

Friends of Palewell Common & Fields

Annual General Meeting

Monday 18th May 2015 7.30 pm at All Saints Church Hall

1. The Chairman welcomed all those present and introduced the Committee, unfortunately the Deputy Chair, Jessica Rettie was unable to attend. He welcomed Councillor Brian Marcel, Yvonne Kelleher, Park Development Officer Richmond Borough Council, Mark Chase Tennis Coach at Palewell Common and Kate Maruici who has been involved in setting up a new Friends group for Sheen Common.

2. Chairman's Report 2014/15:

The Chairman reported on a successful year of events and activities and particularly of improvements to the Common.

Sport:

The boules pitch had been increased in size to create a third pitch and a new concrete edge put in place, the Council had borne the greatest part of the cost and the Friends had contributed to the costs plus a contribution from the Richmond University of the Third Age (U3A) group.

The new pitch had been opened on Saturday 9th May by Baroness Susan Kramer (who had opened the original pitch more than 10 years ago) and Bill Stevenson the local President of U3A. The use of the pitch has continued to grow.

Football, Tennis and Cricket continue to prosper.

There are some concerns about golf.

Conservation and Improvements to the Common:

A conservation charity, Froglife, has created a new Frog Pond in the woods with the aim of promoting frogs and wild life in the woods, there are some problems with local dogs and the committee are looking into possibly fencing in the frog pond.

Overall the ground maintenance has been done well by the contractors.

There is a water-logged area close to the tennis courts which has been fenced off, the possibility of planting the area to create a landscape feature is being discussed.

The Council has invested in improvements to the parking area with new kerbstones and new tarmac which has improved the overall look of the entrance to the Common.

The Chairman mentioned that a large tree had fallen into the brook at the Roehampton Gate end of the Common. The Council had removed branches but the tree is still growing. The Environment Agency assessed that there was no flood hazard and therefore responsibility lies with the houseowner. The Chairman commented that this was not entirely satisfactory.

The Chairman mentioned A Free Compost Day 6th June which will come under AOB.

Activities of Friends:

There had been two successful Open Days to inform users of the Common about our activities and to recruit new members, one in the Autumn on the 25th October 2014 and one in the Spring on the 9th May 2015.

The Spring event on the 9th May was the formal opening of the Boules pitch and also included an inaugural Palewell Common Dog Show, partnered with Dog Town (a local dog grooming business) which was very successful and attracted a good number of entries in each of the three categories. There were also competitions for children to take part in.

There had been a number of Conservation Days with Nature's Gym over the year when volunteers had worked to tidy up paths and open spaces in the woods. The council had supplied wood chippings which volunteers had laid on the main path which had a good impact for about three weeks. More recently volunteers had planted about 200 native plants.

The Chairman thanked Justine Nagaur who together with Tony Dowson has substantially updated our website. Justine Nagaur has also created a new Friends blog available from www.palewellcommon.org.uk.

The Chairman informed the meeting that he and Andy Sutch had been talking with Kate Maurici and the emerging group of Friends of Sheen Common to offer support and see if there were opportunities to collaborate.

The Future:

The Committee has proposed to Richmond Council an information/interpretation table to point out the different features on the common.

The Friends will continue environmental work to improve the woods and the common. The next volunteer day is on 24th June - meet at the entrance to the Common at 10.00 am.

The Friends will liaise with Richmond Council about the re-letting of the maintenance and sports contracts which starts in 2016.

3. Accounts for 2014/15:

Andy Sutch, Treasurer presented the annual accounts which showed that there was a small reduction in total funds over this financial year mainly as a consequence of the timing of our contributions to the new Boules pitch. There had been two large donations last year, one from U3A and one from MESS (Mortlake with East Sheen Society). These were for the extension of the Boules pitch. The Boules extension was much more costly than originally expected and the Council agreed to fund the majority of the cost, MESS therefore requested that their donation of £200 be reimbursed. In addition the costs of two AGM's had fallen in the same financial year.

Turnover for the year had been very similar to the previous year and the Friends remain in good financial health.

AS thanked Ken Cook for auditing the accounts. AS proposed that the Accounts be approved, the meeting approved the Accounts.

AS proposed that Ken Cook be appointed as Auditor for next year, the meeting approved the nomination.

4. Membership Report:

Dhun Kenny has been Membership Secretary for 7 years. She informed the meeting that the 2014 list had 156 past or current members and we ended with 81 paid up members which was a small increase on the previous year's total. The target is 100.

The small subscription of £10 a year goes towards work on the common and we need members to keep the interest and activity going. The most effective way to increase membership is word of mouth - encourage existing members to recruit one new member.

Yvonne Kelleher said that the Council would help to produce leaflets, a member commented that it was encouraging that the Council was prepared to help.

It was agreed that we need members to be involved and 'hands on'.

Rikki Marks said it would be helpful if there could be a Friend's noticeboard to update everybody. Yvonne Kelleher said she was happy to help and would comment on this later in the agenda.

John Hockley said that the Boules pitch dates when booked are on the notice board.

Liz Smith, a professional dog walker said they were strictly regulated and she was willing to help the committee to ensure dog walkers respected the environment on the Common.

DE said there are many dog walkers now and we would like some help - perhaps she could come to a committee meeting.

