

Friends of Palewell Common & Fields

Minutes of Open Meeting & Annual General Meeting

Tuesday April 24th 2012

7.30 p.m. All Saints Church Hall

The Chairman, Francis Rowland, opened the Meeting and welcomed all those who had come to the Meeting. Unfortunately Councillor Lord True was unable to attend owing to an important debate taking place in the House of Lords this evening, he sent his apologies.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their ongoing support.

Chairman's Annual Report:

The major achievement of the year was the Opening of the refurbished Pavilion on 13th September 2011. He thanked the Council, particularly David Allister, for their efforts. Thanks were also extended to the Contractors and to the Friends. The Chairman commented that there were a few remedial issues which were being addressed, such as tarmac to be replaced, water puddles to be sorted out, hopefully all this would be done within the warranty period.

The Friends much appreciated the support of the Police at the Opening Ceremony, the Helicopter arrival had been a great success particularly with the younger members of the community.

He thanked the local schools for their involvement and their continuing involvement in providing paintings for the Club Room. This level of support is essential.

The Chairman thanked Janusch, our local park keeper, who does an excellent job maintaining the Common, the Golf Course has improved hugely thanks to his efforts. The Chairman asked David Allister to pass good wishes to Gaye Galvin who is away on maternity leave.

He reported that the area near the nursery school will be landscaped.

The Chairman commented that the café Pistachios is doing a very good job and reminded the Friends that there is a loyalty card available and members receive 10% off the bill on presentation of their membership card.

Boules has increased hugely in popularity and is now played every Friday and Sunday and there are plans to have another evening to the extent another one or two pistes are required. There is now a good link with both U3A Richmond and with Barnes Bowling Club. There are future plans to 'twin' with Fontainbleau.

The Orchard, which had been planted with the help of Simon at BTCV is now in bloom. Green Flag: the Chairman was confident that we will be awarded it again; this reassures us all that standards are being maintained.

Treasurer's Report: Andy Sutch, the Treasurer, informed the meeting that membership and donations were significantly up but that there had been a small loss this year. This was due to the costs associated with the opening of The Pavilion including the printing of the souvenir programmed which includes the lists of local organisations. Membership subscriptions he told the meeting were essential for FoPC to thrive and continue its work.

The Treasurer thanked Dhun Kenny for her hard work as Membership Secretary and, in his absence, thanked Ken Cook for auditing the accounts.

The Accounts were approved and accepted by the meeting.

Election of Committee: The Chairman invited David Allister to conduct the election of the Committee. David Allister expressed regret that Francis Rowland and Robin Laidlaw were standing down from the committee and on behalf of Richmond Council and The Friends of Palewell Common thanked them for their hard work and huge commitment over the past five years. They will be greatly missed. David referred to his first meeting with them when he and Gaye Galvin outlined what the Council suggested, they were told what the local community wanted - you need strong leaders. He went on to comment on the fantastic parks in Richmond which are so important to the community he said that the Friends should be proud of what they had achieved.

Election of Committee: Chairperson, Treasurer, Deputy Chairman, Secretary, Membership Secretary, Committee Members.

Chairman: Nomination: Andy Sutch proposed by Francis Rowland seconded by Robin Laidlaw

Treasurer: Nomination: David Evans proposed by Dhun Kenny seconded by Andy Sutch

Deputy Chairman: Nomination: Jacqui Pattison proposed by FR seconded by Bernard Adams

Secretary: Nomination: Angela Howorth proposed by FR seconded by AS

Membership Secretary: Nomination: Dhun Kenny proposed by AS seconded by JP

Committee Members: Rikki Marks, Bernard Adams, Francis Rowland, Len Griffiths
Proposed by AS seconded by Dhun Kenny.

The Committee was duly elected.

Andy Sutch thanked David Allister and reiterated thanks to Francis Rowland and Robin Laidlaw and said they would be a hard act to follow.

