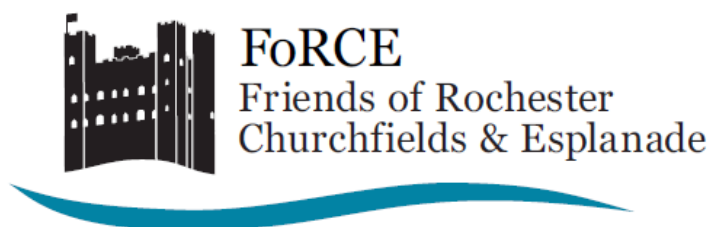


FoRCE 2020 Annual Review



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Foreword

Since our inauguration in January 2020, we have faced obstacles and grown in ways we'd never have expected. We've made the most of the circumstances by focussing our efforts on getting the nuts and bolts of the group together during covid restrictions, gathering project ideas from our local residents and committee members, and hosting a number of volunteer activities, when permitted.

You'll find in this report how we're run, our objectives and strategy, finances, a snapshot of our activities (both front of house and back of house) for the year gone by and a heads up on the year ahead.

It's been a hell of a year, but we're really proud of what we've achieved to-date and have great hopes and ideas for the future.

Terry Clennell
Chair
Friends of Rochester Churchfields and Esplanade

Structure & Governance

AGM

We held our first Annual General Meeting in January of 2020 where we elected a committee and ratified our constitution. The AGM scheduled for January 2021 has been postponed, owing to the pandemic, and will be held later in the year.

Constitution

Our constitution is the bedrock of group. It sets out the governance and establishes our purpose. [Read our constitution](#)

Committee

Our committee is made up entirely of volunteers. In order to run most effectively, the committee requires a mixture of portfolios/roles, which can be grouped as follows:

- Leadership: Chair; Vice Chair
- Management: Secretary; Treasurer; Strategy & Planning
- Resources & Relationships: Fundraising; Partnerships; Membership & Volunteers
- Delivery: Projects, Programmes & Events; Comms & Marketing

In 2020 not all of these roles have been occupied, though we're very proud to have recruited some great committee volunteers in this our first year.

Our current committee is:

- Chair – Terry Clennell
- Vice Chair – Elizabeth Gilliard
- Secretary – Jan Webb (previously Amrita Choudhury)
- Treasurer – Stuart Ferris (previously Rajesh Ambadath)
- Membership & Volunteers – Kristian Hansen
- Comms & Marketing – Natalie Poulton

The committee has also received assistance from non-portfolio members:

- Terri Zbyszewska
- Carmen Juravle

As the AGM has been postponed, the current committee will remain in post until such a time as an AGM can be held.

Strategy & Planning

Our Mission

Friends of Rochester Esplanade and Churchfields (FORCE) helps to protect, conserve and enhance the green space and river walks of the Esplanade and Churchfields for the good of our community and more widely.

Our 2020 objectives

1. Build a functioning committee and 'back of house' operations.
2. Start to engage the community and deliver initial 'front of house' activities.

Our 2020 strategy

Front vs back of house – In normal times we would have delivered more events and activities and spent less time on back of house operations, however, given the restrictions, we diverted energies and invested more time on the latter.

Making connections – Forming partnerships with organisations and businesses, building awareness about our group, establishing a network of volunteers and members.

Learning the ropes – The activities we undertook were as much about us understanding the logistics, such as how to fill in a council risk assessment, as they were about delivering the activities. (We learnt a lot!)

Our Plan

In 2020 we planned iteratively, building up insights as we went along. We also started developing our long-term plan, our Grand Plan, as we call it, which is still work-in-progress.

We have set out the following approach to choosing activities:

1. Scope: Actively listening to our community and members, understanding what's important to them, such as at the AGM or through our Ideas Harvest.
2. Structure: Organising these ideas into themes. So far, we have identified a number of themes: green, clean, social, wildlife, and wellbeing, which we will adopt for 2021
3. Prioritisation: Choosing the activities to focus on that give us the greatest return.
4. Resources: Securing the time, skills and money we need to deliver our priorities.
5. Delivery: Execution of the chosen activities.

This is a cyclical process and using the insights from 2020 we have created an outline plan for 2021 with activities to address the themes identified, though subject to covid.

Back of house operations, such as our approach to data protection or setting up online payments, are put forward by committee members, discussed and agreed at committee and led by the relevant committee member.

Deliverables

The above sets out what we're trying to achieve and how we have and will go about it. The following sections will focus on what we have delivered in 2020 and give you a heads up of what's on the cards in 2021.

