

Fifth AGM of Save Our green Spaces (SOS)
Held at Park Street School, Lower Park Street
On Thursday 29 November 2007

The Chair started the meeting by reading the mission statement of SOS. He welcomed the attendees and in particular Sarah Tovell of the Active Communities Team and Diana Oviatt-Ham, Principal Arboricultural Officer.

1. Apologies were received from Ursula Sims Williams, Cllrs Joye Rosenstiel and Julie Smith, Alistair Wilson and Caroline Fisher.
2. Minutes of AGM meeting held on 6 November 2006: The Secretary outlined the minutes of last year's AGM. The minutes were accepted as a true record of the meeting.
3. Matters Arising:
 - a) With regard to the planning application for the Station Area (point 4b) it was noted that Ashwell had not appealed against the rejection of their plans and were submitting a new application.
 - b) River moorings: SOS's interest arises in the case of impact on green spaces and obstruction of river banks.
4. Chairman's Report

The Chair outlined a number of issues that the Committee had discussed during the year (as already circulated) including:

- a) Technology Management: it is still the aim of SOS to host an umbrella website capable of hosting other local organisation's pages to enable a city contact point. There was still an issue over the current domain's ownership but this will be resolved.
 - b) Stagecoach threat to Christ's Pieces. The Christ's Pieces Residents' Association AGM held in March had revealed a real possibility of encroachment on this green. There was still an on-going threat to CP from bus traffic.
 - c) Relocation of long distances buses to Parker's Piece. The inadequacy of current facilities was highlighted and confirms SOS's desire to see better facilities provided for in Ashwell's plans for the Station Area., providing smaller satellite buses which do not mar the view of open spaces.
 - d) Proposed removal of cycle pinch points on certain green spaces by the council: this issue was discussed with reference to cyclist and pedestrian safety. It was suggested that it is a matter for local residents' associations.
5. Treasurer's Report

Sue Ilsley reported balance of £440, thanks to a £250 grant from the City Council. There had not been much financial activity during the current year although more will be spent on the website next year. John Cooper had kindly inspected the accounts and they were available for inspection at the meeting.

6. Membership

Peter Constable resigned as Chairman, after five years in the post, and John Lawton was elected in his place. The rest of the committee was agreed as follows:

Victoria Zeitlyn (secretary)
Sue Ilsley (Treasurer)
Lisa Buchholz
Adrian Brink
Buria Shachar-Hill

Ursula Sims Williams has resigned from the committee.

7. Honorary Auditor

John Cooper again kindly agreed to act as Honorary Auditor.

8. Election of Officers - as above

9. A.O.B.

Open discussion took place during the meeting and, amongst others, the following points arose:

Trees: SOS expressed concern on the care of existing planting and replanting where trees had to be removed. SOS would like to know the Council's budget and resources and to see a proactive policy of planting for major avenues such as on Jesus Green.

Mrs Oviatt-Ham responded that between August 06 and March 07 a survey of all trees on all open spaces under the remit of Council had taken place. There is a budget of £12,000 from within the Active Communities department (formerly Parks and Recreation) and this is for all planting and shrub work. There is no separate budget for tree replanting. Further funds can cover Highways trees and there should be section 106 money from new communal housing projects (although the question of availability of such funds was raised).

Further concern was expressed over the avenue of trees on Jesus Green and it was stated that remedial work on the Green to alleviate drainage problems and compaction was essential for the trees, existing and any new, to survive.

Sarah Tovell noted that in preparation of the Beer Festival moving to a fresh site on Jesus Green a drainage survey had taken place. Money paid by EDF for the cable digging across the Green had been put into a pot to be spent on JG and Midsummer Common, including new electric, self-closing gates for MC. There were other sources of funding including "Improve your Neighbourhood" projects (see Council website).

The point of commercial rental rates for use of the open spaces was raised as an issue and a desire to see higher rates.

Sponsorship: This has been suggested in the past for litter bins and it was raised as a possibility for trees also.

VZ 07.12.07