

Fern Avenue Residents Group

Minutes of the AGM held at Jesmond Cricket Club on 16th November 2016

Present. Members of the FAR Group: Noël Burton-Roberts, Tessa Burton-Roberts, Barrie Craven, Amanda Davidson, Suky Drummond, Grace Hodge, John Hodge, Mary Hodgson, Elizabeth M, Janet Nicolls, Pam Ranson, Marc Robertson, Bil Sedgwick, Chris Sutcliffe, Jenny Torode, Lucy Wareing, . In attendance: Felicity Mendelson councillor (FM)

1. Introduction and welcome by the Chair

2. Apologies for absence. Andii Bowsher, Manuel Cresciani, Tony and Pat Evans, Les Hodgson, Estelle Louw, James McConnell, Sarah Melling, Richard Melling, councillors Dan Perry, Stella Postlethwaite, Kerry Allibhai and Catherine Walker, and the local police.

3. Adoption of the minutes of the last AGM 16th November 2015. The minutes were adopted.

4. Matters Arising – None.

5. Chair's report

First of all, I would like to thank the committee and particularly Grace and John Hodge and Suky Drummond for their help to me as Chairman of FARG and their sterling work for FARG throughout the year. Over the past year the committee has met 3 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.

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

Over the year Grace Hodge (as Vice Chair) has attended meetings as a representative 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 events.

In March, 12 residents enjoyed a lunch at Antico.

We welcome suggestions for the venue for the next lunch.

The annual street party continues to be a great success. As in 2015, this was held in the street itself (with copious bunting). 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.

An innovation, a bric a brac stall, was a success and contributed significantly to FARG's funds.

On October 7th, we held our ever-popular annual get-together, a Curry Night at the Jesmond Cricket Club. This was very successful and well attended by 75 residents and friends. Thanks are due to Suky Drummond and Martin Starkie 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 a further annual leaf clearing event is being held on 4th December.

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. The planters are looked after by individuals some of whom provide their own plants. As Grace no longer has transport she would appreciate offers of lifts on occasion to garden centres to obtain further plants for the other planters. Many thanks go to all the planter carers.

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 very small profit), (b) contributions collected during the street party and (c)

by one-off donations and standing orders from a few members. John Hodge, our 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.

The balance in the bank at the end of this period was £1405.01

Income:

Ward Grants

The group received grants from the two Jesmond wards amounting to £604.

These grants are much appreciated.

Standing orders

The income from seven standing orders set up by members was £216. These orders are for three monthly payments, one of £3 and two of £5, plus four annual payments, of £15, £20, and two for £25. The annual income that we can now expect from these orders is £241. A standing order, for however small an amount, is a very helpful way for residents to contribute to the running costs of the Group as this is assured income in each year.

Donations

One-off donations were made by residents amounting to £55. These have been much appreciated by the committee.

Street party collection

At the street party held on 26 June, the sum collected from the bric a brac stall (an innovation this year) and from donations for the beer kindly provided by Matt, 49 Fern, was £321.

Curry night

The committee always aims to break even with our main social event at the Cricket Club. This year there was a small surplus of £6.38.

Expenditure

AGM room hire.

£30 has been saved by hiring the upstairs room at Newcastle Cricket Club instead of the Function Room.

Street Party

The magician and the face painter are a regular and popular feature of back lanes/street parties. Equally popular, music was again provided by Mike Sutton's Midnite Special Group.

PLI*

A fixed requirement by City finance officers before releasing the Ward Committees' grants.

Stock

Three sturdy tables have been purchased at a cost of £100.47. These are an excellent addition to stock and were put to good use at the street party under our recently acquired big gazebo.

Self-Sufficiency

I am pleased to be able to report that the Group is on the way to achieving the aim of the committee of becoming self-supporting and that our funds are such that we should not need to apply for grant aid from the North and South Jesmond wards in the financial year beginning 1 November 2016.

However, we should not become complacent. We shall continue to need to raise funds in various ways to meet our annual running costs of around £800.

