

# Sunderland Green Spaces Forum Constitution

## *An Unincorporated Association*

### 1. Key Terms of Reference

- **Green space** : an area of land, of which a substantial part is covered in vegetation <sup>1</sup>
- **Working Groups**: The main Forum meeting or the Committee can opt to set up Working Groups - which will not have any decision making status but will report back to the main group - comprising three or four members, of which one should be on the Committee, to look at a particular subject in more detail or to discuss issues with other bodies such as the Sunderland City Council.
- **Equal Opportunities**: The Forum is committed to being accessible and inclusive and to ensuring that its meetings are run in an inclusive, friendly and accessible way. The Forum recognises the importance of both diversity and non-discrimination and will work to ensure this occurs.

### 2. Aims and Objectives

- a. To help protect green space, particularly its flora and fauna, both now and in the future.
- b. To offer ideas, knowledge and experience for the sensitive development of landscape or visual amenity in the Sunderland area.
- c. To act as a source of independent advice on green space in the Sunderland area.
- d. To encourage greater public use and appreciation of green space, promoting the areas wherever possible to those groups that make less use of them.

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<sup>1</sup> It was suggested at SGSF meeting 28/11/17 that the terms of reference did not include water and a suggested amendment made as follows 'Green and Open Spaces, an area of land, of which a substantial part is covered in vegetation but also including water bodies adjacent/ upstream/downstream and connected to specific areas of land. Can include rivers and streams, lakes and ponds and groundwater'.

- e. To influence green space decision making, including resources allocation, on a local, regional and national level.
- f. To act as a key consultation body on green spaces in the Sunderland area.
- g. To offer an opportunity to share ideas and experience.

### **3. Membership and Representation**

#### **3.1 *Members:***

Membership of the Forum will be for resident led green spaces or topic wide/thematic groups with an interest in protecting/improving, for example, natural spaces, allotments and outdoor playgrounds.

#### **3.2 *Groups:***

A 'group' in this context would not need a constitution or any other formal organisation, only to be able to show it is committed to being open to all and able to sign a membership form that states this.

#### **3.3 *Representatives:***

Groups can nominate two named people who will act as the lead representatives of the group on the Forum. There is no restriction as attendees from a membership group.

#### **3.4 *Becoming a member:***

The Forum will welcome new members who meet the terms 3.1 to 3.3 above. They will cease to be members if they no longer meet these terms.

#### **3.5 *Voting:***

Each group will carry a single vote. Should the group need to vote, one of the two representatives will vote on behalf of the group.

#### **3.6 *Councillors***

Groups should not nominate Councillors as representatives for the group. Councillors will be welcome to attend the Forum and will often be invited by the Forum to attend for specific purposes in relation to the agenda. Councillors will be non-voting.

#### **3.7 *Council officers:***

Officers will act as advisers to the Forum when invited to attend, but will be non-voting.

### **3.8 City wide, regional or national organisations:**

These organisations (such as the C.P.R.E, Civic Society, Durham Wildlife Trust, Groundwork and Age UK Sunderland) which also meet the other criteria 3.1 to 3.2 above, can be members with one vote per organisation.

## **4. Governance**

**4.1** The forum will run its affairs in line with the agreed constitution, which may be amended at an Annual General Meeting.

### **4.2 Chair**

The Forum will elect a Chair by vote at each Annual General Meeting. The Chair will act as the first point of contact between the Forum and Sunderland City Council, represent the Forum membership in a formal capacity where appropriate, and ensure the Forum meets the other terms set out in this proposal (in particular, relating to equal opportunities and accessibility).

### **4.3 Vice Chair**

The Forum will elect a Vice Chair who will act in the absence of the Chair.

### **4.4 Rotation**

Neither the Chair or Vice Chair should hold this position for more than three years.

### **4.4 Committee**

Committee Members will be elected at the Annual Meetings. The Committee can also appoint Committee Members between meetings with endorsement being asked for at the next full meeting. The committee should represent groups from both as wide a range of types of green space and as many different areas of Sunderland as possible. Where areas or types of green space are underrepresented, the committee will encourage new groups to join as members.

### **4.5 Eligibility**

Chair, Vice Chair and other members of the committee should be members (as defined in 3.1). At no time will both the Chair and Vice Chair positions be held by members from the same group.

