

Friends of Richmond Green (FoRG)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024

(contact details: Chairman – tel: 020 8948 3384 / email: mail@FoRG.org.uk)

Date: **Wednesday 17 April 2024 at 7.30pm**

Venue: **The Cricketers pub** (upstairs room), Richmond Green

Attendance: The total attendance was **30** individuals (according to several head-counts by PG). This total comprised 7 committee members in the room (Vivien Harris [VH], Peter Willan [PW], Peter Griffiths [PG], Diana Billingham [DB], Gemma Fumagalli [GF], Juliet Bramwell [JB], David McKenzie [DM]); plus 23 other residents who were observed to have attended (some arriving after the meeting had started, etc).

NB. An attendance sheet was circulated on the night, and 23 names were collected on it. Aside from the 7 committee members, the 16 other people who actually signed the attendance sheet included: Christine Cave, Karen Grigorian, Andrew Morgan, Brian Palin, Richard Pearson, Gill Bromley, Maeve Willan, Laurence Bain, Tamla Anderson, Robin Andrew, Charlotte Andrew, Judith Fisher, Peter Fisher, Bob Harris, Petina Hauptfuhrer. Others arrived but never got to sign the sheet (eg. Naomi Samuel, Frances Bouchier, Anna Newton Dunn, Julian Paxton, Jenny Rees, etc).

AGENDA

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of last AGM (26 April 2023)**
3. **Matters arising**
4. **Report of the Executive**
5. **Financial Report and adoption of FoRG Accounts for 2023**
6. **Election of Officers for 2024-25**
7. **Any Other Business (general discussion)**

MINUTES of the FoRG AGM 2024

Meeting began at 7.30pm

VH: Welcomed everyone and introduced the committee members present, thanking each them for their contribution over the past year.

1. Apologies

Apologies in advance of the meeting received from: Gemma Warrillow, John Lee, Sir Brian Fall, Tony Winslade.

2. Minutes of last AGM (26 April 2023)

VH: Copies of the 2023 AGM minutes are placed out on chairs; there's also a copy on website for people to read. Asked for approval... and no-one objected.

Proposer: Anna Newton Dunn

Seconder: Brian Palin

2023 AGM Minutes agreed.

3. Matters arising

VH: None that won't be covered later in the meeting.

4. Report of the Executive

VH: A detailed report on key issues and on-going activities is contained in the recent FoRG Newsletter for March 2024, but highlights were summarised as follows ...

- **May Fair & Ball** – VH: both are back this year... and also Arts Picnic returns on the Sunday this year with a music theme. The Fair will feature all the old favourites... e.g. the Victorian fun fair, the dog show, the Arts & Crafts marquee, local bands and performances, etc. The featured charities for the Ball on the Friday are My Life Films and Riding for the Disabled centre at Park Lane stables in Teddington;
- **Resurfacing of Old Palace Yard** – VH: finally, it's now done but we're still waiting for Heritage gravel to be added. Overall, it's already a major improvement;
- **Traffic gridlock** – VH: the sheer amount of gridlock in recent times is very frustrating, along with the worsening condition of the seriously pot-holed roads around The Green – among the worst in the borough; we understand that The Green is on the council's prioritising list for dealing with potholes, but we're told they only have resources to do 10 of the 60 roads listed and we're not yet sure if The Green will be one of those chosen;
- **Planning and licensing** – VH: there's been unusual intensity of activity on this front over the past year; the number of cases PW has dealt with (7, or up to 9 by now) has meant a huge amount of work for him on our behalf – for which we're grateful; two development projects/proposals in particular have triggered most concern: 80 George Street (formerly House of Fraser) and Onslow Hall next to Richmond Theatre; happy to discuss further in general discussion towards the end of this meeting;
- **Public loos** – VH: the Council has shortlisted 6 locations – among them the Duke Street corner of The Green, although the one chosen is more likely to be that tucked away at the back of the Library;
- **Heathrow** – VH: the RHC campaigning continues, with lots of activity over the past 12 months relating to issues such as the impact of Airspace Modernisation and night-flights;
- **Old Deer Park** – VH: the much-delayed creation of the new pathway between car park and riverside is a positive development, although the lower end is yet to be finished owing to higher tides and regular flooding; it's an environmental circumstance that's affected other places locally – eg. the Royal Mid-Surrey golf club which has lost the use of some of its holes due to high tides; in addition, the planting of a new row of cherry trees near Pools-on-the-Park is to be welcomed;
- **Friars Lane car park** – VH: it has now re-opened having been closed for weeks since early February and is in use; its overhaul has been long overdue;
- **Crime and Policing** – VH: the increase in low level crime is still a major concern to residents.
- **Travelers on The Green** – VH: it was a shock to everyone when they suddenly set up camp last September; we are in touch with Parks at the Council about how best to prevent another such visit.

