

Draft

## Friends of Palewell Common & Fields

### Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 23 May 2018 7.30 p.m. at All Saints Church Hall

1. **Welcome:** The Chair, Jessica Rettie, welcomed all those present.

2. **Chair's Report for 2017/18**

2.1 Jessica said that the last year has continued to be a successful one for the Common. The Friends have continued to prosper and the Common continues to be an important local resource for recreational and sports activities.

#### Sports

The use of many of the sports facilities on the Common has continued to grow.

- Our boules pitch remains popular both with the Boules club, visiting teams and local residents although we would like to see more usage. John Hockley from Boules will give a report later in the meeting including on recent successes in competitions.
- Football has continued to grow for a wide range of ages covered by both Kidsworks and Sheen Lions.
- Cricket – the work done to improve the square has started to bear fruit this season and after 5 winter renovations the square is playing much better. Last summer was a successful season with nine leagues games and two mid week friendlies and some Sunday morning games.
- Tennis has seen the biggest changes with a new operator taking effect at the end of last year and we welcome the new Sheen Parks Tennis team. Kate Maurici will talk to us later about the progress they are making including possible opportunities from a closer relationship with the LTA.
- The use of the Common by keep fit classes and personal trainers has continued to grow. The outdoor gym equipment seems to be reasonably popular despite a disappointing uptake of the personal training sessions arranged by Richmond last summer. Karen Crump from Blitz fitness will give us a brief update later.
- On Golf there have been concerns over the lack of investment and growth in the pitch and putt, and the state of the course. The previous operator has now been replaced by Continental and there have been some improvements in maintenance. However, usage and management of the golf hut remain a concern.

## The physical environment of the Common

- Users of the common will have noticed that the wet area at the foot of the tennis courts remains fenced off. Last year the Friends worked with Richmond conservation team to agree plans for a wet garden and seating area. Funding was approved and the work was scheduled to begin this spring. The wet weather early in the Spring caused some delays as heavy machinery on the wet ground would have damaged it but we are informed that the start of work is imminent. The idea is to create some mounds and ditches, which will control the boggy area. Once the landscaping is done, the Friends plan to organise some planting, and possibly some seating. The area will remain fenced off for a while yet therefore while this is all established but we are hoping that eventually it will be a nicer environment. Anyone keen to get involved do let us know.
- There continue to be issues with rubbish on sunny days. We will continue to try to find solutions to this.

## Conservation issues

- We're keen for the woodlands to continue to be a resource accessible for the local community. In our volunteer days we have worked with our previous conservation partner Nature's Gym to lay woodchips to cover the mud on the main path and clear the brambles and undergrowth on the other paths. Tower House school have also been involved in planting and clearing work and we welcome this involvement and would love that to grow.
- However the previous nature conservation contract has now come to an end and Richmond are in the process of preparing a new tender. This means that we have been unable to run any conservation days because of lack of insurance. This is slightly frustrating as the window of opportunity to do work in the Spring is closing. However, helpfully Richmond have offered to arrange for an interim solution for some clearing and planting- so we hope there will be a conservation morning in the next month.
- Otherwise we feel that the standard of maintenance of common by the Council's contractors has by-and-large been satisfactory, and the Common and Fields are looking particularly lovely at the moment having been freshly mowed.

## Activities of Friends

- The Friends held a successful Halloween event in October- hunt the pumpkin continues to be popular with the kids due to the large amount of chocolate on offer! On Easter Sunday the third annual Easter Egg hunt was held in the dog free area and was a roaring success. Having expected around 20 kids we were slightly overwhelmed when around 50 turned up. It was a wonderful atmosphere, great fun and very

popular with local parents. Thank you to Pistachios for the gift of the potatoes- we may need more next year!

- We have continued to work with Richmond on general maintenance issues. We represented the views of the Common users to Richmond in relation to the implementation of Public Spaces Protection Orders, and have continued to make representations on issues such as the maximum number of dogs which can be walked by one person.
- We continue to work closely with the sports providers- promoting their activities wherever we can and helping with issues that arise in so far as we are able to.
- Thanks to our Committee member Justine Nagaur our website [www.palewellcommon.org.uk](http://www.palewellcommon.org.uk) and blog have continued to be regularly updated with news about activities. We are also more active on social media. These provide lots of information about our activities and I'd encourage you to have a look and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

### The Future

- Last year we shared with you our Vision Plan setting out our plans for projects in the short and medium term. A number of the projects had been completed but others remained to be done and the Friends would continue to work on these.

