

# **Minutes of meeting of Friends of the Rose Garden held on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2018**

## **1. Welcome to meeting**

Ken Eastwood started by welcoming everyone to the meeting and thanked the fourteen people for attending. He introduced himself and explained that he is Chair of the Parish Council.

This is the first meeting of the Friends of the Rose Garden. It is an informal meeting, with an open call to join the group, though he stressed that was not compulsory. There is a need for ideas and expertise but it would also be helpful if people were willing to be part of the Friends' Group as well.

## **2. Appointment of Chair**

Ken asked about appointing a Chair. One person queried if this was a bit preemptive and asked why a Chair was needed. Ken said this could be left until a later date.

There was then a query about why the Parish Council was taking on liability for the Rose Garden and relying on volunteers. A further question was asked about who would co-ordinate the management of the Garden. Ken said that administrative support, would be available from the Parish Council.

Ken checked that everyone was fine for him to run this meeting, which was agreed and he then was then asked to explain the background and talk about future plans for the Rose Garden.

## **3. Update on Current Position**

Ken started by talking about the decline of maintenance over the years, due in part to budget cuts at Bradford Council.

He said there had also been issues with drug use and anti-social behaviour in the Rose Garden. Concern about these issues had been raised over a number of years with the Parish Council.

This led to the Parish Council looking at how to improve the Rose Garden. There was a public consultation. This showed a strong feeling that the Rose Garden belongs to Oxenhope and there were several suggestions for improvement. The Parish Council felt there was strong support in community for the Council to take on the Garden.

Ken then explained about the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process. The Parish Council has applied to Bradford Council for the transfer of the Rose Garden under this process. When the process started the guidance implied the Parish Council would own the Rose Garden, but actually it is a 50-year

lease, with the Garden still owned by Bradford Council. Within the terms of the lease, the Parish Council is able, should it find out it is too difficult to manage, to return the Garden to Bradford Council, provided it gives three months' notice.

The Parish Council has taken advice on the CAT. There are currently over 100 CATs in process at Bradford Council and the Parish Council felt there was no point in trying to challenge Bradford over the asset transfer actually being a lease.

Bradford Council has issued a draft lease. The Parish Council has taken legal advice on this and agreed to it in principle. They are now waiting for Bradford Council (who had appointed external legal advisors to help deal with all the CAT applications) to provide final sign-off. Until the lease is agreed, Bradford Council will keep cutting the grass.

Following a question, Ken confirmed there was no charge to the Parish Council for taking on the Rose Garden, but there were no grants either. Although, the group would be able to apply to external funders including the Lottery and the Co-Op. Karen Faulkner offered to get in touch with Bradford Council to see if any grants might be available.

Ken explained that an unsuccessful grant application had been made to the Ovenden wind farm fund. He said that friends groups are often more successful when applying for grants as they evidence strong community support and engagement.

A query was raised about what would happen when Bradford Council stop cutting the grass. Ken said a maintenance amount had been included in the Parish Council's budget. This had been set at £1,300, which was the amount Bradford Council said they currently spent on maintenance. Ken said the options could be to buy a mower and use volunteers, or employ a company to undertake the maintenance.

#### **4. Future Plans and Funding Options**

Ken then talked about the recent removal of shrubs. The original idea had been to seed the bare areas to provide some colour this year. Seeds have been brought and about three quarters of the Garden have been seeded, but the lack of rain has prevented the seeds from germinating.

A question was asked if there was a master plan for the Rose Garden. Ken explained a plan had been drawn up by a landscape gardener, but the Parish Council were now moving away from this. It was seen to be too ambitious. He stated the Council now wanted to take a step by step approach. The aim was to get seeds planted this year and then maybe more elaborate planting next year. Longer term, the number and siting of entrances would be looked at.

The state of the benches was also mentioned. It was stated that there were previously 12 benches, some of which were memorial benches. Only one

current bench has a plaque. There as an acceptance that memorial benches should be supported, but the Garden shouldn't become a memorial garden.

One person stated that the lack of benches, rather than entrances, stopped more people from using the Garden. They stated that the starting point should be the structure of the Garden, the boundaries and paths.

It was asked if any Section 106 funding (funding from housing developers) would be available for the Rose Garden. Ken stated that he thought this would be unlikely but the Parish Council were currently looking at the allocation of Section 106.

There was then a discussion on using perennials rather than seeds, and how to get people involved and whether a plant donation event would be a good idea.

There was also a discussion on the decision to remove all the shrubs, which have left a big empty space. Ken said professional advice had been sought and the bushes were in a very poor condition. The aim was to try and open up the Garden and although it is obviously too bare at the moment, there appears to have been less nuisance behaviour and also less refuse.

