



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 6th May 2014
at Fellowship House at 8.00pm**

Present: Jonathan Seres - in the Chair, Douglas Blausten, Tony Brand, Terry Brooks, Alan Brudney, Jeremy Clynes, Tony Ghilchik, Colin Gregory, Jeremy Hershkorn, Stephanie Hurst, Brian Ingram, David B Lewis, Rosemary Goldstein (Secretary to the Council), David Littaur, Max Petersen, Gary Shaw, Ann Spencer, Diane Walsh, Paul Wenham

Visitors: Joyce Littaur, Jennye Seres, Gary Sheldon and Susanna Sciutti

1.

(a) Apologies for Absence

Peter Beesley, Charles Gale, Rosalind Josephs, Amanda Reuben, Richard Wakefield.

(b) Any Other Business for Agenda: There was none.

2. Questions from visiting residents: There were none.

3. Council Minutes

(a) Approval of Minutes of 8 April 2014. Item 1(c) syntax was corrected.

(b) Matters Arising not on Agenda: There were none.

(c) Per the agenda:

Orchard Housing Society: Diane Berger's appointment as the RA's representative on the Orchard Housing Society, previously agreed by email, was ratified.

4. Financial Report

The Treasurer had circulated the management accounts to 31 March, prior to the Meeting. He said that these included the Standing Orders for the annual subscriptions and that there had been little expenditure in that month.

The Chairman commented on the item of expenditure of £2,129 from Publications. This covers the cost of the design and printing of the annual report and two different membership renewal letters as well as the envelopes and postage. The total was correct but the labels of the subtotals needed clarification; footnotes will be added after the Treasurer's return from holiday.

The Treasurer said that we have a legacy Barclays Bank account, mainly because of the older Standing Orders.

The mandate needs updating. Two signatures are required for each cheque issued and the recommended signatories are the four officers.

The Treasurer proposed a Motion which was seconded by Terry Brooks:

“That the four officers should become the signatories of the Barclays Bank Account”.

This was passed unanimously.

In reply to a question, the Chairman said that the chairman of a committee can be one of the two signatories on a cheque relating to that committee's activity but if the cheque is paid to the chairman it is preferable for someone else to be signatory.

5. Current Matters

(a) Membership Renewal

Brian Ingram had raised the question in January of why 5,300 families were to be mailed in February/March with the Annual report and the first demand for membership fees.

Two years previously all households were mailed in June and October but in 2013 the EC decided to limit October to the 2,225 renewals but, as an experiment, to mail all 5,300 in February, as, if there were to be a mailing to the non-members, it would be preferable for it to be at the beginning of the year. Few non-members had joined. The January 2014 EC had therefore limited the March mailing to the 2,225 households (1,964 members from 2013, plus lapsed members from 2011 and 2012 – albeit some may have moved away). BI would like to use email for next March's renewals.

The Chairman had circulated a paper, following an initial mention at the March meeting and a fuller email on 17 April, regarding the proposal to issue discount vouchers and renewal reminders by email to the 1500 or so members who have registered email addresses. Paper letters will be sent to the other 500 members. Initially the vouchers would go to those members who renewed by end April.

The Directory which previously accompanied renewal letters had just been delivered with Suburb News.

The inherited system was complicated, and costly, and had involved letters to 3,300 non-member households even though few responded. Coincidentally BI had questioned the costs. Last year the mailing house charged £1279 for producing the letters and packing the envelopes and contents, which could reduce to about £400 under the proposed system. The Treasurer and the Chairman had worked with technical help from Jonathan Powell, and in consultation with the membership secretary.

So far, there had been two adverse comments from Suburb News (SN) delivery volunteers regarding the additional weight and difficulty of posting the two items, albeit two Council members had not themselves experienced difficulty, and praised the insertion by the SN printer, albeit at a cost which this year was £160 but might be negotiated down next year.

Jeremy Hershkorn suggested that shops participating in the discount scheme display an RA Logo (as the plants' nursery still does). Ward Reps had been notified of the emailing proposal and there had been an article in Suburb News.

A motion was proposed by Jonathan Seres and seconded by Terry Brooks:

“That the Agenda paper is approved and that members who have registered their email address would receive an email with a discount voucher or a renewal reminder, as appropriate”.

This was passed Nem Con with one abstention

(b) Open House

A Paper had been circulated to Council prior to the meeting regarding the proposed grant, as in previous years, of £800 towards an HGS entry in the Open House weekend in September, to match the HGS Trust's 800.

