

RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION OF WEST WIMBLEDON

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD VIA ZOOM

27 OCTOBER 2020 AT 7.30 PM

Present: The committee of the association and about 25 members

1. Welcome and introduction

The chair of the meeting was Nigel Ware (NW) who welcomed everyone present and said that the meeting was being recorded so that minutes could be taken from the recording. Apologies had been received from Neil Ransome.

2. Wimbledon and Putney Commons

NW welcomed Stephen Bound, the Chief Operations Manager of Wimbledon and Putney Commons, who gave a presentation about the commons including their history. There are 8 Conservators, 3 appointed by Government Departments and the other 5 elected by local residents triennially. The commons have 22 permanent staff lead by a Chief Executive. SB outlined some of the main infrastructure improvements made to the commons in recent years and described the National Lottery Heritage Fund project which was ongoing. The onset of the pandemic and the associated lockdown had impacted the commons with the enormous increase in visitors. Some of the buildings on the commons were in need of substantial refurbishment, including the pavilion at the Richardson Evans Memorial Playing Fields alongside the A3. SB explained the volunteering opportunities and described the new Friends group. 2021 would be the 150th anniversary of the incorporation of the commons and it was hoped to run a number of celebrations to commemorate this milestone, but this would be subject to the Coronavirus restrictions in place. SB explained that the next election for the 5 elected conservators would be taking place in March 2021 and said that anybody who was interested in standing as a conservator should look out for announcements on the commons' website.

At this point, NW invited Stephen Hammond MP (SH), to say a few words as he had to leave shortly for another engagement. Points mentioned were:

- a. SH hoped that the coronavirus restrictions would be lifted by the middle of 2021 so that some semblance of normality could return to daily life.
- b. At previous RAWW AGMs there had been discussions about Crossrail 2 and the expansion of Heathrow. SH thought that Crossrail 2 was now in the "deep freeze" and he thought it highly unlikely that there would be any expansion at Heathrow in the near future as the aviation industry would need to assess the impact of the pandemic on international travel in the years ahead.
- c. Locally, SH said that new traffic schemes would engage people over the coming months. Some would have merit and other perhaps not. Residents should look out for opportunities to make feedback on the consultations about such schemes.
- d. SH mentioned his mucky Merton campaign. There was continuing pressure being applied to the Council to improve waste management and street cleaning.

3. **Flooding**

Jane Barnes (JB) spoke about flooding in the RAWW area. There had been several severe flooding incidents in the centre of Raynes Park in recent years and they seemed to be getting more frequent. Thames Water said we should be grateful that we had separate systems for surface water and sewage. However, JB said that when there was a short sharp downpour some of the surface water got into the sewage system and this sometimes resulted in sewage spills. There had been some such sewage spills in past years in Raynes Park centre but also more recently in Morley Park and residents' gardens. JB's slide listed recent surface water flooding and sewage spill incidents.

RAWW has been in regular contact with the Council's flood reduction officer. Thames Water had given a presentation at a recent Raynes Park Forum and had shown a map which indicated that there was an area in Cottenham Park and Copse Hill where studies and remedial works were required. JB said that RAWW would like residents to provide more information about flooding incidents (photos and/or videos) so that more pressure could be applied to Thames Water and the Council. It was imperative that all flooding incidents were reported by telephone to Thames Water as the more telephone calls they received the more likely they were to take remedial action; telephone calls seemed to achieve better results than emails or letters. RAWW would be campaigning for routine checks on drainage implementation and maintenance on major developments, like Wimbledon Hill Park on Copse Hill. Hopefully in the longer term, Thames Water would increase the capacity of its sewage systems in the area.

Simon Hood said that he had recently moved to Cottenham Park Road and was concerned to see that that was one of the highlighted flooding areas. JB said that Cottenham Park Road had been particularly badly affected in August 2020 in the section between Durham Road and Oakwood Road with water running down Cottenham Drive and from Morley Park.

4. **Morley Park**

James Oliver (JO) spoke about Morley Park which had suffered from a period of intense use during the lockdown earlier in the year. The quality of the playing fields was a cause for concern with a number of bare patches, particularly in the area near the pavilion. The cause was thought to be over-use by Ursuline School's tenants during the winter months and the extremely high levels of rain last winter. There was also a lack of irrigation during the summer months when it had been very dry. The Friends of Morley Park had taken this matter up with the school in an effort to understand the plans for the restoration of the playing fields.

The other major issue relates to the attenuation pond in the meadow on the upper part of the park. Although a schedule of maintenance had been agreed between Berkeley Homes (BH) and the Council with regard to the attenuation pond and the drainage systems of the development, there was very little evidence that any of this maintenance had taken place. The attenuation pond had silted up and it was possible that this had contributed to some of the local flooding problems in August 2020. Discussions are ongoing with BH about remedial action.

There had been some vandalism in the park recently with a bench destroyed and graffiti on notice boards. In the summer there had also been an unwelcome number of people cycling in the park.

