

Chair: Lois

Notes: Rebecca

1. **In attendance:** Barbara, Gill M (part of meeting), Keith, Jennie (and Joe), Josephine (part of meeting), Julian, Lois, Nat, Peggy, Rebecca.
2. **Apologies:** Bob, Clare, Francesca, Ingrid, Immy, Jill, Marion, Peter, Tristan.
3. **Notes/minutes from the last meeting in June 2020** agreed.
4. **Elections:**
 - a. **Re-confirmed:** Rebecca Jones (Secretary); Julian Hickling (Treasurer); Keith Bird (Membership Secretary); Lois Clarke and Bob Billingham (Co-chairs).
 - b. **New person elected with enthusiasm:** Jennie Brandon (Co-chair). Good to have three chairs for three meetings.
Agreed we don't need a wider committee.
Action: contact Rebecca if you think we need a new role and want to take it on.
5. **Updates since June 2021:**
 - a. **Finances:** Brief Treasurer's report from Julian
 - i. To 30 April 2021: We received £721.13 in donations, plus £52 from a bank error in our favour; £730 in grants (Kindness project, allocated). In previous years, we have funded our insurance from the kitty tin donations (around £200/year). We spent £747.53 for running costs and projects; £114.94 within the kindness project (picnic tables and gardening tools) and £38.99 within the polytunnel allocated grant (plant trays and compost; a grant from previous financial year. We have £182.20 still remaining in that grant to fit out for growing).
'Major spend' (individual items over £100): pizza oven and accessories (our contribution to the kitchen grant): £320.15; bulbs and two trees: £120.81 (from a donation); Annual insurance: £168.32.
Balance at the end of the financial year was £1,149.09 (of which £351.83 is 'unallocated' funds).
 - ii. Current balance (14 Sept 2021) is £786.62 (£303.93 excluding allocated funds). However, on top of this, we expect ~£90 to be repaid to us by the Council for 'veranda' project, and we have already received ~£100.00 in Friends Membership donations (see below). Major spend includes £188.63, for annual insurance, and £332.00 for the pink bench (covered by donations). Since 1 May 2021 we have received £480.92 in donations (not including from the Friends memberships). We expect to receive a grant of £8,650.00 for the outdoor kitchen, but we don't know when this will be received and it will be 'allocated'.

Update since AGM: We can spend up to £200 from Kindness project grant at the proposed late December meet-up at Wulfstan Way (for decorations and 'picnic'). The solar lights can be made into a community asset and used for other events, including the Moon Festival.

In general: we haven't pursued business sponsorship yet but inviting them to

become Corporate Friends could be a good way.

Action: Rebecca to chase (again) water butt spend (Kindness project) and transfer of funds for kitchen project. To review 'corporate Friends' at the next meeting.

- b. **Membership.** Welcome to new regular volunteers (since June 2021): Marion, Hsin-Ling and her TzuChi group.
Action: Rebecca to contact existing membership to ask them if they want to stay in the group (and receive more frequent e-mails) and/or if they'd prefer to be a Friend instead (and get less frequent ones).
 - c. **Time credits.** Still a bit quiet on local spending.
Action: let Rebecca know if you want to start earning them and/or want back-paying.
 - d. **Volunteering.** We are doing well, and it is especially nice to have new people contact us and join in. We tend to have different people on Sundays and Mondays – people who can't do weekdays and people who prefer to keep weekends free.
 - e. **Completed projects in the garden** (since June 2021): planted fig tree and vine (in orchard area); completed rainchains; under-tree 'pink' bench (very well used already); nature-swap shelves (very popular); painted veranda furniture (thanks Jill and Clare); inside club hut: mosaic table, pallet wood cladding (started), coat hooks and storage unit for baskets.
 - f. **Visits and groups in NG:** several, including Queen Edith school; birthday party for local family; Cambridge Garden Club; mindfulness/wellness walks; DIY Little Nightingales; Streets and Open Spaces (SOS) volunteers' party.
 - g. **Visits/volunteering by NG gardeners.** Julian/Rebecca visited Water Lane mosaic garden project, and Marion and Rebecca visited Clay Farm.
Action: to look for opportunities to join working parties at other gardening projects.
6. **Future groups/meetings/events:** see newsletter for more dates and ideas and they are advertised on QECF Friday e-mail:
- a. **Tuesday 21 September 2021:** Mid-Autumn Moon Festival, 4 to 7pm.
 - b. **Thursday 11 November 2021:** St Martin's Day celebrations. TBC.
Action: contact Rebecca if you'd like to help out.
 - c. **'December before 25th':** meet up at Wulfstan Way shops – with QECF. TBC.
 - d. **Sunday 26 December:** Boxing Day informal tea in the garden. TBC.
7. **Friends Group:** leaflets and cards were very well received (including at Skip Day). Would like to see Francesca's designs on T shirts. Launched at Queen Edith's skip day (Saturday 11 September 2021) – 10 people signed up already and many more forms taken away. We can give these to people as we meet them in the garden too.
Update after AGM: checked: we don't need to have a data protection officer or pay a fee to the ICO. Rebecca added a better data protection statement to the Friends webpage.
8. **Newsletter:** first issue August/September. Laminated copy is on the metal table on the veranda and available online. Would be nice to have a noticeboard for it but struggling to work out where.
Action: Next issue October/November, Rebecca to finalise after the Moon Festival and aim to get online in late September/early October. Send any ideas or copy to Rebecca asap.

