



General Public Meeting Minutes:

Thursday, 6th February - Held at Firs Farm Community Hub 7pm

Present Friends of Firs Farm: Toni Guiver, Chris Ferrary, Becky Beach, Paul Guiver, Louise Dennis, Nurel. Plus Ken Waterhouse (HCPSE) & Richie Hardwick (Leons) & general public

Apologies: Treasurer Simon Jarosch.

Welcome from the Chair and walk through the 'General housekeeping' for public safety

1. A draft was reviewed with no comments - All agreed
2. Firs Farm Community Hub
Update provided by Chris Ferrary, Ken Waterhouse & Richie Hardwick
- 2.1. Whats on at the Hub: A list was shared available for all upcoming events classes at the Hub.
Plus: Two music events scheduled for March. "Gosh, It's Friday" to resume in spring.
Exercise activities and classes continue as usual.
Ken is working on developing an improved website for the Community Hub.
- 2.2. Leon's café: A new catering offerings, including large square Roman pizzas. Planned launch at the end of the month for lunchtime service, with potential evening takeaway if successful.
- 2.3. Defibrillator: Sufficient funds have been raised through community contributions.
Ensuring the correct type is purchased with guidance from a local company.
Will be semi-automatic and installed indoors. Free awareness course will be available once equipment purchased and installed
Hub staff will be trained and can be used by community (e.g., football teams).
- 2.4. Water Pressure Issue: - Ongoing issue for a year; investigations continue.

3. Finance

Update from Paul Guiver : Apologies from the Treasurer Simon who could not make this evening

- 3.1. Funds to date have brought in the Hub and landscaping of surrounding areas in addition to the general FF improvements including the sensory room and of course the launch event.
- 3.2. Contracts are in place with an income supporting the works / improvements for Firs Farm.
- 3.3. The recent quiz we organised at the Hub raised £1000* for Starksfield local school and will provide them with hours of Sensory room use.
- 3.4. We are hoping to raise further funds through future events to provide a Defibrillator and FREE training for all.
- 3.5. We also want to make further improvements with permeable hardstanding to the LHS of the Hub and further landscaping to the rear of the Hub with additional planting along the Swale, seating etc.
- 3.6. Financial Status:
Healthy bank balance. Recent fundraising efforts:
Halloween Event: £1,200 gross
Christmas Event: £1,600 gross
Quiz Night: Funds raised, supported sensory room use (*£1,000 allocated for the year)
Another 'Chase' quiz night planned for later this year, hosted by Shaun Wallace or other quiz master.
- 3.7. Upcoming Projects & Expenditures:
Sensory garden project at the back of the hub—seeking support and expertise.
Additional funding needed to enhance the sensory room (adding sound and scent elements).

Updating the hub Friends corner notice board - currently with a local designer.
Discussions ongoing regarding designated disabled parking; liaising with the council.

4. Communications

Update from Becky Beach

- Want improved communication within the committee and community.
- Current assumption is that attendees of this meeting receive public meeting invite via email.
- Discussion on alternative communication channels: Attendees suggestions - send in please.
- Sainsbury's and Little Waitrose notice boards.
- Additional emails to subscribers.
- Community noticeboards in schools, libraries, and churches.
- Additional TV screen at the hub dedicated to event announcements.
- QR codes for event details.
- Physical newsletters.
- WhatsApp groups updates are successful.

4.1. Reporting Issues:

Concerns raised about waste collection and recycling bins not being emptied.

The park's management is not the charity's responsibility, but litter problems affect the space.

Richie has been in contact with the council regarding these issues.

Suggested approach: Engage local Labour councillors for support.

4.2. Audience comment:

Discussion on zebra crossing conditions—part of the high road and under repair.

This issue does not sit with Firs Farm Wetlands. Winchmore School construction work may have contributed to the issue.

Positive from the construction work includes group receiving surplus wood, to be repurposed for Firs Farm projects

4.3. School Involvement:

West Ley and Highfield Primary Schools have/will assist with gardening and maintenance projects.

Schools looking to implement controlled projects, particularly in the orchard.

Work experience opportunities can be facilitated but must be managed by the schools

4.4. Audience comment:

Groveland's Park also has litter issues but is generally cleaner. Look at how they are managing this.

Football clubs using grounds could contribute to litter control.

Idea to set up a self-service litter-picking station at the hub.

Request for an update on the football league spreadsheet to know what teams use play at grounds-

Attendee stated that he could provide details.

4.5. Plastic Waste Initiative:

Build community awareness and discussion on the impact of plastic bottle waste- Becky suggestion

Playful yet educational engagement ideas suggested. Such as fun buzz words to encourage maintaining a litter free environment.

Success of the "Little Helpers" initiative. Engaging young children to take pride in their environment.

Jo Attree was thanked for this initiative.

Highfield School's involvement mentioned in conservation efforts at the wetlands.

5. Events

5.1. Tree Planting:

2,500 trees planted since 2013.

Two years ago, 82 trees were planted. 33 cherry trees also planted at a community event.

Proposal to celebrate a Blossom Day in April once tree cages removed in a year or so.

An additional 350 saplings (whips) arriving for a March planting event plus in 150 in stock.

5.2. Annual events to continue as usual

Easter Event: Easter quiz and learning hunt with small prizes for children.

Christmas & Halloween Events for 2025

5.3. Potential New Events:

Potential dog-friendly event, a bit like a community friendly Crufts/Scruffs.

Mentioned need. Enhancing the hub's left-hand side to have more seating and allow the hub to be more dog-friendly (outside space).

6. Volunteering (TG)

Volunteer Roles & Leadership Changes. Chairperson Transition: Toni stepping down as chair. At AGM Plan to divide responsibilities into three separate roles – We need a new Chair.

New Lead volunteering role – being developed – anyone interested?

Volunteers Projects – Sensory Garden ongoing works around FF Water quality team, Sensory gardening projects team

- Monday – general maintenance of vegetation / tree care
- Saturdays – as directed
- Wednesday team creates props and materials for events. Engaging small businesses for support.

Volunteer Training -gaps:

Training on water quality assessment in progress.

Greater awareness of wildlife conservation efforts.

All our events include a mission statement and risk assessment.

7. AOB

- Duck feeding station to be installed in one of three potential locations. Payment via card-operated machine

General Communication & Engagement:

Encouraging better communication within the group and community.

Council Crematorium Proposal: Definitely not moving forward.

Council A10 Traveller proposal Concerns: Member/s of friends attended consultation; unlikely to proceed.

Awaiting further updates. This proposal directly affects the skating area: Skate users won a skating competition, skating is also an Olympic sport. The skate park wants to expand/develop but can't do so with this proposal. Waiting on outcome.

Firs Farm Status will be published on site .

The park is designated as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL), providing protection.

Discussion on whether Hub Park should be designated as a community asset.

Council meeting scheduled for 24th February—Toni to attend.

Derelict Outbuilding: Fire Risk acknowledged / controlled

Ongoing efforts to maintain our space and park.

Council & Police Engagement:

Regular meetings with councillors.

Encouragement for more council meetings at the hub.

Open invitation for local police meetings at the hub.

Meeting Adjourned.

Next Meeting Date: AGM 5th June 2025