

FoRCE AGM Minutes
5th September 2023

1. Terry Clennell, the FoRCE chair, welcomed the attendees to the AGM. He thanked the committee members, the Medway Greenspaces Team, Norse and local councillors for their continued support.

He said that he looked forward to continuing with the work being done by the volunteers and branching out into new projects.

2. Committee Updates:

- Secretary: Jan Webb gave an overview of the year from her perspective as Secretary and vice chair. She seconded the thanks given by the chair and said that she was looking forward to the prospect of new and exciting projects for The Esplanade and Churchfields areas.

- Treasury: Stuart was unable to attend, however from his written report Terry said that over the past year more of the FoRCE funding has been spent on plants and engagement activities. Stuart also suggested that looking to tap into additional income streams would be a focus in the coming year.

3. Elections (Officiated by the Medway Greenspaces Team)

- Chair – Terry
- Vice Chair – Jan
- Secretary – Jan
- Treasurer – Stuart
- Engagement – Elizabeth
- Membership – Aileen
- Partnerships – Terri
- Communications – Natalie
- River – Kristian
- Without portfolio – Will

4. Interactive Session No1: Reflection on past year.

Members agreed that communications around events and updates worked well. The chair said that the work on Bed 3 of the sensory garden was progressing well and on track to be completed in 2024. He

thanked the staff at Norse who had helped with this work. He also thanked Cory Smit, who continues to report graffiti and other signs of anti-social behaviour to Medway Council. Responding to a question from Cllr Paterson, Norse confirmed that reports are logged for data collation.

5. Interactive Session No2: Looking forward.

Kristian said that the foreshore litter picking events have proved very popular with local people and are now a regular volunteering feature. He said that he was pleased that there are plans in train to address the collapsed pier and handed the floor to Cllr Paterson to provide more information. Cllr Paterson confirmed that the pier salvage work would commence 25th September. The prow, wooden poles known as dolphins and transition platform will be first to be removed. This work would be undertaken on the river itself to minimise impact to the park area. A Charitable trust will need to be set up to tap into funding streams to support further pier work.

Kristian said that he welcomed the proposed pier work but saddened to learn that the fixed pier structure would not be immediately accessible.

There was a general discussion regarding the pier and whether it could be self-sustaining with links to local businesses.

6. Question time with Committee, Councillors and Officers

Rob Flood, on behalf of the City of Rochester Society, said that work to reinstate the restored ornate light fittings was progressing in conjunction with the Rochester Bridge Trust.

The chair raised the issue of the vandalised and removed playground equipment. The Medway Greenspaces team confirmed that safety concerns had instigated the removal and that funding options for a new playground were being explored. Cllr Paterson said that the appropriate budget had been cut in February 2023 but that he would be lobbying for this decision to be reviewed. The charity Scope had contacted him and that he would be inviting them to provide suggestions. He agreed to share any resulting plan. Cllr Paterson suggested that a simple 'playground road' would be an inexpensive and fun installation.

The chair asked Norse to expand on their plans for the care and maintenance of the sites. He said that some areas had recently looked unkempt and that plants in the formal beds had not been cared for and were overrun with weeds. Norse said that the challenge had been to find a non-toxic weed suppressant. The paths would be tackled again later in the year. Norse said that they were keen to replant the beds with perennial plants which would reduce the need for watering. The chair said that he would be happy to share the FoRCE planting plans. Norse said that they were not able to meet everyone's expectations and would need to stretch the available finances. Norse acknowledged the work of the FoRCE in maintaining the area.

7. Close

The chair reiterated his call for continued support and funding and thanked everyone for what they had contributed thus far.