



# FRIENDS OF THE STRAND POOL

## INAUGURAL MEETING MINUTES

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> June 2016 7.00pm at Sunlight Centre, Gillingham ME7 1LX

Attendance: Peter Wright, Jackie Wright, Victoria Hill, Jo Matthews, Alan Blyth, Barbara Monaghan, Paul Ewart, Jason Terry, Eve Terry, Cllr. Pat Cooper, David Gaul, Sally Smith, Jade Edwards, Adrian Sambrook, John Jones, Cllr. Adam Price, Alan Snipp, Fay Snipp, Graham Bourne, Jane Bourne, Ruth Cavalier Finn, Geoffrey Cavalier, Ann Cavalier

Apologies: Cllr. Andy Stamp, Tania Holland-Williams, Jean Newman, Val Jarvis, Terry Cooper, Benita Wright, Huw Thomas, Ray (*surname*), Monica D'Agata

### 1.0 WELCOME

Peter Wright (PW) explained the background to the Friends of the Strand Pool (FOSP) being formed in the past three weeks, following dismay at greatly-reduced Pool opening hours being implemented by Medway Council. PW advised that FOSP would be an 'unincorporated association', to be a credible and recognised group but without being a legal entity. PW proposed that the meeting would a) facilitate the formal structure of FOSP, and b) provide a forum for all in attendance to air their views. The elected FOSP committee would then work to implement the agreed strategy and communicate progress.

Declarations of interest were noted from Cllr. Pat Cooper, Cllr. Adam Price and from Jade Edwards from the KM Group

Informal introductions were given by all attending, including many with significant history of using the Strand Pool

### 2.0 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chair – Victoria Hill (VH), proposed Jackie Wright (JW), seconded Sally Smith (SS)

Vice-Chair – Peter Wright (PW), proposed VH, seconded SS

Secretary – not appointed (PW and VH to manage for now)

Treasurer – Alan Blyth (AB), proposed VH, seconded JW

Membership officer – not appointed (offers sought)

Committee Members – Jackie Wright (JW), Sally Smith (SS), Jane Bourne (JB) and Adrian Sambrook (AS), Barbara Monaghan (BM), and Jo Matthews (JM) were elected

### 3.0 CONSTITUTION

VH referred those present to the copy draft Constitution documents that had been distributed, and took the meeting through the details by page. Comments and suggestions from the floor were noted for addition and / or amendment but the document was agreed as a whole to be appropriate.

**Action 3.1** PW to provide a revised, completed Constitution for the records before the next committee meeting.

## 4.0 CURRENT SITUATION

VH briefly covered the 2016 opening hours arrangements at the Pool and how these had changed from previous seasons, and covered the various letters and e-mails that had already been sent in protest to M.P.s, Councillors and Council Officers. Some of the responses to these were read out or summarised – most appeared to be similar or identical in their wording, to the effect that 'budget cuts had forced closures, and that little could be done'.

However, JW, and others, had just received a response from Cllr. Howard Doe, portfolio holder responsible for Sports, Leisure and Tourism, with a slightly more conciliatory approach, suggesting that Bob Dimond, Head of SL&T, 'is quite prepared to discuss whether the hours should be re-allocated' and 'will consider any suggestions for improving notification', in regard to opening on warmer days outside the core opening hours. The meeting took this as a positive sign, and evidence that the volume of complaints sent to councillors and others had achieved some recognition.

VH took the meeting through the excellent press coverage to date, with special thanks to the KM Medway Messenger who had been very supportive and fair-minded, and the additional exposure provided by KMTV, BBC Radio Kent and Kent University.

The group's social media work was also highlighted by VH, with remarkable growth being achieved in a short space of time. The online petition at change.com is about to reach 1600 signatories, with paper signatories adding another 320+. PW reported that the Facebook page, 'strandlidoopenforswimming', set up by Tania Holland-Williams, had a page reach of 3250, with 2354 post engagements, i.e. people liking, sharing or commenting. Daily contact with 300 to as many as 800 people was being achieved.

VH advised that the Twitter page #strandlido had attracted 70 followers, and that other outdoor swimming enthusiast sites such as H2 Open Magazine, Outdoor Swimming Society and Community Pools and Lido were supporting and communicating the Strand Pools' challenges.

