

Maresfield Conservation Group
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
Held on 3rd July 2018 at the Village Hall, Maresfield
The Meeting commenced at 7.30pm

Present

Mrs Sheila Cumming, Chairman [SC]

Ms Gemma Hallin, Secretary [GH]

Mr John Smith, Treasurer (JS)

Mr Rob Penfold, Membership Secretary [RP]

Mrs Peta Penfold, Minute Secretary (PP)

Mr Ogden, Committee Member [KO]

Mr Stan Sadowski, Committee Member [SS]

Mr Ian Shaw, Committee Member [IS]

Mr Dick Thompson, Committee Member [DT]

Cllr Roy Galley of East Sussex County Council, Non Member

27 Other MCG Members

1. Apologies

The Chairman, Mrs Sheila Cumming [SC], stood to welcome everyone to the AGM and to advise that she had received apologies for absence from Mr & Mrs Clive and Pat Brooks; Mr & Mrs Graeme and Denise Day; Mr & Mrs S Jupp; Ms Anne Seigne; Mr & Mrs David and Alexis Sandall; Mrs & Mrs David and Pat Bowler; and Ms Sue Guckenheim. The order of business then commenced.

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Minutes of the Meeting of 4th July 2016

The Minutes of the last AGM held on 4th July 2017, as published, were proposed by Mrs Marion Myers, seconded by Mrs Cathy Shaw, and carried unanimously.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

4A Membership Secretary's Report

4A.1 **Summary:** Mr Robert Penfold [RP] advised that this year there are 167 households listed as members of the MCG. Sadly, several Members (many of whom who will have been friends) have been lost, but 6 new households have joined. RP reported that more Members are getting involved in MCG activity and events, which is encouraging. The Collectors have again been busy pounding the streets posting newsletter and collecting subscriptions, and, on behalf of the Committee, RP thanked them for their sterling efforts - without their help, MCG would not exist. Finally, RP welcomed a new Collector, Mr David Bailey, who has taken responsibility for collection subscriptions along Straight Half Mile and Mulberry Park.

4A.2 General Data Protection Regulations (2018): RP advised that new data protection regulations came into force in May 2018 and apply to the MCG as they do to all entities that hold personal data. RP has taken on the role as the GDPR Officer as required by the new legislation. As it stands, MCG records are kept centrally on two databases, namely the membership database that RP controls, and the financial databases/bank records controlled by JS. Other than passing on details to HMRC for Gift Aid purposes, and providing edited details to Collectors, none of the Members records are, or will be, shared with third parties. RP said that, under the new legislation, MCG Members are free to enquire as to what records are held, and explained that, currently, MCG retains details of names, addresses, subscription totals, allocated Collector, e-mail addresses (as applicable) and bank details for those paying by standing order. In addition, JS creates returns for the HMRC Gift Aid applications to HMRC, using elements of the data previously outlined. RP concluded by saying that GDPR is a very powerful piece of legislation and the MCG Committee takes its responsibilities to protect Members' data very seriously.

5 Questions to the Chairman on Published Chairman's Report

5.1 Grass Cutting: SC advised that the grass cutting contract had been handed back to East Sussex County Council [ESCC] in April 2017. ESCC had imposed additional cuts (raising the requirement to six a year) but there had been no corresponding increase in the Grant. This year, the rules have changed again. SC wrote to ESCC on 08/06/2018 to query why the grass had not been cut at all in Maresfield and received a response on 19/06/2018, which she read out. In summary, the approved County Councils budget for 2018/2019 required a £400,000 saving in relation to the County's grass cutting service, and this necessitated changes. Grass cutting is not a statutory duty of the Council, but ESCC is aware of the importance of the service to communities and has carried out a wide-ranging consultation exercise within East Sussex. There are three delivery options:

- i) Parish Councils to self-deliver the grass cutting contract, receiving funding from ESCC for two cuts per year and managing the service themselves, or;
- ii) Parish Councils to receive the standard two urban cuts funded by ESCC and managed by the Highways Department within ESCC [Highways]; or
- iii) In addition to the two cuts provided by ESCC, Parish Councils to fund the four extra cuts, with the overall contract being managed by Highways.

