

Chair: NA

Notes: Rebecca

1. **Welcome and thank you!** Thank you to everyone who has been involved since May 2019, or frustrated by not being able to be. Since March 2020, it hasn't been very easy to keep the garden going and members connected - but we have kept the garden open for most of the time and it has been very well used and appreciated by park users.
2. **Minutes from the last meeting in March 2020** (on website): to agree. Any changes needed?
3. **Annual review.** See brief report attached to the end of this agenda.
4. **Election of officers:** we like to keep the working of the Group very easy and informal. We work rather informally, without a committee as such, which seems to work well. But we still need to elect the minimum number of officers.

Please contact Rebecca, the Secretary, if you would like to stand for an officer role, which can be shared. Also, if you'd like to propose a new role or way of working. For example, we could have someone to organise informal social meet-ups, as long as we follow government rules at the time.

- a. Keith as Membership Secretary. Happy to stand again.
 - b. Julian as Treasurer. Happy to stand again.
 - c. Rebecca as Secretary. Happy to stand again.
 - d. Co-Chairs, for future meetings: Bob is happy to stand again, and Lois would like to join him.
 - e. Immy has been acting as our youth co-ordinator.
5. **Finances and fundraising:**
- a. **Bank account and major spending:** Treasurer's report from Julian:
 - i. At the **end of our last financial year** (30/04/2020) our balance was **£547.42**. Of this, £221.19 is allocated for fitting out the polytunnel (i.e. the balance remaining from the grant we received and what we have spent on the polytunnel so far).
 - ii. **Current balance** (02/10/2020) is **£399.80**. The main expense so far this year is the insurance (see below).
 - iii. **Insurance:** this has been renewed, at a cost of £168.32, to 13 September 2021. We used McClarrons again, as arranged through Social Farms and Gardens. It includes the polytunnel. It doesn't insure us for work on the veranda roof so we can either add this when we have risk assessed with Guy or find another solution.
 - iv. **Fitting out the polytunnel:** we might need to buy some wood/supplies, when we have worked out what we need. No urgency here.
 - v. **Outdoor kitchen and portable pizza oven:** we were **successful** in our bid for S106 funding. It is for a wooden covered area between two whitebeam trees (where the tarpaulin-covered wood pile is now). And a pellet-fired Ooni pizza oven, which can be shared with other local community groups. We think the funds will be released in January 2021. We will project manage it. We have committed to contributing £300 towards the project but have an offer of a donation to cover that.

- b. **Possible new spending ideas:**
 - i. **More tools so we don't have to share**, we might need to get a few more tools. No urgency.
 - ii. **Wooden tanalised edging** for further raised beds. No urgency.
 - iii. **Trees:** a plum and greenage. Probably in February 2021 (we want to make sure the mains water is turned back on first).
 - iv. **Sturdy bench by the mud monster.** We have a light, moveable wooden bench that migrates under a popular 'climbing tree' to help children get a foothold. We have had a request for a treehouse and really like the idea. But, after an informal discussion with the Council, we think it might end up a very slow, expensive project with high ongoing monitoring costs. Another option is to make a very sturdy bench for this area that doesn't require footings. Then we could re-site the light, wooden bench in another part of the garden.
6. **Membership:** We have at least 31 members who have signed forms. Welcome to Jenny and Family who have joined us recently. In October/November, Rebecca will contact all our members to see if they want to stay on the e-mail list.
7. **Time credits:** until March 2020, we were recording time credits for about 29 people. Because we haven't had formal sessions, and there hasn't been anything to spend them on, Rebecca hasn't been keeping records since about April. Rebecca has a bank of paper time credits if anyone would like to earn them for volunteering. Let her know, if you have been recording your own hours. When we re-start more organised sessions, Rebecca will start recording them again.
8. **Networking: Cambridge Community Growing Group.** On 20 August 2020, Paul Herrington worked with Sandie from the Botanic Garden on a video section in the garden for her Open Cambridge video, which went live recently.
9. **A plan for volunteering:** this has been difficult since March - see report.

We have had a few new people asking about volunteering but we have been nervous about starting until the building work has been completed and we have regular sessions and know more about how we can work safely. Now, we seem to be in a second wave of the virus, we think we should stay cautious until the Spring and have very small groups of people volunteering – but stay in touch in other ways.

 - a. In general, we think we can **garden safely as long as people can socially distance, don't share tools or indoor spaces** and there aren't too many people in the garden doing too many things.
 - b. **Rule of six:** Rebecca has been trying to work out how this affects us. It is still unclear. In the short-term, we will follow the City Council.
 - c. **Proposal:**
 - i. Until Sunday 29 November 2020, cautiously re-start **Sunday and Monday afternoon volunteering sessions, from 2 to 4pm**. To have up to six people volunteering at a time, counting Julian and Rebecca. With no extra 'mingling' with other groups. Social distancing and not sharing gloves or tools.

