

## Courtfield Gardens 2015 AGM Minutes

20:00, January 21st, St. Mary Le Bolton

Chairman: Thomas Schneider

Committee Members: all present

Copies of the 2013 minutes and accounts were handed out to those present. Time was given for residents to review before the Chairman commenced the meeting..

### **Garden Manager Report**, Robert Player

Following 2013 as a major project year when the gazebo, wildlife pond and pagoda were introduced, 2014 was all about planting.

- 180 tulips of 5 varieties were introduced to the internal beds
- garden beds received 18 tons of horse manure to give impoverished external borders a needed boost

2015 will see a further 18 tons for the internal beds

- 3 new white stemmed Birches planted in the lawn
- 15 apple tree planted, however 4 were lost
- South side pruning was completed on finally reaching agreement with RBKC to get more light into the garden, however it was not as extensive as residents had requested.

2015 will see the North side pruning addressed

- by-product of the pruning are the chippings which are re-distributed within the garden
- bark is to be used for the area around the gazebo with large leafed plants to create an indigenous children's wild garden
- bark for the paths however was not a success and gravel has been restored to those areas

Many compliments have been received throughout the year from residents and passers by.

- climbing benches made from sleepers have been installed to give a raised area for children to view the wildlife garden

Robert explained how important the wildlife garden is for bio-diversity balance in the garden, no sprays are used in the garden, it is 100% organic thanks primarily to the pond. The garden really is in very good health, and has a very strong reputation underlined by the Silver Gilt 'London Large Private Square' award, coming 5th overall.

Robert expressed his delight to be working in Courtfield Gardens and thanked the committee for the business.

### Questions:

1. a resident questioned the presence of foxes; this was reassured as normal a long standing feature of London Garden Squares. It was joked how in fact they are some of the most healthy and lucky of foxes and have not caused any problems to date.
2. a resident queried increased presence of mosquitoes since the introduction of the pond and an anecdotal huge locust like cloud of insects which engulfed him in the garden. It was explained how there have always been insects in the garden and how they are part of a healthy garden eco-system. The resident

referred to the pond as the cause due to its stagnant state, the gardeners explained that the pond is not stagnant but a well-balanced wildlife pond which actually provides a critical ecosystem.  
It was agreed the gardeners would keep an eye on mosquitos and action will be taken if required.

#### **Itemised 2014 Accounts, Lauriane Bradford - Treasurer**

The 2014 precept was £60,000, a figure consistent with the previous 6 years.

Additional Income:

- key deposits
- corporate party held in September, £1,000  
It was noted that only up to 3 private events a year are considered. This particular party was accepted as the party was organised by a resident, and had previously left the garden in very good condition
- Made In Chelsea film location, £1,500. The committee has a good relationship with Monkey Productions, usually filming takes place early on weekdays and has caused no complaints.

Invoices are still pending for some works, these therefore still show as credits

2015 Budget includes:

- consultation for a children's play area for design, fit for purpose and regulatory compliance, £2,000  
An EGM will be called to allow residents a vote on this significant change proposal. Subsequent to a vote in favour the Council and trustees will need to be consulted for approval.

Questions:

3. a question was raised by a resident as to whether more money could be reserved in advance for a children's playground.

This caused disquiet within the room due to a mixed feeling from the residents as to whether a children's playground should be built. The Chairman proposed a vote to increase the precept by £5,000 to £65,000 to increase contingency and provide a fund for additional projects without any specific allocation to a children's playground.

Precept voted 15 to 6 in favour of increasing precept to £65,000

4. a question was raised by a resident during the precept increase debate as to why Courtfield Gardens is more expensive than other Garden Squares, in protest against the raise. The RBKC website was consulted and the committee advised that Courtfield Gardens is in fact in the lower 30% of gardens on a per key holder rate. It was advised the headline rate appears high on the basis that there are more units than other garden squares.

#### **Legal Report, Mr. Barry Simpson Gray**

There are four ongoing legal issues, all with Collingham Road properties due to the eastern garden boundary.

- No.15 Collingham Road has a lease on an area including a large plane tree. No.15 is therefore obliged to contribute to the pollarding of the tree. A charge of £750 will be imposed on No.15, who accept this charge. Issue resolved.
- No.25 is the subject of a judicial review. Planning permission was granted to dig out 3.5m, however the conditions were compliance with the lease and the 1931 garden square act, London squares preservation act. The works do not comply with the act and a judicial review was held last Wednesday. The Judge will refer his decision in due course.

Barry stated the importance of upholding the 1931 act and ensuring our gardens are maintained and preserved in keeping with their original purpose. If developments such as no.25 are allowed to continue the land becomes private with residents no longer permitted access.

#### **Garden Party & Events, Candace Wambold**

- overview of the party and Pluto appeal was provided, £12,000 was raised for this good local cause.
- the garden is always open to residents even when private events or filming are being held
- Open Weekend saw 346 visitors

Anyone who wishes to assist in hosting the garden Open Days please make yourself known to the committee

#### **Technical Report, Duncan Hawkins**

The gate has been causing problems for quite a time. A solution was found and set in the 2014 budget to replace the entry system with an upgraded solution to ensure the access to the gardens is made secure and reserved for residents only. There have been numerous incidents of non-residents accessing the garden, unauthorised parties, littering and vandalism.

The new solution is to be provided by PES and will include a push button to exit. The opening hours of the garden will be able to be controlled, as per the by-laws, and be available to residents from 05:30 to 23:30.

The work is anticipated to be undertaken in April and a number of key exchange dates will be held in the garden.

The police recommended the committee look at installation of CCTV to discourage anti-social behaviour by 3rd parties. A vote was held and unanimous agreement was reached that a CCTV solution should be researched and presented back to the committee. The increased precept may allow installation in 2016 if found in favour.

An understanding of any guidance or rules issued from a RBKC perspective is to be sought.

The 2014 committee stepped down in accordance with the RBKC guidelines.

Barry Simpson Gray was re-elected Chairman

Lauriane Bradford was re-elected Treasurer

Lynda Simpson Gray was re-elected Hon. Secretary

Thomas Schneider, Duncan Hawkins, Roma Ashford Simpson, Lindsay Hampson, Candace Wambold were re-elected

Christian Testa joins the committee as a new member.

AOB:

Resident Alexi raised his disagreement with the wording of the garden rules, revised by the committee in accordance with RBKC guidelines, reviewed with specialist garden lawyers and approved by a judge, on the basis that they are unfriendly to children. Alexi questioned the process and the interpretation of the guidelines. The residents strongly contested the nature of Alexi's representation and countered with the position that the original purpose and environment of the garden should be upheld.

Thomas Schneider proposed an EGM should be considered to review.