*A resident asked about the public liability insurance. Why do we have it and do we need it? It was explained that the group first took it out as the council insisted that it was necessary to release grant funds. However, as no application is being made for ward funds in the current financial year, there is no external compulsion on group to renew this insurance and this led to discussion. It was noted that not only is the street party covered but also the litter pickers and other events such as leaf clearing day. The chair called a vote and the majority of members voted to continue to have the insurance.

7. Election of officers and committee members

All members of the committee were re-elected.

8. Re-evaluation of major concerns.

Students: A resident reported that she has been having problems with her student neighbours' behaviour. They cause noise, litter and worse mess in the front garden and street. The council, police and universities have been contacted which has resulted in some improvement. Another resident, who also lives next door to an HMO, reported that the letting agents were very good at finding appropriate tenants for a quiet residential street. It was felt that Pat Robson could do more in this regard and it was suggested that they are contacted on behalf of the FAR group to emphasise this.

To Let signs: It was generally agreed that the ruling banning To Let signs has been a huge improvement. A resident asked Felicity what the rules are and whether a sign on the gate is ok? FM confirmed that this is not ok and that signs can only be put in the windows.

Reports to the police: A resident asked if it was possible to get feedback on the action police have taken if they had reported an incident e.g. a loud street party. FM said that she would look into it.
(FM has talked to the police, see the result in appendix 3)

Jesmond Dene Road Closure: A resident had expressed concern that the closure is causing more traffic to come up Fern. FM noted that the consultation on the closure had already taken place but that she was interested in collecting any comments as to whether we think the closure has had a positive or negative impact.

New junction markings on and around Fern: A resident had asked to have their status confirmed – are they roundabouts? FM confirmed that they are not roundabouts. The priorities are deliberately unclear with the intention that some confusion over a junction ensures that drivers slow down and take it cautiously. Members at the meeting expressed different opinions as to the effectiveness of this and a vote was called to see if people were generally in favour of the new junctions. A large majority of members present are in favour of them and think they have a positive impact on traffic.

It was also noted in a more general discussion that the overall opinion in Fern Avenue is that it would be beneficial to reopen Holly Avenue and Queens Road. It was suggested that residents get involved in the next round of Streets for people.

A resident noted that although there are now 20mph signs in all our streets and on Osborne Road there appears to be no obvious enforcement.

(See follow up notes from FM – Appendix 3)

9. Any other business

Police Report: The police were unable to attend the meeting but they sent a report which is attached in Appendix 2.

Bunting and Gazebo: It was noted that the bunting and the gazebo which are owned by the group have been lent out to various other groups – e.g. the gazebo was used at the Community Orchard and the bunting has been used for other street parties.

Low trees: A resident asked what the policy is on trees or bushes that impede access on the pavement. If it is really bad you can report it to the council but it was agreed that a request for people to tidy up overhanging foliage would be added onto the flier for leaf clearing day.

Sharing: A resident mentioned that she always has far too much fresh rosemary and wondered if there is a way of residents sharing things they have too much of or that they no longer want. Suggestions included using the website or our e-mail circulation.

Appendix 1

Fern Avenue Residents Group Financial report 01.11.2015 – 31.10.2016

Opening	balance	£963.11			
	INCOME		EXPENDITURE		
N.Jes, Ward grant	£354.00		AGM room hire	£50.00	
S.Jes.Ward grant	£250.00		AGM refreshments	£9.80	
Standing orders	£216.00		Street party	£375.00	Band£200; magician £100
Street party collection	£321.00		Pub.Liab.Insurance	£82.12	Face painter £75
Donations	£55.00		Curry night room hire	£110.00	
Curry night	£551.00		Curry costs	£434.62	
			Jes.Fest Stall	£15.00	
			Plants, compost,fertilizer	£54.20	
			Social events stock	£117.47	Inc.3 tables £100.47
			Stationery	£56.89	
Totals	£1,747.00			£1,305.10	
Closing	balance	£1,405.01			
Gain over pre.Year	prev.year	£441.90			
John Hodge					
Hon Treasurer					
11.11.16					

Appendix 2

FERN AVENUE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION –POLICE UPDATE

CURRENT PRIORITIES

STUDENT ASB

While overall levels of reporting are down there have been a number of large scale student parties this term involving PA systems and door staff. There have also been incidents involving sports societies from both universities misbehaving in the rear lanes of Queens Road and Devonshire Street.

