MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING ("AGM")

Friends of Horsham Park C.I.C ("FoHP")
Minutes of the AGM Held at Park Barn, North Street, Horsham, RH12 1RJ On 29 September 2026

Present:	Sally Sanderson (SS)	Chair
	Stephen Sandham (StS)	Vice Chair
	Philippa Charman (PC)	Director/ Committee member
	Ben Brace (BB)	Committee member
	Ros Shiel (RS)	Director/ Committee member
	Adam Tweed (AT)	Committee member
	Freya Brook (FB) *(Secretary)*	Committee member
In Attendance:	Tony Frankland (TF)	Councillor
	Steve Makin (SM)	Councillor
	Sorin Caraiman (SC)	Horsham District Council
	Phil Lieberman (PL)	Guest Speaker
	Doctor Tara Quinn-Cirillo (TQC)	Guest Speaker

Present at the meeting were 9 friends/guests.

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1 WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

1.1 Sally Sanderson, Chair, took the Chair and welcomed members, friends and guests to the AGM. The Chair declared a quorum present.

1.2 SS introduced guest speakers Phil Lieberman and Dr Tara Quinn-Cirillo to the meeting.

1.3 Apologies were received from Ruth Fletcher, Pete Crawford, David Hide, Alison Farrell, Cerys Thomas and Caroline Holder.

1.4 The Chair noted that the key items to be covered at the AGM were Chair and Treasury Reports, aspirations for Horsham Park ("the Park') and how 100 years of the Park will be celebrated.

2 MINUTES FOR APPROVAL

2.1 The Chair proposed the acceptance of the minutes of 28 October 2026 AGM which had been published on the FoHP website and the link circulated in the September 2026 newsletter.

2.2 **IT WAS PROPOSED AND AGREED THAT** the minutes from 28 October 2025 be accepted.

3 CHAIRS REPORT

3.1 The Chair presented her 2026 Report for the FoHP.

3.2 The Chair opened by noting that, after nearly a decade of campaigning the Park had achieved Fields in Trust status during 2026. This milestone had been celebrated at an event held at the bowls club. SS highlighted that 17% of Horsham residents live more than a 10-minute walk from their nearest green space, more than twice the average for England. Noting that, in this context it would be good to see more green spaces in Horsham protected. The Chair reiterated that the aims of FoHP were to Protect, Enhance and Promote the Park.

Protect

3.3 Post Field in Trust status FoHP focus remained on protecting the Park but with a slightly different approach: looking forward FoHP would continue to protect the Park by protecting the standards and maintaining high-quality green spaces, including the protection of habitat not just for residents but for wildlife.

3.4 As a thank you to the charity that helped protect the Park in perpetuity the FoHP were working on raising £1,000 of which at the time of the meeting £322 had been raised.

Enhance

3.5 FoHP focus was now on enhancing the Park which involves significant effort and working in partnership with Horsham District Council ("HDC") and the gardener for Park House Sensory Garden. SS commended the contribution of the Wednesday volunteers, who had collectively given more than 2500 hours during the year, despite periods of extreme heat. FoHP volunteers now cared for more than 30 beds and areas within the Park, including supporting path maintenance. SS emphasised that this volunteer activity was not intended to replace HDC maintenance responsibilities.

3.6 The work undertaken by FoHP volunteers had contributed to increased colour and planting throughout the Park, including the Ribbon Border at the entrance, which was maintained by the Sunday Border Team having contributed more than 240 volunteer hours during the year.

3.7 SS highlighted that the Human Nature Garden ("HNG") was a good example of working in partnership with HDC. This area of the park had been neglected during the pandemic and was subsequently cleared by volunteers with help from the Strawford Centre during 2026. Coffee grounds from Koffie were utilised to boost soil health in the HNG, followed by planting and mulching. The impact was now a colourful year-round space which also provided a peaceful space for wellbeing.

3.8 Other successes included the use of coffee grounds to accelerate the composting process by a year for use across the Park. The planting and watering of alder buckthorn to support brimstone butterflies and caterpillars had also been carried out with much success.

3.9 Lead by StS volunteers had undertaken over 50 hours of litter picking during the year. The most recent September litter picking had hauled more than 15 refuses bags of litter, along with a number of unusual items.

Promote

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3.10 The Chair explained a number of initiatives had been undertaken during the year to promote the Park and raise awareness of FoHP's work.

3.11 *Branding* - Investment had been made in the new FoHP branding which had been used and launched at the Funday Sunday and will be used for future events and activities. Referring to the branding displayed on screen SS drew out that each of the new icons within the branding had been chosen to reflect the diverse communities and activities associated with the Park. In addition to events the new branding would be used for digital campaigns to highlight the conservation work of FoHP.

3.12 *Book Project* - The Park would be celebrating its upcoming centenary in 2028. To celebrate work was underway on a book documenting this history of the Park. Research was being undertaken in collaboration with Horsham Museum and the West Sussex Records Office, with a view to publishing in the second half of 2028.

