

Draft

Minutes of the adjourned AGM held on 18 October 2022 in the Greenwich Steiner School
These minutes will be presented for approval at the next AGM

Chair: Mark Barnes (MB)

20 members attending in person, 4 by proxy

MB welcomed those attending and especially new members. Membership was up from 71 to 87 members within last month.

- 1) The 2021 AGM Draft minutes were approved unanimously.
- 2) Treasurer's statement (given by MB):
Balance of £272.15 is down from something over £500 last year. Expenditure in the last year included new bench, labels for trees, tree party storyteller, willow fencing instruction from Stephen Stockbridge.
HSBC account was closed due to new charges of £5/month being imposed on the account by HSBC. The Vanbrugh Community Association (Mycenae House) agreed to help by creating a 'nominal code' in the MH accounts to host FoMG funds and occasional transactions. MB thanked Mark Johnson-Brown (MJB) for organising this. MJB stated that a high number of small individual transactions should be avoided, such as membership donations. It was suggested that another platform be used to raise these funds such as GoFundMe, JustGiving, etc.
- 3) The proposed amendment of the constitution to confirm and ratify that arrangement with Mycenae House was approved unanimously.
- 4) The Chair's report
The report had been sent out for the 13 September meeting and was available in printed copies. MB updated it:
 - The latest pruning day had been held on 15 October. Although fewer people had attended this year, it had been successful. The major work was the repair of a large section of dead hedging that had been completely removed
 - The willow fences have been uprooted and stripped in large part
 - Mycenae Arboretum: an increasing number of the labels have been broken or are missing and will have to be replaced
 - Woodchip: following the intervention of councillor Leo Fletcher, the council has agreed to supply a large quantity of woodchip in October, but with the clear message that woodchip will not on its own be enough to solve the problems of over-use and compaction.A summary of the resulting discussion is attached as an appendix
- 5) Elections to the committee.
MB reported that two members of the committee had been unable to participate during the year and were not presenting themselves for re-election.
The remaining members stay in post, namely:
 - Mark Barnes (Chair & Secretary)
 - Fiona Machen Harrison
 - Vera Shuvueva-BecarThat leaves four vacancies, although any more willing to serve may well be invited to committee meetings and asked to help in any way they can.

The following kindly offered themselves for election and were elected unanimously:

Bruce Atherton
Anne Robbins
Virginia Williams
Stewart Williams

In addition, Sarah Peters-Harrison offered her help (from Christmas) as an invited member

Appendix

Discussion (summarised by topic):

- The damage to the gardens
After-school club children have been seen dismantling the willow fencing. There was also substantial damage found to the dead-hedging, now repaired. Why? There are no GSS staff members attending the after-school activities. It is important to redouble efforts to educate and inform children and their parents/carers about the need to protect the dead hedging, the willow fences, and the shrub beds. This would need to be repeated regularly (as used to be done). The Code of Conduct is included in welcome packs for new children. It was advertised by email last year (September) but not this year. Suggestion that a shorter version should be created and circulated regularly to encourage more people to read it.
It was suggested that it might be helpful to make short videos explaining the importance of the gardens the wildlife area and the various fencing, to be shown to the children and on the website. Bruce Atherton (BA) and MJB offered to help with the video-making.
Rita Sesay (RS) said the school already planned to have the children make wooden signs for the dead hedging and she planned interim signage meanwhile. RS also suggested that the woodwork curriculum could include making fences and signs during the Autumn/Winter period when materials (willow whips and coppiced stakes) are naturally available (November to March). This would embed an annual drive to maintain the fencing with the children.
Suggestion of creating a Children's Trail leaflet with map and pics to help children identify the various trees. Perhaps some stories/folklore about some of the species.

- Publicity and communications
Currently, the group uses the following channels:
 - email - although sometimes it goes to spam.
 - occasional articles in Westcombe News
 - Twitter
 - website
 - FoMG Notice Board although this seems to be ignored/not noticed.

It was suggested that there should be an 'Activities' board. RS suggested that there could be a large 'Welcome' board on Mycenae Road (garden wall) to advertise the space and the Friends Group, near the entrance.

It was suggested by more than one attendee that a WhatsApp Group be created for members to use in addition to email notifications of activities. Short WhatsApp messages are more likely to be read.

Mirjam Lisi (MJ) and VS offered to coordinate with Class Reps to communicate FoMG news and activities in the school.

Sarah Peters-Harrison (SPH) and BA offered help regarding website update, social media comms, video making, helping to coordinate the various committee activities.

- Membership

Suggestion to set up a survey of who uses the gardens, how many visitors, from where?

MJB suggested a rethink of membership structure, perhaps with a tiered system of membership to appeal to a wider audience, who might be interested in being involved in some ways but not others.

MJB also called for ideas on how to form a children's group to support the gardens. Children from many schools come and enjoy the gardens, not just those from GSS.

RS noted that children in Upper School (year group?) perform community service duties as part of their Steiner curriculum. Rita suggested building out a schedule of works for them to support the care of the gardens. This will be in consultation with the Friends Group and MH.

- Finance issues

Suggestions were made for fundraising by events and/or a call for voluntary contributions.

The group needs an experienced fundraiser.