Parks Strategy: David Allister said we should be proud of the community involvement in the success of the Common and the Council is very keen to encourage more of the community to be involved. Parks and Open Spaces are identified as the number one issue in this borough and it is a great legacy. Eighteen months ago the Council set out eight strategic principles in a new strategy to protect that legacy. Fundamental to all this is the quality and positive experiences for park users. The borough has an important team of ten Parks Officers they currently have a contract with Veolia who do all the maintenance work across the borough which expires next year. The

new contract will be a pioneering framework to give greater flexibility and an opportunity for more local engagement. The new arrangements will be a series of smaller contracts trying to open up opportunities for specialists. Ground maintenance is not the current contractor's core business and so to attract quality staff can therefore be difficult but Palewell is an exception because of Janusch. In future specialist firms may bid for part of the contract framework. In future quality will receive more emphasis. Contracts will be awarded for: Horticultural Services: Trees: Sports facilities: Tennis, Golf: Play areas: Patrol & Monitoring - Parks police: Events - contract to manage: Small works e.g. kissing gate: The key date is 31.03.13 and new contracts will commence on 01.04.13. It could be that somebody such as Janusch could remain and transfer to new contractors.

During the next four to six weeks the voluntary sector could explore the possibility of a formal agreement to enter into a contract for managing and taking responsibility for Palewell Common. He stressed that the Council is not selling or transferring sites only offering the opportunity to manage them. The Council will help in working out a business plan.

Tennis and golf: The Council propose to let tennis on a contract across the borough as in the Royal Parks. Golf is likely to be companies who will manage the facilities and enhance the experience.

Andy Sutch thanked David Allister for outlining the proposals and invited questions from the members present.

A member of the Friends raised the issue of the safety of teenage children, especially when walking across the common to the Bank of England sports club. Assaults had taken place on a regular basis and mobile 'phones and cash and even bicycles had been stolen. The situation had been worsened by the 'kissing gate', it was noted that this had been installed to prevent motor scooters coming on to the Common. The questioner said that the situation was getting worse. David Allister said that these incidents were not being reported. He commented that security cameras are very expensive to monitor and the Council had to balance this. A member said that after an incident there was only one policeman for one day assigned to the site.

Another member who has three children raised the problem of children, particularly from Ibstock School, using this route, the Community Police have been spoken to but little has changed. She tries to walk her dog on the Common when pupils are most likely to be using the route across the brook. She suggested asking dog walkers to help and to keep an eye out and hopefully help to prevent muggings. David Allister urged that these incidents are reported. FR commented that Janusch could play an important role. David Allister urged people to ensure that crime reports were made and Youth services called out, it was essential to look at the options. AS said that the more people engage with and use the Common the less likely these events are to occur.
He will discuss this after the meeting.

RL said that Pistachio's want to develop 'Safer Haven' which they use in other cafes they run, this means that if there is a problem the young person can go to the café and the café will look after them and will take appropriate action to ensure the child's safety.

DA said that Janusch could remain in his core role - essentially he falls under horticultural. A member asked what small businesses know about the proposed contracts, DA replied that the Council would make sure that they are informed.

AS raised the possibility of a Memorandum of Understanding, between FoPC and LB RuT, similar to the one The Friends of Barn Elms have, if this was in place the Friends of Palewell Common would have a role in the specification for the maintenance and management of the common and this would provide a safety net to ensure the Friends' voice was heard.

A member asked about the Tennis Courts. DA said they would come under new management, there would be very little difference for the consumer and prices would be controlled by the Council. The present contract runs out in December 2012 and the new contract will start in April 2013. Whilst it will be awarded to one contractor, it is possible that existing coaches in the borough could get together and form a company.