Conclusion

3.13 To conclude the Chair thanked all the Committee members and volunteers for their enormous contribution and achievements during the year. Noting that collectively this was equivalent to a monetary value of in excess of £105,000.

4 TREASURERS REPORT

4.1 The Chair welcomed PC to the meeting who presented the Treasurers Report for FoHP.

4.2 PC highlighted the following; Income for the year ending 31 August 2026 was £2,394 comprising of lottery, quiz proceeds, eco cup sales and other donations. PC walked the meeting through the total costs for the year amounting to £4,035. This had resulted in a loss for the year of (£1,641). PC noted that it had been agreed last year to spend the reserves. While some reserves had been spent £1,000 had been retained for prudence in the event there were unforeseen circumstances like the pandemic.

4.3 The Chair thanked PC for the preparation and presentation of the Treasurers Report.

5 GUEST SPEAKER PRESENTATION – HORSHAM PARKRUN

5.1 The Chair welcomed Phil Liberman, Parkrun Event Director, to the meeting. PL had been involved with parkrun since it began locally 12 years ago.

5.2 PL extended his thanks on behalf of parkrun for all the work FoHP do to maintain the Park.

5.3 PL explained that parkrun takes place every Saturday morning at 9AM in the Park and provides a free, timed 5km run/walk. What began in Bushy Park had grown significantly, with more than 800 events and around 3,000 parkrun events worldwide. The weekly event provides Horsham residents with fresh air, exercise and benefits to mental wellbeing.

5.4 Locally, parkrun started with around 336 participants and now regularly attracts more than 700 people, which was described as an astonishing level of growth. The event welcomes and is attended by people of all abilities and PL noted he frequently receives positive stories and feedback from participants.

5.5 The Chair enquired as to how FoHP could support parkrun.

5.6 PL noted the benefit of having a suitable path running around the whole of the park, removing the need to use Southwater Country Park in the winter. He thanked HDC for the new stretch of path but highlighted that the northern stretch by the hospital, particularly around the skate park, remained unsuitable. The current path was described as unsafe and poorly lit. Noting that an improved, continuous route would benefit not only parkrun but the wider community, particularly people using mobility aids and those who are less steady on their feet.

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5.7 PL further noted that green spaces could be incorporated into future developments, potentially creating opportunities for additional local 5km routes. Referencing the success of parkrun at Tilgate, where participation had reached approximately 500–700 people. The introduction of another nearby event at Ifield Millpond, attracting around 150 participants, had helped reduce pressure on Tilgate Park.

5.8 TF confirmed support for parkrun and said that discussions had been taking place regarding the potential improvement of paths within the Park. There was some consideration as to whether a dedicated track would be appropriate, with the preference to retain the character of parkrun as a community run rather than encouraging racing. The condition and accessibility of the paths on the north side of the park were discussed. It was acknowledged that this section can be difficult for people with mobility issues, as it is narrow, poorly lit in places and affected by tree roots. It was noted that constructing a suitable dedicated route would be a significant financial commitment, potentially costing hundreds of thousands of pounds. While this makes the proposal challenging, TF confirmed that options were being considered.

5.9 SC suggested that a piecemeal approach could be taken, with improvements made in stages as funding and opportunities allowed. PL referred to the new path that had recently been completed by the boxing club and agreed that the aim should not necessarily be to create a dedicated track, but rather to provide a suitable path. This could also help prevent the existing route becoming muddy and reduce damage to the park during wet weather. SS noted that although the existing route along North Parade provides shade, the uneven surface and tree roots can create trip hazards and may be particularly off-putting for older people.

5.10 TF invited further thoughts and views on the potential improvements to the parkrun route.

5.11 PL concluded by sharing that parkrun would like to give back to the Park by contributing to the organised litter picking activities and was committed to staying in close communication with FoHP. PL emphasised that parkrun was open and welcoming to everybody.

5.12 The Chair thanked PL for his presentation.

Action: Members to provide TF with any further views or suggestions regarding potential improvements to paths and routes for Parkrun.

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6 GUEST SPEAKER PRESENTATION – CONVERSATION STARTER PROJECT

6.1 The Chair welcomed founder Dr Tara Quinn-Cirillo to the meeting to give a presentation on the Conversation Starter Project. TQC explained the project provides free walk-and-talk sessions every Wednesday in the Park and Fridays in Southwater Country Park.

6.2 TQC explained that the walks focused on preventative wellbeing and that the NHS was increasingly promoting the benefits of regular walking, recommending at least 15 minutes of walking each day. She highlighted the significant health benefits that can result from something as simple and accessible as walking, while recognising that mobility issues can be a barrier for some people. The sessions aim to support both physical and mental wellbeing and may help reduce demand on NHS and mental health services which often focused on crisis management. Safeguarding was a key consideration at the sessions, with safeguarding leads and trained volunteers at the sessions. TQC clarified that the groups are not therapy sessions but are supported by psychology expertise.

