

FRIENDS OF EASTCOTE HOUSE GARDENS

Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on Thursday 7th July 2022 at 2pm in the Stables

PRESENT:

Catherine Dann, Lesley Crowcroft, Malcolm Penny, Jo Oliver, Susan Toms, Joan Butfield, Chris Groom, Keith Barnard, Sue Smales, Denise Read, Tony Swan

APOLOGIES;

Gerry Edwards, Paul and Christine Lake

PICNIC DEBRIEF

Jo Oliver collated the comments and opinions from members of FEHG and social media.

The fete was a huge success although concertina into the pm; this gave rise to a number of unforeseen issues.

There was confusion on the stalls of the children's corner and a check list of procedures and games will be provided in future.

EHG had good PR from the fete, and was covered by a number of websites, e.g. FEHG, ERA and Next Door, What's app, Instagram.

New sponsorship gained - Andrew Pearce, Estate Agents.

No printing costs involved.

Music seemed to be popular.

Individual stalls, i.e., cake and tombola did well.

Special thanks to Richard as Town Crier.

Regular announcements, e.g., for book sales could be made

The Dog Show was popular as always. Unfortunately, there were large queues and the PA system needs improving. There was a shortage of water bowls for the dogs. It was suggested that registration for the dog show should be time limited, say 11am - 1pm. Signage could be improved as people were unsure where the dog show registration and the actual show were taking place.

Raffle - during the afternoon long queues formed to buy tickets which meant the raffle draw took place after 4pm. A system whereby the ticket numbers were entered into a book with the telephone number of the purchaser and the tickets put straight into the raffle box should make proceedings quicker. Announcement for last chance to buy raffle tickets should be made no later than 3pm with raffle being drawn at 3.45pm. at the latest.

Car Parking - there were so many Blue Badge Holders that their cars encroached onto the Dovecote Meadow. This caused grave problems with pedestrians when the cars wanted to leave the grounds. It was decided that notices should read "Limited Blue Badge Parking Only" and have the "Car Park Full" notice in a prominent place.

Volunteers - many volunteers worked tirelessly throughout the day as there were no designated replacements for them. The volunteer in charge of the stall should organise replacements and Sue Smales said that the Craft Stall volunteers would be ready to help out.

Refreshments - depending on the size of the event it was thought that the mobile coffee van which was at EHG whilst Alex was in hospital may be used. It is registered with the Council, and also could be placed away from the cafe and the FEHG tea tent, e.g., near the ice cream van. This would ease queueing. This was a particular problem this year as it blocked access to the toilets and signage.

The FEHG banners were not put up on the day. These have now been found so all FEHG stalls in the future should have banners.

The committee saw no problem with the repetition of a number of stalls with similar goods, i.e., tombolas, plants.

Alex employs her own staff and we cannot ensure that she has the correct staffing levels. She does employ extra staff for events. She was overwhelmed this year which added to the queueing problem.

Adverts at Back Entrance - for Heritage Day a banner will be erected at the back entrance. When FEHG first advertised there, the banners were vandalised. Residents of Eastcote Park Estate were most unhappy about the banner being there.

TS said that the gazebos were always checked before events, but occasionally they do break on the day. There are 9 gazebos now.

Fund-Raising

Clarity around the purpose of the event, i.e., fund-raising for EHG, celebrating the community, opportunity for other charities to raise money – i.e., this was the purpose of the event.

The first picnic was held to celebrate the reopening of the walled garden and to raise awareness of the gardens and to start our application for Heritage Lottery Money.

Money is now needed for maintenance of the gardens.

The Committee was asked about the number of large events we should hold; whether we should have themed events and who would run them and if the picnic should be held alternate years.

LC said that the picnic raised £2835. after expenses which gives us a total income so far of £3,635.

We need in the region of £3,500 to cover the running of the group.

Book and Plant Sales are small events which bring in a good return. Tree dressing, which is a small event gives very little monetary return but does encourage the community, especially the children .

