

Friends of Tooting Common, AGM Minutes

Meeting Held by Zoom, 15 November 2020 at 3pm

Attending:

Peter Ramell (Chair), Tove Bellingham, Claire Butcher, Léonie Cooper, Kim Dewdney, Jean Ettridge, Matthew Hamlyn, Rose Harley, Simon Hemsley, Lew Hodges, Geraldine Kelly, Shirley Kermer, Stephen Lacey, Michael Langdon, Sarah McDermott, Jill Pitty, Simon Prager, Éamonn Richardson, Liz Sayce, Andrew Sharp, Mike Squires, Jonathan Taylor, Roy Vickery, Emma Wheeler

Apologies:

James Stratford, Anna Cope

Peter welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked people for attending via Zoom.

Minutes of the AGM for 2019:

The minutes as circulated were agreed. Andrew Sharp noted the wrong spelling of his name in the attendance list.

Financial accounts:

The accounts as circulated were reported on by Éamonn Richardson, Treasurer. Leonie Cooper proposed, seconded by Andrew Sharp that they be accepted and this was agreed.

Membership report:

Membership stands at about 215 although as some of these are family memberships there are more people involved. It was noted that the FOTC Facebook page had many more members and there was an ongoing attempt to encourage more of these to become full members of FOTC. The website had been upgraded so there was now a facility to pay for membership online. Peter Ramell recorded his thanks to Francine Forde for her work as Membership Secretary.

Litter Picks:

Peter Ramell recorded his thanks to Tove Bellingham as the lead on litter picking, and for her report. It was reported that FOTC had done as many litter picks as possible given the constraints of lockdown and subsequent restrictions on movement and meeting others but that this had also been a time when litter picks had been most needed due to more people using the Commons. Peter Ramell reported that FOTC were trying to persuade Enable to leave the larger cages for litter out for longer during the year. At the time of the meeting litter picks were suspended once again but would be up and running when the restrictions changed.

Chair's report:

Commenting on his report, Peter Ramell reported that despite lockdown FOTC had successfully run its two largest events - the Dog Show and the Pumpkin Parade - online as virtual events. These had both been well received and had successfully raised money for charity funds. He recorded his thanks to Simon Hemsley and Léonie Cooper for all their work with these events.

He reported on the work to the website which had led to the photographs of the Common over the year and the Photo of the Month competition which had been well received by members. He also recorded his thanks to Roy Vickery for his contributions with Plant of the Day/Week pieces.

FOTC had contributed to Council consultations and discussions on a number of issues during the year, including the Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, the Triangle Development, Cycling & E Scooter use. The website and email were used to inform members on these issues and more work needed to be done on communications with members in the future.

Peter recorded thanks to the committee, and particularly to Kim Dewdney, Francine Forde and Jean Ettridge who were standing down.

Léonie Cooper proposed, seconded by Matthew Hamlyn, that the membership, litter picking and Chair's report should be accepted and this was agreed.

Elections:

Léonie Cooper took the chair for the election of officers.

Chair - Peter Ramell, proposed by Mike Squires, seconded by Rose Harley. Agreed
Treasurer - Éamonn Richardson, proposed by Peter Ramell, seconded by Léonie Cooper. Agreed
Membership Secretary - no nominations
Minutes Secretary - Jill Pitty, proposed by Éamonn Richardson, seconded by Lew Hodges. Agreed.

Members of the Committee:

Leonie Cooper, proposed by Mike Squires, seconded by Andrew Sharp
Simon Hemsley, proposed by Mike Squires, seconded by Léonie Cooper
Geraldine Kelly, proposed by Roy Vickery, seconded by Léonie Cooper
Tove Bellingham, proposed by Andrew Sharp, seconded by Jill Pitty
Anna Cope, proposed by Peter Ramell, seconded by Léonie Cooper
Matthew Hamlyn, proposed by Peter Ramell, seconded by Jill Pitty

All the above were agreed. It was also agreed that Stephen Lacey would be a co-opted member from the Woodfield Project, proposed by Andrew Sharp, seconded by Léonie Cooper.

