

Fern Avenue Residents Group

Minutes of the AGM held at Jesmond Cricket Club on 16th November 2015

Present. Members of the FAR Group: Noël Burton-Roberts, Barrie Craven, Suky Drummond, Grace Hodge, John Hodge, Les Hodgson, James McConnell, Sarah Melling, Richard Melling, Peter Nicolls, Janet Nicolls, Alison Priestley, Pam Ranson, Chris Sutcliffe, Lucy Wareing, Andrew Wareing. In attendance: P.C. Neil Johnson community police.

1. Introduction and welcome by the Chair

2. Apologies for absence. Marc Robertson, Tessa Burton-Roberts, Amanda Davidson, Bil Sedgwick and councillors Dan Perry, Felicity Mendelson, Peter Breakey and Catherine Walker.

3. Adoption of the minutes of the last AGM 17th November 2014. The minutes were adopted.

4. Matters Arising – None.

Report from Jesmond neighbourhood policing team

P.C. Johnson gave an overview of how the community police are structured. There are 5 officers who are dedicated to Jesmond (At least 90% of their time will be spent on Jesmond). He stressed that if an issue is adversely affecting residents' life in Jesmond then the officers are interested even if control might say it is not a police matter. He encouraged residents to contact him directly on his work phone – 07552254672 – or e-mail through the website (easier said than done, try newcastleeast.npt@northumbria.pnn.police.uk).

The link for the relevant page is:

http://www.northumbria.police.uk/your_neighbourhood/central/newcastle/east/index.asp). The main issue at the moment is burglary – two burglars have recently been arrested. He stressed that we should report anything suspicious to 999.

5. Chair's report

First of all, I would like to thank the committee and particularly Grace Hodge and Suky Drummond for their help to me as Chairman of FARG and their sterling work throughout the year. Over the past year the committee has met 4 times.

Information sharing/gathering:

As in previous years, an information pack about the FAR Group and welcome to students was distributed to all households in the street in September along with leaflets from the council and the universities. Nevertheless, antisocial behaviour by students remains an issue.

The FAR Group website is very smart and continues to be run by Bil Sedgwick. Many thanks to him!

Over the year I (as Chair) and especially Grace Hodge (as Vice Chair) have attended meetings as representatives of our group.

Social gatherings and other events.

One of the aims of the association is to encourage the development of a sense of community in the street. To this end we have organised several street events.

In March, 12 residents enjoyed a lunch at Antico.

We welcome suggestions for the venue for the next lunch.

The annual back lane party continues to be a great success. This year it was held in the street itself (with bunting!) to mark the Residents' Group 10th anniversary. It was very well attended and it was generally agreed to have been a great success. Thanks are due to Suky and Grace for its organisation, to the magician and the face painter for their entertainment, to Mike Sutton's Midnite Special Group for the music, to Matt for supplying beer from Wylam Brewery, and to all who supplied food and made and put up the bunting.

On September 25th, there was a very good turn-out at our ever-popular annual get-together, a Curry Night at the Jesmond Cricket Club. This was very successful and well attended (87 people). Thanks are due to Suky Drummond and Bil Sedgwick for the variety of entertaining quizzes provided, and to Suky for her amazingly speedy quiz marking. A big thank you for Suky for organising this and to everyone who helped set it up.

Another aim of the association is to improve and maintain the look of the Street and to this end we'll be setting a date in the near future for our annual leaf-clearing event.

On the subject of clearing: every week teams of litter pickers clear the street and back lanes. This has become less onerous for those involved now there are so many volunteers. Thank you to them and to Bil Sedgwick for overseeing this.

In addition, Grace Hodge leads the back lane group, which is concerned with the "greening" of the back lanes and the administration of the planters. I'll ask Grace to say a few words about this.

Grace reported that the planters are looking good. Thanks goes to all who maintain them many of whom are residents of Queens and Holly. There have been no reports of vandalism this year and bulbs have been bought and distributed for spring.