The Spending Review working group considered that there should be a more favourable split between the payments by RA and the Trust. The cost of entry in the Booklet for a Borough is £4,800 and most Boroughs do subscribe.

Council members thought that representation should be made to Barnet asking them to contribute towards this. This will be discussed further by RA Council later in the year, and if unsuccessful there could be discussion with the Trust..

Jonathan Seres proposed and Colin Gregory seconded a Motion:

“That the grant of £800 should be made to Open House this year”.

This was carried with one vote against.

Tony Brand will raise this with the Councillors at the Hustings meeting on 12th May.

(c) HGS Heritage Report

A paper which had been circulated to Council before the Meeting was noted. Paul Wenham, one of the two RA representatives to HGS Heritage, will talk to Simon Abbott to obtain timetable details.

6. Spending Review

6.1 Renewed mandate

Following a point of order raised by David B Lewis, a Motion was proposed by Jonathan Seres and seconded by Ann Spencer:

“To renew the authorisation for the constitution of the Spending Review Working Group set up on 4th March 2014 **with the same membership as originally constituted**, with a mandate to report (through EC) to the July Council meeting”.

This was passed unanimously.

6.2 Remit of working group

Brian Ingram had raised in advance, in the agenda, a proposal to expand the remit **of this working group** to review the income of the RA as well as its expenditure and spoke to this proposal. In discussion. BI, who **is** one of the four members of the group, felt that he was unable to do an adequate job on reviewing expenditure without expanding the remit to include income. It was pointed out to him that the Motion setting up the Group stated that it should consider ‘whether expenditure could be adapted to show savings in efficiency’. Several Council members did not consider that the income side should be included in the working group's terms of reference.

BI said that he is having problems getting sight of invoices and spread sheets or any accounting schedule, as he needs to look at the totality in the accounts. The Chairman, who also chaired the working group, said that the methodology was to focus on the larger items shown in the management accounts. It was a spending review and not an audit. However, invoices had been available at its meetings and a

sub-group had looked at nominal ledger sheets although he had not thought this necessary for the methodology he had set out.

The proposal was put but not seconded.

7. Proposal that pairs of Council Members review the minutes of a Specific Committee

The Chairman had introduced the proposal, and said that it had been discussed by the EC but the discussion had not been conclusive. He said that the circulation of committees' minutes was an important development introduced in 2009 after the criticism of the RA's process in reviewing the Henrietta Barnett School expansion but means that Council members may get 'deluged' with minutes. The Harris Report made the point that the RA cannot hide behind the fact that it did not realise what was happening.

Tony Ghilchik said that whatever is decided it does not absolve the Council from looking at the minutes. He emphasised that every Council member has a duty to look at all the minutes and giving this duty to two people is watering it down.

Colin Gregory said that if the purpose of this proposal is to get Council to focus on work of the Standing Committees it is a 'cop out'. He suggested that the chair of the standing committees point out 1 or 2 items from their minutes. He thought that the chairs have a duty to refer anything which deserves greater focus to the EC and then to Council.

The Chairman agreed that there is already a duty to bring anything major to Council, under a 2009 Council decision and the more recent response to the Harris Report. He also agreed that all Council members have, and would continue to have, a duty to read committee minutes, but the purpose of this proposal is to meet the problem that no one person is accountable for the awareness of what the committees are doing. He likened the proposal to the parliamentary role of shadow ministers.

David B Lewis thought that it is normal for minutes to be circulated and everyone should look at them. He pointed out that all Council members with an interest in particular committees are probably already serving on those committees.

Alan Brudney said that the present system seems to work well.

Council emphasised that chairmen of committees have a duty to bring major matters to Council and that these should be flagged in the email when they circulate their minutes to Council.

The proposal was not put to a vote as there was no support for it.

8. Objectives for year 2014 (deferred from previous meetings)

The EC had discussed their original proposals for 2014 objectives and reconfirmed them, with a slight update. They were discussed by Council.

1 *Continuing the core work of the present standing committees*
This was agreed.

2. *Finding new volunteers willing to stand for election to the RA Council.*
The Chairman said that it was easy to get volunteers for a particular project to be co-opted to committees but we should try to rejuvenate Council. David B Lewis disagreed and thought that recruitment to Council should come through co-optees to the committees. He said that the RA is not operating the six year rule and we need a

balance between experience and knowledge. All committees should have 10 members. It was agreed to endorse this objective, deleting the words "election to" and adding at the end the words 'and/or its committees' so the revised objective reads: *Finding new volunteers willing to stand for RA Council and/or its Committees.*

3. *Adopting further policies aimed at improving the RA's recognition among residents and establishing their wishes.*

Diane Walsh said that we need to tell residents what the RA does. Residents should be asked what they want from the RA and perhaps implement this through Suburb News. This objective was agreed.

