

Courtfield Gardens West 2016 AGM Minutes

20.00 - 22.00, 24th January 2017 at the Burns Hotel, 18-26 Barkston Gardens.

Committee Members present:

Lauriane Bradford
Lindsay Hampson
Thomas Schneider
Candace Wambold

Barry Simpson-Gray (via Skype)

Duncan Hawkins and Roma Ashworth-Briggs gave their apologies.

Chairman of the AGM: Thomas Schneider

Welcomed the attendees, introduced members of the Committee and ran through the Agenda.

Copies of the 2015 AGM Minutes and Accounts were handed to those present. It was mentioned that these are also posted on the garden website. Time was given for residents to review these before they were voted on and passed later in the Meeting.

Other items voted on during the AGM were the 2016 Financials which were unanimously approved and the Election of the Committee members who were unanimously re-elected.

Garden Manager Report: Robert Player (Garden Associates)

Robert listed parts of the garden where beds had been created or re-planted by the gardeners in 2016, along with a list of general improvements and maintenance tasks undertaken in the year.

1. On either side of the gravel entrance path two new beds were replanted with large shrubs and yew hedging, the latter for providing more privacy to garden users.
2. As a result of successful negotiations by the Committee, three previously encroached pieces of land have now been returned to the garden. This necessitated the creation of 3 new flower beds (to the rear of No's 25, 27 and 31 Collingham Road).
3. 6 tall black bamboos and several large shrubs were planted along the perimeter beds in the NW corner, in response to requests for more privacy for the children's area - by residents at last year's AGM.
4. Also in the children's play section, a 12ft long laurel hedge has been planted to enclose and make safe the garden for the youngest children.
5. 15 tons of manure was spread and dug in to all flower beds (central and perimeter beds).
6. Trees: Tree specialists (Tim George Tree Works) made two visits (Spring 2016 and early 2017) to undertake substantial tree works to all overgrown trees within the garden and to the large perimeter Planes (following inspection by and consent from RBKC's Tree Department).

An update on garden competitions Courtfield Gardens West entered in the summer of 2016: we received Silver Gilt in the London Garden Society private square's sections and 3rd place in the Brighter Kensington and Chelsea (large communal gardens section).

Robert made the point that Courtfield Gardens West contains some unusual, rare and beautiful trees and that the Council now has a programme to encourage more of the Borough's Communal Gardens to introduce similarly varied species of trees in their gardens. They hope that diversity will help limit the damage if tree diseases continue to spread as Dutch Elm had to elm trees and Massaria may to London Plane trees.

He mentioned that to this end, Linda Wade (hard-working Councillor for Earl's Court Ward) has arranged a Tree Planting Seminar to be held at Kensington Palace, on Saturday 4th February 2017. Robert, Candace and Lindsay have been invited to attend to represent the Committee and residents.

Garden Competitions:

Projects for 2017: Fill out the perimeter beds with large shrubs and small trees, top up gravel paths, import more horse manure for soil enrichment and continue to concentrate on improving the overall planting; empty, clean and refill the sand pit.

Garden repairs, purchases and improvements: Lindsay Hampson, Hon Secretary

Purchases:

Barlow Tyrie hardwood bench (replacement for rotted banana bench).
Wrought iron tree seat (replaced aged wooden seat and disintegrated cement base).
Willow playhouse and small wigwam (installed in children's play area).

Repairs & remedial work:

Major repairs to and removal of lower iron railings on SW corner of perimeter. Due to damage of railings and footpath as a result of tree growth of large plane tree.
Installation of extra circular security railings (with spiked edge) in response to complaints from residents of intruders using the SE corner to easily climb into garden and sleep overnight.
Major tree works (see report by Robert Player).
Children's area Astroturf inspected, cleaned, disinfected and refurbished by EasiGrass (as per annual contract).
Repair to irrigation system, damaged by installation of large marquee for resident's party.

Proposed Improvements for 2017:

Repair, sand and repaint garden iron railings. The first remedial work undertaken since railings installation in 2008 (cost itemised in Treasurer's report).
Substantial top-up for gravel paths. (see Robert Player's report).
Extra horse manure for all garden beds.
Robert to install pump for wildlife pond to improve oxygenation.
Extra fruit & nut trees to be planted in orchard.

Itemised 2016 Accounts: Lauriane Bradford, Hon. Treasurer presented 2016 Accounts and Budget for 2017.

The precept for 2017 was voted on and was unanimously agreed to keep it at £65,000. The 2016 accounts and the 2017 budget were approved unanimously.

In 2016 additional and unplanned expenses were incurred when more plantings than expected were made along the Eastern (Collingham Road) side of the garden (see report by Robert Player).
A new bench was purchased to replace rotted predecessor (see report by Lindsay Hampson).
Regarding revenues, the garden was hired by a resident for a large party and 'Made in Chelsea' hired the garden for two filming sessions, resulting in a total revenue during 2016 of £2,100. We expect the main expense for 2017 to be the repair and repainting of garden railings which have not been worked on since their installation ten years ago. The work is scheduled to begin in Spring.

Events & Parties in the Garden: Candace Wambold, Events Coordinator

Parties:

The Annual Garden party was held on 10th June and attracted 500 attendees. The party raised £13,000 for the Chelsea & Westminster Hospital children's charity.

A resident hosted an evening party for their company on 20th July and paid a fee of £1,500 to the garden.

Several other residents' parties were requested and approved during 2016 but were not of sufficient size to be charged a fee.

The Committee aims to allow as many small parties as possible for residents. However, parties on weekends are not permitted (see Bye Laws), especially during the summer months (late May - early September) when the garden is heavily used.

Events:

The garden was open to the public on Sunday 19th June for the Open Gardens Weekend event.

Visitors totalled more than 400 over the day. Many positive comments were received such as, "most beautiful garden in Chelsea and Kensington". Visitors were also surprised by the variety and rarity of some of the trees.

Volunteers are needed for the coming Open Gardens Weekend on Sunday 18th June, to help man the gate and welcome visitors.

Volunteers are also invited to work with the Committee on ideas for future events such as Easter egg hunts, a Halloween party for resident children and a possible winter party around the Christmas tree.

A resident, Kate Marr, has kindly volunteered to work with parents and the Committee on further activities for children.

Please contact info@courtfieldgardens.net if interested in helping with any of the above.

Comments from attendees:

Two residents complained that there is not enough privacy in the garden. They would like heavier planting along the perimeter. Robert Player agreed and will be thickening up the outer beds.

One parent resident enquired about holding children's parties on weekends in the winter (rules state that no parties are to be held on Saturdays or Sundays). Candace (party and events' organiser) responded that the Committee will consider applications for parties during those less busy months in the garden but cannot allow any parties on Saturdays or Sundays during the warmer months when the garden is busy.

A resident commented on how nice the children's area is and how user-friendly it is.