More details about all of those issues can be found in the Newsletter, and we'll return to some of them later in the meeting.

That concludes the report of the FoRG Executive.

5. Financial Report and adoption of FoRG Accounts for 2023

FoRG Treasurer Diana Billingham summarised FoRG's accounts (1 Jan to 31 Dec 2023) as follows:-

- **Receipts** – DB: brief highlights include the fact that income to FoRG has been quieter over the past year, largely because the amount of filming activity / disturbance donations to FoRG was much reduced following the completion in 2022 of filming the popular *Ted Lasso* series; accordingly our income from film payments (which historically vary significantly year on year) was £500 as opposed to higher figures received in previous years;
- **Donations by FoRG** – DB: we made a donation of £1,000 to the new planting of 20 Yoshino cherry trees in Old Deer Park, near Pools on the Park, in honour of the coronation of King Charles III (this project was also supported by a £1,000 donation from the Richmond Society and by donations totalling £600 from individual residents). FoRG also made a £500 donation to the returning May Fair as a contribution to the staging for the event;
- **Other expenditure** – DB: in early 2023 we made a final payment of £3,702 to cover restoration of the period drinking fountain on The Green, work having been completed the previous year; in addition we spent £1,674 on the Coronation Picnic event on The Green in May – it was a great success and enjoyed by all who attended, despite rain; there was a real feeling of community at the event; costs related to entertainment (band), tables, chairs, cutlery and bunting.

Although we were in deficit for the year itself, therefore, a closing balance overall of £9.4k remains and FoRG continues to actively seek practical suggestions from residents about how we best use FoRG's cash; ideas for future projects and good use of funds are always welcome.

Questions from the floor on the finance:-

- **Filming income** – Andrew Morgan asked how the level of filming income is agreed, because the amounts received by FoRG look paltry – DB: our share comes via Richmond Council who agree the payment with production company – we had just two companies last year. VH: to explain the background, our film income is comprised of discretionary donations to FoRG beside the fee paid to the council – our donation is measured against suspension of parking bays, which directly affects residents. In recent years councillors have inserted themselves between FoRG and the film production companies and arbitrary decisions are made about whether FoRG or another charity should get a share; we've discussed this with them because the major impact on residents should be reflected fairly in the amounts we receive, which do vary significantly. PW: there is a history of this issue of funds getting diverted to other charities rather than to FoRG. Currently FoRG receives the majority of the donations.
- **Impact of Ted Lasso tourism** – Jenny Rees of Paved Court: is the council aware that the amount of disturbance as a result of the new *Ted Lasso* tourism around the Princes Head pub and Paved Court is huge? – this heightened activity, including footfall, deliveries, etc., has become significantly amplified... we should be discussing the impact on residents with the council and how it could be regulated; VH: it's a good and fair question, but let's come back to it in general discussion once we've got the formal business of the AGM out of the way.

FoRG's Accounts for 2023 as presented were agreed and adopted:

Proposed: Richard Peirson
Seconded: Maeve Willan

6. Election of Officers for 2024-25

VH announced that Anna Newton-Dunn had resigned from the Committee after many years of service and she thanked Anna for all her contributions over many years.

