

## Minutes From APCG Members' Meetings – March 2022

### Meeting 2 – Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Present: Helen C. (Chair), Tom (minutes), x8 members (names withheld)

#### 1. Introductions and Matters arising from last meetings (November 2021):

- Helen C summed up the case for members' meetings: this is how we make sure the garden is truly member-led.
- Tom covered the many actions taken as a result of the last members' meetings in November 21, including inviting all present to think about putting on a 'Happy to Help' lanyard occasionally. This led to a discussion of the possibility of offering guided introductions to the garden to new members, these to be given by volunteers. A member felt this would be a good way of helping people to engage with the activities at the garden, hopefully encouraging them to return more often. Another member wasn't sure they'd feel comfortable giving a tour, it was agreed that this would only be on a voluntary basis.
- It was asked if a colour has been selected for re-painting the cabins. Tom informed those present that no final decision has been reached, but that following a consultation with members we were leaning towards a pastel purple. This was met with less than full enthusiasm by those present! All those who expressed opinions felt that the same or similar colour would be preferable.
- It was asked if the Rose Garden redevelopment was still planned. Tom outlined the current situation as well as the revised plans for redeveloping the cabin café area (see minutes 14/3).

#### 2. Mental Health Awareness Week (w/c Monday 9<sup>th</sup> May):

- Tom outlined the idea for a 'chatty bench' in town.
  - A member wondered if the bench could inadvertently discourage participation or encourage social stigma – 'if someone is on the bench they must be lonely'.
  - Another member felt it would be good to connect with other local organisations – Tom clarified that this is definitely the plan, the bench is to raise awareness of as many local organisations supporting mental health as possible.
  - A further member suggested that including an active link with Faversham Town Council could help as they are currently actively seeking to engage people moving in to the new housing developments in the local community. Another member reported that they very recently delivered a large number of APCG leaflets to the town hall.
- Helen C. suggested that use of social media to invite people to take part in gardening activities at the APCG could be a way to encourage new and lasting participation in the garden during MHAW. Perhaps seed sowing of sunflowers. A member agreed that shared activities were a good way to create connections, but wondered if pressure to participate in physical activities could deter some people.
- Ways to reach refugees were discussed. A member present knows someone with a local refugee support group, agreed to pass on contact info to the garden team.

#### 3. Tackling loneliness in the long term:

- A member suggested a befriending scheme to build upon the benefits of MHAW.
- There was more discussion of the possibility of new members and visitors feeling that the garden is only for people who are physically able to contribute to working on the garden. A member present agreed, feeling that Paul is a hard taskmaster who mercilessly puts his horticulture students to work!

#### 4. Platinum Jubilee / summer party - ideas?:

- There was general enthusiasm for the idea of a Platinum Jubilee event at the garden over the four-day bank holiday weekend (2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> June). It was suggested that we should consider checking when other local / national events are taking place and scheduling an event to either coincide or avoid clashing with these.
- There were lots of good ideas for a garden event along the lines of an afternoon tea party:
  - 70's party food! Sandwiches (cucumber and salad cream, beef and mustard, egg and cress), vol au vents, cocktail sausages, cheese and pineapple on toothpicks, jelly and ice cream, instant whip, angel delight;
  - games: pass the parcel, bat and trap, musical chairs, blind man's buff, what's the time Mr Wolf, oranges and lemons;
  - bring items for a display of past jubilee / royal events;
  - display of family pictures of past jubilee / royal events;
  - sing-a-long: national anthem and more – there was discussion if some could find the national anthem off-putting, it was generally felt that anyone attending a Platinum Jubilee celebration would at least likely not be too surprised to find the anthem being sung;
  - a big-screen TV to display live footage of any concurrent events taking place (presumably something at Westminster Abbey?), a member said there is one at St Mary's church;
  - bake a 'platinum pudding' competition.
- A member suggested a tree or other plant could be planted as part of the celebrations.

