



## **St Johns Society and Friendly Gardens Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** 24/11/2025

**Time:** 20:00 – 21:30

**Location:** Brookmill Pub, SE8

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### **1. Who Was There:**

Paul Middleton (PM), Nick Blomstrand (NB), Christine C (CC), Rosie Garthwaite (RS), John Wood (JW), Sebastian Bowden (SB), Freddy Tennyson (FT), Sabine Pusch (SP), Kim Thundercliff (KT), Karun Vinayagam (KV)

### **2. Who Couldn't Make It:**

Jo Hemmings (JO), Alma Tischler Wood (AT), Sean Coughlan (SC), Claire Hallam (CH), Bernd Rossmanith (BR)

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### **3. Approval of Previous AGM Minutes**

N/A

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### **4. Introduction:**

PM: Last meeting of the year, so we'll try and keep it to 1.5 hours. We will discuss the updates on Friendly Gardens and then move onto St Johns Soc activities.

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### **1. Finance**

- Current balance: £500, unchanged since last meeting.

### **2. Thames Water Update**

- Works in Friendly Gardens to continue until March/April 26.
- Additional faulty valves identified; pipes cannot be released until hydrotested.
- Discussions underway regarding tree and fountain installations with trees planned for Jan 26.

### **3. Achievements & Activities**

- Upgrade works progressing; more visible activity expected next year.
- No public updates to be posted until confirmation of FOFG upgrade works have been confirmed.
- Funding bids in progress:
  - Veolia: £80k (Council and FOFG)

- Marathon: £50k (Council and FOFG)
  - Additional society-led bid to cover remaining scopes (FOFG)
- 11 planned trees (incl. dog park). Additional 4 trees still required which include the Thames Water trees.
- Planter works has seen new soil added and is well managed by CC and KT.
- Relationship with Council bid writer (Ethan) is strong and we have confidence in successful outcomes but needs to be monitored.

#### **4. 2026 Activities / Forward Planning**

- Need to develop a volunteer recruitment plan, timed for when funding wins generate more community interest and evidence of delivery, however other options to be reviewed.
- Target: secure £200k+ to segment and deliver upgrade works.
- Upcoming meeting with Thames Water and the flood team to discuss and agree plan for:
  - Pool area to be re-rendered and seated.
  - Central section to become a rain garden.
- Explore wetlands/rain garden planting (e.g. bull rushes etc).
- Nature pond in SUDS/nature area; consultation needed with Froglife.

#### **5. General Outlook**

- Strong confidence that project funding and works are progressing.
- Visible progress expected once approvals and bids are confirmed.



#### **1. Finance**

- Income: £1,033.12; Expenditure: £1,034 – currently breaking even YTD, however December activities shall increase income.
- Regular income from monthly donations; regular outgoings include lonos and insurance.
- Query raised about cheaper web hosting/email alternatives with a suggestion to use Mailchimp for email; website hosting still required and to be reviewed as an action to be taken forward by SP and KV.

#### **2. Top 3 Priorities**

##### **a. Funding**

- Society not generating enough income; need new fundraising approaches.
- Ideas discussed:
  - Carol singing with collection tin; QR code for digital donations.
  - Members contributing £2–£5/month.

- Direct small monthly neighbourhood donations (e.g., £1-£3 month door-to-door / through individual street WhatsApp groups / create community poster / social media with QR code and bank details).
- December fundraising: carol-singing + window-unveiling collections.

#### **Bank details for regular donations:**

- NatWest – St Johns Society
- Sort: 600001
- Account: 36364606

#### **b. Recruitment**

- Challenge: attracting new members.
- Ideas:
  - Door-knocking and showcasing current work.
  - Better results when recruiting for specific tasks.
  - St Johns Soc open day at the Brookmill (to learn about us and what we do)
  - Less reliance on email; more use of WhatsApp community groups and local Facebook communities.

#### **c. Communications**

- Create a St John's WhatsApp community, with separate announcements and chat channels.
- Suggestion for polls to identify community interests and follow-up engagement.
- Newsletters remain effective; Mailchimp recommended.
- Decision in principle to end Ionos hosting, pending new hosting solution.
- Website built in WordPress; currently maintained by NB, but to be taken over by KV moving forwards with support from the team.
- Mailchimp being explored for hosting + mailouts (SP).
- Comparison with Brockley Society; further research to be done.

### **3. Achievements & Activities**

- Funding secured for several upcoming projects.
- Ashmead School interested in planting on Lewisham Roadside (Becky M from Ashmead recommended and has been contacted. A further meeting to be established with the Headmaster and SP to support this and feedback).
- End-of-year update/poster planned to publicise progress.
- Notable updates:
  - £32,000 awarded for rain garden at Brookmill roundabout (starting March). Further work to be undertaken by PM and NB on engagement with Darren Gotch and the Council highways team.
  - 4 trees planted last week with a further 4 to be planted in Jan 26 by STfL.
  - New bins delivered to the Council depot and installation expected by 31 March (2–3 on St John's Vale, 2–3 on Friendly Street).

### **4. 2026 Activities**

#### **a. Station Woodland Project**

- FT and SB have progressed a concept plan for the regeneration of the station woodland area.
- Multiple stakeholders involved (Highways, Biodiversity, Flood, Network Rail, Southeastern) and engagement is required to present the current plan for feedback and alignment.
- A site survey is required, and a local businessman has offered to provide this for free. PM to follow up and provide an update to FT and SB.
- Opportunities to be included within the design are sustainable drainage solutions, pop-up business area, e-bike parking etc.
- There is a requirement for community consultation when the time is right and engagement with stakeholders has been concluded.
- Potential involvement of Vicky Foxcroft for accountability and support - to be included in the stakeholder exercise.
- St. John's Rail Users Group suggested as a partner due to contacts with Southeastern etc and again to be included within the stakeholder matrix.

#### **b. St Johns Garden**

- A bid has been submitted by KV for approx. £6.5K for landscaping and improvement works. Notification of award should be known by 15<sup>th</sup> Dec.

#### **c. Community Skip Day**

- Inspired by Brent Council's approach: irregular, one-off skip days.
- Concern: potential misuse by builders, so communication if considered worthwhile will be critical.
- Next step: contact Ellie (Lewisham Council Waste) and FT shall progress this engagement.

#### **d. Planning & Organisation**

- Members encouraged to consider areas of involvement for next year that can add value to both the Society and the community.
- Agreement to set up a shared Google Calendar for events/planning that can then be added to the SJS webpage events section when agreed.
- **Green Conversations:**
  - Valuable but currently too much work for JW & NB alone. If committee members are attending a talk, then it is encouraged that they support the organising team members in the delivery of that talk.
  - Ideas considered: keep schedule manageable, upload to SoundCloud as free podcast; seek technical support (e.g., Duke of Edinburgh volunteers, Lewisham College media students).
  - Need clearer division of tasks for future sessions.
  - Review sustainable funding opportunities.
- Historical talk currently being planned and further details to be shared in Jan 26. KV is progressing this with support from the team.