It was suggested that contact be made with the Friends group who look after Haworth Park. It was also suggested contacting Bradford Council parks department and local nurseries to see if plants could be obtained from them. Sponsorship was also mentioned as a possible source of income. There may also be the possibility of grants or support from the Co-op and Pawson's Mill.

Karen volunteered to approach local nurseries.

It was suggested that stating the mental health benefits of the garden would help with grant applications. The use of horticultural students was also mentioned. The Garden could provide them with a project and again this would be a positive when undertaking grant applications.

The need to co-ordinate planting was also stressed. Roger agreed to draw up a revised plan of the Rose Garden. Ken said the nursery that had supplied the Christmas tree has offered to provide help and advice on planting. It was suggested that maybe there should be a theme for each bedding area.

It was stated that manure was needed to improve the soil. There was a need to know what type of soil and the pH.

Robert Whitaker, who helps Haworth Friends Group, was mentioned as a possible source of help with expert advice. Mention was also made of Pippa Chapman who has created a dementia friendly garden in Church Green in Keighley.

It was also stated that roses could not be planted in beds where roses had previously been grown.

Ken suggested starting on the two bare beds by the central conifers. They are smaller and it would be easier to make an impact. There was general agreement on this.

Roger stated he was willing to share an updated version of his plan for the Rose Garden.

## **5. Water Supply**

Ken then talked about the issues with drainage. The Garden has not flooded since Bradford Council had done work on the drainage, but with the exception of this unusually dry year, the Garden is normally a very wet area. Any plants need to thrive in a wet, clay soil.

There was a discussion around whether water would be available from the sump at the bottom of the Garden. Ken stated he was not able to check this at the moment, as he cannot open the manhole cover.

The importance of having access to water was stated, but there was concern about the cost of getting Yorkshire Water to install a water supply.

It was suggested that water capture or a ground source pump was probably the best way forward.

It was queried if the drain running down through the centre of the Rose Garden might be a source of water. It was thought this would be worth investigating.

## **6. Links with other Groups**

Ken asked about the idea of making links with other groups, for example Incredible Edible in Todmorden and the Oxenhope Gardeners' Club.

It was explained that Incredible Edible was started by two ladies in Todmorden. The aim was to use spare areas of land to grow edible crops that everyone could use. They involved local businesses and had obtained funding for the project. The Todmorden group have a working group who meet weekly.

The top corner of the Rose Garden was suggested as a possible Incredible Edible area.

The idea of involving the school was also mentioned. Ken said that the head was very supportive (but was unable to attend this meeting), but the involvement would need to be with specific projects, for example helping to plant out a bed. The possibility of involving Brownies, Guides and Scouts was talked about as they could use this as work towards badges.

Ken pointed out that risk assessments would be needed before these groups could be involved, but the Parish Council could help with this.

Ken queried how sustainable a community vegetable garden would be in the long term. People are willing to help but they also have other commitments.

It was pointed out that the soil is very dry and full of twigs. It was felt that the whole Garden needs a good feed and a source of water is needed otherwise any planting was liable to fail.

It was again suggested working on one particular area and the central beds seemed to be the most suitable area to start with. There was concern that given the weather and the time of year it was too late to start with all areas, beyond completing sowing of the wildflower and grass seeds and perhaps herb seeds in the larger area.

The idea of a working party was mentioned, though it was difficult to find a time that was suitable to everyone.

In terms of the next steps Ken said we now have an effective Friends' Group, and it was suggested that a Chair was needed to lead the group.

It was asked if decisions made by the Friends of the Rose Garden Group would need to be agreed by the Parish Council. Ken said this would need to be the case, but the Parish Council would normally follow the recommendation of the Friends Group. Only in case where there was disagreement, which might for example be the case on new entrances, would the Parish Council have to decide between different viewpoints.

Concern was expressed that if funding became available, then the Parish Council might want to consider returning to the grandiose scheme, which had been suggested in the original plans. Ken stated these plans had definitely been shelved. The Friends of the Rose Garden would take the lead on the plans. Any funding or donations would be held in the Parish Council's accounts, but would be ring fenced for the Rose Garden.

Ken also stated that in the longer term, if this was wanted, the Friends of the Rose Garden could become a separate organisation, but at the moment by using the Parish Council's account there was the assurance for funders that the money was going to an organisation that is subject to financial controls and annual audits. He stated the Parish Council could also provide administrative support, taking the minutes at meetings, undertaking risk assessments and providing insurance cover etc.

It was decided to hold the next meeting on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> July at 7.30 p.m. at the Methodist Church.

The meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

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