9. **Planned projects:**

- a. **Pizza oven** is ready to use but Julian and Rebecca are just lacking time. It is part of the kitchen project so we could wait until that is finished. Local groups know about it but aren't ready to use it either, for various reasons.
- b. **Outdoor kitchen/activity prep project:** need to finish by June 2022. Haven't received the funding yet from the Council. Have identified at least two contractors who we will contact to tender.

Action: Rebecca chase (again) funding. Rebecca convene a subgroup to refine the design, and find a contractor.

- c. **Nature connectedness project:** waiting for a PhD student to start. Can think about bat walks; beetle/minibeast trail; nature club later but will need to recruit volunteers.

Action: Julian/others finish the dead hedge. Julian/Rebecca/Julia: make minibeast trail for October half term.

10. **To discuss:**

- a. **'Playhouse'**. Popular idea with the Group. Glad it will be accessible. Area cleared by Barbara. **Update after AGM:** on 13 September, several volunteers (including a ten-year old) met to mark it out and discuss the design. To be roughly 2.4 m wide and 1.2 m deep, with the potential for some decking in front. To be open-fronted with a bit of cladding on one front side for cosiness. Made of wood with a corrugated roof. Behind the pink bench, facing the polytunnel and garden. Primarily for children to use so not too big or high. Large enough for an adult to join/retrieve them. Wheelchair/buggy accessible. With cut-out window shapes or spy holes. Need to work out what materials we are short of (we have quite a lot of waste wood already, which would be good to use up). We don't have allocated funding but hope we might be able to fund it via the Friends Group.

Action: continue with design and estimate costs. Fundraise... make!

- b. **Groups:** a few ideas...:

- i. Creative group of some kind: **'Inspired by the garden'**. At the least, a very informal show and tell, maybe every 6 weeks?

Action: Rebecca will e-mail everyone for further discussion, especially about when to meet.

- ii. **'Learn and grow together'**. Agreed in principle to have a focus on this area (depends a lot on volunteer time).

1. Good to have grafting workshops.
2. Good to have willow-related activities.
3. Need to work out how much is 'learning' (demonstrations and/or taking things home) and how much is learning by actually growing plants in the garden itself.
4. Successful produce growing in the garden will need good netting/hoops and signs and an effective watering rota (all need careful planning).
5. Wicking beds could be useful (Jennie and Rebecca to research).
6. Raised beds need topping up, preferably with sterile soil conditioner if they are to grow seeds direct.

7. Liaison with the allotments could be good – especially for recruiting people – as there is a waiting list for plots at the moment.
8. Could also start to use the polytunnel to grow produce (probably not until the Spring). Review the need to install a simple irrigation system (need to estimate costs).
9. Would be nice to grow produce used by people all over the world. To do some food sharing/cooking in the garden.
10. Would be good to provide growing spaces for people living in flats or who don't have outdoor space.

Action: keep discussing... schedule some willow activities from November onwards, maybe other creative ones. Make a plan for better produce growing.

- c. **'Winter hibernation'**: last regular gardening session on Sunday 28 November 2021 and the first one in 2022 on Sunday 16 January.
- d. **Gardeners tea at 3**: Agreed it would be nice to re-start this, but we don't have sufficient volunteers at the moment to support it. Julian and Rebecca want to garden during sessions and need to supervise others. They are not able to supervise teas in addition to this. We haven't had any volunteers (yet) to take responsibility to look after the refreshments and visitors, which will need to be every session. Until we have people willing to take on this responsibility, we agreed:
 - i. For garden volunteers to bring their own drink and snack along, which can be shared.
 - ii. Have some designated times when we don't garden and just meet socially and can invite people along. Volunteers, including Julian and Rebecca, can then focus on teas and cake.
 - iii. When the pavilion re-opens (and our power is restored and we have access to toilets), review this. Having power makes it much easier because we can use kettles and see what we are doing.

11. Any other business. We discussed vandalism in the garden: it is distressing and causes extra work for volunteers. Recent episode at the end of the Summer term: Julian and Rebecca just repaired and tidied up, reduced the amount of materials in the polytunnel and we have locked the gate earlier in evenings. Nothing major since. Agreed it is important that garden users don't perceive the garden as a place that gets vandalised because we think it would spoil their enjoyment – and we probably have less damage than other public spaces anyway.

- 12. Next meetings:** with a social afterwards or mid-agenda.
- a. Spring meeting: Sunday 13 March 2022, 2 to 3pm.
 - b. AGM: Sunday 15 May 2022, 2 to 3pm.
 - c. Autumn meeting: Sunday 18 September 2022, 2 to 3pm.