

## Minutes From APCG Members' Meetings – March 2023

### Meeting 1 – Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023

**Present:** Steve B. (Chair), Tom J. (Minutes), Andy I. (Trustee Rep), x8 members (names withheld)

#### 1. Welcome:

- Steve thanked everyone for coming and led those present in thanking Tom for his work as Acting Manager in 2022.

#### 2. Introductions:

- Those present introduced themselves in turn, what they do at the garden, and how long they have been coming.

#### 3. Apologies:

- None.

#### 4. Members' Covenant:

- Steve thanked everyone for their contributions to the Members' Covenant at the members' meetings in November. This is now on display in the cabin, and any comments or suggestions for changes are welcome.

#### 5. Funding for the garden:

- Steve spoke about the Members' Fundraising Group meeting on 24/3/23, some of their ideas for events, and their intention to turn ideas into action with the help of enthusiastic volunteers generously giving their time.
- Steve invited everyone to get their thinking caps on, and to bring ideas for ways to raise funds to him or the next meeting of the fundraising group. This led to an enthusiastic discussion. A member spoke about the need to seek sustainable long-term funding as well as one-off fundraising events. Others agreed, and spoke about the need to raise the profile of the garden as a worthwhile charitable cause in the locality. Ideas contributed included:
  - Friends of the Garden
  - Sponsorships / partnerships
  - Campaign to 'bring a friend' with you to the garden
  - Seeking NHS or other statutory funding for referrals / uses made of the garden. Steve mentioned the OT placements from CCCU as a good model that does bring in funds, thanks in part to the time donated to support the students by willing members of the garden. A member asked about the GP trainees, Tom clarified that the garden receives no funding for this, and the basis for their presence in embedding social prescribing in GP practice in the region.
  - Talks / presentations by / for members.
  - Forging connections with local businesses / entrepreneurs – charitable donations to the garden with some form of statutory acknowledgement and reward from the garden in return. Suggested to start with the biggest businesses and individuals in town.
  - Mail shots, emails, and following up as part of any charitable relationship with a partner.

#### 6. Update from APCG Trustees:

- Andy updated those present on the recent work of the Board of Trustees. Currently their main focus is on facilitating delivery of the three National Lottery Community Fund project, now in its second month. Andy explained that the first

year of this project is front-loaded with a lot of actions and development relating to staffed projects, community partnerships, and staffing.

- Andy explained his own role within the board – leading on TNLCF delivery by working with the Garden Manager and Assistant Manager. This has already begun to lead to something of a cultural shift at the garden – being more prepared to say ‘no’ to some partnerships and offers to make use of the garden which we would previously have accepted. It was acknowledged that this could be a painful process, and may upset some people outside the garden, but that it is felt to be a necessary step towards sustainability by protecting staff time and the core purpose of the charity.
- Andy informed those present of three new individuals hoping to join the garden as Trustees at this year’s AGM, bringing their time and enthusiasm to the charity, along with their expertise and backgrounds in social care, fundraising, and project evaluation.
- Andy took questions from those present:
  - A member suggested an event for members and invited guests to publicise and inform about the strategy outlined in the TNLCF delivery plan. Pictures, documentation, and presentations to clarify the direction we are heading.
  - Another member seconded this idea, and spoke again in favour of connecting with local businesses; building awareness of the charity; Friends of the Garden. This member also suggested that a list of ‘things’ the garden needs, beyond financial support, could be a valuable tool in seeking support from local businesses as a facet of sustainability.
  - A further member asked if there were plans for an event themed around the Coronation of King Charles III in May. There was discussion of similar events nearby, and the advantages of planning and announcing such events for the calendar year to come as early as possible in the year. It was noted that similar discussions around the Queen’s coronation in 2022 lead to the consensus by members that an event at the garden would not be appropriate (see minutes March 2022).
  - There was general discussion of the importance of maintaining and improving the garden’s relationship with the QE school and with our landlords, the Grammar School Trust.

## **7. Community Partnerships:**

- Steve and Tom outlined the role of the Community Partnerships Lead staff member in the early stages of the TNLCF project: developing contacts with partners able to refer individuals to benefit from the garden on a formal basis. Steve invited all present to contact Jacqui with any useful information or contacts to help with this.

## **8. AOB**

- A member raised the subject of membership fees, stating they were not aware of anywhere else that offers what the garden does for only £15. Steve explained these have historically been kept low to promote inclusivity, last raised a few years ago from £15. There was general discussion of ways to encourage greater giving through memberships:
  - Options to give more when joining / resubscribing.
  - Tiered memberships / Friends of the Garden donation levels.
  - Straw poll of increased membership fee: 8 for, 1 against.
  - Claiming gift aid where possible.
- Another member enquired if there would soon be a formal policy and full use made of the refreshment cabin and terrace built last year as a source of income. Tom took a straw poll in favour of the proposed name ‘Community Café’, general agreement but some felt it was uninspiring, ‘Abbey Café’ was suggested. A member spoke in favour of getting new tables and chairs for use on the terrace.

- Tom reminded those present about signing up to help keyholders open on Saturdays, and asked if any present might be willing to help open the garden at evenings and weekends in the warmer months to help improve access and raise funds. Four members present were interested and their names were recorded.

**9. Date for next meeting:**

- July 2023 – dates TBD.