

Draft

Friends of Palewell Common & Fields

Annual General Meeting

Monday 18 May 2020 7.00 online Zoom meeting

1. **Welcome.** The Chair, Jessica Rettie, welcomed all those on the call (12 people participated – 6 members of the Committee and 6 ordinary members). Apologies had been received from Robyn Phillips. Jessica said that she hoped that everyone had received the papers and that the technology would allow everyone to participate in the meeting. It would be helpful if people could keep their microphones muted when not speaking

2. Chair's Report for 2019/20

2.1 Jessica said that until the coronavirus outbreak it has been a busy and positive year for the Common and the Friends. The outbreak had drawn attention to the importance of green spaces generally for the wellbeing of communities. She had been pleased to see how many more people of differing ages and interests were using the Common in recent weeks. This emphasised what a valuable local resource it was for the whole local community.

2.2 Jessica then gave her report on the year's activities. Last summer and autumn had had been busy for the many sporting users although over the winter the ground had become very wet and some sports had been suspended. Overall football, cricket, tennis and boules had thrived and there would be an opportunity to hear some more about some of them later in the agenda. The fitness classes were also doing well and she understood that Blitz fitness had continued to run virtual classes during the recent shutdown. Golf however continued to be a problem. The course had not re-opened after the winter and the Friends were concerned at the decline in its use. There would be more on golf later in the agenda.

2.3 Jessica said that the physical environment of the Common remained in good shape. She had been pleased to see that the new scrape by the tennis courts was now looking good. The new ponds had contained most of the rain over the winter and the new planting at the edges was growing well.

2.4 A number of conservation days had been run during the year with Richmond's partner TCV who brought a number of volunteers to work on the Common. A challenge for the coming year would be to increase the number of volunteers from the members of the Friends. In the woodland Richmond had started the annual treatment for oak processionary moth. There seemed however to be more of a problem with litter – we had had to postpone a litter pick planned for April.

2.5 The Friends had held our regular Easter Egg hunt on the dog free area in 2019 – but the 2020 event had been a casualty of the coronavirus outbreak. In September we had organised an inter-street boules competition – but turnout was limited by bad weather. Our Halloween pumpkin hunt had been cancelled because of bad weather. Our website www.palewellcommon.org.uk and blog were regularly updated with news about activities thanks to the work of our Committee member Justine Nagaur.

2.6 Looking to the future Jessica said that with more people working at home it was important to recognise the different ways in which open spaces like the Common could contribute to the health and wellbeing of local communities. She was keen for the Friends to think about what more we could do reach out and overcome barriers for its wider use. She was keen to look particularly at

- Making the Common more attractive to different local groups
- Whether we could engage more in social activities
- Ways in which Conservation days could improve the environment

She welcomed suggestions in these areas and hoped the Committee would work on this in the coming year.

2.7 Jessica invited the meeting to approve the minutes of the previous year's AGM which had been circulated with the papers for the meeting. These were approved.

3 Accounts for 2018/19

3.1 Andy Sutch (Treasurer) said that copies of the accounts had been distributed with the papers for the meeting. He noted that they had been prepared on a cash basis and included some donations from members. The Friends were in good financial shape with a closing balance of £3035 – up on the previous year since some regular expenditure had been prevented by coronavirus. The accounts were approved by the meeting.

3.2 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 James Thornton reported that there were currently 44 paid-up members who had renewed either in person or online. A number of other previous members had not yet renewed and he would be following them up. He invited members to encourage their friends and neighbours to become members.

4.2 Peter Hayward said that he would be happy to circulate information about the Friends to the members of his road's local Whatsapp group and a number of members agreed to do the same. Jessica said that we would provide a text including a link to our membership form with our bank details.

4.3 Seamus Joyce commented that given the need to avoid dogs disturbing the deer in Richmond Park during the upcoming birthing season should we publicise Palewell Common for dog exercise? Rikki Marks said that the recent increase in use of the Common had already increased the amount of dog mess and that a further increase would not be desirable. Jessica commented that discussion of dogs on the common invariably gave rise to strong feelings and matters were therefore best left as they were. She said however that a Palewell dog show might well be a good event for later in the year.