Sports Facilities & Plans: AS said encouraging the use of the site makes it more enjoyable he hoped in future that there would be more football, tennis, golf, and boules particularly with the development of U3A. He also wanted to encourage more walking and cycling and felt a common in use is a safer place. In particular the Friends were keen to identify an area on which cricket could be played regularly. AS invited Vinny Codrington, CEO of Middlesex Cricket Club, to speak on -

Cricket & the Community: Vinny Codrington said he was born and brought up here in a large family of five boys and four girls they all used the common and had a lot of fun. He learnt his golf here and friends from school used to play on the common - particularly cricket. It taught those values, team play, team spirit and friendships. Cricket is thriving, for example 400 children go to Richmond Cricket Club on Sunday morning and the biggest issue is lack of facilities, he said he wanted us to be able to play cricket - both boys and girls, the young need to be outdoors and to make life long friends. Watching cricket is very, very English, community is important and a sense of safety, watch cricket and you feel all is good. We must give children a chance, he said he loves seeing families together watching cricket - one then knows that all is well with the world. AS thanked Vinny Codrington.

AS informed the meeting that the current cricket square on Palewell Common needs work, he thanked Brian Reed who has generously donated a roller and hoped that the pitches will be improved and we would then see more young people playing cricket on Palewell Common.

AS asked Bernard Adams to update the meeting on Boules. BA said that Len Griffiths has really got Boules going and it is now prospering. The pistes need maintenance so a roller is good news. It probably needs to expand and needs another terrain - where that can be is the key question. Finally he added that Twickenham Riverside for their grand opening are considering creating a boules terrain.

A member attending the meeting raised the use of the football pitches and commented that usually only two were being used and wondered if there should be more publicity. It was reported that on Sunday usually all four pitches were in use. AS pointed out that we need to look at how the

football pitches are laid out and the positioning of these pitches and the cricket square/s need to be discussed.

2012/13 Activities & Plans: AS invited Jacqui Pattison, Deputy Chairman to speak. JP thanked Simon of BTCV for all his help and efforts and thanked the volunteers. The volunteer's day on the 19th April had been a great success. Rikki Marks had checked with the Parks Department and agreed what needed doing and great progress was made in tree maintenance, clearing overgrown paths through the woodland and the path to Richmond Park and sorting out the bird boxes. In addition volunteers had cleared, at FR's suggestion, the path around the former pond in the triangle. They had also cleared and done some planting of the flower bed on the corner by the nursery school. JP asked Simon to give some background to BTCV. He said that they had been founded in 1959 and were about to change their name. Generally they, with volunteers, do two days a week and two weekends a month with more in the winter. The turnout on the 19th April was very good indeed. During the summer they plan the winter timetable. BTCV bring a fully insured team and bring all tools required, you just need to turn up on the day (check the website if you are interested in helping).

A member asked if we could do more than two sessions a year. Simon suggested that a 5 year plan with key points was worked out and days then arranged. AS said that this was very relevant to the changes going on at the moment and we have a very good strong volunteer group.

A resident, who lives near The Victoria and whose grandmother lived in Vicarage Road was very impressed by the work that had been done especially the clearing of the path around the old pond and wondered whether there was any chance of resurrecting/restoring it as a pond. FR said that, for health and safety reasons it was not feasible, however we can maintain the surround and getting the path back had been very important. For those interested there is a very small pond in the woods. The questioner congratulated the Friends on doing the clearance.

FR also commented that some younger members of the community had come and helped with the work and had had a really good time, we should encourage other young members of the community to help.

The same resident said that another local group 'Lighting up the Community' had just discovered Pistaschio's and they were arranging a curry night there, he felt support of the café needs to be encouraged as it is a great addition to the community.

FR introduced Etienne, who is the golf pro, and told the meeting that he is putting together plans to start regular golf groups and coaching and Nick Gardiner is going to help.

FR also reminded the meeting that the Club Room is there for the community and available for use and can be booked.

AS thanked everybody for coming and for their support, he hoped they would be able to stay on for refreshments and further conversation.

The Meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.

