

The Arundel & Elgin Garden Committee took place at Charlie's Cafe on Portobello Road at 7pm Tuesday, 12th November. 2013.

Committee :

Rob Sargent (Chairman), Nathalie Beaulieu (Treasurer), Tassy Barham (Garden), Nick Bellet (Garden, Dogs & Website), Calum MacInnes (Secretary), Guy Nixon (Trees), Rebecca van Dal (Social events), Kit Davis (Wildlife)

The committee was there with the exception of Sarah Edwards, who resigned in October.

Chairman's Introduction:

The Chairman, Rob Sargent, led off with a thank you to the other committee members for the years work, explaining that the committee had had a harmonious year, and that the garden had flourished due to the hard work of the gardeners, Chris & Anna, who were also heartily thanked.

Rob went on to describe the main project for the year, which was the changeover of the garden keys, which passed off without any major problems. Sarah was thanked for her help as she held the responsibility for the keys on the committee.

This led to the possibility of what the next project might be for the garden, which is currently being discussed as either a replacement of certain parts of the railings or re-construction of the ground in the children's play areas, under the swings and the playground. More of this later.

The other big events of the year were the annual Summer Party and the Open Day. Much of the success of these events was down to Rebecca, for which the committee was very grateful.

Rob then introduced the water environmental project that is being proposed by Thames Water, which is a project to help prevent flooding from storm water, with particular relevance for Arundel Gardens. The consultants involved in the project were supposed to present their ideas at the AGM, but unfortunately had to cancel at the last minute.

Treasurer's Report:

The Treasurer, Nathalie, presented the accounts for the year. It was proposed to raise the gardeners' salaries to move them up to nearer the average, and together with the proposed projects for next year (Railings and/or children's play areas), it was proposed to increase the precept from £30,000 per annum to £32,500. This is the first increase in three years, and will mean that the cashflow profile will be secure in the year ahead, and will result in an approximate £10 increase per annum per

residence/key holder

A vote was taken, and was unanimously carried.

Tree Report:

Guy presented on the considerable changes that have taken place in the garden with regards to the trees.

The RBKC Arborealist came to view the gardens and agreed with a number of recommendations proposed by the gardeners: The result was that two dead cherry trees were taken down in the Ladbrooke Grove end, and are to be replaced at some stage with a snake bark maple and a silver birch.

The dead rowan in the children's play area has been taken out, however due to fungus in the soil, it is important to leave the area to recover before re-planting. A tree will be replanted to replace this next year

The willow in the centre garden lost a branch in the recent gales, and given it is unlikely to be the last of the problems for the tree, it was removed and will be replaced by a Judas tree.

There have been a number of trees that were removed from the horseshoe garden as it was felt it was over populated. The losers were a large common willow and an elm. These will be replaced with a single new tree next year once we've taken some time to think about what would work best in this space. In the same vicinity, an Almond tree has been identified as suffering and dead branches were cut back but the tree itself saved as it is deemed good for wildlife.

The big horse chestnut had it's canopy raised and thinned out, which was severely needed.

The Cherry trees also had their canopy thinned but it is feared they might be coming to the end of their natural existence, so some thought needs to be given to when they will be replaced.

The costs involved this year were considerably more than normal, and this will drop down next year, although the limes will be pollarded in 2014 which is not cheap.

There was a question from a resident about the question of subsidence from trees and the issue of whether there is insurance to cover such problems. Guy confirmed that the trees are being actively managed to avoid any further subsidence issues including the three year rolling pollarding program.

Chris Jelston, the gardener, brought up the subject of the Lime trees. Having a series of "huge poms-poms on a stick" was not in keeping with the garden, given the mess they make, and he made the suggestion that they are steadily replaced at a rate of one tree every two years with a beech or ash or several other species.

There was plenty of discussion on the subject, but we left it that the committee would look further into the matter and report back at next years AGM. The committee agreed that a gentle rolling program for replacement of the Limes was a sensible idea.

Chris Jelston also observed that Elgin/Blenheim communal garden lost their turkey oak (apparently the largest in the borough) in the recent storm.

The arborialists said it was due to the brackets of fungus which was visible at ground level, and was the result of considerable rot at the root level. A tree outside the Sargent's house also has this fungus and therefore needs careful appraisal.

Garden:

Tassy made her presentation on the garden, thanking the gardeners for their hard work throughout the year, the bonfire which they stoked in the rain, the fine azalea bed in the south east corner, and the beauty of the garden throughout the year, in particular the Himalayan Lily which was a glorious specimen before it was destroyed by a child.

Nick made a brief comment about the dog situation, saying in general the situation had been more stable this year. However a resident mentioned that someone was bitten by a dog called Lily. It was requested that Lily is kept on a lead and muzzled, which is normally the case.

The other dog that is causing concern is Maxwell, and Nick is to have a word with the owners to ensure he doesn't frighten residents.

Dog mess is still an issue, and owners are as always requested to pick it up and dispose of it in the bins. One resident owned up to digging it into the flower beds, much to the horror of the gardeners, who requested he stop this practice!

Children:

Rob talked about the number of complaints he and other members of the committee have received about the noise levels and damage to the certain parts of the garden by children. The issue of nannies not integrating with the residents or keeping a close enough eye on the children was raised.

This evoked strong feelings in residents and Rob brought the discussion to an end with a clear message that this is not a significant change in views, but an attempt to keep the balance in the garden as measured as possible given there are 247 key holders who will have many differing views on what the garden means to them, and therefore it was hoped that parents would help keep their children's noise levels down a notch or two.

It was recommended by a resident that a form of tutorial is given to parents and children in the garden to teach them in a fun way how to respect the garden. Notices were also suggested as a form of reinforcing the message.

Thames Water Drainage Project:

We returned to the subject of the storm water project where the details of the underground water tanks were outlined. It was clear that residents wanted to see the plans for the project before giving it the go-ahead.

There was a vote taken to approve that the committee initially research the idea further with a view to presenting the project at an EGM to the garden residents. This was carried unanimously.

Committee Members:

The committee resigned at the beginning of the meeting and were re-elected at the end, with Fiona MacAndrew kindly deciding to join the committee in place of Sarah Edwards.

Calum MacInnes.
Secretary.