

farnham HUMANISTS

www.farnham-humanists.org.uk
covering West Surrey & N.E. Hampshire

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MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 17 February 2013

The ninth annual general meeting of Farnham Humanists was held on 17 February 2013 at the Hop Blossom Pub.

Present included: Jennie Johnson, Jean Fawbert, Damond Fawbert, Joyce Hurd, Bob Jones, Averil Marks, Vincent Marks, Simon Johnson, Mike Adams, Alan Montgomery, Linda Montgomery, Jim Herrick, Tricia Wallis, James Wallis, David Savage, Keith Hayward, Sid Clough, Gwen, Ailsa Davies, Alec Leggatt, Pam Leggatt, Greta Thomas, Douglas Gilbey, Wendy Gwen, Sylvia Harper, Roy Weedon, Sue Shaw. 27 attended.

Apologies: Ruth & John de Prey, Belinda Schwehr, Sue Willson.

Approval of the minutes of the last meeting: No objections were raised. Minutes approved.

Matters arising: None

Chairman's report: Jennie Johnson reported on a full and active year for Farnham Humanists, as follows:
'Farnham Humanists' Chair's Annual Report February 2013

It's been very pleasing to look back at the past year and realise that we have several new people and to see just how many activities we've been involved in.

Our monthly Sunday meetings

We've been stimulated by a number of eminent speakers

- Anne Marie Waters from One Law for All on how British women are controlled by Sharia Law
- Professor Derek Diamond on how a gap between rich and poor is bad for the well-off
- An Anthropologist's view on Humanism from Dr Matthew Engelke
- Local MP Sir Gerald Howarth's views on defence
- Richard Thomas on Farnham's radical William Cobbett

Belinda Schwehr led two of our Sunday meetings –an ethical jury on a terminal illness dilemma followed by an evening on how to set up an advanced decision or living will. Several members have now completed one. Sue Willson reports that her new advanced decision impressed a Farnham Hospital consultant who said medics wish many more people would do them. Thank you to Belinda for being so generous with your time and professional knowledge.

We have devised a varied programme for this coming year. Our first meeting is on Sunday March 10th and is a talk by award-winning journalist and author Janet Heimlich on religiously motivated child abuse and neglect in the United States.

Two public meetings

Thanks also go to Belinda for her excellent chairing of our two lively public meetings: our Big Society discussion meeting with local MP and Secretary of State Jeremy Hunt and our debate on House of Lords reform with two Lords, a Bishop and an Electoral Reform expert. Glen Travis from Farnham University of the Creative Arts has posted a video of the debate on YouTube. Our debate also raised around £200 for Waverley CAB and WaterAid.

Community

Our U3A course has been repeated this year by popular demand. Thank you to David Savage and Sue Shaw for running the course and to the many contributors including Sue Willson, Alec Leggatt, Belinda Schwehr, Jennie Johnson, Mike Adams, Roy Weedon, and Sylvia Harper.

Ruth De Prey has taken over from Alec Leggatt as the voluntary Humanist Listener working alongside Religious Chaplains for Surrey police. Thank you to Alec for all your efforts in developing such a good relationship with the police.

David Savage and Alec Leggatt have continued to support the Surrey County Council Equality Group and the Waverley Borough Council Faith Forum. David has also been attending a chaplaincy training course at St Thomas' Hospital in London.

Jennie Johnson supported Churches Together's running of the local hustings for Surrey Police Commissioner.

Schools

The new Surrey RE syllabus has been published by SACRE (Standing Advisory Council for RE) with significantly more mentions of non-religious views and a new Humanist module for 11 to 14 year olds on "How non-religious people answer the Big Questions".

Following an invitation through Ruth de Prey's role as Police Listener, Sue Willson took part in a multi-faith morning in a comprehensive school in Woking discussing morality and life after death.

Ceremonies

Roy Weedon and Ailsa Davies have now added Baby Namings to their celebrancy accreditations. They both offer Weddings, Civil Partnerships and Funerals. We also have Sue Willson offering Weddings and Civil Partnerships and Alec offering funerals.

