



**Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 1 July 2014
at Fellowship House at 8.00pm**

Present: Jonathan Seres - in the Chair, Douglas Blausten, Tony Brand, Terry Brooks, Jeremy Clynes, Charles Gale, Tony Ghilchik, Jeremy Hershkorn, Stephanie Hurst, Brian Ingram, David B Lewis, Rosalind Josephs, David Littaur, Max Petersen, John Sells, Gary Shaw, Will Sowerbutts, Ann Spencer, Diane Walsh, Rosemary Goldstein (Secretary to the Council).

Visitors: Joyce Littaur, Jennye Seres, Gary Sheldon.

1. (a) Apologies for Absence

Alan Brudney, Colin Gregory, Amanda Reuben, Richard Wakefield and Paul Wenham.

(b) Any Other Business not on Agenda

Speeding on the Suburb was raised by Stephanie Hurst and will be discussed under Roads and Traffic report.

Post Office piece in Suburb News was raised by John Sells and will be discussed under AOB.

Leaflet regarding Rose Garden was raised by Brian Ingram and will be discussed under Trees & Open Spaces Report.

2. Questions from visiting residents

There were none

3. Council minutes

(a) Approval of Council Minutes of 6 May 2014 (circulated 27 May & again 24 June). Approved.

The Chairman noted that there had been no amendments, and took the opportunity to point out that in accordance with a recommendation in May 2011 from the Strategy Group, endorsed by the EC at the time, Council had agreed that, unless there are exceptional circumstances, no amendments should be taken unless raised by email at least a week before the meeting. David Lewis pointed out that this should be incorporated into Standing Orders, which the Chairman agreed should be done on the forthcoming update to take account of Council's agreed response to the Independent Report.

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

4. Financial Report

The accounts had been circulated to Council.

The Treasurer said that the outstanding debtors are paying and he pointed out that the expenses for the Summer Fun Day had not yet been included in the accounts so there was an inflated overall surplus.

An improvement had been made to the presentation of the cost of the Annual Report, as requested, the postage and renewal letters' collation now being separated.

5. Spending Review Report

The purpose was to see whether expenditure could be adapted to show savings in efficiency and bring options through the EC to be considered by Council.

The committee comprised Max Petersen, Ann Spencer, Brian Ingram and the Chairman.

The EC had considered this report, and their comments had been circulated to the Council on 24th June.

The Chairman said that Ann Spencer would present items 3.1 to 3.3 -the production and posting of the Annual Report, Notice of AGM and Request for Membership renewal – as these needed to be understood ahead of the Council's Autumn decision-taking, and she had written those sections. He would then present items 1 and 2, and take questions on the rest which were much more straightforward.

Annual Report, Notice of AGM & Membership Renewal

AS said that the production and posting of the Annual Report could show a potential saving of £1,511 if this was posted on the website and paper copies placed on chairs at the AGM. Some EC members thought that the glossy Annual Report encourages members to renew (and the Chairman referred to the circulated EC comment that the accompanying renewal letters rapidly brought in £11,000). AS pointed out that it had been decided last year that the Annual Report should only be sent to members, rather than the whole Suburb.

The Notice of AGM is printed in the last page of the Annual report. It could also be a word document and sent out by email or by volunteers to those without email

If the Membership renewal letters were sent by email, and delivered by volunteers where there was no email, there could be a saving of £618 as well as at least half this amount on printing.

Residents who pay by Standing Order do not need a renewal letter and those who do not pay by Standing Order could be sent an email, or receive the renewal request by post or hand delivery.

Some freepost envelopes may still be given out. It might even be cost-effective for the RA to buy an upgraded printing & software facility to carry out in house printing of letters.

The May requests to those who had not paid their membership had, this year, been by email where registered. In discussion, it was noted that this did not have such a good response, but pointed out that it had been to people who were already late payers, and therefore was not a comparable, so a decision in the Autumn would partly depend on non-evidence based judgment.

Some of these proposals would need a change to the Constitution if they are agreed, as stated in the Report.

EC's circulated comment on 3.3 was noted, that:

- "Input from the Membership Committee would be needed before any change is debated."

John Sells suggested PDF rather than word documents be used, if we go that route.

Tony Ghilchik wanted the RA to focus on what the RA would like to provide for its members rather than concentrate on cost cutting.

The RA should compare the effectiveness of paper v email reminders although the second mailing in May will go to fewer residents so there will be fewer responses.

David Lewis suggested sending out half the February requests by email and half by mail to compare the results.

He also thought that the Annual Report is well produced and interesting and asked how much we would save if it was printed in Suburb News, albeit the timetable for Suburb News may have to be altered. This had previously been done and Terry Brooks will inform the Chairman which year this had taken place. **TB**

David Littaur asked whether the spending committee had taken into account the importance of any relationship that had been built up with suppliers. AS acknowledged this to be a very valid point, but thought that alternative quotes could be obtained confidentially, and that it is a useful exercise to carry out the competitive tendering to see what the cost would be.

