

**FERNWOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**  
**OPEN MEETING, 20 JUNE 2017**

**Minutes of FRA Open Meeting held on 20 June 2017 at the Fernwood Village Hall**

Present:

David Mack	Chairman
Barry Smith	Treasurer
Nigel Branston	Secretary

Plus 20 other Fernwood residents, two representatives of First Port, one of N&SDC and the Head of Chuter Ede School.

1. Welcome The Chairman introduced himself as well as the Treasurer and Secretary, and welcomed everyone to what had been advertised as the Annual General Meeting (AGM). He then explained that the Committee had failed to give sufficient notice, under the terms of the FRA Constitution, for an AGM; this meeting was therefore to be considered as an Open Meeting. Any constitutional issues (such as discussion of the FRA Constitution and the election of officers) would therefore be deferred until a correctly organised AGM could be arranged. He apologised for this error.

2. Treasurer's Report The Treasurer advised that the main FRA account currently stands at £1455.04, including £171.11 allocated to the Conservation Group and £713 to the Fernwood Youth Initiative, the remainder being in the bank for Committee use. Additionally, the Projects account holds £3285.80. He summarised the year's income and expenditure, and advised that a detailed breakdown chart was on display on the notice board at the side of the room, for people to examine.

3. Chairman's Report David Mack introduced himself and gave some personal background. He and his wife Cheryle had moved to Fernwood from Chelmsford, Essex, in September 2015. In Chelmsford he was active as Chairman of a local youth and adult football team; secretary of the local school parents' association; and involved in the re-birth of the local community organisation. David and Cheryle attended an FRA meeting around a year ago to see what Fernwood had to offer, but also to see what they could offer Fernwood. At that time, the main subject seemed to be resolving issues relating to First Port finances and David thanked Sue Taylor and David Heath for their hard work in getting the refunds due to so many Fernwood residents, and for their commitment to the FRA. He also thanked David Heath for having filled the Chairman position for so long.

Referring to last year's summer fete, David had been unable to attend, but understood that a shortage of volunteers and bad weather rather dampened the event, although Barry Smith's efforts nevertheless achieved a fun-packed day. The annual firework display in November – with last year's also being organised by Barry - is clearly a fantastic event for the Fernwood calendar. Clearly, the residents of Fernwood owe Barry their thanks. However, the diminishing number of active FRA members will make it difficult to continue to organise events like this, and the FRA clearly needs some new blood, to ensure the future of events like the summer fete and fireworks night. Luckily, Emma Oldham of Forest Schools has recently joined the FRA and given us the benefit of her expertise in publicity and communication. Through her hard work and enthusiasm she has encouraged other new members to come forward to help with the organisation of this year's summer fete, which will be on Saturday 12 August.

At the beginning of this year, Emma had approached FRA for their support in the creation of Fernwood Forest Schools. Emma wanted to bring outdoor activity and nature experience to the children of

Fernwood. Since then, the Fernwood Forest School has gone from strength to strength; a report is in para 10 (e) below.

The Chairman explained his vision of the FRA being more of a community organisation, and his belief that - with the support of residents - we can provide enjoyable and memorable events and activities. He is keen that children and parents should in future remember their time in Fernwood with joy. To do this, however, the FRA needs widespread help and support; he encouraged those present to continue to support the efforts, and also to encourage others to do so.

4. Election of Officers As explained in paragraph 1, this item was deferred to a future AGM. The Chairman explained that, until then, FRA posts would be filled by:

Chairman:	David Mack
Vice-Chairman:	Geoff Bowers
Treasurer:	Barry Smith
Secretary:	Nigel Branston
Communications & Media:	Emma Oldham

5. District Council Input Neill Mison, N&SDC councillor, advised the meeting about the two future new developments (by Persimmon Homes and Larkfleet Homes). Persimmon already has outline planning permission for up to 1800 homes, on land to the south of the current Fernwood site. The Larkfleet application for 350 homes is still in preparation.

6. Chuter Ede School Robert Hattersley, Executive Head Teacher of Chuter Ede Primary School, explained that from Sep this year, he anticipated that the 210 places at the Fernwood site would be filled. He explained that, while every effort is made to place Fernwood children at the Fernwood site, it is not always possible, and sometimes parents are offered a place at the Balderton site. Phase 3 of the school development should by now be under way, but has been delayed by issues relating to the roads and the proposed new builds; he currently has no scheduled completion date. There will be no funding for school expansion, until the first 400 homes in the David Wilson Homes new-build are completed and occupied, and the planned provision of a school on the Persimmon site will also depend on construction progress. Finally, Mr Hattersley advised that applications are in place for playing field space and a new building for after-school activities.

7. Fernwood Maintenance Strategy Group Cheryle Mack told the meeting about the FMSG, which requires participation by at least two Fernwood residents for consultation and as a communications bridge to the FRA. She asked for members to consider if they could support the FMSG and to get in touch with her.

8. First Port Gary Cox, the new site manager for First Port, introduced himself. He has been in post for only eight weeks, but has been with First Port for over two years. He explained that while he was aware of the history and the various issues which had adversely affected relationships between the company and Fernwood residents, he hoped to focus on the future and on improved engagement. He would, however, be happy to investigate any specific historic issues on request, and advised that his full contact information would be published in a newsletter within a few weeks. He also explained the reasons behind the delay in the latest bills, and the consequent extension of time in which to pay them.

