

## **Arundel and Elgin Gardens AGM – 2 November 2020**

Attendees for the Committee: Calum Mc Innes (CM), Nicolas Bellet (NB), Kit Davis (KD), Tassy Barham (TB), Catherine Derrough (CD), Mary Cameron (MC), Melode Parker (MP).

Excused: Nathalie Faure-Beaulieu (NFB).

The AGM was held via Zoom and attended by around 30 residents.

1. Minutes of 2019 AGM: these were tacitly approved, unless residents say otherwise within 48 hours after the meeting.
2. The Committee members introduced themselves and their roles.
3. Chairman's report: 2020 dominated by COVID 19 and subsequent lockdown. The Committee was in uncharted territory and had to strike a balance between the needs of different groups in our community. In order to give vulnerable and shielding residents safe access to the Gardens parents were asked that their children do not play outside between 8-10am, 12.30-1pm, 6-8pm. These hours were later reduced to 8.30-10am and 6.30-8pm. Overall, everybody participated and these measures were a success. Lockdown was also marked by a severe drought (thank you Melode, Jane and Tony for keeping the Gardens watered, even at anti-social hours) and by the locks on both gates breaking within days of each other. Sadly, all our events for the year had to be cancelled. The Committee managed, however, to reinforce the gates to the central garden, to replace a bench on the LG side of the Gardens, and to conduct all necessary repairs to the main gates and railings. Finally, following their move to Somerset, the gardeners have resigned after 12 years of service and the recruitment process will start soon. In the meantime, the Committee wanted to get ready for the new national lockdown starting on 5 November and, following government guidance, recommended that residents do not invite guests in the Gardens. It further decided that a children-free time was reinstated between 12.30 and 1.30pm (7 days a week) for the benefit of vulnerable and shielding residents. Following questions and remarks from residents, the Committee explained that these measures would last for the duration of this lockdown and apply to all children under the age of 16. In order to achieve a balance between the needs of all residents, the central garden is to remain children-free, as per the Committee's previous decision. CM noted

that the Committee had a responsibility to act in the interests of all residents and carefully reviewed all sides of the argument throughout the year. KD added that it must be kept in mind that people who are shielding are bearing the brunt of the lockdown; from that perspective a few restrictions on how and when to use the Gardens are a small contribution from our community.

4. Budget: CM went through the accounts prepared by NFB. The 2020 budget was largely under spent due to COVID 19. A healthy level of reserves (£50K) has been achieved. The Committee proposed to decrease next year's precept to £50K (down from £70K) resulting in unanimous approval of residents attending the AGM.
  
5. Tree report: MP gave an overview of the work carried out in 2020. The very diseased Lime tree by on the Arundel Gardens side was removed, and the Ash tree that dropped a branch in the summer has been examined and made safe by the tree surgeons. The European horse chestnut is not in good shape and will be cut back to reduce stress due to disease. The London plane tree and the Mulberry tree are in good condition, but the latter needs mulching this winter. Sadly, one of the cherry trees on the KPR side of the Gardens is diseased and will have to be removed in the autumn of 2021. Following questions and remarks from residents, it was decided that a sign would be placed on this tree warning residents of its potential danger (no climbing, exercising using the branches, no hammock,...).
  
6. Garden report: presented by CM on behalf of TB. A new round bench will be installed under the Mulberry tree after mulching. The Committee would like to improve the area below the swings and are looking into replacing the rubber surface with fake grass (similar to what was installed at the LG end of the Gardens). The monkey bars will also be strengthened. A team of temporary gardeners is working every fortnight until permanent gardeners are contracted. The Committee hopes this will be finalised this winter.
  
7. Security: NB explained that the lockboxes on both gates needed replacement in late spring. The Committee acted swiftly and hired a security guard to make sure that residents would continue to access to the Gardens seven days a week, from 9am until 7pm.

This was particularly important during lockdown. Sirak did a great job, and quickly became a focus point for many children and residents who were not regular users of the Gardens. He left on 12 July, after new made to measure lockboxes had been installed by Banhams. Additional security plates were also welded around the locks for increased security. Later in October, slowing mechanisms were installed providing extra protection for the locks (no more banging of the gates) and extra security as the gates now close automatically. The Committee will ask Richard Marsh to adjust the mechanism as some residents may find the gates a bit more difficult to open. The Committee will also review its policy on how building companies (mainly scaffolding) should be allowed access to the Gardens (clear guidelines distributed to all dwellings, higher deposit) Finally, Metalcraft completed all necessary repairs to finials, railing heads and gate hinges (at their cost).

8. Wildlife and dogs: KD gave an update on the Committee's plans to introduce hedgehogs and grow a meadow. Sadly, both proved impossible. Sadly, too, our bunny died after four wonderful years in the Gardens. There are, however, plenty of insects and birds and the Committee makes sure their habitat is maintained. There are 17 dogs officially registered in the Gardens. A dog owners' WhatsApp group was launched and proved to be a fantastic way to improve communication, promote responsible behaviour and develop a stronger sense of community amongst residents. "Doggy drinks" were organized twice in the summer with great turnout and success.
9. AOB: A proposal was made that term limits be introduced for residents who serve on the Committee: ten years with a staggered transition going forward; former committee members would be welcome to rejoin after a two-year hiatus. This was generally considered good governance and it was agreed that the Committee would take it forward from next year. Following a question, Committee members stated how long they had been on the Committee. The Chairman reminded attendees that volunteers were scarce. An attendee thanked the Committee for its work, and proposed that jobs on the Committee be "advertised" to incite people to join. Another attendee expressed a desire to join the committee after the birth of her child. There was also a discussion about the minutes of the Committee meetings. Some residents would like to see them published. The Committee explained that all its decisions are published on the website and it needed to strike

a balance between detailing the minutiae of its discussions and effective communication. It was suggested that regular high-level updates could be posted on the garden boards and the website. The Committee agreed to look further into this. Finally, there was a question about the Committee's decision not to install a tennis table in the Gardens – see minutes of 2019 Garden AGM for more details.

10. CM stepped down as Chairman. The Committee and the residents thanked him for his work and generous contribution over many years. Karim Derrough joined the Committee.