4. *Creating a short modern Mission statement*

Council did not wish to pursue this objective.

5. *Incorporation with the additional aim of obtaining charitable status under the new legislation if it is easily feasible.*

David B Lewis said that there has still not been any discussion regarding RA strategy.

The Chairman confirmed that these objectives were not intended to be strategic. Council had rejected the main recommendations of the strategy review, although he kept them in mind and EC had agreed a meeting with HGS Trust on 2nd July which revived one strategy objective (communication with the Trust and Barnet). The standing committees were working with LB Barnet trying to build relationships, and had been increasingly successful.

The Chairman said that since the Plymouth Brethren case it has become more difficult to obtain charitable status. Regarding incorporation, it is easier to enter into agreements if you are incorporated and it minimises liability. Brian Ingram said that he would like the RA to become a charity. Charles Gale said that the RA should look into this but it should be separate from these objectives. It was agreed that this should be something to explore but it should not be an objective.

A Motion was proposed by Colin Gregory and seconded by Ann Spencer:

"That steps are taken to increase influence of the RA with LB Barnet and the HGS Trust".

This was passed Nem Con with three abstentions.

Post-meeting note: for ease of reference, the agreed objectives for 2014 were:

1. Continuing the core work of the present standing committees
2. Finding new volunteers willing to stand for RA Council and/or its Committees
3. Adopting further policies aimed at improving the RA's recognition among residents and establishing their wishes.

9. Committee Reports

The Chairman said that in future this would include a heading for EC report, as had been suggested to him by David B Lewis ahead of the meeting. The Minutes of the March EC meeting had been circulated to Council, in the usual way, and the April Minutes were awaiting remaining comments and would be circulated shortly.

(a) Allotments

Alan Brudney said that the allotments are doing well and there are a few plots available. It was suggested that residents are made aware of this on the HGS List.
Alan Brudney will circulate the latest minutes to Council.

(b) Consam

The Treasurer said (a) that the proposal for the development of the electricity sub-station site near the corner of Holne Chase and Neville Drive had been referred to PPC and the CAAC as Consam thought that the development is too large for the site.
(b) a survey of street furniture is being organised.

(c) Events

David Littaur needs assistance with putting out chairs for the Michael Rowley Event on 11th May at 2.00pm at Friends Meeting House as well as at 7.00pm on May 12th for the Hustings meeting at the Free Church Hall. The Chairman urged Council members to attend these events.

(d) Gallery

There was no report in Richard Wakefield's absence.

(e) Marketing

There were no developments, other than detail regarding matters already reported.

(f) Membership

This had been discussed in item 5(a).

(g) Publications

Terry Brooks referred to the paper he had circulated about the website containing links to other sites and points regarding the financial and human resources that would be involved if it were decided to develop the RA's website. Any comments from Council members on this paper should be posted to the forum address racouncil@hgs.org.uk

(h) Roads and Traffic

Gary Shaw told Council that without any consultation LB Barnet had sent notification to directly affected residents that a decision had been made to introduce a CPZ in June in that part of Willifield Way and Asmunds Hill not already included in the existing CPZ. When a resident contacted a local Councillor he was told that he was unable to make any representations due to the forthcoming elections. In consultation with GS, the Chairman has had an email exchange with the highways officer asking for a postponement of the 8 May deadline to mid-June, not as a view on the proposal, but on the process. There was concern that there will be displacement parking in neighbouring streets and Erskine Hill residents have not been consulted or informed.

A resident, present this evening, Suzanne Sciutti, who lives in Temple Fortune Hill at the corner of Asmunds Hill and Temple Fortune Hill had been told by LB Barnet that she cannot purchase a resident's permit although it would be most likely that her part of Temple Fortune Hill will be full of displacement parking. It was agreed that the Chairman and GS pursue these issues with LB Barnet.

(i) Trees and Open Spaces

There was nothing further to add to the circulated report. Tony Ghilchik had flagged some important points in his covering email.

10. To note future programme of Council (and potentially Open) meetings

(a) RA Council Meetings

Meetings will be held on 1 July, 2 September, and 4 November, 2014. All are Tuesdays at 8pm the first at Fellowship House and (if rebuilding goes forward) the second two at Friends' Meeting House, Central Square.

(b) Open Meetings

Reserved potential date 7 October [*postmeeting note: 10th June had been reserved but will not be used*].

11. Any other urgent business

There was none.