

# **Friends of Starbank Park**

## **Inaugural Public Meeting**

**7.30pm, Monday 25<sup>th</sup> November**

**Trinity Academy**

### **Minutes**

1. Alastair Robertson (AR) opened the meeting at 7.35. 26 people attended. The agenda and draft constitution were circulated at the meeting.
2. AR introduced himself and Janet McArthur (JM). AR noted that Starbank Park is a pretty formal park with glorious views over the Forth and formal flower beds. Its condition had deteriorated in recent years. The “Friends of Starbank Park” (the Friends) was being set up to help return Starbank Park to a condition that will encourage its use by all members of the local community. In addition, it is intended to work with the City of Edinburgh Council (the Council) to achieve Green Flag status for Starbank Park. The meeting was being held to formalise the group as the Friends of Starbank Park to maximise our impact and work effectively with the Council.
3. JM explained in more detail what the Friends hoped to do in the future and what has been achieved in the previous two months. JM summarised that the volunteers had started with the STAR bed and had tidied it up ready for winter bedding planting. JM informed the meeting that most of the formal borders are now weeded, vast numbers of roses pruned (dead roses removed) and beds edged, also hundreds of winter bedding plants and a load of daffodil bulbs planted and one also small pot completed (the park only has one small pot). However, there is still an immense amount of work to be done. JM further stated that the volunteers hope to improve the Park’s formal beds by planting herbs, rosemary and lavender borders, espaliered apple/pear/plum trees on the back wall. Dunbar Close is an excellent example of a small park in the City (in The Royal Mile). JM outlined that all the space in the Park is to be utilised properly so it is not only visually beautiful but it is pleasing to every sense and also plan to plant a wild flower meadow. JM said that Starbank Park will be a park with something for all, with formal and informal planting. JM noted that over the last few months there has been a huge improvement from the Council with hedges trimmed and grass cut regularly. The Council also supplied tools and lots of extra winter bedding plants.
4. JM reiterated that a key aim of the Friends was to gain a Green Flag award.
5. JM informed the meeting that a close working relationship has been formed with the Council and Asda and a Website, Facebook page and a Constitution had been established. Furthermore, local publicity has helped to raise awareness with an article published in the Daily Record. The publicity helped to increase the numbers helping to 20 in total when in a previous week it had been 13 volunteers.
6. JM stated that the newly established Friends of Starbank Park has brought some good spirit to the Trinity Community Council meetings as they can see their work directly being put into community action. JM mentioned that the Friends also have contacted a local school to ask if they wished to use the park for planting and projects. JM further stated that it was good to have a buzz of hope and excitement back in the park and commended Stan Dunlop’s assistance as his knowledge has been very extremely helpful to tidying up the park. The Friends have worked closely with SD who lives in the house in the middle of the park and worked in the Parks Department for many years. JM reflected on what a lovely friendly group of volunteers it is in the Park and how it helps personal well-being through keeping fit out in the fresh air with good banter and a nice way to meet local

people. JM further stated that the park is a real asset to the area which knits the local community together, building stronger ties. JM finished by informing the meeting that Friends can also either volunteer in the park or equally from home in other ways. There are a wide range of help and projects that Friends can be involved with for example: practical tasks like improving planting, fruit tree planting, and future painting railings; helping to organise future events, activities and performances; marketing and promotion; fundraising; or helping with future tidy ups and wildlife walks. JM finally stated that the Friends also hoped to organise a weekend volunteer group if there was enough demand.