### **4.6 Committee Roles**

The Chair, in consultation with Forum members, will appoint committee members to any specific roles considered necessary. Roles will include (but are not limited to):

- a. *Secretary* with overall responsibility for keeping a list of member groups, communicating with members and organising meetings
- b. *Treasurer* with responsibility for operating any bank accounts and keeping accounts

The roles of Secretary and Treasurer cannot be held by the same committee member and the Chair and Vice Chair cannot be appointed to these roles. The appointments for each year will be reported to members at the first full meeting after the AGM.

#### **4.7 Committee Duties and Functions**

- a. Engagement with other organisations - including statutory, voluntary and business - where appropriate in pursuit of the Forums aims and objectives.
- b. Establishing sub-groups to achieve specific aims and objectives.
- c. Managing the Forum's mailing lists.
- d. Approving activities in the name of the Forum.
- e. Managing the finances of the Forum.
- f. Communicating with the Forum's membership about the Committee's activities and decisions.
- g. Sending minutes of Committee meetings to the Forum membership.
- h. The Chair, (or Vice Chair in the absence of the Chair) may respond on behalf of the Forum on any issue where the Forum is consulted or asked for its views, or where a public statement is appropriate. Before responding the Chair will consult with other Committee Members where possible and consider views previously expressed by the Forum

#### **4.8. Management Committee Meetings**

- a. The Management Committee will meet as required.
- b. The quorum for Management Committee meetings shall be three. If, during the meeting, attendance falls below the specified quorum the meeting will end and all un-transacted business shall be added to the agenda for the next scheduled meeting

- c. Voting at Management Committee meetings shall be undertaken in accordance with clause 4.8 (b)

#### **4.9 General Meetings**

- a. General Meetings can be convened at any time by the Forum members and shall take place no sooner than 21 days from the receipt of a written request, signed by no less than 5 voting members specifying the object of the meeting. This can include any special matter which the group may desire to place before the membership, including alterations to the constitution
- b. A General Meeting can also be called by the Management Committee (by a simple majority vote) to deal with any special matter the group may desire to place before the membership, including alterations to the constitution
- c. The Management Committee must give 21 days notice of a General Meeting to its membership
- d. The quorum for a General Meeting of the membership shall be 5 voting members of the total voting membership, whichever is greater
- e. The motion will only be carried if a two thirds majority of members present and voting, vote in favor of the resolution

#### **4.10 Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

- a. The Annual General Meeting of the group shall be held every 12 months and no later than 15 months after the last AGM. With the exception of the first AGM of the group which must take place within 12 months of the adoption date on this constitution
- b. The AGM shall include the following business:-
  - (i) To receive and, if approved, adopt the groups statement of accounts
  - (ii) To elect the Management Committee of the organisation
  - (iii) To consider, and if approved, sanction any duly made alteration to the constitution

- c. At least 28 days clear notice of the Annual General Meeting shall be given
- d. The quorum for an Annual General Meeting shall be at least five voting members.
- e. Nominations from individuals wishing to stand for election to the Management Committee must be submitted in writing, to the Secretary, 14 days prior to the proposed AGM date. In addition, Committee members can nominate up to the day of the meeting.

#### **4.11 Finance:**

- a. All funds belonging to or raised for the group must be paid directly into a bank or account in the name of the Forum and may only be used in furthering the aims of the Forum
- b. No member of the Committee shall be employed by the group or receive any payment or other benefits from its funds except for reasonable expenses properly incurred for the purposes of the Forum
- c. The treasurer will keep detailed accounts and report regularly to management committee meetings
- d. The Forum will make provision to have at least four signatories. All cheques will require the signatories of two of the four signatories

#### **4.12 Alteration to the Constitution**

- a) Any proposal to amend the Constitution must be submitted in writing to the Secretary 21 days before an Annual General Meeting (see 4.8.2 above)
- b) A resolution can only be passed by two thirds of the members present and voting at such a meeting

#### **4.13 Dissolution**

- a) If at any general / committee meeting a resolution for the dissolution of the group is passed by a simple majority of those present, such resolution shall be considered at a Special General Meeting held no later than 21 days thereafter (as outlined in clauses 4.8.2 (a) &(b)). The resolution must be passed by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. The Committee shall then or at any future date specified in the resolution wind up the affairs of the group

- b) Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be donated toward charitable groups whose Aims closely follow the Aims of the Forum.
- c) Any remaining assets received through grants should be returned to the grant making body under their terms and conditions.

#### **4.14 Arrangements until first Annual General Meeting**

Until the first annual general meeting takes place the individuals whose signatures appear overleaf will act as the Management Committee of the group.

This constitution was adopted on \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ 2017, by the persons whose Name and Signatures appear below:

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