

RGS Committee Meeting – Sunday 7th May 2017 at 9am

1. Jackie Savage (Chair) welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were apologies for absence from Mike Cooper, Carol Martinez and Brad Sanderson.

Present were: -

Liz Chrominska	Pat Dark	Helen Finch
Shirley Gillbe	Janis Humberstone	Ali Linton (minutes)
Georgina O'Reilly	Mariangela Renshaw	Gill Tamsett
Greg Willcox		

2. To note the agreed minutes of the meeting on Sunday 5th March 2016

The minutes agreed ex-committee were signed as a true record.

3. Matters arising

i. Website The new web-site is now up and running .

ii. Visits - Putney Community Gardens, Doddington and Rollo Estate roof garden (all reported in the Bulletin). There is a visit to Wandsworth Community Orchard on May 11th it is behind Sainsbury's in Garrett Lane, unfortunately no-one from the committee can attend. There is also a visit to Debbie Hardy's Plot in Morden (Best plot winner) on Tues 16 May, 5 committee are able to attend.

iii. Communal area on Site 3 GW reported that work is in progress.

4. Chair's report

i. Lease / Charity update.

JS reported: -

We have an agreed draft Heads of Terms Lease with Wandsworth for 50 years. This is in a form acceptable to the Charities Commission. However in **March** the CC closed our application to become a charity as it had been on going since Oct 2015. We appealed (and Wandsworth also wrote to support us saying that the matter was still going forward) but to no avail. However they have promised us that when we re-submit our application will be fast tracked.

On **20th Feb** Peter Tiernan (Principal Valuer Wandsworth) advised us that they had instructed Lambert Smith Hampton, their property consultants, to consider and advise on the value for the Lease.

We waited and chased and then on **18 April** we heard from Peter Tiernan that the Valuers are suggesting £9K pa (indexed annually in line with the CPI) as the rent on our 50 year Lease (if we become a Charity). We have always argued for a peppercorn rent citing Barnet allotments as precedent.

NOTE: This year we will collect approximately £14K in rents and pass 80% of this (£11K) to Enable. We will keep about £3K.

JS spoke to JH and CM and we asked for a copy of the Valuation but were refused because seeing it "would prejudice the Council's position in these lease negotiations".

We decided to press the matter so on **30 April** we wrote again emphasising that "we suspected that the valuers may have mis-valued the management services provided over the years by RGS for an amount that is nominal and far, far below the value of the services provided" and said we may ask for a copy under Freedom of Information Act.

Our argument for a peppercorn rent is that the proposed charity must be financially viable in the long term, which means over 5 decades. **We reckon we need to have £8 - £10,000 pa to build up capital** for capital expenses that are likely to occur. For example: -

1. Store replacement
2. Water on site 3
3. Security
4. Dispute resolution (may need legal cover) increasing
5. Formal accounting costs needed when we are a charity

Any surplus would be spent on charitable purposes benefitting local population

Peter T has asked for "a coordinated response on behalf of the RGS on these proposals"

The committee unanimously thanked JS and AF for the HUGE amount of time and patience they have shown during these prolonged negotiations.

ii. Key deposits Keys are currently issued and a £20 refundable deposit is taken. It is very difficult to ensure that ploholders return their keys in spite of the explanations given **by GO'R and HF to new plot holders**. The committee suspects that there are lots in circulation. It was suggested that because of the security issues involved we might consider changing all the locks and issuing a new set of keys when we become a Charity.

iii. Can associate members live outside Wandsworth? It was agreed that they can as they have no entitlement to "inherit" the plot as only Wandsworth residents can be plot holders.

5. Treasurer's report

JH reported that only 2 people have not paid their rents. She thought that about 80% had paid by bank transfer. Several RGS members but non plot holders have not paid their subscriptions. There was discussion about rent collections in the store next year and it was agreed to continue on the same format, including Wednesday's as it encouraged people to come to the Store and buy goods!

