

Bee Friends Frodsham Annual Report : 20th. June 2024

Last year's Annual Meeting was held in July – and much has happened over the last eleven months. The aim of Bee Friends is to provide times and places where people can come together, make connections and find networks of support. Bee Friends has continued to meet that aim with the help of many Volunteers and other helpers who have diligently maintained a weekly Thursday tea and coffee morning and have stayed once a month to provide soup and cakes. The number of Visitors (our customers) has continued to increase and we regularly welcome new people who pop in to see what's going on or turn up because other Visitors have told them about what we are trying to do here. So heartfelt thanks both to our Volunteers and to our Visitors. I would also like to thank the seven members of the Steering Group who have worked so well together and also that we appreciate having this central place in Frodsham - the Parish Hall - in which to meet and chat.

Over the past year our regular Thursday slot has included sessions where students from the RNCM in Manchester have entertained us with programmes of classical music. We've occasionally had ice cream and, just recently, a lavish tea party to mark D Day. Once a month we have been joined by OPAL who provide advice about managing smartphone technology. Each week a small creative workshop beavers away and links between Bee Friends and The Memory Café, the STAR Peer Bereavement Support group have been established. Earlier this year several Visitors took up the offer of a 'Mature Drivers' course and, more recently, a 'Meet and Eat' programme at Frodsham Community Centre has started.

Recognition of the work of Bee Friends has spread widely including 'Camerados' a national agency which – like us - provides spaces where people can meet and talk. Back in February, our researcher Rachel Atkins, presented us with a report titled 'Narratives of Wellbeing' which, with many comments from our Visitors tells the story of Bee Friends. It is an important piece of work – thank you Rachel. Every few months we produce a Newsletter which informs people of what's going on.

Our links with Cheshire West and Chester have included a series of training sessions for us and for other agencies represented by The Frodsham, Helsby and Elton Care Partnership. We encourage our volunteers to support these excellent monthly sessions. They include safeguarding, awareness of volunteer boundaries, dementia, communication and listening skills, loss and grief, first aid and mental health issues.

Bee Friends is not static but constantly evolving as the dialogue between our Volunteers and our Visitors continues. We have another 'first' coming soon – a coach trip to Llandudno - and we've begun to consider making a short film about our activities. On the home front we're hoping to set up another coffee shop before long at The Windings in Helsby. Looking ahead to next year, Bee Friends plans to play a big part in inviting an organisation called 'Town Anywhere' – which we're renaming 'Frodsham 2040' – to encourage businesses, local groups and agencies to come together to celebrate and enhance the communal life of the town as we look to the future. With the General Election approaching we are all very much aware of the isolation so many people experience at a time when financial pressures can make life so hard. So, thank you once more for making Frodsham Bee Friends a significant part of that vital business of caring for one another.

David Leslie (Secretary) 20th. June 2024