

Minutes of the 2002 AGM of the Arundel and Elgin Garden Committee.
Held on 11.11.2002 at St Johns Church, Ladbroke Grove.

Present: residents of properties surrounding the garden and the committee members as follows. Michael Wilmot (MW) Chairman. Pat Morton (PM) Secretary. Catherine Williams (CW) Treasurer. Jane Broughton (JB) Garden Planning. Chris Fleming Brown (CFB) small children. Nick Pedgrift (NP) Legal Affairs. David Bailey (DB) Trees and Paths. Anne Canning (AC) Keys. Associate Member Ines Alfile (IA) Children, newsletter.

1: Chairman's introduction.

MW introduced the committee members and their responsibilities over the past year.

2: Procedures.

MW Re-iterated the customary limits of 2 minutes per speaker, 10 minutes per topic and asked all residents to state their names and addresses when speaking. He also explained that the committee for 2002-3 would be elected at the end of the meeting. The committee would elect a chairman at its first meeting.

3: Minutes of 2001 AGM.

These were approved nem con. There were no matters arising.

4: Treasurer's Report.

MW outlined our expenditure for the past year. NP explained that the legal bills for the dispute with no 52 comprised counsel's fees and donkey work done by members of his staff; all his own time had been on a pro bono basis. MW stated that our budget for next year would be £30,000 as against £36,000 allowing a reduction in the precept of 17%. Currently, we had £30,000 in our account. The projected figures would give us a reserve of £10-15,000. This caused comment and criticism from residents who asked why the precept would only be reduced by 17% when last year it went up by 50% and major items of expenditure – notably paths and legal fees – were unlikely to recur.

Residents asked why we kept such a large amount in reserve.

Residents criticised the presentation of the figures asking for more detailed financial information for the current year and projections for the next.

One resident, Anne Clarke, asked what the procedure was for approving the precept.

MW and CW answered by stating we will easily spend £30,000 this year on garden maintenance, planting, paths and key replacement. We were only 6 months into the current years and we had already spent £20,000. We needed to keep reserves available to cope with the unexpected – especially in litigious times – as we could not go asking for more money if we ran out. MW stated that we would steadily reduce our cash at bank over successive years if no further disputes arose and reduce precepts accordingly. JB explained that the price for the paths had been quoted 3 years earlier; at today's prices, a more likely figure would be £18,000.

MW agreed that budgets and projections would be supplied in advance to future meetings.

The precept would be voted on at the end of the meeting.

5. Boundary Dispute.

NP reported that the owners of 52 had abandoned their claim to the disputed strip. The dispute had gone on for 6 years and had only been resolved in the previous week. MW and NP stated that this set an important precedent for other gardens but that we still had to be vigilant.

6. Trees.

DB reported that 2 seasons' work has come under 1 year's budget. We had carried out almost all the priority 1 work detailed in the arboriculturalist's report in the Spring. This work would be completed in the autumn, along with removal of the suckers to all the limes, which would now be done on an annual basis. There would also be a new planting of alder, hawthorn and silver birch at the Ladbroke Grove and another replacement laburnum outside 27/29 Elgin. This would cost £1,360 for pruning and £584 for new trees making £2,624 with VAT. Don Factor queried the timing of the sucker removal and asked whether a chemical coating might prevent regrowth. DB agreed to investigate.

Sally James asked about the ash outside her house and the tree that came down. DB replied that the recommended work to the ash had been carried out and it was now sound and

healthy. The beech that fell was in a private garden. It was not the committee's responsibility and he had found rotten wood at its base. A number of residents complained about the limes outside 26/28 mentioning that the 2001 AGM decision not to fell one of them had been tied. NP objected to us voting on this every year.

DB quoted the report as saying that one tree should be felled within 3 – 5 years of 2001, when the adjoining tree had grown to a better shape. It was agreed to discuss this at the next AGM. One resident asked for more detailed advance information when emotive items like tree felling were to be discussed. The committee agreed to provide this in future.

7 Paths.

DB apologised for the time this had taken and the unsatisfactory loose finish, stating that we had expected the gravel to bed into the hoggin underlay, not remain on top. Since this was not happening, we would remove the gravel, keeping some for drainage, and top up with type 1 hoggin; this would be a smooth surface. Don Factor expressed disappointment that the paths were so narrow. MW stated that this had been decided at the previous AGM.

Barbara Jervis asked if a handrail could be provided for the elderly at the East end. The committee agreed to consider this.

8 Planting.

JB reported that we were now employing the gardeners for 3 man-days a week; Paul and 2 others were here on Fridays. Now the dispute was over, we would be able to catch up on planting at the southern side of the garden and replacing equipment. The global budget figures were £8,900 for materials and plants and £3,000 for new equipment.

Diana Wilmot queried whether Paul and his assistants, currently his wife and son, represented good value as they were unqualified and their pruning had been criticised. Also that she had been doing extensive and heavy work in the central garden until her contract had been terminated. JB, DB and NP stated that we had actually required her to work under the direction of Paul, ending a situation where she had been doing the central garden and having no contact with Paul and JB who were in charge of the rest. Paul had 15 years experience and his work in other gardens was admired. JB remembered that planting in the garden had been neglected for long before her time on the committee.

After further discussion, it was agreed that the planting should go ahead as planned but an appraisal of the results would determine whether we needed any extra help on the planning and design side.

Sarah Edwards criticised the way in which the herb garden at the East end had been dug without prior consultation with residents. MW stated that this was a response to children playing football, who had turned the existing lawn into a mudbath. JB stated that details of all future developments in the garden would be posted on the central notice board.

9 AOB: Security.

Don Factor complained that security was poor by no 52. NP had witnessed incursions there and confirmed that this was now a priority. One resident was worried about foxes, however the committee and other residents confirmed that they were more or less endemic.

9 AOB: Parties.

After discussion, it was agreed to participate in Garden Squares Day but extend the summer party in July to have a children's party in the daytime with the adults later. The 2003 bonfire party would also go ahead. CW reported that we had insurance cover this year but would keep the situation under review.

9 AOB: General.

Residents complained about chicken wire falling away and excessive waste by the compost boxes. JB stated that the wire would be attended to but the excess rubbish was dumped, illegally, by residents.

10 Precept.

MW called a vote on reducing the precept by 17%, which was carried by 26 votes to 3.

11 Election of the 2002 – 2003 Garden Committee.

No nominations were received. The 8 existing members were returned nem con. IA was appointed a full member of the Committee.

12 Drinks. The meeting concluded with a general discussion and a glass of wine.