#### 5. Some reminders and updates - OT placement, Qi Gong Tai Chi, Drama Group, FCS talking therapies, etc!:

- Reminders and invitations to upcoming garden activities were discussed, and awareness raised of Faversham Counselling Service.
- The upcoming OT placement was discussed. As an occupational therapist and gardener, a member present would like to meet the OTs and informally help them to combine their growing skills with the work of the garden.

#### 6. Cabin reopening:

- Tom asked for feedback from those present on the relaxing of guidelines around the use of the cabin.
- Two members present felt that a complete relaxation of the rules would be very uncomfortable for volunteers working in the cabin during busy times. There was discussion which led to the conclusion that allowing general access during the majority of garden hours would be appropriate, particularly now that the weather is improving, but that it would still be of considerable benefit to cabin volunteers if the table could continue to be placed across the entrance to serve as a counter during busy opening hours.
- There was general enthusiasm for any possible future repositioning of the counter in the cabin as has been discussed recently. It was noted that the current electrical wiring would make this more difficult than was first thought, but those present agreed it would be worth pursuing if possible.
- All present agreed that a serving hatch on the side of the cabin as part of the proposed café cabin works would be an excellent and desirable addition.

#### 7. AOB:

- All present offered congratulations to a member present, who has recently been presented with life membership of the National Museum Association in recognition of their volunteer work at local organisations including Rye Castle and Oxfam. Helen C. asked if they would like to do more around the garden, but this member was happy that the garden remain a place where they can come to learn horticulture and meet with friends.
- A member noted that weekends are getting busier (40+ visitors last Saturday), and made the case for reinstating a proper donation box / donation station near the entrance to the garden. This led to discussions of other complementary ideas including:

- a visitors / feedback book for suggestions and comments;
  - pre-printed gift aid envelopes for cash donations;
  - a 'thermometer' displaying a running total towards a named micro-funding goal.
- Another member asked if the garden has made use of Tesco's 'Bags of Help' scheme. Tom explained that we have received this funding before, but was not sure when we last were included or if the minimum allowable time before reapplying had yet elapsed. This will be looked into.
  - The same member asked what the garden's policy on use of chemicals including pesticides was. Tom was not sure if it was a formal written policy anywhere, but explained that we have a policy of zero chemicals at the garden. All fertilisers and pest controls are organic in nature, including nettle and comfrey tea, natural oil-based pesticides, and biological pest controls in the greenhouse. It was suggested that a connection could be made with Cllr Chris Williams of 'Edible Culture', who is seeking to promote pesticide-free gardening locally.
  - Another member asked if the step leading to the kitchen could be replaced and widened, now that the double doors lead directly on to it. There was discussion also of the need to repair the covered roof and install guttering at the front of the kitchen – Tom clarified the plans to do these things in the near future.
  - The same member suggested, with the loss of the veranda and trellice, that more plants around the kitchen and seating area would be nice, particularly as outdoor cooking may resume soon. These could be grown in pots and / or new narrower trellising.
  - The same member also suggested a suggestions box! Feeling that sometimes staff can seem too distracted or busy to be approached while working.
  - Helen C. suggested a long wooden bench around the inner wall of the summer house gazebo to replace the current table and chairs which are not a great fit for the space.
  - A member asked if the 'Lunch of Love' scheme was still going. Another member present explained that it is, and the system for recording donations and meals donated. There was some discussion of the potential awkwardness of offering a free meal to someone, without making them feel like a charity case:
    - a member suggested that visitors / new members first meal at the garden could be free.
    - Tom suggested a day or event where everyone eats for free from the proceeds.
    - another member wondered if the funds could be discretionary and used for similar charitable micro-donations to members – Tom was instinctively uncertain about this, but it could be worth thinking about.
    - It was suggested that the local foodbank could be a good way to connect with people who would appreciate a free meal at the garden / to take away.
  - Helen C. suggested pursuing a broader garden vouchers scheme as a means of raising funds.
  - Helen C. invited all present to reach out to trustees at any time with any questions or concerns they may have, and invited anyone with experience writing funding applications to volunteer in this capacity if they have the time to give.
  - Helen C. thanked everyone for coming, next meetings in July dates TBD.