6.3 The group currently meets at the HNG in the park. TQC noted that staff and volunteers also gained significant benefits from participating alongside those attending the walks. TQC referred to the increasing number of people experiencing mental health difficulties and noted that some participants had reported coming off medication or experiencing improvements in health metrics.

6.4 TQC also highlighted research showing the positive impact of walking in natural environments. Explaining that walking in nature can have a different emotional and psychological impact compared with walking in an urban environment, including benefits to emotional processing. The Park was fortunate in that once inside the Park the views of urban areas were limited.

6.5 The Chair enquired as to how FoHP could support Conversation Starter Project. TQC suggested the following for consideration:

- Better signposting and collaboration so that people were aware of the services available;
- Providing more dedicated wellbeing areas within the park;
- Creating designated spaces where people can undertake wellbeing activities;
- Improving paths and access, particularly the less-used/back paths, which can be difficult for people with limited mobility; and
- Addressing winter access, as poor conditions can become a significant barrier and may cause people to disengage from using the park.

6.6 TQC explained that the group currently meets in the HNG and suggested that this could potentially be developed or recognised as a dedicated wellness garden.

6.7 TF explained that HDC was currently undertaking a significant procurement project for leisure and wellbeing services, with a new contract expected to be in place by this time next year. Currently the four leisure centres in the Horsham District have traditionally focused on people who are already active. The new approach would broaden this remit, requiring future providers to support people who may be less confident or comfortable being active, provide wellbeing services and take activities out into the wider community. The wider philosophy around wellbeing was changing with an emphasis on supporting people returning to activity so that they can maintain better health into older age.

6.8 It was noted that the HNG was one of the few areas in the Park which received sunlight throughout the year. Questions were raised about how the space was currently used and whether it was sufficiently accessible and welcoming

6.9 TQC reported that it can be difficult for people to find the main entrance and that the hedging helps to designate the garden as a specific space, although it can also make the area feel quite enclosed. It was agreed that there may be opportunities to review the space and consider what improvements could be made.

6.10 The Chair thanked TQC for her presentation.

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Action: Explore opportunities to improve the Human Nature Garden as a dedicated wellbeing/wellness space and consider how access, signage and the wider park environment could better support wellbeing activities.

7 CREATIVE PROJECT IN THE PARK AND OTHER IDEAS

7.1 Having received apologies from Caroline Holder SS presented on behalf of the Strawford Centre. SS explained that the Strawford Centre ran a “Save the Planet” group. Caroline Holder had recently visited Stockport and seen examples of recycled art installations, prompting the suggestion that a similar project could be considered for the Park.

7.2 SS opened the floor for discussion.

7.3 Member raised a concern about whether recycled materials used for an installation could themselves have an environmental impact. It was agreed that any proposal would need to be carefully considered, including the materials used and the length of time the installation would remain in place, as materials could degrade and the appearance of the artwork could deteriorate.

7.4 SS enquired what other types of artwork members might like to see in the park. The benefits of interactive art were discussed, including the potential for groups to contribute to its creation.

7.5 Members raised whether a water instillation would be feasible. SC advised that water installations required substantial upkeep including frequent water testing and also contributed to the rodent population so would not be practical at this time.

7.6 Members suggested that more trees need to be planted to provide shade, especially for seating and that another avenue of trees would be welcome.

8 100-YEAR ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

8.1 The Chair noted the need to consider how the Park's 100-year anniversary should be celebrated.

8.2 SS enquired whether members would prefer a programme of events throughout the year or one larger 100-year celebration. Members suggested it would be good to have activities taking place throughout the year. Ideas included awards, organised walks, tree planting and a challenge to collectively walk or run 100 miles during the year.

8.3 Members raised whether HDC had been engaged or had any plans for the anniversary. SS agreed that conversations should be started with HDC, Horsham Town Council and other organisations and groups that may have an interest in celebrating the anniversary. It was suggested that a committee or working group involving a range of stakeholders could be established to develop the programme.

8.4 Attendees gave other suggestions on different initiatives which were all noted by the Chair. The discussion was considered a useful starting point for developing ideas, with the importance of continuing discussions with HDC, the Town Council and other relevant community organisations emphasised.

9 AOB

2026 South & South East In Bloom

9.1 The Vice Chair noted that he had recently attended the South & South East In Bloom awards at RHS Wisley. FoHP had been presented with an It's Your Neighbourhood Award receiving a Level 5 – Outstanding rating. The Park had also achieved a Gold Award for a Park over 25 Acres.

9.2 The South and South East in Bloom awards also recognised personal achievement and this year had awarded Sally Sanderson with the 2026 Outstanding Achievement award.

9.3 StS presented the Chair with the South and South East in Bloom Outstanding Achievement 2026 award in recognition of her outstanding achievement and contribution.

9.4 The meeting congratulated the Chair on the recognition and thanked her for her continued commitment and contribution.

Close of the meeting

9.5 The Chair thanked members, friends and guests for attending.

9.6 There being no further business the meeting closed at 8:56PM

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