VH: the members of the FoRG Executive Committee have agreed to stand for re-election for the coming year 2024-25.

Firstly the positions of Chair and Treasurer:-

- **Vivien Harris** (8 Pembroke Villas) – as Chair

- **Diana Billingham** (21a The Green) – as Treasurer

Proposed: Naomi Samuel
 Seconded: Frances Bouchier

In the absence of any other nominations, therefore, Vivien Harris was duly re-elected to continue serving as FoRG's Chair and Diana Billingham was re-elected to continue as FoRG's Treasurer for the coming twelve months.

Other Executive Committee members also standing for a further year were:-

- **Peter Willan** (7 The Green)
- **Peter Griffiths** (26 The Retreat)
- **David MacKenzie** (4 Pembroke Villas, The Green)
- **Gemma Warrillow** (Old Friars, Old Palace Place) – absent from the AGM
- **Gemma Fumagalli** (6 Pembroke Villas)
- **Juliet Bramwell** (3 Chomondeley Walk)

VH asked for approval for this whole group to continue.

Proposed: Brian Palin
 Seconded: Bob Harris

In the absence of other nominations, Peter Willan, Peter Griffiths, David McKenzie, Gemma Warrillow, Gemma Fumagalli and Juliet Bramwell were duly re-elected to serve as members of the FoRG Executive Committee for the coming year, and were duly elected to serve on the committee for the year 2024-25.

VH: that concludes the formal business of the AGM.

7. Any Other Business (general discussion)

VH: before we get to questions from the floor, certain key issues require brief summaries – beginning with Gemma Fumagalli on crime and anti-social behaviour...

Crime & Anti-Social Behaviour – GF: earlier this week I attended the most recent quarterly Police Liaison Group meeting; we're lucky with the police team we currently have – 2 inspectors and 2 PCs – they really know the area and the criminals who are active around here, my impression is that they're really on it; and we have direct lines of communications with them. In summary...

- **Burglaries** increased over the winter months. Plain clothes PCs have been on car duty and arrests have been made. Given the number of burglaries, if anyone is aware of even an attempted burglary, it's important to please report it... the police need your reports. If there is any possibility of forensic evidence, the Scenes of Crimes Officers will attend to collect it. The hardest thing for the Police is linking small numbers of offenders with multiple crimes, so all evidence can be crucial.
- **Car crime** around The Green and the ODP car park (A316) continues to be a problem. But 85% of car break-ins affect people who are visiting the area; the criminals scan a car for blue tooth, so even if you've placed a device in the boot out of sight they can find it. Again, please report any break-ins or attempted break-ins.
- **Shoplifting** continues to be a significant problem but is very under-reported. The police are working with local shops to encourage reporting of any shop-lifting incident. Many shopkeepers don't report because they think it's pointless and no action will result, but police do need reports to build up a picture of what's happening in the town and this can then trigger allocation of resources. So if you witness any shoplifting, please do report it.
- **Beggars** – the problem continues and police are spending lot of time on this because, as well as the challenge of dealing with nuisance, there are safeguarding checks to be done to check for

trafficking/slavery operations; the beggars you will have seen holding cardboard signs (all apparently drawn in the same hand) on the high street are actually part of a professional Romanian gang who are dropped off at various locations across south-west London; the police say please don't give them things...it's a hard-core gang who don't need the help; the Police check on their welfare and where necessary will issue community warning notices, 3 of which will lead to arrest.

GF: our weekly link reporting has re-started and I'll be submitting a regular report on any crime and ASB around the Green that I'm aware of. The one-way Police WhatsApp channels continue to be the best way to stay informed of crime and local police activities. Here are the links:-

Follow the MPS – South Richmond Safer Neighbourhoods team channel on WhatsApp: <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaDkI9v4Y9luxDwWNV2f>

Follow the Met Police – Richmond Borough channel on WhatsApp: <https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VaCwPTfG3R3oENdebs3r>

In general, please report any crime in progress on 999. Any past crime can be reported at: <https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/ocr/af/how-to-report-a-crime/>

Incidences of ASB/drug-taking etc can be reported at: <https://www.met.police.uk/ro/report/asb/asb-v3/report-antisocial-behaviour/>

Finally, please report anything local directly to our local Police team, even if this means double-reporting – that way we can ensure our team knows about it. Email them at: Southrichmond@met.police.uk

Questions/comments for Gemma F...

