

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Friends of Holland Garden

Held at 7.30 pm, 4th July 2016 at Christ Church Hall, Cottenham Park Road
N.B these will be formally approved at the AGM in 2016- June/July - date tbc

Present:

- Committee: Robert Britton (Chairperson), Iain Carmichael (Hon Treasurer), Alan Hancock (Community) and Cherry McCormack (Hon Secretary).
- 12 local residents who are members of the Friends (plus 3 apologies received).

Welcome & Introduction

The Chairman welcomed every one and introduced himself and the other members of the Committee.

Approval of the Minutes: AGM 15th June 2015

Bob asked for approval of the minutes from last year's AGM. These were agreed unanimously.

Change to the Constitution

Bob proposed that the Committee be changed to 4 members (currently 5 in the constitution), due to the lack of local people being prepared to commit the time and get involved in running the FOHG.

This motion was seconded and agreed unanimously.

Election of the Committee for 2015/16

The existing Committee indicated their willingness to continue in Office and were duly elected for another year.

New committee member

Jenny Baker who has sent her apologies has agreed to join the committee for 2015/16
This was proposed and agreed unanimously.

Annual Report of the Committee

Financial Matters and Treasurer's report

1. Iain presented the accounts for 2014/15 and answered questions about the revenues from tennis subscriptions and King College School. Stewart Sanson proposed the motion to accept the accounts and they were approved unanimously. N.B Revenue will show an increase in 2015/16 due to tennis subscriptions and advertising revenue. Iain confirmed that this will include money received from Kings College School for advertising their open days.
2. Iain thanked Mr CJ Newby who continues to provide an independent review of the accounts and proposed that Mr Newby continue to provide this service. Stewart Sanson proposed the formal motion to appoint Mr Newby and it was approved unanimously.
3. Iain suggested that subscriptions remain the same for 2016/17 - £10 for a family, £5 for an individual and £6/£3 respectively for concessions. Kevin McCormack proposed the formal motion and it was approved unanimously.

Update on tennis subscriptions

FOHG agreed with London Borough of Merton to collect tennis subs for London Borough of Merton and manage the membership list and access codes for the court gates. In return, FOHG keep 60% of the revenue to invest back in Holland Garden. The Committee have agreed to set aside a proportion of this money so that things like tennis nets can be replaced when required. However any large capital expenditure like re-surfacing of the courts will have to be negotiated with London Borough of Merton, as the subscriptions received will not cover major expenditure. The last major refurbishment of the courts in 2010 was funded by The London Marathon Charitable Trust and London Borough of Merton.

Iain confirmed that there are approximately 80 tennis members.

The Secretary's report

1. The Committee received a few of letters and e-mails about the closure of Holland Garden gates by LBM on 16th July 2015 during the day, which coincided with Hollymount School's picnic. All were answered and posters were placed the gates to clarify that a contractor working for LBM had inadvertently locked the gates; it was nothing to do with FOHG. We worked with RAWW to include an apology from LBM in their newsletter to local residents.
2. We have had more meetings with LBM on the updates on the outsourcing of the park services. Due to legal issues, LBM explained that they could not share details about bidders with the Friends Groups, until they had a preferred bidder. We should learn who the preferred partner is later in July and the service levels LBM have agreed to. We submitted our requirements last year but LBM have not been clear how or if they used the submissions from the various Friends Groups in the borough.
3. The Committee met with LBM 15th April 2016 to discuss remedial work in Holland Garden and agree an action plan. 2 of 3 actions have been completed:
 - a. Pruning of the shrubs in the 3 beds at the top of the Garden by the rockery
 - b. Weeding of the borders by Orchard Lane and mulching to suppress weeds
 - c. **And still to start** - Removal and pruning of dense shrubbery bordering Pepys Road to create clear sight lines into Holland Garden from the road. This helps to prevent anti social behaviour/ vandalism.
4. Following recent damage to the tall hedges by the tennis courts and several trees we put up notices about First Aid for trees and hedges, designed to engage children and adults to help look after the Garden. LBM have put an orange fence around the damaged hedge. Alan and Bob had a very positive meeting with the Headteacher of Hollymount School. As a result several pupils have designed a number of posters which are now displayed around the Garden.

The Community representative's report

Alan talked through progress in the last 12 months:

1. He thanked all the members who open the gates each morning from April to October. However LBM have been sporadic in closing the gates at night recently, which we know from experience leads to vandalism
2. The wildflower beds were planted for another year, which was funded by FOHG. The flowers are now blooming after a spell of very wet weather.
3. LBM should replace the magnolia tree which was snapped off last year, along with another memorial tree in the autumn. The Girl Guides are funding a replacement
4. Dog bins have been removed by LBM so all rubbish goes in the same bin. It is part of a cost saving initiative.
5. There have been problems where owners have allowed their dogs off their leashes in the Garden, which has resulted in some damage to flower beds. Following the success of the posters designed by children at Hollymount about caring for Holland Garden, Alan will try and involve Hollymount in helping to educate dog walkers and take responsibility for the Garden.
6. The Gardening Club meets on Tuesdays; it relies on a hard core of people. New members are always welcome. They work hard to keep the beds tidy, especially as LBM do less work each year.
7. There have been issues with youths gathering by the pavilion at night when the Garden is closed. They have ripped several park benches out of their concrete footings and in some cases moved them onto the roof, causing more damage. Local residents should call the police on 999 if they see people acting suspiciously in the Garden.

Discussion on plans and priorities for 2016/17

Iain proposed that some of the surplus be invested in refurbishing the benches and re-siting those that had been ripped up from their footings, around the Garden. He had obtained quotes for 20 benches will cost £5000-6000, which includes new bases.

This was supported unanimously.

The Committee also asked members for ideas they had to invest in the Garden.

Formal business was concluded.

AOB

The surface of the tennis courts is getting rough and needs investigation. The stones from the pétanque area are drifting over and damaging the surface. It is also getting greasy in places. The Committee have asked LBM to treat the surface to get rid of the algae and moss and are awaiting a reply.

There was a discussion about the area used for pétanque. Although it doesn't seem to be used very often two members said their families did use it. It was agreed to publicise pétanque to see if usage increased and review the situation. One suggestion included replacing it with outdoor chess areas. The grant from the Marathan Trust which paid for the tennis courts did include a pétanque area, so any change will involve further investigation.

Once again there are low hanging branches by the tennis courts at eye level. Alan agreed to contact LBM to get this sorted out.

As LBM continue to reduce the manpower in Holland Garden it was suggested that local businesses like estate agents could be approached to sponsor flower beds. However this will mean somebody leading a project to investigate this and make it happen.

The Committee asked members for suggestions on how to get more local people involved in caring for Holland Garden, particularly those with children who use the Garden every day during term time. The use of large posters on railings would be explored as one option to advertise for helpers.

Jean Pinchin gave a vote of thanks for the Committee for all their work.

Bob closed the meeting and thanked everyone for their contribution.