In 2018 Highways will cut the grass verges twice in 'urban' areas (i.e. areas where the speed limit is 40mph or less). The grass in Maresfield is scheduled to be cut on 24/07/2018 and again in October 2018, although both dates are weather dependent and may be subject to change. Roy Galley, East Sussex County Councillor, was in attendance and added that ESCC has this year been required to make a £17 million saving which impacted upon the Highways budget and resulted in the decision to reduce the frequency of cuts. Whilst some people have asked about an earlier cut, the new ESCC grass cutting contract runs to a programme, usually starting on the coast and moving northwards. SC explained that MCG are not permitted to cut along roadways for safety reasons, and the Footpaths Group cannot therefore provide the grass cutting service. She finished by saying that grass cutting is on the Agenda for the Parish Council Environment Committee in July.

5.2 Hedge at The Lodge: SC has received a number of complaints about the hedge adjacent to The Lodge which is imposing on the footpath and forcing foot traffic onto the road. SC sent photographs to the Parish Council, who in turn have now referred the issue to ESCC. The hedge is on private property and cannot be arbitrarily cut unless the owners fail to respond to requests from ESCC. SS said that he has spoken to the agent who agreed to approach the owners with villagers' concerns. However, SS has received advice from the RSPB who recommend that hedges and trees should not be cut between March and August as this is the main breeding season for nesting birds. It is an offence under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built.

- 5.3 **Committee Meeting Minutes:** The new MCG website was launched in August 2017, and a suggestion had been made that the MCG Committee Meeting Minutes should be published on the website. Those present were asked whether they agreed, a vote was held, and the proposal was carried.
- 5.4 **Other Updates:** SC said that one of the new white posts next to the church was knocked down earlier in the year but has subsequently been replaced by ESCC. MCG have sold 51 copies of the newly republished booklet 'Maresfield in 1840', but there are a few still remaining. The Summer Supper is not being held in 2018 because Dick Waterson, who usually organises the event, was unable to assist. Instead, a Cheese & Wine Evening is being held in Ann & Dick Thompson's garden.
- 5.5 **Questions to the Chairman:** Mr Graham Allt pointed out that he has just returned from the West Country, where the state of the grass in many of the villages is much better than that in East Sussex. Whilst everyone appreciates that there have been financial cutbacks, he wondered how 6 counties in the West Country have been able to manage more successfully than ESCC. Mrs Marion Myers commented that the roundabouts are much better this year. SC advised that there are separate rules and regulations, and separate contractors, involved. KO added that safety concerns impact, and, in addition, roundabouts often receive funding from advertising. There were no further comments or questions.

6. Questions to the Treasurer on the published Treasurer's Report

- 6.1 **Summary:** Commenting on the Treasurer's Report for 2017/2018 as published in the AGM newsletter, Mr John Smith [JS] advised that bank account interest is up, and the 1840 booklets are now in profit. The bench at the Play Area, having been vandalised, was replaced using a £250 donation from the Parish Council and funding from MCG. MCG also contributed towards the cost of the new oak trees at The Rec which were planted by members of the Footpaths Group. Income was generated by the Summer Supper, Quiz Night and Winter Supper events, and HMRC has already paid over the Gift Aid monies following early submission of the Gift Aid Return by JS. The Parish Council grant to MCG was made which allowed the Footpaths Group to invest £532 in equipment (including a lot of strimming wire!).
- 6.2 **Oak Trees:** Mr Robert Penfold [RP] said that the newly planted oak tree closest to the Pavillion appears to have died, possibly as a result of the recent drought. JS responded that it may need to be replaced – he will speak to Mr John Mason of the Recreation Ground Committee. Mrs Karen Tritton added that a dog lead has been hanging on one of the trees for weeks. JS said that he will remove it.
- 6.3 **Rec Sign:** Mr Anthony Myers asked whether there were any plans to restore the sign at the entrance to The Rec. JS said there were. KO then interjected in his capacity as a Member of the Recreation Committee. He said that the lane alongside The Rec is private property but there is public access for users of The Rec. The Park Farm Close builder is required to resurface the road but has not done so as there is a discrepancy over the boundary lines. There are issues over miss-parking, and 'Private Road' signs are due to be installed, along with small signs indicating parking for The Rec. It was pointed out that Mr Myers' question was specifically about replacement of the sign at the entrance to the Rec. The Recreation Ground Committee have asked for a new wooden sign, and this is in hand.
- 6.4 The Treasurer's Report was proposed by Mrs Cathy Shaw, seconded by Mr Anthony Myers, and agreed unanimously.