On Car crime – Andrew Morgan– my car was broken into and police did get him; they're not interested in everything in the car...they're largely stealing to order; trackers in your car are a good idea so that police can monitor the car's location after its been taken; GF: it happened to us too, but be aware that trackers can be disabled in seconds and car-thiefs know how to do this... steering wheel locks work better and can be a deterrent.

Naomi: the parking spaces directly outside Maids of Honour Row seem particularly to be a target.

On Beggars – Anna ND wanted to know more about the Romanian begging gang. GF: they sit on the high street with cardboard signs (described), and they don't speak much English; there's a big gang of them; the women who sit there are just pawns in a bigger game; and if you try to ask, they won't give up the people behind the operation (they're probably scared); so if you see any vehicle dropping these people off at the start of a day, then do your best to take a note/photo of the car number plate so it can be passed to the police.

Other issues...

Impact of film tourism – VH: let's return to the issue raised earlier; the council, of course, will say that the tourism is a good thing and that the pubs and people are benefiting. Jenny Rees (of Paved Court): I would like the impact of film tourism on local residents to be discussed – the increase in deliveries, rubbish, etc... this has all escalated over the past couple of years because of the popularity of films/TV shows filmed here – and it's encouraged by the council, it seems. It may be good for parts of the town's economy, but local residents are compromised by it. What can be done to regulate it in some way? PW: we may have a chance to get to this discussion because similar issues have arisen with the development of 80 George Street (the former House of Fraser building now known as 'The Gosling'), with its planned restaurants, etc; we've engineered a process of discussion and consultation with the developer/council to discuss the potential for congestion, over intense traffic activity, badly managed processes, etc; we can probably widen this dialogue to the collection of rubbish linked to film tourism elsewhere around the high street and Green. Jenny Rees: 'Dave' at the council has been

brilliant at helping with badly disposed and unsightly rubbish, etc. PW: knows him – it's David Weller, a Council officer; LB: Dave is a 'street scene officer' who works with issues on the way the streets are cluttered, but the problem is he has to report all this up the chain to his bosses and this is his problem – getting action on the basis of his report; Dave himself can't force adequate action, apart from things he can get done himself. This is very frustrating for him as well as us. Also there are up to six different companies engaged to pick up commercial rubbish and they're all doing it at different times... it's not well co-ordinated. VH: as PW says, the issues associated with 80 George Street give us a chance to address the wider issues that are troubling local people. VH: we'll keep you posted on the FoRG WhatsApp group. AND: the general escalation of restaurants in our midst really doesn't help.

Q. Night-time economy – Jenny Rees: the council seems actively to be promoting evening/night life; how can we protect residents' interests in all of this? PW: the council's night-time strategy is being developed and there have been various meetings which we've engaged with... I agree, we should do everything possible to stop the arrival of a 24hr economy in Richmond town – but there is a good chance we can limit this, because there are people at the council who are also concerned about the prospect; dispersal of large numbers of people from various licensed premises is a key problem, but the fact that Richmond has a Cumulative Impact Policy (CIP) for licensing is fortunate.