Gary then advised that First Port intends to provide an assistant for John Jeys, in the near future, by taking on an apprentice/trainee. This should enable a more proactive approach to some of the tasks, rather than purely reactive.

Gary promised to work closely with the Parish Council and the FRA, and invited them (and any individual residents) to contact him directly with ideas and suggestions. He also said that anyone seeking sponsorship for activities should contact him.

9. Fernwood Parish Council Barry Smith briefed the meeting on the Fernwood Neighbourhood Plan, which has now been examined by an independent expert, and formally approved and published. There will, later this year, be a referendum (by N&SDC) on acceptance, which will offer all residents a vote; he urged everyone to take the opportunity to do so, and also to encourage others to make use of this opportunity to submit their opinion. The benefit of approval would be that some N&SDC funding would be redirected to the Parish Council, thereby offering the opportunity for a more local perspective on expenditure commitments of value to the village.

10. Fernwood Interest Groups

a. Fernwood Amateur Dramatic Society (FADS) Mollie Weale briefed the meeting on the FADS and encouraged participation, whether for on-stage or back-stage roles. She emphasised the value in teaching people about teamwork, and also advertised the pantomime to be staged in February 2018.

b. Fernwood Over Fifty-Fives (FOFFs) Mollie Weale explained that the FOFFs is a self-help group, which meets on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Thursday of each month (1<sup>st</sup> in the Village hall, 4<sup>th</sup> for some form of trip or event). Activities include presentations, games, barbecues, trips, etc. and any new members will be made very welcome. She then advised the meeting of the recent death of Ray Dickinson, FOFFs member.

c. Fernwood Conservation Group Jeff Hobson told the meeting about the activities of this small group, including installation of a bird hide; planting of wild flowers and fruit trees; and the creation of woodland paths; Group social meetings also take place. He then paid tribute to Ray Dickinson, who had been a founder member of this Group, and the lead for the installation of the bug hut, the original bird hide, and the woods path by the meadow, as well as being very involved in activities with the school. Ray will be sorely missed.

d. Fernwood Pétanque Group Michael Phelan explained what pétanque is, and about the installation of the playing areas (pistes) with funding from various councils and groups, including First Port. He invited people to come along and join the regular activities (Sundays and Fridays) and advised that one member has now achieved the status of a national pétanque judge. He also highlighted that the Group hold some social events, and sometimes goes on trips away from home.

e. Fernwood Forest School Emma Oldham, unable to attend the meeting, had sent an update to the Chairman, who read it out to the meeting:

“Excitingly, Fernwood Forest Schools has taken off really well with a great support network from Fernwood residents. We now run four different age groups, catering for ages from birth to 16 years. Our recent family day events have also been a huge success, including a Fernwood bug hunt - where we got to meet some of the mini residents of Fernwood including false black widow spiders, scorpion flies and leopard slugs! Our next ambition is to

raise funds to purchase a bell tent to offer shelter and warmth for the winter months, so that we can continue running sessions. Thank you to everyone who has supported this great project, from bringing their children, to donating equipment and helping to spread the word.”

11. Q&A Session The Chairman invited audience questions.

- a. An audience member raised the point that there was a clear need for FRA notice boards around the estate, to advertise FRA meetings, activities and contact information for all of the various Interest Groups. The one FRA board did not appear to be updated very often, and was not seen by many residents. Gary Cox advised that First Port was considering installing lockable notice boards, and could provide ones with two halves – one half for First Port and the other for FRA use. This was met with some approval, and he asked that the FRA contact him with suggested numbers and locations.
- b. Also on the subject of advertising and communication, it was pointed out that not everyone uses Facebook, or looks at the website; this endorses the need for notice boards and the Fernwood Fanfare. David Heath stressed that the website includes space for Interest Groups to insert and update their own information. It was generally agreed that FRA needs to make use of all available means of communication and advertising. Ideally, space should also be made available on the notice boards in the entrance to the village hall – there would be space if out-of-date items were culled. Cheryle used this opportunity to request contributions to the next Fernwood Fanfare, the preparation of which is currently ongoing. Volunteers are also needed to help distribute copies to all residents. Anyone interested in contributing in any way should contact her. Some copies will be left out in Earl’s and (if permitted) in the One-Stop. John Jeys advised that, for those blocks of flats which FRA members could not access, the copies should be passed to him for delivery.
- d. Requests for more details of the Persimmon and Larkfleet developments were answered by Neill Mison. He explained the mechanisms for determining school builds and GP surgery needs, and stressed that it was too early to be certain of what would be provided or when. Some sports facilities were included in the Persimmon plans. Concern was expressed about the plans – relating to the next David Wilson Homes phase - to close Hollowdyke Lane to traffic (and the increased likelihood of Fernwood isolation in the event of a problem with the A1 bridge). Neill advised that it has been determined that the junction at the Balderton end of Hollowdyke would be dangerous, with increased traffic, and plans will probably allow only buses and cycles on Hollowdyke. In any case, the plans are on hold and will depend on the new-build. A resident asked about possible use of the A1 bridge in the Fernwood Business Park, but Neill advised that it is quite old and unsafe.
- e. In response to a question about access to the tennis courts, John Jeys explained the required procedure to obtain a pass. David Mack then mentioned that he was considering whether a tennis pro could be engaged to give lessons; Ken Forbes had some past experience of this, and offered to provide relevant contact information.

NIGEL BRANSTON

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