

AGM 2015

Committee present: Calum, Tassy, Guy, Carrie, Kit, Nicholas, Nathalie.

Absent: Rob.

The AGM was held in Nathalie's house, and approximately a dozen residents turned up.

The Chairman, Rob Sargent, was unable to attend due to recent back surgery which kept him at home in bed. Rob asked that Calum would do the introduction and run the meeting in his place.

Calum started the meeting by thanking the committee for their contribution over the year, also the gardeners & the residents who came to support the AGM.

He then gave a brief review of the year (bonfire night, summer party, the garden seminars and the railings/security developments.)

The garden review:

Tassy started with more thanks to the gardeners, gave a round up of their work for the year, and a look at the year ahead:

2014/2015: there was a limited budget but despite this constraint the highlights for the year are that the gardeners have re-modeled the north bed of the central garden, adding peonies, hydrangeas, cistus (creeping) and moved plants into the shadier south side, as well as planting a new bed by Kensington Park Rd (south side) of blueberries.

Also on the Kensington Park Rd end, to the left of the compound, the bed has been cleared up and the remaining plants are flourishing, including the Liquid Amber.

The hazel has been coppiced hard as it was a contorted hazel that has lost its shape over the years of coppicing. The committee asked the residents for their approval for removing the hazel altogether and either plant something interesting or not - depending on how it looked in the Spring.

A vote was taken in favour of our proposal.

There was a garden walk-around with the gardeners & four members of the

committee on the 31st October which reviewed the year and discussed planning projects for next year.

So for 2015/2016 plans include:

Cutting back much of the taller shrubs.

In the swings area, it was suggested that winter box be planted around the periphery facing the central garden to soften the sharp concrete edging and to help the small slope up to the swings to grow some grass by offering two entrances for the children into the swings.

Add more autumn colour into the garden.

Add a few new rhododendrons to the rhododendron bed.

Fiona Fleming-Brown raised the question of the security over the Ladbroke Grove gates as it is easy, with the help of the bench, to jump over. We are not allowed to use barbed wire so a thorny rose was suggested to grow over the gates. This will only be a short-term measure until the new gates are in place.

Tassy also mentioned that some children were causing damage to the shrubs and trees in the horseshoe bed (particularly the camellia tree) by using the area as a den. It was requested that children are asked to keep out of this area to prevent further damage.

Tassy also requested that children do not enter the compound by Ladbroke Grove gates. The gardeners often come in on a Thursday to find the compound in a mess with poles taken into the garden. To help the kids – who might be looking for toys put into the compound by residents – it was proposed that 4 members of the committee (Nick, Tassy, Rob and Nathalie) will hold keys to a new padlock, so kids can ask to get in through the gates rather than jump in from the side. It was also agreed that the sides where access is easy, will be raised to prevent this happening in the future.

Treasurer's report: Nathalie explained that the spend for the year was less than expected due to a reduced spend by the gardeners on plants, and the delayed start to either of the projects previously discussed; the railings and the re-laying of the playground surface in the children's area by the Ladbroke Grove gate. Nathalie explained that RBKC had changed the payment timetable from twice to once a year, which meant a potential cash

flow issue which we had to be mindful of, and made any short term decisions about projects impossible unless we raised the precept.

Nathalie presented a five-year forecast for the garden, which included 3% inflation from year 3.

The precept was discussed in relation to the railings project. The ballpark costs were explained, and an increased precept over 4 years was proposed to cover the costs as we know them. The figures are a rise in the precept by £40,000 for the next three years, and £20,000 rise in year 4. The rise in year 4 will be used to cover the renewal of the playground area. This was unanimously passed.

Railings: This is the next big project that the committee propose to work on in light of resident's concerns over security, and the fact the railings on KPR are hanging by a thread.

Calum explained that he has spoken to the architects, Susan Walker, and also had discussions with the chairman of Royal Crescent garden who had overseen a considerably bigger railings project. They had used Susan Walker architects and said that their work was first-class and made the project run on time and within budget.

A question was raised as to whether we could have higher railings to improve security, which we will look into. It is unlikely as once a precedent has been set with the existing railings height, this becomes the level to which new railings have to conform.

Wolfgang raised the question of the architects' fees and whether savings could be made. He also asked about the possibility of using re-constituted railings as apparently there are plenty available. Calum will ask the architects to look into this, and confirmed that we would be getting several quotes for the work to ensure we were working with competitive rates.

Trees: Guy reported on the pollarding of limes and that this is now a once every two year event following a walkabout in the garden with James Burton of the council. He said that it would be unlikely that limes would be planted nowadays, but there is to be no cutting down in the meantime. The pincus test on the lime tree outside Rob's house proved fine, but it could be tested every year if required to check on its health. There was concern expressed not just about it falling, but also about heave and subsidence if it was also

required to be taken down.

The Silver birch (which died - by the LG entrance) is to be replaced by something new.

The budget is light for new trees. There has been no new generation of tree planting yet, but something we need to come back to in a couple of years when the budget is available.

There is still a preference for high trees to help those in the top floor flats to have a better view.

There was also a request to keep a theme of similar trees when growing a new generation. Consistency was considered important.

There was a comment that the mulberry is casting too much shade. Guy said that the gardeners are to lift the canopy. However James Burton said that it is the finest specimen of black mulberry in the borough, so please look after it carefully.

It was suggested by Wolfgang that mulch around the trees might be helpful as is the case with trees in Kew gardens. The gardeners will be asked to look into this.

Keys, dogs

Nick started by thanking Alison Kidd for the new sun dial in the central garden. Residents expressed their gratitude for this generosity.

Keys: There has been a high turnover & many are not returned.

Dogs: There are 15 in the garden & waste is still a problem.

There was a discussion about an owner who lets their dog roam without the owner being in attendance. It was decided that a letter from the committee should be sent to her/anyone who lets their dog roam independently. The rule about no use of the garden at night needs to be reinforced.

Handing out the keys is a good way to pass the message to newcomers.

There was a question about dangerous dogs & what can we do about them.

Nick reply was that there are four breeds that are banned under British law.

The bye-law states that if a dog is perceived to be threatening or dangerous, then the committee can forbid access to the gardens. As we have no

capability to enforce this rule, we need the co-operation of the owners, which fortunately they've always done.

Facebook: Carrie explained that the committee had agreed to construct a FB page for the garden. Fiona Fleming-Brown expressed concern about a two-tier group of users of the garden, given many older residents don't want to use social media. The view was put forward that all major decisions would still be conveyed as usual either by flyers, on the website, or by email. It was also thought that many younger residents only use social media to hear about what's happening, and we want to reach these people too.

There was a vote to decide if we should set up a FB page, and the vote was in favour.

Fireworks: Wolfgang suggested that the fireworks could be moved from Sunday as this meant a late night for children ahead of school on Monday. Nick suggested we start them earlier. 6pm was agreed as the new starting time as opposed to 7pm.

Resignation of the existing committee and selection of a new committee: The committee resigned and everyone was asked who might want to be part of the committee for the next year. The members of the last committee all decided to apply for re-selection, which meant that there were eight positions filled, given we had lost Fiona McAndrew and Rebecca van Dal. . Fiona Fleming-Brown asked to become a committee member and was immediately accepted. This makes the committee complete at nine members.

Just after the AGM finished, Calum received a request from Mary Cameron to join the committee, but he explained that the committee was now full.

The date for the first meeting is Monday, 23rd November at 7pm.

Calum.
Secretary.