Secretariat

Secretariat is the running of the committee and the mechanics of the group.

This year

This year we have:

- Held monthly committee meetings, taking minutes
- Created a web-based project tracker and IT jobs schedule
- Established an interactive work platform on 'Slack'
- Registered a web domain and created emails for each committee role
- Set up cloud-based document management

Whilst these tools are only used by the committee, they are crucial to our long-term success as they help with the efficient running of the group and ensure accountability and continuity.

Next year

Projects identified so far for 2021:

- Charity Status – We have started investigating this and hope to build on the foundations set this year
- Build out our Grand plan using insights from the Ideas Harvest
- Extend the transparency of our governance and activities

Treasury

Treasury is the management of resources, such as donated monies, goods and services; their budgeting, handling and accounting.

This year

This year we have:

- Written a governance document for Treasury matters
- Set up a bank account, including online banking
- Taken over a pre-existing PayPal account
- Identified and collected legacy funds

Annual Financial Report (Period: 28/01/2020 to 27/01/2021)

		<u>Committed</u>	<u>Transacted</u>
<u>Income</u>			
Donations			
	Sensory Garden	2100.00	2100.00
	Other	0.01	0.01
Subscriptions			
	Annual	105.00	105.00
	Life	100.00	100.00
<u>Expenditure</u>			
Expenses			
	Transaction Fees	-0.45	-0.45
<u>Assets</u>			
	Bank Balance carried forward		0.00
	Net income		2304.56
	TOTAL ASSETS		2304.56

Commentary

- Cash donations came from the City of Rochester Society and our local Councillors
- Expenditure was almost nil, thanks mainly to supporters' donated goods/services, which included a variety of things from a hosting subscription for our website to branded tabards, and much besides.

Next year

Projects identified so far for 2021:

- To improve our resource management, we will seek insights from other groups and individuals who might assist us in maturing our processes.
- To increase the number of resources at our disposal we will undertake a number of projects with our partnerships, donors, members and volunteers, outlined further below.

Partnerships

These relationships help us to achieve our aims. Establishing them, building mutual understanding, influencing and supporting them are all facets of these partnerships.

This year

Through the course of our first year, we have established some great relationships. Below is a summary of them.

Medway Council:

- Councillors, particularly Stuart Tranter and Alex Paterson
- Officers, particularly Marion Phillips and the greenspaces team
- Medway Urban Green Spaces Forum, especially Simon Curry, connecting us with other Friends groups

Clubs, trusts and societies:

- City of Rochester Society – contributed to our Sensory Garden project
- Bridge Trust – we hope to announce our first joint project soon!
- Medway Swale Estuary Partnership – advising on waterside activities
- Rotary club – planting crocus bulbs
- Other Friends groups – sharing ideas

Local businesses:

- Café Nucleus – donated brownies for our inaugural event
- Current Force – gifted hi-vis tabards branded with our logo for our events
- Design Shack – gave free design time and discounted printing
- Rye Design – created our lovely logo for us for free
- Aerial Photography South East – donated aerial photos for our use

We're hugely grateful for the support, advice and assistance provided by all. Thank you!

[Find more about our supporters](#)

Next year

Projects identified so far for 2021:

- To develop our relationships with existing partners, including:
 - o Medway council – helping them to develop a long-term plan for the site, including how to deploy 'Section 106' monies from the Rochester Riverside development
 - o Bridge Trust – We hope our first joint project will be to restore the dilapidated ornate lights at the Esplanade Park entrance using their recent experience of repairing those on the bridge. This is currently going through their budgeting process and we're hoping for approval. Fingers crossed!
- To identify and form relationships with new partners, including:
 - o Norse – contractor delivering greenspace maintenance on behalf of the council
 - o The Hathaway Court Residents' Association / Management Company
 - o Medway Volunteer Centre
 - o A sympathetic garden nursery would also be great!

Commented [CJ1]: Is that correct?

Membership & Volunteers

This is the recruitment and management of our most important asset – the fantastic people who kindly give us their valuable time and/or donations.

We recognise there are different forms of volunteer engagement:

- Activity Volunteer – people who give their time, but who are not yet Members
- Member Volunteer – people who have signed up for Annual or Life memberships
- Committee Volunteer – people who are actively involved in the running of the group

This year

This year we have:

- Created a membership database
- Established an interim membership process
- Agreed our approach to data protection
- Created a tracker for volunteer hours

Our recruitment numbers are counted both in number of people and the total number of hours volunteered.