John Sells, who had experience in the field, considered that competitive tendering is also about innovation and service and not only about cost cutting, which is some way down the criteria.

Charles Gale asked what the total savings would be if all the savings were implemented. Including the saving on the Directory and Suburb News the Report summary mentioned between 10-28% of annual expenditure – the higher figure including the March pre-review savings already made and the year's ongoing effect.

Diane Walsh asked whether there would be a loss of income from advertising if the Annual Report went into Suburb News but the Chairman noted that the present annual report doesn't carry advertising (and it was cheaper to print 12 pages than 10, because the paper didn't need guillotining).

With regard to the time scale for printing the annual accounts, the Treasurer said that these are prepared by the end of January but the problem is that it is the busiest time of the year for the Accountant who has to examine them, and mid-February has been the earliest the accounts could be finalised. DW asked for a timeline for all aspects of the February March matter to be issued ahead of the Autumn discussion, and suggested that if necessary the year end could be moved to June. **SpR Team**

DW raised the possibility of using Direct Debits and agreed to look into it, albeit the Treasurer cautioned regarding both cost and administration. **DW**

DW suggested that we ask residents without standing orders to renew their subscriptions earlier in the year – certainly for the email members, there was no reason why the request should not go out at the beginning of the year.

AS was concerned that we do not let another year slip and that decisions are made in sufficient time to enable action, if decided, to be implemented in February/March 2015.

She was thanked for her presentation and this aspect of the Report will be discussed and reviewed again in September when decisions will be made.

Competitive tendering

The Chairman briefly talked about competitive tendering. The Suburb Directory had been put out to competitive tendering by Richard Wakefield this year, on 4th March, ahead of the Spending Review, and this had saved over £600 (£1,040 instead of last year's. £1,724).

The suggested tender threshold of £500 will be reviewed in the Autumn.

The reports' Notes and Exceptions were briefly discussed, including the EC comment that "Exception (b) is obvious, but if cost were high, the option is to plant fewer trees or terminate the commitment."

Projects where approved in stages

The Chairman explained that with projects authorised in stages, at each stage the committee chair should present the accumulated estimate as well as the expected total.

If the initial total is below the threshold tendering or it is excused from competitive tendering, but a stage two revision brings the subsequent (future) expenditure above the competitive threshold, tendering will apply – subject to the Notes and Exceptions.

Postage

Brian Ingram was not clear on the figures. The Chairman reminded him that he had been emailed a breakdown on 25th June.

AGM Sound System

David Littaur thought that the HB School's sound system is poor and the system provided at this year's AGM was very good. The EC comments had included: "a trial, including Chairman of Events, would seem sensible" It was agreed that Brian Ingram, Tony Brand and Max Petersen will attend with David Littaur in testing the School's system for a meeting orientated towards the stage (& thus towards the speakers).DLt

6.

(a) **Website** – raised by Brian Ingram

In response to BI's agenda item, Terry Brooks had recirculated a note issued to Council by the Publications committee in May. Steve Morris had commissioned a new home page and is in the middle of updating the design of the present site, which he owns. There will be consequential changes to the RA pages behind the home page, which Publications will look into. TB requested that standing committees should look at their pages on the web site and decide what they wish to see.

Committees

DBL intended to be actively involved. BI was concerned that there should not be any expenditure at this stage and it was confirmed that Steve Morris is not asking for payment for the new home page.

(b) Suburb News – raised by Brian Ingram

This item was deferred at BI's request, with an option to raise it in September.

(c) Plaque for Elizabeth Taylor

David Lewis explained that as English Heritage would not erect a blue plaque for Elizabeth Taylor, who lived in Wildwood Road, until 20 years after her death, he would like the RA to undertake this. A plaque had previously been erected for Harold Wilson in Southway. Elizabeth Taylor had been a patron of the Suburb Centenary Celebrations.

The approximate cost would be £600 and a charity had agreed to fund one half of the cost. It would probably be enamel rather than ceramic, at a lower cost, and in view of the size of the house and drive, it would be larger than the one for Harold Wilson, albeit only just visible from across the road.

Tony Ghilchik thought that the RA should have a 'plaque scheme', and he and others pointed out that some households would not wish to have a plaque on their front door as it attracts tourists to the house.

The Chairman proposed an amendment to the Motion, seconded by Max Petersen that:

'subject to a commitment by the RA not to exceed £300 and to the consent of LB Barnet and the HGS Trust being obtained beforehand'.

This was passed by 12 votes in favour with no votes against. The agreement of the house-owner would of course be necessary.

David Lewis proposed the Motion, as amended, seconded by Charles Gale:

'That the RA erect a blue plaque for Elizabeth Taylor on her former house in Wildwood Road, subject to a commitment by the RA not to exceed £300 and to the consent of LB Barnet and the HGS Trust being obtained beforehand.'

