

CHERRY TREES RESIDENTS' AMENITIES ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 17 November 2015 at St. Mary Abbots Hall, Vicarage Gate, W8

Committee Members Present: Charles Penney, Chairman (CP), Ashley McNeile, Treasurer (AM), Thomas Blomberg (TB), Myrto Rochat (MR), Bruce Fair (BF), Rae Than (RT), Brett Burkhart (BB), Frances Manthos (FM), Mimi Carney (MC), Monique Bahadur (MB), Caroline Cuffe (CC), James O'Neill (JO'N).

1. Apologies and Opening Remarks

The Chairman opened the meeting at 8.06pm and welcomed those in attendance, some 65 members. Apologies had been received from the following Committee member: Romanos Brihi.

The Chairman offered a special welcome to our MP, Victoria Borwick MP, and Councillors Tim Ahern and Catherine Faulks. Apologies were received from our Council office and the police.

Councillor Tim Ahern (who could not stay for the rest of the meeting) gave the following update: The doctors' surgery in the Kensington Library was due to open in May 2015; a number of major changes have been demanded which has delayed the project until the new year. Fixed penalty notices for littering no longer exist but a new charge, the public space protection order, has been introduced which will result in increased penalties and a criminal record for those who do not pay their fines. These will apply, for example, to construction companies with parking violations. There is enormous pressure on budgets and the streets are not as clean as they should be. Park budgets have also been cut. The Mayor (Cllr. Robert Freeman) sent his apologies as he was unable to attend the meeting. The Council is not pursuing the issue of speeding cars. Our MP, Victoria Borwick (VB), asked about street gamblers; Cllr. Ahern will follow up. Cyclists travelling along the York House passage are not being stopped; the Council has no powers of stop or arrest. The Council has a big problem with certain basement construction companies, their transgressions are difficult to stop; it can take up to six months to prosecute them; RBKC's powers are very limited; and they do not have enough enforcement officers.

2. Minutes of the 2014 AGM

The Chairman presented the minutes of the 2014 AGM, held on Monday 25 November 2014. The minutes were approved by the meeting.

3. Sponsorship

The Chairman thanked our sponsors, John D Wood (partner Matthew Harrop also kindly attended the AGM), Strutt and Parker, Winkworth and Huntsworth Wine Company. All had generously supported our parties throughout the year. Vicarage Gate Development contractors, Sisk, have paid for all of our events' rental charges this year.

4. Accounts for the Year Ended 31 October 2015

AM distributed the accounts to all attendees. There is a surplus of £561 on the CTRAA balance sheet. The health of the finances owes a great deal to the sponsorship. Not all sponsorship goes through our books - some sponsors pay suppliers directly, mostly for catering at parties. The Chairman thanked AM for his hard work. A copy of the accounts will be displayed on the Inverness Gardens notice board. The accounts were approved by the meeting.

5. Composition and Election of CTRAA Committee for 2016

A draft list of portfolios for 2016 was circulated at the meeting. There were no resignations or new committee members this year. CTRAA has a committee of 13. JO has taken on pavements and rubbish, BF will take on traffic and parking. The list of portfolios and committee members was approved by the meeting.

6. Status of Membership

AM reported that membership had declined over the past few years. Numbers are shown at the bottom of the accounts. Part of the membership decline followed the request for up-to-date payment for membership. AM has done an analysis of people who have resigned their membership, mostly represented by people who have left the area. The Chairman commented that we are probably not doing as well as we can in terms of recruiting people who are moving in to the area. We would like to try to improve on that. We have dropped cards in to all homes in our area inviting new members to attend our parties. We have also asked the estate agents in our area to let buyers know of our organisation. Word of mouth is the best way to get new members. AM asked meeting attendees to bring their new neighbours to our parties.

7. MP Comments

MP Victoria Borwick (VB) introduced herself as a local resident. She was a councillor of Abingdon Ward and was then Deputy Mayor of London. The Housing Bill is of great concern to local residents. VB is working with the Leader of the Council to write a detailed letter to ensure that issues important to Kensington are represented. For example, commercial property should not necessarily be allowed to be reassigned as residential property. VB is fighting for a mixed community. She receives 200 letters per day and holds regular surgeries. She has also been visiting schools. A survey is being issued to see if some changes can be made to the Notting Hill Carnival so that residents are protected.