BHA involvement

Several of us have attended BHA run events including: Roy a two day Train the Trainers course on Humanism, Sue Willson the BHA Groups Annual meeting and Jennie a BHA School Volunteers pilot training programme.

Social events

We continue to meet for a chat over a drink at the Fox on the first Wednesday of the month at 8:00. Do drop in and join us. Other socialising has included a pub walk, garden party, mid-winter festive gathering and we have 40 coming to our annual dinner rescheduled for Feb 24th. Our new Book Club is flourishing and thanks to Sid for initiating this.

New ideas and activities

We really would welcome any ideas for talks, community involvement or social activities.

We are taking up Alan and Linda Montgomery's very generous offer to buy Farnham Humanists a projector and screen. Thank you Alan and Linda.

One area several of us are keen on is becoming more proactive in schools supporting RE lessons and assemblies. We're putting together a list of people who would be prepared to be involved with this even if it's only once a year. One route is through Kauser Akhtar, Faith Links Adviser to the Guildford Diocese and a Muslim woman on SACRE, who would like to be able to call on Humanist speakers. Please let us know if you would be willing to be involved. Sue Willson has offered to do a workshop to help us feel more confident going into schools.

We'd also welcome any help with our website or our biannual newsletter.

We're losing three valued members of our committee.

Alec Leggatt initiated the group in 2004 and has been active on the committee ever since giving talks, building links with Surrey Police, local equality and interfaith groups, the Hospice and as a funeral celebrant. He now feels it's time to retire and for others to steer the group forward. In recognition of his unique contribution to the group we would like to give him permanent life honorary membership.

Jim Herrick is moving to Cambridge. As well as the author of several books including 'Humanism- an introduction', Jim has edited various Humanist magazines and been generally prominent in the Humanist movement (see his Wikipedia entry!) We've hugely benefitted from Jim's expertise and friendship. We're saying good-bye for another time as Jim has yet to complete a house sale and purchase. But we wish him all the best for the move and hope he will come back and visit us often.

Belinda is also stepping down but fortunately for us she is keen to continue to support us by chairing public events and generally providing us with the benefits of her many areas of expertise.

Thank you so much to Jim, Alec and Belinda.

Lastly a very big thank you to our Secretary Sue Shaw. The success of the group is in no small way a result of Sue's tireless efforts and thoughtful sensitivity. '

Jennie opened the meeting. No comments were made.

Treasurer's report: Mike Adams reported that he had drawn up the accounts and he will present them to the auditor once he has received the bank account which covers the date of the AGM. Total subscriptions, £505 included some 2011-12 subscriptions. Other income included £28 from the U3A Humanism course. Expenditure £459.90, mainly expenses for the annual debate and 'Jeremy Hunt 'Big Society' discussion.

Mike thanked Jennie and Simon for sponsoring our website and Alan for giving wine for the speakers at the debate. The accounts were accepted.

Subscriptions. Mike Adams recommended a modest increase of our annual subscription from £10 to £12.50. Our first increase since Farnham Humanists was formed. A vote was carried.

Members are welcome to add a voluntary contribution.

Subscriptions are now due and should be made payable to Farnham Humanists and sent to Mike Adams at 10 New House Farm Lane, Wood Street Village, Guildford, Surrey GU3 3DD.

Election of Chair: Jennie Johnson proposed by Sue Shaw and endorsed Alan Montgomery.

Election of Vice Chairman: Roy Weedon. proposed by Jennie Johnson and seconded by David Savage

Re election of officers and committee:

Secretary: Sue Shaw proposed Pam Leggatt, seconded Jean Fawbert

Treasurer: Mike Adams proposed Roy Weedon, seconded Alan Montgomery

Committee Members: Alan Montgomery

David Savage

Sue Willson

Appointed to the Committee: Ruth de Prey proposed Sue Shaw, seconded Alec Leggatt

John de Prey proposed Roy Weedon, seconded Alec Leggatt

Tricia Wallis proposed Sue Shaw, seconded Simon Johnson

Appointment of auditor: Simon Johnson was re-appointed as auditor.

Affiliations to the British Humanist Association (BHA) and National Secular Society (NSS) agreed.

Any other business: None

The meeting was closed.