

Friends of Palewell Common & Fields

Annual General Meeting

Monday 19th May 2014, 7.30 pm at All Saints Church Hall

1. The Chairman, David Evans, welcomed an excellent turnout for the meeting. He thanked representatives of Richmond Council, Glendale Golf, Sheen Common Cricket Club and Glendale – Nature's Gym for coming to the meeting, they will speak later in the meeting about what they have been doing on Palewell Common and about their plans for the year ahead. He invited people to raise any questions relating to any item. The Chairman introduced Jessica Rettie, Deputy Chairman, Andy Sutch, Treasurer and Angela Howorth, Secretary.

2. Chairman's Report for 2013/14:

The Chairman said that this has been a year of change with new contractors and there has been a 'bedding in' phase but he believed that the arrangements are now working reasonably well. The Friends have identified things to be done and there has been a good response from the Council. He asked people to raise any issues they had. The Common is he said well used by sports and dog owners. In spite of the heavy rain in the first couple of months of the year the Football resumed in early March.

There had been a number of one off events which had been successful. In August there had been a successful sports day. On 8th September Pistachios Café had organised an event which attracted lots of people. On 2nd February the Nursery worked with a charity to attract stem cell donors to help treat leukaemia patients. Later in March East Sheen Primary School had held a 5 km run.

Last year the Nursery School had submitted a planning application to extend numbers and hours. The Friends had expressed some concerns about the application but it had eventually been agreed by the Council. A member questioned whether it was the evening extension which we disagreed with, Andy Sutch confirmed it was.

The Chairman commented on the committee's activities. There had been three events. A Saturday morning Halloween event, a Christmas Event and an Easter Egg hunt. These were good opportunities to speak to people and to recruit new members.

In response to a comment from a member we had issued three e-mail reports and updated the Friends' website. Another thing we had done was to prepare to work with a member John Blundell to prepare short pictorial guides about fungi and birds on the common which we would like to display more prominently on the Common.

We continue to work to expand the sport facilities:

- the cricket square is now fenced off
- Boules piste: there is more demand and discussion to meet demand – a possible temporary pitch may be the solution.

Non-sport activities:

We had had three successful nature days led by Gina Beresford from Glendale-Nature's Gym and our ambition is to improve the woodland. The committee felt strongly that they should continue to run events and to hear local views. It was important that they talk to Richmond Council to discuss priorities and to represent local views. They were also hopeful that it might be possible to develop a nature walk.

Keith Hutchison of Park Drive asked if the old disused road/path through the woods might be planted as a wild flower walk plus a sculpture for the blind in the woods, it could be a project for young and old. The Friends had planted a wild flower meadow near the allotments which needs careful nurturing. The Chairman thanked Keith Hutchison.

3. Accounts 2013/2014:

Andy Sutch (AS) Treasurer, presented the accounts. He thanked Ken Cook for his role in the independent examination of the accounts.

The balance at the end of the year i.e. 31st March 2014 was £2,558 but this included donations to the value of £450 from Mortlake and East Sheen Society (MESS) and the University of the Third Age (U3A) to improve the Boules facilities, this £450 will be used for the third temporary piste.

The figures of new members will show in the accounts. The bulk of expenditure in 2013/14 has been on securing the cricket square and on the various events.

AS anticipated more expenses in 2014.

4. Membership Report:

Dhun Kenny (Membership Secretary) reported that when the Friends group started there were 107 members, this dropped to 63 more recently. Last year there were 65 members. This year 44 had so far renewed and events had generated 19 new members. She said we hope to meet our target of 80 to 100 this year and asked that people encourage others to join. The Chairman said we would like to increase our membership.

5. Election of Committee:

All current members have agreed to stand again. The following were proposed and seconded by the committee.

Chair	David Evans
Deputy Chair	Jessica Rettie
Treasurer	Andy Sutch
Secretary	Angela Howorth
Membership Secretary	Dhun Kenny
Executive Members	Bernard Adams
	Rikki Marks
	Jacqui Pattison

Two additional nominations have been received, Justine Nagaur and John Hockley of the Boules Group. The Chairman asked if any others present would like to stand, there were no additional nominations

The Chairman said that the two additional nominations filled the two current vacancies and invited the members present to elect all those nominated.