5 Election of Committee

5.1 The Chair Jessica Rettie invited the meeting to move to the elections for members of the Committee. As she was standing for Chair again she invited a member, Seamus Joyce, to assume the chairmanship temporarily.

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

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	James Thornton

5.4 No other nominations were made and she invited those participating to support the nominations. Those participating signified agreement and they were all duly elected.

5.5 Jessica said that the Agenda set out 4 nominations for the 5 slots available as ordinary members as follows -

	Proposer	Seconder
Bernard Adams	Jessica Rettie	Robyn Phillips
Rikki Marks	James Thornton	David Evans
Dhun Kenny	James Thornton	David Evans
Justine Nagaur	Andy Sutch	Rikki Marks

There had also been one late nomination – Di Hall – who lived in Palmerston Road and had been involved with both Palewell and Sheen Commons. She proposed Di Hall and David Evans seconded the nomination. She asked those participating to agree the nominations and those participating signified their agreement. All 5 were duly elected.

6 Sports update

6.1 Andy Sutch said that the meeting would be able to hear directly from Kate Maurici about tennis and from John Hockley about boules. He noted that until the lock-down the other main sports on the Common, football and cricket, were thriving – but that it was likely to be some time before such team sports would get back to normal. He supported the Chair’s comments on the importance of widening the range of keep-fit activities on the common and hoped that new yoga and pilates classes would be started.

6.2 On golf Andy said that he had spoken to Richmond Council several times in the previous week about the course and had been reassured to hear that the plan was to re-open the course from 1 June. There was a considerable backlog of maintenance work but the contractor was working on it. He believed that it should be possible to arrange for play to take place in a way which respected social distancing and the need for proper hygiene. He understood that the other golf clubs which had opened had been very busy.

6.3 Seamus Joyce said that he hoped that the Council would be able to make suitable arrangements for booking and that the course would be brought back to a suitable standard. Members noted that it (and the dog-free area) had not been mowed during the lock-down. Rikki said that she had already asked the Council to cut the grass on the dog-free area. *[Note added after the meeting – work to cut the grass on the course and dog-free area started the day after the AGM.]*

6.4 Kate Maurici said that she had been delighted to be able to restart tennis the previous Friday on both the Palewell and Sheen Common courts. She and the other coaches had been able to assist Richmond to implement the LTA guidance on safe play – which involved restricting play to singles, use of gloves, disinfecting tennis balls between clients etc. She understood there had been a massive increase in use over the weekend which she hoped would continue. It would not be possible to hold group lessons and this would impact on the income of Sheen Lawn Tennis. She was hopeful that Richmond would lift their facility fee – which would reduce their losses.

6.5 The condition of the Palewell courts continued to be a concern – particularly the back courts which were barely playable. She believed there would be an opportunity to raise the funds to pay for the expensive relaying needed if enough priority was given to them.

6.6 She had been grateful for financial support from the Friends in 2019 which had enabled them to put on a coaching course for autistic children. Unfortunately the lock down and school closure had meant that this had been cancelled this year. However good links had been established with Richmond Park Academy which she was hopeful could be re-established. Jessica thanked Kate for a fantastic update and said the Friends would continue to support tennis on the Common.

6.7 John Hockey reported on boules. He said that the club had also been very pleased to be able to re-open – he had played twice already. He had created a booking system to enable members to play one on one games in a safe way

consistent with social distancing rules. He also expressed thanks to Richmond for providing a top dressing of gravel for the court during the year. The club was in a good state with over 40 members. Jessica thanked John and said it was good to see that boules was thriving. She hoped that it would be possible to run another inter-road competition in 2020.

7 Any other Business.

7.1 Jessica asked if there was any other business. There being none she closed the meeting at 20.05. She hoped that at future AGMs there would be an opportunity to continue informal discussions with Committee members over a drink.