The position of Membership Secretary was unfilled for the present. The committee would consider this further. Éamonn Richardson and Peter Ramell would handle interim work.

Subscription Rates:

Peter Ramell proposed that subscriptions remained the same for the following year (£6 individual, £10 family). This was agreed.

Any Other Business:

Léonie Cooper noted the success of Tooting Common in getting to the final of the World Cup of Parks which had been run online during the summer.

Simon Hemsley recorded his thanks to Dave at the Tooting News website for his help in promoting events and reporting through the year.

Thanks were again expressed to Roy Vickery and Michael Langdon for their very informative posts and photos on plants on the Common on the FOTC FB page.

The formal part of the meeting closed at 3.30pm and moved to a general discussion of the FOTC activities and issues on the Common.

The discussion fell mainly into two sections

- a) Emma Wheeler raised concerns about arrangements or signage which would prevent children cycling safely to school. On e-scooters, they had enabled people who can not afford cars to travel around London, and there should be informed discussion before they were banned from the Common, though their safety and speed needed consideration.

Peter Ramell outlined the position re e-scooters and cycling. At the moment only one path on the Common was a cycle path; and the Council had banned e-scooters which FOTC was supporting on safety grounds. It was felt there was a need to remind people of where cycling was allowed at the moment. However he also felt there was a general need for a review on cycling (including e-scooters) on the Common.

Matthew Hamlyn said that the legislative position on e-scooters was difficult but he could put this together for a future discussion. Information was at:

<https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/cbp-8958/>

As for cycling, the problem was enforcement of the current restrictions.

Léonie Cooper said that the issue of cycling had been raised several times at the Common MAC with Steve Biggs of the Parks Police. He reported that in the first instance the police encouraged people not to cycle off the designated path but in the last resort would move on to enforcement and Fixed Penalty Notices had been issued.

Peter Ramell said this was definitely an area that needed further discussion by the Committee. It would be helpful to have the current legal position for this regarding e-scooters and a proper review of cycling on the Common. Members of FOTC would be consulted in due course on the matter.

- b) Simon Prager expressed considerable concern about the loss of the Common for the Triangle development and FOTC's position on this; and the lack of social distancing on the Common. He felt that FOTC should become more of a campaigning organisation particularly with regard to police resources for enforcement on the Common and that things which the Council should provide, eg litter picking, should be stopped by FOTC.

Simon Hemsley pointed out that litter picks were started and continued at the request of members and that it provides a good way of monitoring whether Enable are doing the job properly or not. He also said that FOTC did oppose the Council on issues where members had been consulted and there was a clear view about the opposition. However, on some issues such as the Triangle development some members were vehemently opposed to it whereas others saw it as an opportunity to gain some improved facilities. FOTC had consulted its members on the issue and the split was evenly balanced. On this basis we could not claim to represent members by saying that all were against or all in favour. FOTC's position in contributing to the Council's consultations on this development has reflected the balance of members' views.

Peter Ramell said that FOTC strongly agreed on the need for more police patrolling resources on the Common and had raised this issue repeatedly with Enable and the Council. He would inform the Council that the issue was again raised at the AGM and that more enforcement by increased police resources is needed. On the Triangle development FOTC will respond to the application to the Secretary of State (Planning Inspectorate) that is presently open and will tell members of this, and again invite comments on the line FOTC as an organisation should take. Individual members might well also want to comment individually, direct to the Planning Inspectorate.

On the issue of social distancing there was a further discussion about the need for and usefulness of signs to remind people. Matthew Hamlyn said he felt that there were things the Council should be doing at this time of a national emergency and that he would be happy to look at this with the Committee. It was agreed that the committee would consider whether FOTC should raise again with Enable and the Council the need for clearer signage on the need for social distancing.

Peter Ramell closed the meeting at 4.15pm and said the Committee would keep members informed via email of all future discussions. He thanked Simon Hemsley for setting up the meeting via Zoom.

Andrew Sharp proposed a vote of thanks to Peter Ramell for chairing the meeting in these circumstances and there was unanimous agreement for this.