This was passed by 14 votes in favour with no votes against

7. Committees: issues arising on Minutes plus major issues indicated by Chairmen:

It had been suggested that where Minutes had previously been circulated it is only necessary to draw Council's attention to matters of prime importance.

7.1 Executive – Nothing to Report [*post-meeting note: the open meeting for Councillors on 7 October would include invitations to the three East Finchley councillors, per the 24 unanimous responses to the circulated email of 2nd July*]

7.2 Allotments - In the absence of Alan Brudney there was nothing to report

7.3 Consam - John Sells told Council of Consam's concerns that objections raised at the Trust's PPC meetings to two applications had not subsequently been put to the Trust Council. Consam have written to the Trust chairman in detail concerning one of these applications. A meeting will be arranged to discuss this.

The Chairman mentioned that the Strategy Group had recommended regular meetings with the Trust and one was scheduled for 2nd July, as mentioned in the EC Minutes that had been circulated. The Friends Meeting House had been booked by the RA. Five trustees and two executives from the Trust will attend, with the four RA officers and four other Council/Committee members, as listed in the EC minutes.

Douglas Blausten left the Meeting at this point.

7.4 Events

Summer Fun Day

David Littaur reported that several hundred people had enjoyed themselves at this event despite the weather. 17 local organisations had taken tables and there were 16 tables of picnickers.

It was hoped that the total expenditure would be lower than budget.

He thought that there may be ways of generating more money from this event in future years.

DLt said that he would have liked more volunteers especially for clearing up after the party.

A review meeting will be held next week.

Jeremy Hershkorn said that there was competition from a school that also had a fair on the same day but this was thought inevitable on a Sunday during summer time.

The Council thanked DLt for the enormous amount of work he had done steering the arrangements, and for the months of planning and meetings as well, as thanking his team of volunteers who had also worked extremely hard to provide such an enjoyable event for the Suburb.

7.5 Gallery

Paul Wenham was reported to be liaising with Richard Wakefield and Fellowship regarding storage plans whilst Fellowship is being redeveloped.

7.6 Marketing

Comprehensive minutes had been circulated.

7.7 Membership - Report on emailing and Ward rep deliveries

There are still 400 members without email who require a letter with their membership/discount card to be delivered. These were delivered by the Ward representatives this year.

Jeremy Hershkorn asked why the membership card expires in June 2015 although membership runs from January – December. Residents do not usually pay at the beginning of the year and it is mainly for practical reasons

Will Sowerbutts suggested that membership should start on the month when a resident joins the RA but others considered that this would be very complicated to implement.

7.8 Publications

Terry Brooks said that a meeting had been held the previous evening, and there was nothing major to report.

7.9 Roads & Traffic

Stephanie Hurst asked why there is not a 20mph speed limit on the Suburb - she was only aware of one in Willifield Way. She said that a number of accidents had occurred on the Suburb and she had been involved in one. She was concerned at the lack of adequate signage at some junctions.

Gary Shaw said that speed is rarely the cause of accidents, and in the Suburb they often arise from inattention. 30mph is, in his opinion, the correct speed for the Suburb.

Roads & Traffic will look into the signage at various junctions, with this in mind. **GS**

7.10 Trees & Open Spaces

Rose Gardens

Tony Ghilchik said that Stephen Crisp had prepared a design for the Rose Garden and there will be a meeting with LB Barnet to progress this, hopefully on 11th July. He could not yet provide the costing for this but the RA contribution to Stephen Crisp for the design had been limited to £300, as authorised.

Brian Ingram was concerned at the cost of maintenance and Tony Ghilchik said that the scheme would only necessitate two sessions a year but he did not know how many hours each session would last. The specification for the design had stipulated low maintenance. He confirmed that no trees would be removed.

Central Square

Richard Townley is leading this project and a meeting will be held with Barnet on 14th July to progress this.

7.11 Feedback from Trust Estates Committee re Central Square tennis courts

Rosalind Josephs reported that these tennis courts are currently leased to LB Barnet, for use by HB School. In the autumn the lease will end and the courts return to the Trust when a full assessment will be made. It was proposed that one tennis court will be cleared and refurbished, and be available for use by any resident. [*post-meeting note*: It was subsequently learned that the second court up by the Square is likely to need, and receive, lesser refurbishment, which may be spread over time according to the finances available]. The cost of works will be split between the Trust and Scheme of Management, as the courts would be open to all residents. The lower court is in very poor repair and will be securely fenced off.

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

RA Council Meetings

These will be held on Tuesday 2 September and 4 November 2014 at 8pm at the Quakers' Meeting House, Central Square.

6 January has been provisionally booked at Fellowship House as well as 3 March, 7 April, 5 May and 7 July.

Open Meetings

These will be held on October 7, potentially December 2, February 3, and June 2.

9. Any other urgent business

Suburb News - information from Post Office

John Sells asked why the information from the Temple Fortune post office had been published in Suburb News. The Chairman explained the reasons and said that legal opinions had been sought from two Council members before publication.