8. Environment

MC reported that one lamppost was removed and has been repaired and returned to Inverness Gardens. Some repairs will be made to other lampposts. Cllr. Catherine Faulks has visited residents in Strathmore Gardens and has asked for further help from the Council to get more trees planted.

The persistent offender with regard to rubbish dumping on Vicarage Gate has been caught; RT will continue to be vigilant. There is a persistent offender littering Berkeley Gardens and there is a trail of bottles each morning, possibly from late night revellers. Further bins were requested but VB said that there is no funding for the bins to be emptied. A question about the quality of air was raised; the Chairman was not aware of any changes; VB reported that the air quality is no worse than it was. The buses are cleaner as the fleet is now dual-fuel. Most of the pollution comes from diesel and old-style ventilation systems. We are one of the worst boroughs in the country in terms of air quality.

9. Police Liaison

No police liaison representative attended the meeting. It was noted that the private security service, Granimpex Ltd., continue to operate effectively and its principal, Kris Vaskilis, was present at the meeting. He reported that there has been no crime for the past six months at night. Most of the crime takes place before 6pm Apartment buildings with a communal door have been targeted. In May 2015, there was a motorbike rider who smashed a car window and grabbed a bag. Residents can sign up to the Owl Messaging service at the Met; it is a neighbourhood watch messaging service. The link is www.owl.co.uk CTAA does send a representative to the Ward police team meetings; if members would like to suggest a priority, please let AM or MR know.

10. Traffic and Parking

BB reported that the parking suspension team are supposed to give seven days' notice to suspend parking apart from the occasional emergency. In that case, if you are parked in a space where less than seven days' notice is to be given, you should be contacted daily to try to get you to move your car. Your car may be moved but it would be free of charge and you would not receive a fine. The RBKC website advising of suspensions is now operating at a lag of 24 hours. Parking payment by phone is not available at RBKC due to an existing contract.

11. Planning issues

TB raised several planning issues as follows:

New basement rules have been implemented limiting basement extensions to one floor and 50% of the garden, although the latter rule seems not to apply to front gardens. TB has seen a lot of new basement applications. There is one large basement planned for Inverness Gardens and another huge one in Palace Gardens; the question of what constitutes starting work may be challenged.

On the Newcombe House development process, which runs down to Kensington Place and includes the car park behind the buildings, the developers are close to submitting an application. They will submit their proposals to residents' associations in the next week or two. The consultation process has been well handled to date. They have included a doctors' surgery in their plans. Demolition would commence in August 2016, with completion in 2019.

Opposite Newcombe House is the Book Warehouse corner, including the Victorian houses next to it. A current development plan will probably be approved.

The remaining seven buildings, of which Newcombe House was one, have been sold and the new buyers are likely to redevelop.

Lancer Square will be demolished this coming Spring. The Starbucks lease expires at the end of the year.

12. Website - ctraa.org.uk

TB outlined the new website design; the first page is a blog allowing quick updates. There are very few people visiting the site. A more interactive website could be produced if there is sufficient interest. The website address is on the party invitations.

13. 2016 Parties

The Chairman confirmed that 2016 parties will be much the same format as for this year. It is a very important part of what we do, enabling members to meet each other.

14. AOB

A meeting with Cranbrook Basements was held by Richard Link and Theresa Khairallah; they seem willing to sponsor CTAA events. A question was raised about the parking area in front of the new Lea and Sandemans shop - would the new owners be allowed to park a delivery van there? BB will follow up. Members were asked to take a picture of any vans on public pavements so that the parking officer at RBKC can be informed.

Cllr Faulks spoke of an initiative which she is supporting called City Living Local Life. The councillors have a budget of £20,000 for charitable purposes such as planting gardens. Currently phone lines for the elderly are being funded. Members are invited to suggest possible projects for funding. The CTAA website will be included in City Living Local Life emails.

The Chairman thanked the Committee for their time and help. A vote of thanks was offered to the Chairman.

The meeting ended at 9.20pm.