Financing the FAR Group.

In the past, the Group has applied for and received grants from the Council. Our finances are supplemented (a) by the sale of tickets for the curry night (making a small profit), (b) contributions collected during the street party and (c) by one-off donations and standing orders from a few members. The Treasurer will give details in his report.

The committee feels that, at a time of local government austerity, it would be desirable for the Group *not* to depend on local government funding, i.e. aim to be self-financing. This could be achieved without too much hardship if more members were to make regular donations, in the form of a small - even very small - monthly standing order or an annual donation.

6. Finance Report

See Appendix 1 for the figures.

Ward Grants

The group received grants from the two Jesmond wards amounting to £400. These grants are much appreciated.

Standing orders

£161 of the group's annual income is now from 5 standing orders set up by members. These orders are two monthly payments of £3 and £5, and three annual payments, one for £15 and two for £25. These are much appreciated by the committee.

Donations

Two donations were made by residents amounting to £60. These have been much appreciated by the committee. It is hoped that residents will continue to make donations but this cannot be automatically assumed.

Street party collection

At the street party held on 14th June, the remarkable sum of £261.70 was collected. This was made up largely from the sale of raffle tickets plus voluntary contributions for glasses of beer from a keg very kindly contributed by Matt of no. 49.

Curry Night

The committee always aims to break even with our main social event. This year there was a small profit of £15.51.

As the income and expenditure of the curry night practically cancel each other out the actual income for the group to cover running costs was **£825.21** not £1544.70.

The projected budget for 2015/16 is between £800 - £900, this includes points up for discussion by the committee such as entertainment at the street party and the level of public liability insurance taken out. We have enough to cover this budget but, bearing in mind the dwindling ward grants, the situation for following years looks bleak. There is a need to start building a cash reserve now and, as we need to keep moving towards self-sufficiency, we appeal to our members to take out standing orders, monthly or annually, or to make a donation.

7. Election of officers and committee members

All members of the committee who were willing to stand again were re-elected.

8. Re-evaluation of major concerns.

Residents did not raise any particular concerns.

9. Any other business

Leaf clearing day – Sunday 6th December between 10am and 12 noon.

Suky to contact the councillors in order to borrow equipment and arrange for collection of the bags of leaves. Grace and John Hodge kindly volunteered their garden as the collection point for all bags. Richard Melling kindly offered to provide strong garden bags.

Keep Jesmond Clean.

Grace reported that a new pan Jesmond initiative has been set up by councillor Dan Perry to address the problem of end of student year rubbish dumping. Welcome letters have been sent and also people have been round to the student houses to discuss the issue. Also letters have been sent to landlords and students have been made aware of the possibility of being fined for fly tipping.

Keep Gardens Tidy

Is a North Jesmond initiative. A council officer was appointed to knock on doors and encourage tidying of gardens. They are waiting for a final report.

Communal bins. A resident asked what was happening with this initiative. There were no councillors to report but we are fairly sure that Fern Avenue back lanes have been discounted from the scheme as unsuitable.

**Appendix 1
Fern Avenue Residents Group Financial report 01.11.2014 – 31.10.2015**

Opening balance		£1,081.60				
	INCOME		EXPENDITURE			
N.Jes, Ward grant	£250.00		AGM room hire	£60.00		
S.Jes.Ward grant	£150.00		Gazebo	£144.96		
Standing orders	£161.00		Printer cartridges	£99.94		
Donations	£60.00		Street party	£325.00	£150	band
					£75	Face Painter
					£100	Magician
Street party collection	£261.70		Pub.Liab.Insurance	£79.50		
Curry night	£662.00		Curry night room hire	£110.00		
			Curry costs	£536.49		
			Planter repairs	£41.06		
			Plants, compost,fertilizer	£100.54		
			Social events stock	£32.46	Spoons, forks, etc.	
			Stationery	£105.24		
			Litter pickers	£20.00		
Totals	£1,544.70			£1,655.19		
Closing Balance		£963.11				