We will try out a 'booking system', i.e. let Rebecca know if you want to come along – this also means we can cancel more easily if the weather is grim.

Agenda for 'AGM by e-mail/post' before Sunday 11 October 2020

- ii. Julian and Rebecca take responsibility for most of the maintenance and jobs but invite others for one-off **working parties** for other tasks that can't be completed during regular sessions.
- iii. A few others **to come in at other times and carry out VERY SAFE tasks with their own tools**. People can take responsibility for areas of the garden. They need to co-ordinate what they do with Rebecca/Julian, which can be by e-mail or text.
- iv. To monitor any new rules and the spread of the virus and react accordingly.
- v. In Spring 2021, review.

10. **Other activities and events:** Rebecca has been in contact with local community organisers to see if there are any opportunities to collaborate on ways of getting people using the garden other than in their usual family groups. It is currently very difficult to do this safely and within the rules. But we can do 'help yourself' activities. Do contact Rebecca with any good ideas:

- a. **October half term holiday** (24 October to 1 November) Rebecca, Immy and Ingrid have started working up a pumpkin/Hallowe'en self-guided trail/quiz, using laminated signs around the garden and anticipating a bit of extra decorating. Let Rebecca know if you'd like to be involved.
- b. **Xmas/Winter:** any good ideas for a trail or decorations or other activity?

11. **Updates on larger projects:**

- a. **Club hut:** the contractor hopes to complete the guttering by the end of October 2020 (the wrong guttering was sent), and we have lots of work we can do on the inside, time and resources allowing.
- b. **Veranda:** the main woodworking is done but aim to swap at least two of the metal braces for wooden knee braces. The roofers have started, and we hope to have the paving completed by the end of October. Then we need to get the roof substrate to the garden, on the roof and seed/plant it.
- c. **New planting:**
 - i. We have a **large green roof** to sow/plant. It should provide an unusual 'brownfield' habitat so we will vary the substrate (clinker, crushed basins and sand) and its depth; also add slate, logs etc to it. We have decided at first to plant our own plug plants of wildflowers, sedums and other plants that do well in dry conditions like chives and herbs. We can also order some Emorsgate green-roof seeds in the Spring, if needed. Many of the species are already growing in the garden and we weed them out! We won't sow grasses.
 - ii. We'd like to plant two more trees in the orchard area: a **plum and greengage**. We will wait until we know about the water supply. Hopefully, by February 2021.

- iii. **Spring bulbs:** we think we need to put on a good display for 2021 – cheer everyone up. Let Rebecca know if you have any ideas. We could have people planting up different beds.
 - iv. We have been donated a **small fig tree** and will nurture it through the winter and find a sheltered but sunny spot for it in the Spring. Rebecca will also take some cuttings from a local fig tree.
 - v. Rebecca has bought a selection of **Benton bearded irises** from the Beth Chatto nursery. We hope to be able to propagate from them. They were developed by Cedric Morris in Suffolk and have been 'rescued'. They should do well in our free draining soil but might not flower in their first year.¹
 - vi. It would be good to become **less dependent on mains water**. Cambridge has a serious problem with its water supply. By planting drought-tolerant plants. By being careful what we grow in the polytunnel.
- d. **Polytunnel:** The structure is finished. In the short-term, it is a cosy space for garden users (and volunteers) to sit and shelter. It might start to be used more by incoming groups. We propose to keep it mainly a 'people space' until Spring 2021 and then, when we know what is happening with COVID-19 (and the water supply), to make it more of a plant space.
- e. **Improved path to the garden.** Guy thinks the Council are starting to plan something...
- f. **Park pavilion demolition/re-build:** there is now an update prepared for 7 Sept South Area Committee ²: They are aiming for Spring 2021 for the build to be completed but, before this, we could lose our mains water supply (in addition to the power and loos, which we lost some months ago). They are confident about restoring the water supply soon, including because they will need it for the foundation work.
- g. **Workshops:** plans on hold... they are tricky to do with social distancing. Rebecca has been playing with natural dyes from plants in the garden and we have a dug-out bed to grow dye plants next year. We have lots of woad seeds!
- h. **Flymo/McCulloch prizes:** all sold (£170). Huge thanks to Bronwen for her help.
- i. **Policies and procedures:** we have all the ones we need now. Rebecca will update the health and safety one and circulate it.

12. Next meeting: probably March 2021. Cross your fingers!

¹ <http://digdelve.com/moving-irises/>

² <https://democracy.cambridge.gov.uk/documents/b13481/Nightingale%20Pavilion%20Update%2007th-Sep-2020%2019.00%20South%20Area%20Committee.pdf?T=9>

Brief annual review for May 2019 to October 2020

Meetings and events: we have had two, well-attended, formal Group meetings since May 2019. Thanks to everyone who came along and supported us.