The councillors for North and South Jesmond as well as Ouseburn Ward and the two universities have funded Operation Oak again for this year. The council wards have not been able to provide the same level of funding as in previous years but their contribution is greatly appreciated.

The Northumbria Police policy is that noise within a dwelling should be reported to Newcastle City Council. It is appreciated that the council will not attend at the time but they do still operate a noise team. Any noise in the street should be reported to the Police via 101

Operation Oak will function on most Friday and Saturday nights during university term times. There are a number of other dates when we will operate, for example Halloween and Saint Patrick's Day. When Operation Oak is operating residents can contact the Police on 101 and ask for Operation Oak to attend. This is irrespective of whether the noise is from a dwelling or in the street.

There is a well- established procedure for dealing with witnessed anti-social behaviour involving the students. By witnessed this means by a Police Officer or a member of the City Council noise team. This starts with a warning letter up to Noise Abatement Notices which can only be issued by council officers. The evidence is that only a minority of students re-offend after being dealt with under the graded response system.

Your neighbourhood policing team work fourteen late shifts every five weeks. During that time we actively patrol Jesmond and will intervene where we see anti-social behaviour or noisy parties.

Over the last month your neighbourhood police team have visited a large number of the HMO properties in Manor House Road, Queens Road, Queens Terrace, Devonshire Place, Cavendish Place, Fern Avenue, Shortridge Terrace and Grosvenor Place to speak to students. Our aim has been to educate the students that this is a residential area, explain how we expect them to behave and the consequences if they don't. The visits have been conducted jointly with local councillors and local volunteers.

BURGLARY

In September and early October there were a number of burglaries in the area. The vast majority were targeted at student properties. There has been a significant amount of work done to tackle this, including crime prevention talks to students as part of our visits to the HMO properties. However, the message is equally as important to owners and residents of non- student properties. Burglars do target Jesmond and they are looking for easy opportunities to steal.

As a result of the work a prolific offender was arrested and charged with a burglary in Fern Avenue in October. The number of burglaries has dropped significantly as a result but we mustn't be complacent. Please keep doors and ground floor windows locked.

PEDAL CYCLES

At this time of year many residents raise the issue of cyclists on footpaths and without lights on their bikes. The majority of offenders are students. We are again running an operation where resources and our other duties allow dealing with this issue. This will run until the Christmas. Offenders will be stopped, their details obtained and they will receive a warning letter for a first offence. If they are repeat offenders they will be prosecuted.

Appendix 3
Follow up notes from Felicity Mendelson councillor for South Jesmond

Here are answers to a couple of questions you asked,

1. HMO Licences - response from Paula Davis, HMO Licensing Officer

"Licences cannot be transferred. If a property is sold the HMO licence is revoked and the new owner must apply for a new licence. All of the usual checks on the new owner including an assessment of his fit and proper status, the management arrangements and training and experience are taken into consideration.

HMO licences are issued for a 5 year period. We are required to inspect the property at least once in that period. If work is required at the property we will revisit to ensure compliance. Further inspections will be carried out if we judge there to be a risk that standards will not be maintained and visits are made in response to complaints.

Licences can be revoked if there has been a breach of the licence conditions or concern over the "fitness" of the licence holder."

2. Response from Sgt Colin Murray re follow up calls after reporting ASB

"We used to do ASB ring backs to all callers some time ago but this stopped. The officers, if allocated, should update the caller at the time although I'm not sure if the noise has stopped and they are just getting back to sleep that they would appreciate another call to update them.

I just am about to lose Megan Careless as she is starting her training as a police officer which will leave me with only Dave Brittain as my only PCSO to cover all of Jesmond, Dene and North Heaton. I can't justify keeping him in the station to do call backs to callers at the moment. Should I get a replacement for Megan I will revisit this"

I understand that when you report noise to the Council during the week when Operation Oak aren't on at night they will usually get back to you. And if the problem persists despite calls to Police and/or Noise please let us know the address and we can check it for you.

Re : Enforcing 20 mph on Osborne Road

This is a Police responsibility and I will check with them what action they are taking.