Andy Sutch seconded John Hockley and Jessica Rettie seconded Justine Nagaur. They and the current committee members were duly elected by members to the Committee.

6. Discussion with representatives of London Borough of Richmond and other partners on plans for 2014/15:

The Chairman invited Des Smith, standing in for David Allister the Parks Contracts Manager, to speak.

Des Smith said that the Friends of Palewell Common is a good and positive group and the Council enjoyed working with them. He said that golf and tennis were working well and that football was very successful. The Chair said that the relationship with Des and his colleagues in the Council is very good and welcomed the willingness of Richmond to work with Friends Groups. Bernard Adams thanked the Council for putting up netting to protect the Boules players from golfers.

Glendale Golf: John Dummett and a colleague attended the meeting. JD said that Glendale took the contract to run the Pitch & Putt course on the 1st January 2014 they run Richmond Park Golf Club and have a large investment there. Palewell offers exciting opportunities to improve and the possibility of an academy for young players. The key points so far:

* to maintain and improve the course at Palewell with new rubber tee bases, new flags and holes and work with Gina Beresford to tidy up the course

- * to concentrate on an academy for young players and get Richmond Park Golf Club involved
- * to improve security
- * to improve the kiosk

There are no revolutionary plans the priority is keeping the course in good condition.

Invited questions. Justine Nagaur asked if they would run holiday events for children?

John Dummmeett said they are in the process of getting an Academy team in place, they want to set up small groups for lessons and set up mini tournaments.

Andy Sutch mentioned coaching U3A and that Palewell can get back into golf and progress.

David Evans said the previous golf coach had worked well to build up a following in the local community and he hoped Glendale would do the same. JD said that they aim to be better than the previous contractor.

AS said that there had previously been a discount for regular users of the course - namely 10 for the price of 8. He wondered if a similar arrangement could be put in place again.

JD said there will shortly be a six month review of Palewell presented to Richmond Council.

Sheen Common Cricket Club: Giles Browne and Gareth Perkins spoke about the work they have done to enclose and improve the pitch. They thanked the Friends for their kind donation towards the cost of its upkeep. They would aim to progress Palewell Common as a home for the 3rd and 4th teams and over a period of four years aim to make it a really good pitch. It is wonderful to have Palewell, it is a ground which has great potential. Bernard Evans asked whether they would put in an artificial pitch. ? said that they hoped to improve the current pitch plus sight screens but it will take time. DE commented that it had been used for football.

Glendale – Nature's Gym: Gina Beresford explained that she had organised volunteer days for the Friends of Palewell Common. They had worked in the woodland cutting back and tidying up particularly along the paths. They had also planted bulbs in clearings. She was able to inform the Council if there were any major issues she is keen to involve local schools. Next Wednesday, 21st June, there is a volunteer day and she is planning to plant more wild bulbs and to tidy up the wild meadow, perhaps follow Crane Park with a mix of perennial planting with more diverse areas. GB said that the Princes Trust volunteers came to help at Palewell Common and had enjoyed the day.

DE suggested that we could create a path through the woods with informative signs. Justine Nagaur mentioned a tree was down by the tennis courts.

Robin Laidlaw raised the idea of encouraging young people to perhaps plant poppies as a form of remembering.

DE repeated that there would be a volunteer day next Wednesday.

7. Any Other Business:

John Hockley asked if it would be possible to speak about plans for a new Boules terrain. The Chair suggested this should be considered at the next meeting of the Committee.

Mr. Tony Checketts said that the machines used to clear the tennis courts were very noisy, would it be possible to use quieter machines?

The state of the courts was discussed, two are very poor. The Council do not think it worth spending as much as required. The current management contract is quite short so investment is unlikely. AS said the cost is likely to be £80,000/£100,000.

Mark Chase, our excellent local coach, had sent his apologies for absence due to a prior engagement. DE noted the comments on noise.

A member noted that some of the old concrete posts had been replaced with wooden posts and questioned whether this would make it more likely to attract drivers on to the common. DE replied that they are very solid posts and hoped that they are robust.

DE reported that he had been to several police liaison committee meetings. There had been no robberies on the Common this year. He hoped this would continue.

The Chairman thanked the representatives of the Council and the Contractors for attending and thanked all members for attending.

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50 p.m.