Suggestions were made from the floor to link to Streetlife and ME Postcode sites

**Action 4.1 PW to look at links with Streetlife and ME postcode sites.**

**Action 4.2 All to share responses to letters written with friends@strandpool@gmail.com, these to be scanned and emailed to all committee members**

## 5.0 ACTION PLAN

VH proposed that the first aim should be to arrange a meeting with Bob Dimond, Head of SL&T. This was enthusiastically endorsed from the floor, and suggestions gathered for the content, as follows:

**Opening position to be to restore last seasons' opening hours  
Why no consultation and / or discussion with users and councillors?**

Then to understand SL&T position in regard to:

Pool dirty on first day (May 28<sup>th</sup>), some cleaning has now taken place  
Changing rooms still 'disgusting'

How is Pool income and usage measured? Who checks?

What are trends from previous seasons?

What expenses are allocated to Pool from Strand Park?

What is effect of City Card?

What is deemed an 'acceptable' level of usage / income?

Is Pool expected to make profit / break even / or cost a certain figure?

How much was lost on beach huts and zorb balls last season?

Was any market research carried out? Has any ever been carried out?

What proportion of the annual fair income is allocated to offset Pool expenses?

How is Pool (and Park) communicated to local and foreign students?

What are the current policies regarding numbers of lifeguards and other staff?

Proposed 'Met Office 24 degrees scenario' – temperature set is unrealistic and too high  
How is the proposed 'Met Office' scenario to be implemented and communicated?

Is SL&T aware of the widespread dislike of 'sessions', and the negative impact on attendance in 2015 (particularly in the 10.00 to 12.00 period selected as an example by SL&T as an uneconomic period)?

Is SL&T aware that staff are using expensive tap water to fill the Pool, and do not seem to know how to operate the efficient river water / filter system that provides the salt water that is a Strand Pool USP?

What is SL&T planning to recognise the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Pool on 27<sup>th</sup> June?

FOSP will explain that it wishes to offer assistance – we can help with communication, with marketing, with events, with proposals for early hours swimming with lower attendances, with knowledge of the pump and filtration system (Graham Bourne), with volunteers to help keep costs down, and so on

Further discussion took place regarding the most effective way to present the petitions. VH advised that the next full Council Meeting was not until 21<sup>st</sup> July, too late for any useful effect on the restricted June and July days. But possibly a good way to keep the spotlight on the issue, depending on the outcome of the expected meeting with SL&T.

PW asked if a website could be set up to allow easy communication to all Pool users, and to be another way in which FOSP could aid SL&T with the successful running of the Pool. Cllr. Adam Price offered a contact of his who has set up a number of community websites. Meanwhile, PW will secure a suitable domain name 'strandpool.co.uk'.

The need to secure free meeting space for FOSP was discussed. Meetings would need to take place on weekdays after work. There were several offers from the floor to make enquiries locally.

**Action 5.1 VH and PW to write to Bob Dimond on behalf of FOSP to request meeting**

**Action 5.2 PW to secure website domain name**

**Action 5.3 AP to provide community contact to assist with FOSP website design**

**Action 5.4 All – to provide an offer of volunteering help they can provide – eg cleaning, litter pick, etc to friendsstrandpool@gmail.com ASAP**

**Action 5.5 PW and VH to provide update to group following meeting with Bob Dimond**

**Action 5.6 Local free meeting space enquiries to be made – JM – MEMS, AB – Rugby Club, Sally – ASDA.**

## **6.0 MEMBERSHIP**

VH requested feedback from the meeting about establishing a formal membership structure. Confirmation was quickly agreed about this in principle, and discussion moved to a fee model, to enable FOSP to manage ongoing smaller costs such as meeting room fees.

£10.00 per head was suggested, then adjusted on discussion to £5.00 per person or £10.00 per family, with all under 16's free. The meeting agreed this fee structure.

Membership benefits to be considered by committee in due course.

Other fund raising ideas were aired, to include a Picnic at the Pool, and a sponsored 'Channel Swim' to celebrate the 120<sup>th</sup> anniversary to raise funds. Committee to explore these and other ideas.

**Action 6.1 Membership benefits to be considered by committee at next meeting**

**Action 6.2 All to consider activities and contribution to mark and support the pools 120 year anniversary. All to send ideas and offers to [friendsofstrandpool@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofstrandpool@gmail.com)**

**Action 6.3 Discuss diversity of membership of FOSP at next meeting – focus on attracting young people.**

## **7.0 CLOSE**

There being no further business to discuss, VH thanked everyone for their attendance and support. FOSP will report back on progress and schedule another meeting once they have met with SL&T.

**Meeting closed at 8.40 pm.**