



# Governance update

Thursday 20 July 2023

## Overview

Most of us involved in the Friends lead busy lives with work and family commitments. We're hugely appreciative of everyone who volunteers their time – the value of their enthusiasm and commitment is enormous and it's incredible how much we achieve.

This paper is intended to provide a bit more clarity on proposed governance arrangements moving forwards, which aim to balance busy lives and a cultural preference for relatively informal and friendly gatherings with the need to act as good stewards of the Friends on behalf of our community.

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## Committee meetings and subcommittees

The complexity of the Festival as well as the Play space and Biodiversity projects means that Friends business is increasingly being run by enthusiastic subcommittees.

This is a positive development, since it allows more people to become involved in leadership roles as well as allowing people to pursue increasingly complex specialist interests within the group.

At the same time, we're very keen to balance out the range of volunteering opportunities so that our hugely successful and popular Festival does not become all-encompassing.

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## Making Committee meetings more infrequent but more formal

For this reason, we're proposing holding just **two formal Committee meetings a year** - one at some point in July, which can include the Festival wash-up, and a second in November, which will also serve as the AGM.

These formal meetings will provide:

- The ability for Committee members to provide better stay abreast of all Friends activities and provide better oversight without getting bogged down in minutiae.

- The ability to stay abreast of key developments via **top level reports from each of the current Subcommittees or areas** including Biodiversity, Play area, Festival, Volunteering, Finance and other subcommittee activities.
- Better visibility on our activities for the wider community.

The minutes of both Committee meetings will be published on the website, alongside the subcommittee reports and an overview of our accounts.

This should provide a mechanism for ensuring transparency about everything we're doing for the interest and engagement of our wider community.

We don't believe the Subcommittee chairs should be expected to minute every meeting. However, they should provide a twice yearly update report for these formal Committee meetings. They should not be too onerous - a side or two of A4 with all the key points. Ideally these should be provided at least a week in advance to give everyone the chance to read them.

These Subcommittee reports will be published alongside the meeting minutes on our website.

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## **Committee member portfolios**

We'd also like to consider formalising the responsibilities and portfolios of each Committee member.

For example, we'd ask each Committee member to serve on at least one Subcommittee as well as committing to ownership of a clear portfolio within the group or the relevant Subcommittee, for example, Volunteer engagement, running the Stalls, heading up the Tiny Forest or looking after the Main stage.

A growing challenge for Heads of Festival in particular has been the need to manage multiple portfolios. To keep the Festival as well as Biodiversity work sustainable, we're going to ask for clearer commitments and ownership around key areas.

It's possible we may map these out as particular documented Portfolio roles so that new members coming in understand any related responsibilities. The goal is to create a mechanism would help to spread the load without things becoming too onerous for anyone or any single individual.

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## **For approval**

We're asking the Committee to review and agree the two meeting plus report structure. (Committee portfolios for further discussion.)