

Friends of Rochester Churchfields and Esplanade  
Annual General Meeting 2022

Jan Webb, FoRCE Secretary, welcomed the Friends Group members, friends, local Councillors and members of the Medway Council Greenspaces Team to the FoRCE 2022 annual general meeting.

Jan explained that the Chair couldn't be at the meeting and noted his and the following apologies:

Terry Clennell

Cory Smit

Angela Howe

Jacquie Corbin

Susan Haycock

Jennifer Bray

Terri Zbyszewska

Louise Worrell

Gordon Ames

Jan recorded thanks to the local branch of the Soroptimists International who are regulars at volunteer task days and have contributed in terms of time, a beautiful rose bush and their enthusiasm.

She also made special mention of the local Cllrs who support us financially and via their social media platforms, and said that FoRCE looked forward to working with them in the years to come.

**Committee Updates:**

The following updates were provided:

Secretary: This has been a really productive year and as Secretary it's been my job to make sure that we've kept a clear record of all our

decisions. A strong committee group is key to driving forward the vision of the group and I'm looking forward to building on the relationships we've formed with the Medway Green Spaces Team, with our local councillors, other volunteer groups, our members and supporters. Feeding data into the Greenspaces team for instance means they can support what we and other groups want to achieve so it's vital that we keep our records up-to-date and transparent.

Partnerships: FoRCE helps to protect, conserve and enhance the greenspaces and river walks of the Esplanade and Churchfields for the good of our community and more widely. Our ambition is to make a difference to our community and environment.

In 2022 we have liaised with Medway Council, councillors Stuart Tranter, Alex Paterson and Simon Curry. The Green Spaces Team, especially Karen Francis, Fiona Leadley and Peter Garrett. The Medway Urban Spaces forum. Medway Norse, the service provider for the council especially Darren Toms and James Richardson.

We've liaised with the City of Rochester Society who ran an article about us in their newsletter. The Soroptimist International of Medway and Maidstone whose members join our task days. Other Friends groups especially Watts Meadow and The Vines. The Friends of Eastgate House with whom we shared watering duties using the community bowser and The Medway Swale Estuary Partnership.

Local media partnerships include KMTV who have publicised our group at the time of the February flood, the pier collapse in May and the sensory garden work in October, and Kent on-line who wrote about the vandalised memorial bench.

Treasurer:

## **Annual FoRCE Financial Report**

For Period

**23/09/2021 to 01/11/2022**

		<u>Committed</u>	<u>Transacted</u>
<b><u>Income</u></b>			
	<b>Donations</b>		
	Sensory Garden	112.45	112.45
	Other	1859.39	1859.39
	<b>Subscriptions</b>		
	Annual	215.00	165.00
	Life	300.00	300.00
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>2436.84</b>

**Expenditure**

	<b>Expenses</b>		
	Transaction Fees	-0.27	-0.27
	Re-usable equipment	-1271.92	-1271.92
	One-off (plants, compost)	-2913.58	-2913.58
	Website costs	-8.39	-8.39
	One-off allocated to prior period	-21.60	-21.60
	<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>-4215.76</b>

**Assets**

	<b>Bank Balance carried forward</b>	2409.30
	<b>Net income</b>	-1778.92
	<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>630.38</b>

**Communications:**

- **Mailing list:** We try to send a monthly newsletter with latest news from the FoRCE, upcoming events and other items which may be of interest. Currently we have 217 subscribers, up over 30% since last AGM.
- **Noticeboard:** Our noticeboard was installed by Medway Council early in 2021 and continues to be used for notices of upcoming events and local information about the area and the FoRCE.
- **Public Events:** In April, for International Women's Day, we presented a short talk on the Suffrage Sensory Garden at Gillingham Library. The event was part of the Arts Council Funded 'Circle of Six' project celebrating the lives and work of six extraordinary local women and a recording is available to view on YouTube.
- **Social Media:** Over the past year we have uploaded hundreds of photos, general information, and news posts, plus a couple of videos we produced in-house on the following platforms:
  - **Facebook Page:** A public profile page where we can share information, news and events. We have nearly 600 followers – nearly double the number of followers last year.
  - **Facebook Group:** Our historic FoRCE group was replaced by a new **Rochester FoRCE Volunteers Group** where we share local information, news, and events which we hope will be of interest and members can comment or submit their own content which is moderated. This new group has gained nearly 200 members since it was created in February of this year.
  - **Twitter:** A useful platform for sharing short updates containing text, media content and links. We have over 350 followers on Twitter, up nearly 45% on last year.

- **Instagram:** A popular platform with a focus on sharing photos and videos, where we currently have over 720 followers, up nearly 15% on last year.
- **Local Media:** We circulate occasional press releases to local media outlets and have featured on local television, with filmed footage and with interviews with committee members. Several articles have also appeared in the Medway Messenger and other local periodicals.
- **Website:** We have a static website with information about the group, a calendar of events, a link to a membership application form and contact form.

Our communications resources are currently very stretched but, with additional assistance and expertise, we could improve our overall offering and extend to other platforms including perhaps SnapChat, TikTok and You-Tube.

If you, or anyone you know, might be interested in becoming involved and joining our Comms Team, do please drop us a line at [contact@esplanadefriends.org.uk](mailto:contact@esplanadefriends.org.uk)

Membership: Gordon can't be with us tonight but reports that, this year we have 33 annual members with an increase by 3 of Life Members, this giving a total of 6 life members, which is 39 overall members. This provides an income of £465.00 for 2021/2022. 2023 we will review the membership process with a view to streamlining the number of emails used and look at how we can increase membership and the income that it brings. We have had a proposal put forward to look to move from the Annual Membership Subscriptions to Membership Donations. We will continue to operate as is for now whilst we investigate our options. next steps - Mid 2023 we will have a committee meeting to discuss the proposal and if agreed we can take it to the 2023 AGM. How having donations

for membership would look/work is still being looked into. The membership team will initially discuss with Simon Curry Chair of MUGs our thoughts to get an overview and put together a plan of how this might look for FoRCE

**Elections:** The committee posts and nominations for election were:

Chair – Terry Clennell

Vice Chair – Jan Webb

Secretary – Jan Webb

Treasurer – Stuart Ferris

Engagement – Elizabeth Gillard

Membership – Gordon Ames

Partnerships – Terri Zbyszewska

Communications – Natalie Mayhew

Jan called for any further nominations and received none. Peter Garrett , Medway Council Greenspaces Team, verified that the election had been conducted properly.

### **Interactive sessions**

The meeting then took part in two interactive sessions; the first looked back to the events of the past year. The Rochester Artisan Market provided feedback and ideas some of which were on display at the AGM. The summer picnic, regular volunteer task days and anti-graffiti project were mentioned as well as the flood which covered the park and road and the drought which followed.

In the second session, the groups looked forward to the year to come. Cllr Tranter said that Medway council would be looking to make repairs to the pier and that a Trust is to be set up to provide a funding route for those repairs. Peter Garrett suggested that such a Trust could bid for a grant from the Heritage Lottery.

Cllr Tranter suggested that FoRCE might want to consider adding the Rochester Castle grounds to their area of interest. Jan said that this was something that could be discussed by the committee at the next meeting.

### **Recruitment**

Jan reminded the meeting about the benefits of membership and the ways in which the group communicates using social media and newsletters.

### **Sowing Seeds**

Terry had prepared a packet of sunflower seeds for each participant to take away with them. His request to everyone, was to plant them at the appropriate time, to share photos on social media and, if possible, donate a seedling one of the task days.

Jan drew the meeting to a close and thanked everyone for attending.