The Friends of Morley Park were always looking for new members and residents could join by visiting their website. In the last year, the Friends had spent more time chasing BH and the Council about outstanding issues than protecting and improving the park. BH were being chased to ensure they complied with their obligations regarding landscaping and tree planting. It was expected that BH would be finishing on site by the end of the first quarter of 2021 and they had indicated that they would finish all the outstanding matters by then. The Friends would endeavour to ensure that all the outstanding issues were appropriately dealt with.

The Friends had been trying to obtain a copy of the lease between BH and the Council, but the Council had refused to supply it. After an application to the Information Commissioner a heavily redacted version of the lease had been provided but the redactions were so severe that it was difficult to understand exactly what obligations BH had regarding the eradication of the knotweed or the arrangements that applied to transfer the ownership of the park to the Council at the end of the lease.

The Friends had been pursuing the Council regarding the failure to let out the cottage near the pavilion. This was important because the income from the cottage was supposed to be ring-fenced to provide a fund for improvements to the park. Recently the cottage has been occupied by a Council employee and despite the Friends taking a case to the relevant Ombudsman, the Council had declined to ring-fence an amount equivalent to the rent.

5. Financial report

NW, gave a brief summary of the Association's financial position for the year ended 5 April 2020. Total income for the year had decreased by 3% to £3,085 which was almost entirely attributable to a drop in subscriptions and donations income. NW thanked those members who had made donations in addition to the £5 membership subscription and to the advertisers in the annual hard copy newsletter.

Total spending for the year had increased by £281 to £1,410. The main reason for this was the cost of £240 for an extra mail drop last year in connection with the Heathrow consultation.

Overall, there was a surplus of £1,675 for the year which was £386 below the previous year. The Association continued to have healthy reserves.

6. Questions from attendees

Simon Hood wanted to know if there were any funds available from the CIL (the Community Infrastructure Levy) which might help Morley Park. JO said that as part of the s106 agreement with BL the park had received a dowry (£360k +) which was ring fenced for the use of the park but held by the Council, who so far had been reluctant to release any of it for small projects proposed by the Friends. JO pointed out that the playing fields and pavilion had been leased to Ursuline High School who were responsible for their upkeep. Therefore, it was up to the School to undertake the remedial works on the playing fields rather than the Council. Unfortunately, during the hot summer months, the school had not turned on the irrigation system that BH had installed because they said they could not justify the cost. JO said that the dowry could, in theory, be used to undertake some remedial works to the paths and also some flower planting by the main entrance gate. It was, therefore, a matter of keeping up constant pressure on BH, the Council and the school to address these issues.

Jean Pinchin was concerned about the school streets scheme by Hollymount School in Cambridge Road. She explained how the scheme operated, the imposition it imposed on local residents and how motorists who were not familiar with the area could easily be caught out. Stephen Crowe (local councillor) said that the scheme had been brought in by emergency traffic order and had not, therefore, been subject to scrutiny. The idea was that after 3 months residents would be able to report their views on the scheme on the Council's website and after 6 months the whole scheme would be re-assessed by the Council in the light of the comments. The scheme would become operational after half term and according to the Council would be started on a "soft launch" basis such that fines would not be levied during such period; it was not clear how long this soft launch period would last. Adam Bush (also a local councillor) said that he understood that the fining regime would come into force two weeks after commencement. Local residents within the school streets area could apply for exemption via the Ringo app, and the councillors recommended residents to make sure that they registered. Jean Pinchin was still concerned and was unsure how the scheme was going to be enforced – by ANPR cameras or by parking wardens? NW suggested that all residents affected by the scheme should make sure that they put in their objections to the scheme when the consultation period opened in a few months' time. Mark Leggate thought that the scheme had merit because it would give more space for social distancing when children were being delivered to/collected from school and it would also be safer for children who wanted to go into Holland Garden after school. However, he recognised that the street signs were very high and might not be obvious to everyone. He also noted that in other parts of London where these schemes had been introduced, physical barriers or cones were placed in the road so that road users were in no doubt that scheme was operational.

Simon Hood said that he lived in Cottenham Park Road where there were no speed bumps yet cars, and the 200 bus in particular, regularly came along the road at more than 20 mph. He wondered whether there would be any merit in putting speed bumps in Cottenham Park Road and Durham Road. Myfanwy Morgan, who leads for RAWW on the 20 mph limit, said that there was an issue with speed bumps as they tended to encourage motorists to straddle the middle pad, thus avoiding the impact of the bumps. Charles Reid said that speed bumps resulted in cars slowing down and speeding up, thus spewing out more pollution than would be the case if they had just gone down the road at a steady speed.

7. Election of committee members

NW explained that the committee were elected as a block. The proposed committee were Jane Barnes, Pat Keith, Max Gladwyn, Sarah Field, Myfanwy Morgan, Keith Thomas, James Oliver and Nigel Ware. A poll was placed on the screen and participants were invited to vote. The committee was reappointed. NW thanked the other members of the RAWW team who were not on the committee, namely the road representatives, Simon Bartlett who produces the newsletter and Dave Magee the webmaster.

NW thanked everyone for attending and said that he hoped we would be able to meet in person for the 2021 AGM.

The meeting finished at 8.35 pm.