1ST SEPTEMBER was the date given for a deadline for a decision to be taken regarding the picnic in 2023. Who will run it? A solution could be a larger picnic committee and jobs delegated to more individuals so nothing untoward should occur on the day. LC will confirm date of next meeting - see end of Minutes

MP thanked KB, CG and JB for running the picnic.

LC thanked JO for collating the material.

HERITAGE DAY PROGRESS

Stables booked with Fiona Sweet for Saturday afternoon, 10th September and all day Sunday 11th September.

Susan Dalloe will display archaeological finds from Eastcote House Gardens' digs in the Stables.

RNELHS display and publications in the Stables.

British Legion will have a stall outside - provides own gazebo - if they have enough volunteers

Eastcote Horticultural Society stall outside —provide own gazebo

Pinner Flower Group will attend either with a stall or flowers around the gardens as at the picnic.

Jazzology and Stumbling Block will perform two sessions each - Jazzology 11am - 11.45am Stumbling Block 12noon - 12.45 pm; Jazzology 14.00pm -14.45pm and Stumbling Block 15.00-15.45pm.

Ice Cream van booked

Plant sale organised by Lesley in gardeners' yard.

Second-hand book sale organised by Sue Smales in gardeners' yard.

Dovecote will be open and Terry, Trevor, Christine, Susan and Irene have agreed to steward.

FEHG STALLS

Tea tent organised by Jane

Publications

Raffle - Paul and Christine collecting prizes

LC to check with John if willing to run raffle with volunteers

Cards - Dave and Sally

Craft Stall - Sue Smales - may need 2 gazebos.

It has been agreed that local groups of Friends of the Earth and Cats Protection League can be on site to distribute leaflets but not have a gazebo tables or chairs.

Thanks to Chris, Andrew Pearce have agreed to sponsor the event and Keith, Susan and Joan are meeting Joe Prosser of Andrew Pearce to confirm designs. It was agreed that we would ask AP to put the boards up no earlier than one month before the event. It was also agreed that AP could not have a stall at the event as this was not in keeping with the event.

Posters being printed for notice board and car park.

CLASSIC CAR SHOW

The cars will be charged £5. entry fee .

The Mayor will arrive at 12.30pm and depart at 2.30pm having performed the Awards Ceremony. Waste bins and traffic cones have been confirmed

FIRST AID COVER

Provided by authorised members of the car clubs.

Please let Susan Toms know if you are available to volunteer on the day.

PROCEDURES

SS and JO volunteered to get a “reference bible” together of procedures for each event which will give clarity to all those involved and what their tasks are, how the day is to be run and follow up with lessons learnt.

ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

There has been a resurgence of ASB at EHG and in Eastcote generally. During the month of June at EHG graffiti, unlicensed music events and motor bikes have been ridden around the park. Enlisted help from Chris Head re the bikes; he has been circulating messages from FEHG to EPE. The Eastcote SNT has now taken on the matter. We need better coverage of CCTV around the gardens.

LC will send out details of who to contact about ASB.

CURRENT LACK OF LBH RESOURCES FOR EHG

The amount of resources now available to FEHG from LBH dwindles all the time. This puts considerable pressure on us. The tree contractors, Red Squirrel have added greatly to our work load this year. Keith and Lesley met with Sophie Coughlan LBH Tree Officer to discuss. Sophie is the only tree officer for the whole of the Borough. Recruiting is in progress for 3 officers.

Repairs and maintenance work are at the lowest level ever.

Outstanding work

1. Repair to board walk - reported 6- 8 weeks ago. Drayton Fencing only just given job. Subsequent to the committee meeting, JB reported work had commenced on the 8th July.
2. Painting of the bollards around the car park
3. Repair to the paths in walled garden and the path from WG entrance past the cafe to the steps near the yews.
4. Repairs to the garden walls - 5 years since last inspection. No response despite writing and stating how urgent repairs were.
5. Repairs to Dovecote.
6. Collapsed sewer at side of carpark - we are trying to have it renewed.