80 George Street – Naomi S: is the 5 May proposed opening date for Sticks'n'Sushi definite? PW: well they are trying for it, but the building has to have its safety certification in place before any customers can be admitted – eg. a fire certificate – or at least a partial certificate. We have spent huge amount of time on this with the planners and the developer. For example, SnS are going for later licensing hours than we'd like. But after our efforts it's going to be a pretty restricted licence. NS: is the whole building taken? PW: not yet – the gym/pool in the basement and the ground floor restaurants are committed, but other spaces are still not taken – eg. the two floors of office accommodation, which as we know is proving hard to let... it could end up being something of a white elephant. We worked hard to resist the 5th floor extension (already being built), but it went through; that extra bulk and height is doing significant damage to the heritage value of The Green and town... size, height, lights, noise, people, rubbish, deliveries, loss of privacy, etc. Jenny Rees: there's already a loss of privacy and it's a problem. VH: we did fight it. Jenny Rees: waiting for planning permission to be granted on a building that's already being constructed tells us a lot about the developer's attitude to the council's planning process. PW: development creep is indeed a real problem. VH: to our knowledge upper restaurants are not yet set up (Ivy Asia was in talks but pulled out) and the office space will probably lie empty. Jenny Rees: I think living spaces have been built behind the façade of Paved Court; PW: I have seen how those spaces work in relation to the commercial premises of 80 George Street and there really isn't room for accommodation there as you suggest.

Q. Traffic in King Street – Anna ND: for locals trying to get home or get away, the traffic congestion and hold-ups is just getting worse – it's a nightmare now, and I'm worried it will just get worse with everything we've heard concerning 80 George Street, etc. PW: I agree, and we're fighting that outcome by trying to shape development of a Traffic plan including ways of diverting additional traffic before it gets to The Green.

Public loos – PW: Just one other thing... I was at the council's Environment meeting last night and the subject of finding a location for some new public loos in the vicinity of The Green came up; the leading candidate on their list of six possible locations is not likely to be the Duke Street corner of The Green (which we would oppose); it's probably going to be a site in the Quadrant, behind the library/theatre a short walk away; the council is also keen to reinstate the community scheme whereby commercial premises offer toilet access to passing public, but the effectiveness of this is questionable; also, any approved site for a new facility will take around two years to completion.

Q. Friars Lane building works – Naomi Samuel: the ongoing development at the top of Friars Lane ('Friars Way') is troubling – it's of such bad quality and the new atrium roof is visible from The Green and shouldn't be. PW: we opposed it, but the council made its decision without adding conditions requested by Gemma W (Old Friars) who also took professional advice about it. NS: I struggle to understand how it's been allowed, it's extraordinary that it's been allowed; Frances Bouchier: then write to the council about it.

PW: the proposal for redeveloping the garages and first floor flat in Hunters Lodge has come back for a third time and we need to keep an eye on that; Gill Bromley: I'm very interested in this one. FoRG will oppose the latest planning application. It is another example of 'development creep'.

Charlotte Andrew: what's happening about the drain repair Thames Water are supposed to be doing half-way down Friars Lane? I'm concerned about the efficiency of the repairs that are being planned; how long will they last until the next disruption, etc? Juliet B: we should individually contact Thames Water (0800 009 3921 – permit ref: MU113LOT5CAP1713) to ask what's happening there – the cumulative weight of local concern matters more than a single collective enquiry. Laurence Bain: the root problem is actually 19th century sewers being overloaded by reckless modern use... then add in the rain and flooding, and the old sewers are simply backing up unable to cope with the volume of use; it's a problem London-wide.

Q. Flowers/Trees on The Green – Julian Paxton proposed the planting of some daffodils on The Green? Others: what about bluebells, primroses, British bulbs etc... VH: we've tended to resist that idea whenever it comes up. LB: a more pressing problem if the trees, we should sort them first before we start planting other things; the London Plane trees date to just after the war and are getting to the end of their lives... so what's the plan? "Somebody needs to sort it out... someone with vision and drive", etc. GF: ageing trees could also become dangerous. VH: we'll talk to the council tree officer about what their plan is, but previous attempts to suggest change were met with fierce resistance and Tree Preservation Orders were slapped on the Plane trees, etc. But we will talk to them.

Discussion ended

VH thanked everyone for coming and concluded the meeting.

Meeting ended at **8.45pm**

(wine was served)

END