7. In response to a question, AR agreed that a plan was essential to achieve the ambitions of the Friends outlined by JM. The Friends had only started in early October and all work up to now and over the winter would be general gardening. A plan would be drafted over the winter. In discussions, it emerged that vandalism is not substantial problem at the moment. Dog mess is, however, an issue.
8. AR noted that while the Council have been extremely helpful with tools and plants, the Friends need to raise funds to cover items such as insurance, website, stationery, plants, gardening equipment and plant containers, tools, promoting wildlife (bird and bat boxes, feeders etc) and noticeboards. It also is possible that the Friends could be involved in larger projects in the future. Fund raising is critical.
  - a. A small annual subscription of £5 per annum was proposed.
  - b. Local businesses may also assist. We are already receiving practical help from Asda and coffee from the Starbank. Other businesses are being approached.
  - c. There are many grant-giving bodies: these can cover tools, plants, plant containers (e.g. CSV Action Earth) or bigger projects (e.g. Heritage Lottery Fund).

There was some discussion about insurance. It was stated from the floor that the Friends of Warriston Cemetery does not require insurance as its volunteer work is covered by Council insurance. AR noted that specific Council advice for "Friends of Parks" was that insurance was needed and that Friends of Warriston Cemetery were operating on property managed by Bereavement Services whose insurance arrangements may be different. AR will check with the Secretary of Friends of Warriston on their arrangements and with the Parks and Greenspace Service in the Council.

9. Helen Stockham, Education Officer, Parks and Greenspace Service, City of Edinburgh Council, noted that there are now over 40 "Friends" organisations operating in Edinburgh parks and green spaces. The Council provides direct support to the described support that the Council gives to Friends of Parks. There is also a Forum of Friends and the Council arranges various events for Friends groups. One person noted that he had been berated for "doing the Council's work for them". He felt that it was important that the Friends position themselves as working with the Council and adding to the Council's capabilities work.
10. AR noted that the group would endeavour to operate as openly as practicable. At the moment we are thinking of open events every quarter, including a public meeting every 6 months, coffee mornings, sales etc. We will use the website, Facebook, notices in businesses, in the park and on noticeboards to keep people informed of progress, events and meeting minutes. We will consult as widely as practicable on proposed significant changes to the park, for example using Facebook and website surveys, consultation with Newhaven and Trinity Community Councils and other interested groups and publicise the consultation on notices. Suggestions from the floor for publicising our activities included Trinity Spotlight (Trinity Community Council have highlighted Starbank Park in their article in recent editions but noted that it is expensive) and Wardie Church Magazine. The Edinburgh Volunteer's service may be able to supply additional volunteers.
11. Election of office bearers: the following were elected:
  - a. Chair: Alastair Robertson; proposed: Janet McArthur; seconded: Sandy Logan;
  - b. Secretary: Janet McArthur; proposed: Alastair Robertson; seconded: Richard Scott;
  - c. Treasurer: Graham Buckley; proposed: Sandy Logan; seconded: Alastair Robertson

- d. Four committee members were elected:
  - i. Sandy Logan
  - ii. Richard Scott
  - iii. Stuart Gardiner
  - iv. Liz Nicholson
- 12. Membership will be open to anyone who is interested in helping the group to achieve its aim, who is willing to abide by the rules of the group and who has paid annual subscription. AR noted that Membership forms were on each chair and invited those attending to join.
- 13. The Draft Constitution was discussed. It was agreed that it would be adopted subject to the following changes:
  - a. Consistent terminology to be adopted for the “committee”
  - b. All committee members will be elected at each AGM
  - c. Office bearers and committee members will not normally hold office for more than five consecutive years
  - d. Add the address of Starbank Park
- 14. AR thanked everyone for coming, the Wednesday Volunteers, Janet for her ideas and enthusiasm and hard work, Asda for their practical assistance, The Starbank for coffees, Allan Jackson and Trinity Community Council for their help and support, particularly when starting up, the Council in general for the work they are doing and the plants and tools and in particular, Helen for her support and her words tonight and Ritchie Fraser for his all his help, support and labour on Wednesdays and for making things happen in the park.
- 15. There being no other business, the meeting was closed at 8.45.

Signed:

Alastair Robertson, Chair ..... Date.....

Janet McArthur Secretary ..... Date.....