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| <p><b>Short term projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Resolution of winter flooding problem- In progress</li> <li>- Planting of native plants at woodland frog pond- pending new NCC contractor</li> <li>- Planting of wild flowers and native plants in orchard- as above</li> <li>- Volunteer activity to clear woodland paths- as above</li> <li>- Upgrade of playground equipment (DONE-2017)</li> <li>- Replacement of keep fit equipment (DONE-2017)</li> <li>- Consult with Richmond re dog walkers and rubbish-Done</li> </ul> | <p><b>Medium term projects:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Obtain funding to improve back two tennis courts – exciting opportunities- Kate to mention= we will support.</li> <li>- Establish greater number of community events including with local partners (e.g. Age UK)- More work needed here.</li> <li>- Establish frog and other life at the woodland pond- in progress</li> <li>- Addition of sensory garden/ sculpture for visually impaired- not currently being progressed.</li> <li>- Installing seating/ garden area in boggy area of Common near tennis courts- in progress</li> <li>- Improvements to the condition of the cricket wicket- Largely done- good progress made.</li> </ul> |
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- We will continue to liaise with Richmond about the re-letting of the maintenance and sports contracts which are currently happening. We are keen to ensure that the improvements will continue and that the sports contractors are committed to grow the number of users of our facilities.

2.2 Jessica also thanked all the members of the Committee for all their hard work over the previous year and said that she wanted particularly to thank Mark Chase (the previous tennis coach) who had stepped down as a member of the Committee.

2.3 It was noted that the minutes of the previous year's AGM has been provided on the chairs for members to read.

### **3. Accounts for 2016/17**

3.1 The Treasurer, Andy Sutch, introduced the Accounts for the previous year copies of which had also been circulated on the chairs. These were prepared on a cash accounting basis which meant that income was recorded in the year it was received. This meant that membership income did not simply reflect the numbers of members in each year.

3.2 There being no questions, the Treasurer invited the meeting to thank the scrutineer of the accounts Ken Cook and to agree to his appointment for the coming year. This was agreed.

### **4. Membership Report**

4.1 In the absence of the membership secretary, Dhun Kenny, the membership report was given by David Evans. He said that in the previous year we had had 65 members. The number of paid up members for the current year ahead of the meeting stood at about 40 and seven members had paid up at the door – including two new members – who were particularly welcomed. We would continue to press previous members to renew over the next few months.

### **5. Election of Committee**

5.1 The Chair Jessica Rettie invited the meeting to move on to the elections for members of the Committee. As she was standing for Chair again she invited Councillor Marcel to assume the chairmanship temporarily.

5.2 Council Marcel said that she had been nominated as Chair by the present Committee. No other nominations were made and she was elected by acclamation of all those present.

5.3 Jessica re-assumed the Chair and invited members to consider the nominations for the officers made by the Committee which were indicated on the Agenda as follows

|                      |                |
|----------------------|----------------|
| Deputy Chair         | Robyn Phillips |
| Treasurer            | Andy Sutch     |
| Secretary            | David Evans    |
| Membership Secretary | Dhun Kenny     |

She drew attention to the fact that the previous Deputy Chair Bernard Adams wished to step down (although he wished to continue as an ordinary member). Robyn Phillips had agreed to put her name forward for the post.

5.4 No other nominations were made and she invited those present to support these nominations. They were all elected by acclamation of those present.

5.5 She said that she had received five nominations for the remaining five positions on the Committee as ordinary members as follows.

| Committee member | Proposer       | Secunder       |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|
| Rikki Marks      | Jessica Rettie | Justine Nagaur |
| Bernard Adams    | Andy Sutch     | David Evans    |
| Justine Nagaur   | Robyn Philips  | David Evans    |
| Antony Hunt      | David Evans    | Andy Sutch     |
| James Thornton   | Jessica Rettie | Andy Sutch     |

5.6 There being no other nominations she invited those present to endorse their election which was done by acclamation.

## **6. Sports update**

6.1 Andy Sutch said that he had been pleased to see the overall growth in sports activities on the Common as noted by the Chair in her report. He had hoped that a representative of the new Golf contractor would attend but in their absence he was able to report that he had had a good meeting with them and he was hopeful that there would be improvement to the course and in the numbers playing.

6.2 He said he understood that there would continue to be pressure on the funding of Parks activities in the light of the Council's overall financial position but he hoped that the Council would continue to invest to maintain standards. He hoped that the Friends group would continue to support the Council.

