

Minutes From APCG Members' Meetings – March 2022

Meeting 5 – Friday 18th March 2022

Present: Steve B. (Chair), Tom (minutes), Lucia (trustee), Sarah P (trustee), x2 members (names withheld)

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

- Steve welcomed everyone and those present introduced themselves.
- Actions taken since November meetings were covered, and all present invited to wear a 'Happy To Help' lanyard, as modelled by Tom.
- Everyone present had participated in the Secret Santa event last year and would enjoy doing it again.
- The strumming group was mentioned, Tom wanted to enter for the minutes that a member attending has been amazing us all with his singing at the group on Mondays at 2pm.
- Qi Gong was discussed – do people know what it is? A member present knew that it was similar to Tai Chi, others felt they wouldn't have known what it was.
- Thanks were recorded for the work of the Men's Shed, and to the volunteers who worked hard to remove the diseased plum trees over the winter.

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

- Tom outlined plans for the 'Chatty Bench' in town in May and June. Steve invited those present to suggest other ideas for MHAW at the garden.
- A member suggested an event of some sort at the garden to invite people along to. Lucia pointed out that the members' coffee morning in May falls on Monday 9th, the first day of MHAW. All agreed that a widely-publicised invitation to the wider community to attend this coffee morning would be a great addition to MHAW.
- Sarah suggested making contact with Cllr Hannah Perkin who has been working to raise awareness of dementia in the community.
- A member suggested that putting out flyers and invitations (existing, or created new for the purpose) to the garden into housing communities like the one they live in would be a good way to reach people at risk of loneliness and isolation. Tom asked those present to help compile a quick list of suitable local housing communities in Faversham:
 - Gange Mews
 - William Gibbs
 - The one opposite the Post Office we couldn't remember the name of
 - Waterstone Place
 - Park View
 - Canterbury House.
- Lucia suggested that the pop-up coffee café idea from before the pandemic could be resurrected to reach these and other communities.
- A member asked if the garden is advertised in GP surgeries, Lucia and Steve believed that we are.
- Steve offered to 'pound the pavement' in helping to distribute this material about the garden.

3. Tackling loneliness in the long term:

- Lucia wondered if these should be existing or new ideas – Steve suggested both would be appropriate.
- A member wondered if it would be possible to reach school leavers or younger people. This member was unsure if people in this group would be at risk of loneliness. Others present felt that they very much could be at risk.
- Lucia suggested summer evening events, such as family picnics, to reach new people who may be unable to attend the garden during opening hours. Steve suggested that volunteer keyholders may be able to help make this a reality, and would be happy to himself. A member agreed that the longer daylight hours made this an

excellent idea. Lucia suggested that Alex (Faversham Community Kitchen project lead) may know people who could provide live music at these or similar events.

- Steve suggested also that making the garden available during evening hours in the summer could help facilitate members and the wider community to enjoy some peaceful time at the garden, as it is often very busy during opening hours. An unnamed participant in the meeting wondered if beer could be available at such an event, Tom wasn't sure, but felt it might be possible as long as it was brought in by individuals and was not for sale by the garden. Lucia and Sarah suggested brown paper bags!

4. Platinum Jubilee / summer party - ideas?:

- Steve asked those present for feedback on and suggestions for a possible Platinum Jubilee event at the garden.
- A member wondered if, with so many other Jubilee events taking place, people would be burned out on them and less likely to attend another one at the garden.
- Steve agreed this was possible and wondered if it might be possible to combine a summer party with the AGM. Lucia explained that the current plan is to hold an unusually early AGM in May in order to confirm the year's accounts for 2021 as part of the current funding strategy. It was agreed that a summer party would still be a lot of fun.
- A member suggested that such an event could include subtle nods to the Jubilee – such as coronation chicken!
- As with each meeting this week, a general consensus on the monarchy was reached. Where other meetings fell quite markedly on one side or other of the discussion, today's meeting was unanimously ambivalent!