We also:

- Had a stall on Saturday 18 May 2019 at the **Queen Edith's School fete**. We did 'Colours from plants', which was enjoyed by people of all ages. The fete was cancelled in 2020.
- In June 2019, we had an evening visit from local cubs.
- In June 2019, a summer Solstice 'Get together' bring-and share evening celebration with Queen Edith's Community Forum.

Finances, donations and fundraising: We are very fortunate that people bring us tools and resources. Thank you to our wider community for their support.

- Our major regular expense is the insurance, which is renewed in September each year.
- Julian and Rebecca fund the website and e-mail expenses.
- We have a Group bank account, which is working well.
- Until March 2020, we got a steady, roughly £20, donated every few weeks via the collection tin, which goes into the bank account. We have also had some extra donations from members direct to the bank account – thank you so much - and have sufficient funds for the coming year.
- In 2019, we were successful in our application for S106 developer funding for a polytunnel. We were also successful in our application for S106 funding to improve the path surface from the car park to the garden, this will be led by the Council.
- In July 2020, we applied for S106 funding for an outdoor kitchen/activity preparation area and also a portable pizza oven to share with local groups. On 1 October 2020, we found out we were successful. It will provide another covered area for groups to use but also for visiting garden users to sit in/under.

Achievements: just to keep the garden going, working well, looking good, flowers counted, well-watered and welcoming to garden users is a huge achievement – everyone contributed in their own way – thank you!

Since May 2019:

- We have completed the polytunnel and almost completed the green-roofed veranda, despite lockdown (and the rest).
- More of the garden is under perennial planting.
- In February 2020, we planted a winter flowering cherry and a Comice de Doyenne pear tree.
- During Spring/Summer 2020, we have planted more jostaberries in a raised bed, made a new comfrey bed, a sensory bed, a moth/pollinator bed, bearded iris bed, edged more beds, made two more raised beds, and a mud monster.

Membership: we had a steady number of members, although some people have left the area (we miss them!) and some have stopped coming for work or health reasons. It is important that people feel they will be welcomed back whenever they are able to join us and when we can be more sociable again.

Networking: we have good links with:

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- Empty Common, via Ben.
- Clay farm, via Peter.
- Rock Road Library gardens and Wulfstan Way, via Rebecca and Bob.
- Queen Edith's School, via Rebecca and Emma.
- Local allotments, including at Ninewells, via Justin, Kate, Peter, Rebecca, Julian, Bob and Lois.
- To other gardening groups, via Sandie at the Botanic Garden.
- To other family and youth groups, via Bronwen, Ingrid and Immy.
- To St James church, via Barbara, Jenny and family.
- Red Cross Residents Association, via Ingrid and Immy.

Impact of the health emergency

A few days after our March 2020 meeting, we decided, for the wellbeing of all our volunteers, to stop meeting on Sundays and Mondays. Then a few days, for the wellbeing of garden users, we decided to lock the garden. As a closed space in a City Council park, we were told a few hours later that we had to close the garden anyway.

After a few weeks of 'staying at home' two (one household group), and then three, volunteers gardened 'as our daily exercise', with locked gates.

In June, after risk assessing the garden, we unlocked the gates during the day but established a regular Sunday morning 'very productive gardening' session behind locked gates. This time was chosen because we thought it was doable alongside the co-ordinators' work responsibilities and also a less popular time with garden users. One, two, and then three, household groups have been meeting on most Sunday mornings. We have also met on some evenings, especially to water.

- Rebecca has stayed in touch with community gardens across the UK. They have all found this time really difficult, especially the ones that have social gardening at their core. It is very difficult to carry out many gardening activities and social distance. Some are financially very vulnerable; thankfully, we have such low overheads we are OK.
- The garden has always been very dependent on the two volunteer co-ordinators. The weekday availability of Rebecca and Julian as co-ordinators was very reduced in the Spring and Summer and might remain reduced.
- Several of our volunteers and garden users were shielding and others developed new ways of spending their time. We are very happy that regulars have started coming back to the garden and we have been contacted by new people who are interested in gardening with us.
- The garden has been open as much as possible. It is looking good, if a bit wilder – but garden users seem to like this.

Volunteering: We have tried out various ways of volunteering safely, with others, since lockdown eased. We find it can be challenging to remember to follow rules when there are more than a very small number of people in the garden.

Other issues:

- In August 2020, we had some daytime/evening vandalism to our wildlife habitats, which caused us to lock the garden for a few days to try to break the habit. We haven't had any problems since.

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- In August, after the footings in the veranda area were installed, we were very nervous about leaving the garden unlocked but not attended, so we kept the gates locked for a few more days. This was very frustrating for the volunteers who want people to enjoy the garden as much as they do.
- In September, the veranda building site became safer and we opened the garden every day, unless the contractor wanted it closed. The gate rota volunteers re-started, which is great – thank you to all of them!