6.3 John Hockley reported on boules. He said that usage continued to grow with a total of 35 players on their books and as many as 16 playing at any one time. The new pitch had demonstrated its value. A group of Sheen players had been invited to visit Fontainebleau (a Richmond twin town) and had won two cups in competitions during the visit. The group also took part in a cross London boules competition and they were commended on the state of our pitch. They had also been asked to advise on the creation of a new boules pitch at Chelsea hospital for the Chelsea Pensioners – and had received a commendation from the hospital. He was grateful to the Friends for providing support for boules.

6.4 Kate Maurici and Caroline Jordan reported on tennis. They said that the new arrangements had started well. There had been a few teething problems which being overcome e.g in relation to storage and the noticeboard and they were pleased to have built a strong relationship with Richmond Park Academy – including getting some volunteer students to help on weekdays.

6.5 Court bookings overall were rising and they had started a programme of competitions for young people some of which went beyond the local area. Using LTA funding they had introduced a subsidised course over 6 weeks aimed at getting new young people into the sport. They had also started an adult fitness class. They were investing in further the skills of their coaches

(who were all already LTA accredited) to extend their range e.g. to help disabled players. They needed a volunteer as their Safeguarding officer – so if any Friends members were interested they could speak to Kate.

6.6 They had established a good relationship with the LTA and they were hopeful this would pay off eventually in terms of further investment in the courts. The Council had also been helpful and provided new nets for the front courts. There had had some problems with footballers damaging the nets and they hoped this would not continue in the summer. They were grateful for the invitation to provide a report on tennis and were keen to continue to work with the Friends.

6.7 Karen Crump reported on the keep fit classes organised by Blitz fitness. She said that class numbers were continuing to grow and she was continuing to extend the range of courses – e.g. to include one for the tots from the Montessori nursery. There were a few minor problems – e.g. dog poo on the main field and the fact that the main toilets were not always open. She was however very grateful to Antony Hunt at the Café for making the toilet there available. Yvonne Kelleher said that the main toilets were for the use of those in the changing rooms – so the café toilet was intended to be used in those times when the café was open.

6.8 Members raised continuing issue of rubbish on the Common including overflowing bins – particularly after sunny weekends and the rubbish left after the football training. Antony also had a problem with people depositing un-packaged rubbish in his commercial bins by the café. Yvonne Kelleher said all of Richmond's parks had the same problem. In some cases more bins might help but she was not clear that would help on Palewell – in other cases more signs might help.

6.9 Jessica said that we had experimented with Friends signs on the bins last year asking people to take their rubbish home if the bins were full. This had had some effect for a limited time. We would be happy to repeat the signs this year and the Friends would consult Antony and Yvonne.

## **7. Comments from Richmond Council**

7.1 Councillor Sean Joyce introduced himself and said he regularly walked his dog on the Common. He hoped that in his new role as Councillor he would be able to work closely with the Friends – he also had links with local education and Kingston Hospital which he hoped would be valuable.

7.2 Yvonne Kelleher reported on the work that Richmond Council had been doing. She said that the new contractor for the pitch and putt course was working to improve the physical state of the course. Footgolf had been put on hold pending conclusion of this work.

7.3 In relation to the wet area near to the tennis courts there was a site meeting (involving the Friends) later in the week and she hoped the work would be complete before the end of the month. She understood the Friends'

frustration at the lack of conservation activity and had arranged for a new contractor TCV to support 3 days over the next few months.

#### 7.4 Members raised a number of issues -

- *When would the football goalposts be removed?* Yvonne said that she thought this had been slightly delayed because of a backlog of football fixtures caused by the bad weather over the winter.
- *Would it be possible for the paddling pool in the playground to be opened earlier in fine weather?* Yvonne said that the Council needed to arrange daily testing of the water to ensure its quality. The contract had been let from the late May Bank Holiday. In discussion she agreed to look at bringing this forward to the early May Bank Holiday in future years.
- *Would it be possible for the tester to help clear litter from the paddling pool?* Yvonne said that there were separate contractors for testing and cleansing – but she would look at asking the tester to remove and dangerous litter e.g. bottles or cans.
- *What was the Friends' position on the reduction of the maximum number of dogs per walker to 4 from 6?* David Evans said that the Friends had supported the reduction – this had been a concern expressed by a number of local residents. The Friends had written to one Richmond Council who had expressed doubts about the reduction to repeat our position. Yvonne Kelleher said that there had been a legal challenge to the Order made by the Council which had delayed its coming into force and enforcement. Work was being done to make a small amendment to the Order and enforcement action should start soon on any un-licensed people with more than 4 dogs. The issue was however more one of education.

#### 8. Any other business

- 8.1 There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting at 20.45.