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

- Steve made those present aware of the services offered by FCS.
- Steve outlined plans for an OT placement for four students beginning in April and running for nine weeks, exact start date TBD. The plan to embed OT students as garden members for a week was explained and approved of. Steve asked if there were plans for students to be given long-form projects again this year. Tom explained that we have some ready to go, but intend to keep these in the back pocket until we see how successfully we can encourage students to bed in to the daily life and work of the garden.
- Lucia told of recently meeting Ebe from last year's cohort. Those present who met him shared very positive memories of Ebe and were pleased to hear that he was back in the country and catching up with his studies.

6. Cabin reopening:

- Steve outlined the new dispensation regarding access to the cabin, relying on members to behave responsibly and conscientiously when using this indoor space. It was clarified that regular cabin volunteers will retain the right to close off the front of the cabin while serving on busy days.
- Tom explained the changes to the plans for the outdoor café area, adding that it was hoped this new area would help make use made of the indoor area less congested. Tom (very) cautiously suggested that this could be completed this summer.

7. Trustee update:

- Steve invited the trustees present to speak on the latest goings on with the board.
- Lucia and Sarah spoke on the activities of trustees:
 - funding is the current priority, with trustees collaborating on a bid;
 - the Vision and Learning group continue working with members to build a clear and delineated vision for the future of the garden, in order to ensure that staff and volunteer efforts and focus are being directed appropriately;

◦ those present agreed that the garden would be lucky if Helen Carr feels able to continue in the role of Chair of Trustees for some time to come. She is currently taking a lead on the funding bid and ensuring that the trustee working groups' efforts are going where the garden most needs them.

- A member asked if funding applications are all entered at once at the same time. Sarah explained that this is a continuous, ongoing process of applications and reports. Lucia clarified that Suzanne and Tom are currently putting aside one working day a week to work on funding applications, and that as a grant-funded charity we are now in the application-intensive part of the funding cycle.
- A member mentioned the South East Water 'Community Chest' fund available for grants of up to £2000. Tom confirmed after the meeting that Suzanne has put in a bid to this fund after this member first brought it to our attention.
- The same member explained that in their experience the National Lottery funds can be quite fickle and hard to predict. It was pointed out that oversight for this source of funding is soon to be changing hands from Camelot possibly to an overseas company.
- Steve thanked the board of trustees for all of their hard work in this area, which he can relate to from his own time as Chair of Trustees, when the garden was in an at-times perilous state of underfunding.

8. AOB:

- Steve invited those present to raise any other business in turn:
- A member said that KCC and SBC Members' Grants are soon to be available again, wondering if the garden has gained access to these. Lucia confirmed that members of Faversham Town Council have been very generous to the garden, especially during the pandemic. It was suggested that Members' Grants be added to the spreadsheet collating sources of funding.
- The same member also mentioned the 'Great Big Green Week' events due to place again in September. £300-400 funding is available for one-off events and projects. Lucia suggested this could be combined with the hop festival.
- Tom was happy to be recording the final set of minutes of another very successful, positive, and productive week of members' meetings. Tom also thanked all of the members and trustees who attended the meetings, and Steve for his invaluable help in chairing.
- Lucia suggested revisiting some of the ideas put on hold for the pandemic, mentioning school holiday family-friendly events.
- A member would like to see a return of feedback from the board of trustees which used to appear in garden newsletters. Tom was not sure when a garden newsletter was next planned, but will check with Jacqui.
- The same member wondered if there was currently an 'ordinary member' on the board of trustees, and if this was part of the garden's charter. Steve felt that the week-long members' meeting format was going some way to empowering and enfranchising members in the running of the garden.
- A member asked what the average age of members at the garden was. Tom was not sure, guessing somewhere between 40 and 50, and explaining that collecting this demographic data is not something we have achieved successfully with the current administrative hours available. Another member and Sarah felt this would be useful information to have as part of funding applications. Tom wondered what had prompted the question – the member explained that they have been wondering if younger people could be in need of the garden's help.
- Steve asked if we put information about the garden into local schools – Tom was not sure, but Jacqui does have connections with QE school. Lucia suggested that D of E participants could be a source of younger volunteers at the garden. A member and Steve suggested that people aged 16 or under would require external supervision and may have insurance implications.
- Lucia had one last excellent idea – include a few dates for upcoming coffee mornings / BBQs / etc included underneath agendas handed out at members' meetings in future. Another no-brainer!
- Steve thanked everyone for attending, next meetings in July.