John Blundell asked if the subscription was going to remain the same. DE replied that as we had adequate reserves there was no need to increase it.

5. Election of the Committee for 2015/16:

David Evans, Chairman, invited nominations for the Committee:

Keith Hutchison stood for election seconded by Angela Stride and was duly elected.

Ranjeet Panesar stood for election seconded by Anthony Hunt and was duly elected.

Angela Stride was co-opted for 1 year.

Councillor Brian Marcel was invited to supervise the election: David Evans stood for re-election as Chair and was voted in unanimously.

David Evans then re-assumed the Chair of the meeting and noted that all current committee members wished to continue and were duly elected. [It was subsequently noted that the number of elected members was already at the maximum allowed by the Friends constitution and it was agreed that the three new Committee members should be co-opted.]

The Chairman, David Evans, invited Councillor Marcel to say a few words.

Councillor Marcel said he was standing in for Councillor Lord True who was in Parliament and could not attend the meeting. East Sheen was, he said, a wonderful area of green space, great sporting facilities and just down the road great allotments, a fantastic place to live. It was a great pleasure to hear at first hand the work that Friend's groups do and the contribution they make to their communities. He then started to speak about a number of Conservative party events. The Chair said that it was not appropriate for party political

issues to be discussed at Friends' events and after mentioning a forthcoming event hosted by the local MP Zac Goldsmith to increase awareness of online fraud Councillor Marcel resumed his seat. Andy Sutch left the meeting during this exchange.

6. Discussion with representatives of LB of Richmond upon Thames and other partners on 2015/16 Plans:

Yvonne Kelleher (Park Development Officer Richmond Council) spoke about some of the recent activities supported by the Council. She noted that the Common had retained its green flag status. She said that the Parks department had been pleased with the high level of satisfaction expressed by residents in the annual survey - 94%.

She said that she was aware of problems with the water-logged area near to the tennis court. She understood that there was a natural spring under the courts which caused the problem. She said she would be happy to visit the common to discuss if anything could be done.

She said that she understood that her colleague Tasha Hunter would be happy to discuss with us a notice board and Interpretation Board for the Common - which would follow the style established for other Richmond open spaces such as Barnes Common.

She said that there was a possibility of installing new more permanent fitness equipment on the Common to replace the present more temporary equipment. The Chair and other committee members welcomed this - the common was already well used for keep fit purposes e.g. by personal trainers. A member commented that there were very good facilities at Old Deer Park.

She noted that the management contracts for both the environment and sports would be renewed in 2017 contract. The Council felt it had learnt from the first time it had let framework agreements but would be happy to receive comments from the Friends Group about how the contracts were running and priorities for the future. She recognised that some of the sports contractors had been unable to invest in facilities because of the short 4 year term of the contract. It was possible that the next set of contracts would be longer term. Kate Maurici said that she hoped that local groups such as the Friends would be able to compete for contracts if they felt they could provide a better service to the local community.

Yvonne Kelleher suggested that the Friends should consider arranging nature walks - A bat walk and fungi walk had been very popular in Crane Park.

A member asked if the trees overhanging tennis courts 3 and 4 could be trimmed to bring more light in and reduce the growth of moss. Yvonne said she would look into the situation and see if there is any protection order.

Angela Stride said that the pathway from Enmore Gardens and Clare Lawn Avenue to the Common needs some clearing, it is very overgrown and the steps had become quite dangerous. Yvonne said she would be happy to look at this when she visited.

It was noted that Sheen Cricket Club continue to invest in the cricket square on Palewell Common and will start to play there shortly.

Golf/Pitch & Putt: The new golf contractor Glendale does not appear very keen and concentrates on activities at Richmond Park Golf Course. There is no longer a coach at Palewell. A member said that no golf coach had been provided for the summer sports camp in contrast to the good provision for tennis.

The Chairman asked Geoff Parminter, the Chairman of Sheen Lions to update the meeting on progress in the Club. Geoff said that he had been Chairman of Sheen Lions for 17 years and that it was the second biggest club in South East England with 360 boys in different groups up to 18 year olds. The under 18's became Champions of Surrey (300 started), one player had just signed for Chelsea. They co-operated well with the other football coach - Kids Work - which concentrated on the youngest players. Sheen Lions was a registered charity which relied on support from the community and the local Council. He supported what the Chairman had said about the good standard of ground maintenance on the Common.

The Chairman commented that other sports could learn from Sheen Lions about the importance of harnessing local support.

Bernard Adams praised the work that Andy Sutch had done in getting cricket back on Palewell Common.

8. Any Other Business:

The Chairman informed the meeting that Richmond Council were supporting a Free compost day on the 6th June. Large amounts of compost would be delivered to Palewell Common and local residents could come and collect free amounts of compost.

The Chairman informed the meeting that a local resident had made a private reservation of the Boules Pitch on 27th June from 10.00 a.m to 5.00 p.m to hold a private event. A resident commented that it did seem excessive that nobody else would be able to use the pitch that day. John Hockley said that now the pitch had been extended it can now be sub divided to enable more than one group to play at the same time.

There being no further business the Meeting closed at 8.50 p.m.

The Chairman invited those present to discuss any further issues with Committee members over a drink.

