

Friends of Palewell Common & Fields

Minutes of Committee Meeting held on 14 Sept at 7.00 pm at 37 Palewell Park

Present: Jessica Rettie (Chair), Rikki Marks, Andy Sutch, Bernard Adams, Robyn Phillips, Antony Hunt, Mark Chase, David Evans.

1. Apologies for Absence:, Justine Nagaur, Dhun Kenny.
2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 Jun: the Minutes were approved.
3. Matters Arising:– All the actions from the previous meeting were complete. The following points were made in relation to the issues discussed previously -

- Rubbish: The notices on the bins had made a short-term impact but there was a continuing problem with litter left on top of the bins after busy weekends which the foxes then scattered. It was agreed that Jessica would write to Yvonne asking if more secure bins could be provided to cope with the extra rubbish on summer weekends. Andy also agreed to write to the Football clubs to remind them to clear rubbish after games and training sessions.
- Meet the users event 1 July: The turn-out had been a bit disappointing but we met a few users who did raise a couple of issues. First someone said that they had been disconcerted to see an adult hanging around the playground without any obvious connection to any children. Andy said he had taken this up with the local police who agreed to visit the playground from time to time. Secondly a representative of a local cycling group had objected to the gates on the Roehampton side of the Common saying that they were difficult for disabled or elderly cyclists to negotiate. The Committee agreed that the reason for installing the gates – to prevent motorbikes and scooters from coming onto the Common - remained valid and that we should not support any changes to the gates. It was agreed that we would continue to try to engage with users on the Common at ad hoc meetings.

Action: Jessica to prepare in consultation with David a letter to Yvonne about the rubbish.

Action: Andy to write to the Football clubs reminding them to clear up after games and training sessions.

4. Finance report: Andy Sutch reported that the current balance at the bank was £2466.31.
5. Membership report: Dhun had provided a written report in advance saying that we had 59 paid up members with 10 electronic payments and 6 standing orders. It was however proving more difficult to get members in Hertford Avenue and Enmore Gardens to renew. She also noted that the website had an out of date list of the names of the Committee.

Action: Justine to update the Committee names on the website.

6. Conservation and volunteer days: Rikki said that she had been in touch with Gina who was going to arrange two volunteer days in the Autumn – one of which would be on a Saturday to allow the Tower House boys to participate. She would let us know the dates.

7. The Council had arranged for some tree works to be done around the pond on 25 September. Rikki will be in contact with the tree surgeons – the work should include clearing the fallen branches.

8. Tasha Hunter had been in touch to ask whether the Friends had any ideas for the boggy area by the tennis courts. Committee discussed this and agreed to propose an enclosed area with railway sleepers at the edges – perhaps three sleepers high to allow people to sit on the edge. The inside could then be planted with water-loving plants towards the centre and slow-growing thicket type plants (e.g. hollies) to provide a barrier to prevent dogs or children getting into the wet area. We could invite her to visit to discuss the options. There was a brief discussion on the Council's policy against barbecues on open spaces but the Committee concluded this was likely to be difficult to overcome.

Action: Rikki to let Tasha have our suggestion for the boggy area and suggest a meeting on the Common.

9. Sports update: Andy said that the Committee needed to discuss the unsatisfactory outcome to the tender for the tennis courts in which Mark had lost the contract to the Sheen Common coaches – Kate and Caroline. The Committee said it wished to put on record its appreciation for the many years of service which Mark had provided in coaching on the Common and its concern that Richmond had failed to recognise the benefit of supporting a local coach.

10. Jessica said that Kate had approached her to arrange a meeting to discuss building a relationship with the Friends. While she recognised past difficulties she thought that she should agree to this to establish a professional relationship and discuss how the new contractors would support tennis on the Common. She understood that a significant element in their tender had been growth in tennis and we needed to build on our past efforts – e.g. with Age UK.

11. Mark said that he had been extremely disappointed that the Sheen Common coaches had failed to be open with him and that Richmond had not recognised the 14 years of effort he had put into tennis on the Common.

12. The Committee agreed that the position was not a good one but that we needed to move on. It agreed that we should write to Richmond formally to record our unhappiness with the outcome of the tender but that we should also try to establish a relationship with the new coaches.

Action – Jessica to prepare a letter to Richmond in consultation with David and Andy and meet the new coaches to understand better their plans for tennis on the Common.

13. Andy said that cricket had gone well. He understood that the scores in matches had been much higher this year – which reflected improvements in the pitch. The Committee agreed that it was good to see more use of the pitch.

14. Andy said that he understood there were still some disagreements between Kidsworks and Sheen Lions about the football pitches. The Committee concluded that it was best for the Friends to keep out of such issues.

15. Bernard wondered if the boules pitch was being used as much as previously. Members said that it was difficult to assess but that there were certainly more ad hoc players in weekdays and weekends when children's parties or other groups were

using the dog free area. Bernard agreed to speak to John Hockley to make sure that the regular players were not getting the way of such users.

Action: Bernard to speak to John Hockley about the regular use of the pitch and the notices at the fence to ensure they did not discourage other users.

13. Events: Antony described the charity event he was supporting on Sunday 24 September. One of his part time helpers was a local schoolgirl who wanted to raise £1800 to visit a school in Kenya next year for a community project. He planned a community softball cricket match starting around 1.00pm as well as a raffle. He would be contributing 20% of the day's takings to her fund and had obtained a temporary licence to sell beers. Ranjeet would also be selling Indian street food. The Committee were very supportive and agreed to publicise this in an email to members and on the website.

14. The Committee discussed other possible events with the aim of having a regular programme with events every 3 months-

- it was agreed that it would be better to postpone a dog show until next spring – probably in May after the AGM.
- it was agreed that we would run a Halloween event on Saturday 28 October with a pumpkin hunt, games and prizes similar to that done previously.
- It would be good to try out a drinks party early in the new year as a part of a recruitment effort with a particular focus on the local roads including Hertford Avenue and Enmore Gardens. The date of Saturday 20 January was agreed with the event running from 5.00 to 7.00 in the café. Publicity etc would be arranged nearer the time.
- the Easter egg hunt on Easter Sunday had been a great success – not least from Antony's efforts to publicise it. We should repeat it next year.

Action: David to send an email to all members about the 24 September event with a general update on what has been happening on the Common and including advance warning of the later events

Action: All Committee members to support Antony for the charity event on 24 September and Jessica for the Halloween event on 28 October.

15. Any other business: There was no other business raised.

16. Date of next meeting: It was agreed that we should look for a date in late November early December in good time to prepare for the January event. David will circulate a doodle poll.

Action – David to find dates for the next meeting

17. The meeting closed at 20.20.