CG said that bricks have fallen out of the walled garden walls and are very close to being dangerous. Won't be long before something gives. LBH and Councillors don't respond to maintenance list. London in Bloom will notice. The Council put the work out for tender; got one unsuitable reply and nothing heard since. Stuart Hunt never replies.

LONDON IN BLOOM

This year we have had much more unexpected work to carry out because of lack of resources from LBH. This takes us away from our normal work, which falls behind. Discussion held about whether or not we enter LiB in 2023. A decision would need to be made before February 2023 when the entries open.

As LBH are not entering into LiB it will be up to FEHG to cover the entry costs - totalling about £200. It is very nice to get the kudos for gold medals but is it worth it? What do FEHG get out of it? Is the extra work worth it?

LBH will be getting credit but not paying.

CD suggested to let LBH know if we decide not to pay and volunteers not able to do the work so will not be entering next year. Copy CD who will send a response that she regrets this proposal.

RISK ASSESSMENT

To put ourselves in line with LBH rules we do need to have Risk Assessments. Working together these should cover all types of events at EHG as well as the regular volunteer sessions. The Book and Plant sales have one, as do the Corporate Visits. LC will be willing to write them in conjunction with the event organiser. All assessments can then be kept centrally and updated when needed. Therefore, anyone taking over an area has the Risk Assessment ready for use.

AOB

Website Report from Paul Lake.

in summer 2021, after many years' service, Trevor Dixon decided to step down from his role as Webmaster. I had been his second-in-command for some time, and so I stepped up to take on the role.

The website has been hosted by a company called Weebly: we have used the cost-free "no frills" package, which offers a very basic service. I was very grateful that Trevor continued to provide advice as needed, but over time a number of issues arose:

- It is difficult to create new tabs and webpages
- Uploading new content is slow and cumbersome
- I could not find out where "Contact Us" messages were going, so I was unable to answer people's requests
- The narrow screen format is the wrong format for modern screens, especially tablets and smartphones (in addition, new colour content converts to black and white on phones...)

For support and advice, I contacted a long-standing friend and colleague, Dave Kidner – former headteacher of Newnham Junior School, he went on to establish the Hillingdon Schools' Learning Grid, and now runs GX Computers, a tech support and repair company.

Dave began by getting to grips with the Weebly site, but soon suggested that a better option would be to create a new website. As a result, he has built a brand new website for us: eastcotehousegardens.org.uk. In my opinion, the new site is a great improvement on the previous one – full screen, bright and cheerful, with easy navigation through the numerous webpages. Feedback from other committee members has been largely very positive: as with any transfer of this nature, there have been some teething troubles, but I have liaised with Lesley to develop a snagging list, and all issues are being addressed.

Dave is happy to donate his services to us at no cost. Unlike many websites, ours has a huge amount of content built up over many years – photos of events, wildlife information, activity trails, publications, committee minutes, etc., some going back as far as 2010. Dave has spent many hours transferring all this data into a clear, user-friendly format. Whilst I have the title Webmaster, Dave is ultimately the person who uploads any new information and troubleshoots the site. I welcome any feedback regarding the website, and I would ask the committee to register its thanks to Dave Kidner for his hard work, his technical skills and his continuing efforts on our behalf.

Paul Lake - Webmaster

LC and PL met and discussed website and thanked DK. PL will give DK wine and LC will send a card of the gardens.

VOLUNTEER LUNCH

Further to yesterday's meeting LC has been able to book the Stables for the volunteer picnic lunch on Friday 28th October from 11.30am .

CG suggested changing gardening day to a Friday. Limited to 50 including Craft Group members. Volunteer needed to organise.

KB said he had been asked if we were considering doing music concerts on a Sunday afternoon.

LC said we need a license. If someone wanted to volunteer to take the suggestion forward for further discussion let the committee know.

KB said that date for the Christmas lunch at the Woodman would be 8th December or 15th December. Preferably the 8th December. He will confirm with Woodman.

TS said 6 Coca Cola personnel were coming on the 28th July to help with the gardening.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 8th September 1.30.pm in the Stables

The meeting closed at 4.15pm