6. Allotment Secretaries' reports

Site 2 GO'R reported: -

Plot lettings:

Plot 6A, 2 rods

Plot 16, 2-5 rods

Plot 32A, 2 rods

Plot 2A, previously 2.5 rods, re-measured and now 3 rods

Plot 40G, 2 rods, previously part of 40D

Plot 38C, 2.5 rods

Plot 27A, previously 3 rods, re-measured and now 2.5 rods,

Plot moves:

Plot 44B, 2.5 rods

Plot 42, 5 rods

Plot 22B, 2 rods now amalgamated with 22A and renumbered 22, 5 rods

Plot 11, 5 rods

Plots to let:

Plot 13B, previously 3 rods, re-measured, now 4 rods, still to let. Considerable work needs to be undertaken to clear this overgrown plot. The previous plot holder had already attempted to eradicate the bamboo, but it is re-emerging and will need continuous monitoring. The previous plot holder has offered £100 towards the cost of this and any further cost will be met by RGS.

Water tanks

Three of the five water tanks on site 2 had some problems when the water was turned back on at the beginning of March. A plumber plot holder has adjusted or repaired them. RGS has donated £50 to him for his time.

Plot inspections

These will be held on Friday 12th May.

Site 3 HF reported:

Lettings: 15 lettings since last meeting in March, 2 resulting from letters written after the March plot inspection.

Plot 117, 3.5 rods.

Plot 92B, 2 rods.

Plot 62, 5 rods. The plot has many fruit trees on it and has been divided into 2 plots but only half has been let. This part is named 62B, is 3 rods. Plot 62A has been shown to about 8 prospective plot holders all of whom were not willing to take it on. It may become a communal orchard plot however the current tenant of 62B is keen to unify the plots. If he continues to cultivate well for at least a year then this could be considered as it would be within our plot letting policy rules.

Plot 51A, 2.5 rods.

Plot 78 listed as 8 rods. It has been divided into 3:

New Plot 78A, 3 rods.

New Plot 78B, 3.5 rods.

New Plot 78C, 2 rods.

Plot 115C, 2 rods.

Plot 58A, 2.5 rods.

Plot 124B, 1.5 rods.

Plot 74B, 2 rods.

New Plot 79B. 2 rods. This is the tip of plot 79 and is now rented by an existing plot holder, who has downsized from a 2.5 rods plot on site 2. She remains on the waiting list for more land.

Plot 76A 4 rods has been split at the request of the tenant.

New 76A 2.5 rods. Now let.

New plot 76C 1.5 rods is the portion retained by the current plot holder

Plot 119B . A and B have been reunited into a 5 rod plot and let to the tenant of plot 119A. This is compliant with our letting policy.

March Plot inspection: Only plots that were identified at the November inspection as being a problem and new tenants' plots were inspected. 7 letters were written resulting in one forced non-renewal of tenancy and one voluntary.

May plot inspection: This is a full inspection and is planned for 12th May.

Water points: There have been 3 water points that needed repairing recently. Many thanks to a plot holder for fixing the leaks.

7. Trading Secretary's report

GT reported: -

- i. The new till has been installed is working well and is much more secure.
- ii. After several phone calls over the past couple of months and non-shows on arranged delivery dates, the root trainers are now in stock. We now stock seed trays in which the root trainers can be placed.
- iii. The variety of seed composts offered this year have sold well. We will look to stocking the same choice next year except for the Clover seed compost which has not sold so well.
- iv. We have several new products in the Store. We have Top Soil, Slug Traps, Trugs, Seed Trays as mentioned, a tonic made from Comfrey, a new Weed Killer which is more environment friendly, and a Patio Knife. We will see how well these sell before ordering more.
- v. We have new sealed containers for tea and ground coffee and a selection of herbal and fruit teas on offer at the Cafe.

8. Bulletin Editor's Report

PD reported that the next edition will mainly concern the Show and MR will write an article about it. The deadline for copy for June is 17th May.

9. Site Manager's report.

SG re-iterated that the plot inspections will be on 12th May. She reported that there is an Enable meeting on Wednesday 10th May at Battersea Park. JS, HF and GO'R are hoping to attend.

10. Diary Dates for 2016

- i. Chelsea Physic Garden This had been a successful visit and plot holder who is a guide there was thanked.
- ii. Wisley PD agreed that it was worth the visit although the numbers are so few.

Action: PD

11. AOB

PD expressed concern about the water on Site 2 and it was agreed to make it an agenda item at the June meeting.

Action: AL

The next meeting will be held on **Sunday 4th June at 9am** in the store.