7. Election of Executive Officers

- 7.1 **Chairman:** KO said that he has been on the MCG Committee for 28 years, and it is good to see new people coming on board. He confirmed that SC is retiring as Chairman of MCG, and there have been three nominations for Mrs Pat Palmer to replace her. Mrs Palmer was invited to address the

Members and stood to say that she has lived in Maresfield for 12 years and has been a Member of MCG for 10 years, sitting on the Committee until 18 months ago. She is an active member of the village having organised Quiz Nights and the Christmas Tree for MCG; bingo nights for the Maresfield Village Meadows Trust [MVMT]; helps with Lunch Club; and been Chairman of the Fete Committee for many years. The nomination for Mrs Palmer as Chairman of MCG was proposed by Mrs Karen Tritton, seconded by Mr Robert Penfold, and Mrs Palmer was duly elected Chairman of MCG.

7.2 **Secretary:** A nomination for Miss Gemma Hallin as Secretary of MCG has been submitted. The nomination was proposed by Mr Ian Shaw, seconded by Mr Robert Penfold, and Ms Hallin was duly elected Secretary of MCG.

7.3 **Treasurer:** Mr John Smith has indicated his willingness to continue as Treasurer of MCG. The nomination was proposed by Mrs Cathy Shaw, seconded by Mr Anthony Myers, and Mr Smith was duly elected Treasurer of MCG.

8. Election of Executive Committee

SC advised that Mr Ken Ogden, Mr Robert Penfold, Mr Stan Sadowski, Mr Ian Shaw and Mr Dick Thompson, are all willing to continue as Members of the MCG Committee. Mrs Alexis Clarke has also indicated that she would like to join the Committee. The Committee Members as stated were proposed by Mr Dick Waterson, seconded by Mrs Ann Thompson, and duly elected.

9. Any Other Business (previously notified in writing)

Mr Dick Thompson [DT] stood to make a small presentation to Mrs Sheila Cumming [SC] as outgoing Chairman of MCG. He knows from past experience that it is never easy being Chairman, but the qualities SC brought to the role included sheer energy, great perseverance, determination, extraordinary hard work and, above all, a dedication to the future of the whole village. He noted an ability to engage with a very wide range of people and make MCG relevant to them. Such qualities will be vital in the immediate future since MCG will need to step in to help the whole community in the face of Local Authority cut-backs. DT concluded by offering sincere thanks to SC for her many years of splendid hard work, and presented her with the gift of a Sussex Trug filled with flowers as a token of appreciation from the MCG Committee Members. SC responded by thanking the Committee Members for their help and guidance during her 4 ½ years as Chairman and offered her best wishes to the new Committee moving forwards.

10. Close of Meeting

The AGM closed at 8.20pm and the Committee Members took office.

The meeting was followed by a very informative talk by Mr John Smith on The Maresfield Parish Millennium Walk, including the flora and fauna to be encountered at various junctures, and the restoration work carried out by the Footpaths Group.