Volunteers	Number of people	Total hours
Activity Volunteers	50	100
Committee Volunteers	10	750

Members	Number of people
Member (Annual)	20
Member (Life)	1

Next year

Projects identified so far for 2021:

- To create an online membership process
- To grow our volunteers and members by harnessing our network, communications and events.
- To fill our vacant committee roles by creating a pathway of small and specific taster projects.

Communications & Marketing

This is the means by which we make people aware, gather feedback and garner support through our broadcast media channels.

This year

This year we have:

- Set out our comms plan
- Developed a brand identity
- Received aerial photography of our patch
- Established a number of communication channels:
 - Social media:
 - [Instagram](#) (363 followers)
 - [Facebook page](#) (113 likes, 145 followers)
 - [Facebook group](#) (79 members)
 - [Twitter](#) (129 followers)
 - [Website](#)
 - Email:
 - Created email addresses for each committee role
 - Created a distribution list of volunteers and members (91 members)
 - Set up a mailshot account
 - Newsletters
 - Posters and flyers
 - Press: Compiled a list of contacts for press releases

Using these communication channels, we have broadcast:

- Regular comms to update on activities and build engagement:
 - Newsletter briefings (approximately bi-monthly)
 - Social media posts
- Campaigns in support of our agenda, projects and events:
 - Tackling anti-social behaviour, littering and graffiti
 - Promoting our Litter pick event
 - Ideas Harvest to gather feedback and ideas for our future activities
 - Membership drive

Next year

Projects identified so far for 2021:

- Further advancements of our website.
- The installation of a noticeboard on Esplanade Park.
- Website traffic tracking.
- To increase our reach, we will continue to build our channel followers/subscriptions and send a regular patten of communications to keep them engaged on topical issues.

Projects, Programmes & Events

These are the 'front of house' activities we undertake to achieve our aims.

Indicated in brackets are the key themes the activity support: green, clean, social, wildlife and wellbeing.

This year

Activities we completed:

- Litter pick (*clean*) – We collected 30 bags of rubbish as well as tyres and all sorts with the help of 40 volunteers in a socially distanced manner
- Ideas Harvest (*social*) – Collecting ideas from people at the litter pick and online about what they think of our patch and how they think it could be improved. We will use this insight as part of our planning process
- Crocus planting (*green*) – Working with the Rotary Club to plant crocus corms in Churchfields Park in support of their Polio campaign

Activities in flight:

- Graffiti (*clean*) – Volunteers have registered incidents and we regularly photograph and provide updates to our contacts at the council to keep them apprised of the outstanding work. This has resulted in most vandalism having been removed from Churchfields and some from Esplanade Park, though there is still further work to be done on the Esplanade Park. A work in progress!
- Sensory garden (*green*) – We created a plan and submitted two funding bids. The City of Rochester Society have kindly donated £1500 toward the project. We await the easing of covid restrictions before being able to take this project further. When permitted, we will tidy up the beds and improve the soil quality and then plant them up.

Next year

As well as those activities already in flight, projects identified so far for 2021 include:

- Walking/Running club (*wellbeing*) – we have a volunteer keen and very able to lead a regular run club, free for members. We'll work with the council on the risk assessments and a plan. Get your trainers dusted off folks!
- Litter picks (*clean*) – We will continue to run our really successful litter picks, hopefully several in the year.
- Summer picnic (*social*) – We hope to be able to have a summer picnic on site.
- Bulb planting (*green*) – We aim to plant more spring bulbs in the autumn of 2021.
- Wildlife protection (*wildlife*) – We're currently in touch with the RSPB Medway branch about how best to protect and encourage bird life on-site. Winter feeding perhaps – more to follow on this.
- Anti-social behaviour (*Social*) – Continue working with the local council and residents to tackle this.
- Lights (*clean*) – Restore the dilapidated ornate lights at the Esplanade Park

Looking forward

This year has been a real learning curve and it feels like we've set ourselves up well for the future, despite the challenges.

Our objectives for the next year in support of our mission will be to:

- build out our long-term Grand Plan
- finesse committee operations
- grow our resources
- build new and deeper partnerships
- deliver local projects that meet the identified local needs
- increase our volunteer base and expand the opportunities for them to get involved
- extend the reach of communications
- deliver activities/project that meet identified local needs and aligned with our themes

Scheduled events will be announced in our communications and appear on our [website events page](#).

Thank you for taking the time to read our Annual Report. We hope you've found us to be a *ForCE for good*.

