

MINUTES FOR LEECHWELL GARDEN ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEETING July 2nd 2014 6pm Fire Station Community Room, Totnes

PRESENT: David Mitchell (Chair), Liz Warnes, Jim Carfrae , Jeannette Willington, David Martin, Lu Overy

1. Apologies: Shirley Prendergast, Marsha Cummings, Ed Vidler, Keith Rennells, Susie Boyd

Dave had received a letter of resignation from Susan Taylor (from both the Committee and the Volunteers). All agreed that she would be sorely missed having devoted so much of her time and expertise to the garden. It was agreed that Lu should send her a thank-you card from all of us.

2. Minutes:

The minutes of the meeting held on May 28th were agreed.

3. Matters Arising:

All the action items had been carried out and there were no issues.

4. Susan Taylor and the Volunteers

As mentioned above, Susan has resigned. It was agreed that we urgently needed new volunteers and various ideas were explored. It was hoped some could be recruited at the AGM (see item 8). The idea of approaching KEVICC was raised and it was agreed that Jim or Dave should ask Kate Wilson (chair of the KEVICC governors) if that was worth pursuing.

Action: Dave or Jim

Lu said that we should make long-term plans for the care of the garden and Jeannette pointed out that it was worth gradually replacing the herb garden plants by varieties that better tolerated drought conditions – watering the herb garden in summer is currently one of the most labour-intensive tasks. See item 6.

The idea of paying for a gardener to help was discussed (one, Douglas) has already be used at least once). At a cost of £12.50 per hour it was felt the LGA could afford perhaps 20 hours a year.

5. SHDC Update

Keith's update (attached below) covered three important points:

Watering (see item 6) – Keith said the cost of installing a proper supply (from South West Water) would be prohibitive and that SHDC could not afford a bowser either. He said he would look into methods used by others.

SHDC under great pressure to reduce expenditure and has just £6K to spend on 100 parks and 300 green spaces across the district but he did hope to be able to contribute £250 towards LGA costs.

SHDC has public liability insurance for its parks but does **not** insure items such as furniture and play equipment – the premiums would be astronomical.

Given (3), the committee felt that the LGA should follow suit and cancel our insurance of items such as the gates, pergola, play structure, seating etc.

6. Watering the Garden

The recent spell of hot, dry weather had caused real problems for the herb garden. It's clear that we need a better solution to watering than the use of watering cans filled from water butts a long way from the herb garden. It's clear from item 5 above that SHDC are not able to offer much help. Following a long discussion it was agreed that:

1. Dave should investigate moving the water butt currently in the Pool Area into the orchard of Leechwell Cottage (so it could be filled by rain falling on their vinery) and connecting the butt to a hose running to the herb garden where a tap could be installed. It was agreed that this was only short-term solution. **Action: Dave**
2. Dave should contact South West Water to establish just what the cost of connecting a (lockable) tap in the herb garden to the mains supply would be (both connection charge and subsequent water rate). **Action: Dave**

7. Update on plans for the Leechwell

In Shirley's absence Dave merely reported that the Town Council's commitment to the project was very welcome. Jim agreed to talk to Hester Pelley to get her permission since she owns the land above the well and to ask if she could offer any financial support.

Action: Jim

8. AGM Planning

No decision was made on a date (since the AGM does not need to be held before the Autumn). There was some discussion of following the AGM with an event of some kind in order to attract a larger audience (and hence increase the chances of getting new volunteers). Various ideas for guest speakers were explored without any firm decision.

10. Proposed New Sign

Dave apologised for not progressing this beyond writing to Jeremy Logie. It was agreed that he would bring pictures of the current signs to the next meeting so some decision on new wording could be agreed. While the late-night teenage problem seemed to have gone away, there was still a problem with dogs and ball games – the current signs aren't enough.

Action: Dave

12. AOB

David Martin mentioned the gravel problem which has still not been resolved. More gravel needs to be removed from the paths and the large bag of gravel by the shed (collected by Susie Boyd and Pete Taylor) needs to be removed (via the 3rd gate?). It was agreed that Dave should email Keith about this.

Action: Dave

David also mentioned that the play structure eucalypt trunk as showing signs of decay. Areas have become very spongy and the wood flakes off very easily. While the structure is still safe we should investigate the matter.

Editors note: I inspected the eucalypt myself the next day – I think we should get Earthwright's to look at it and get their advice on what to do.

Action: ?

10. DATE AND LOCATION OF NEXT MEETING: the next meeting is due at 6pm on Wednesday 23rd July. All agreed that weather-permitting, it should be **held in the garden** rather than at the Fire Station.

SHDC Report from Keith Rennells

Having really hoped to be making this next meeting, I'm afraid my ridiculous schedule means I won't be able to join you. Sorry, was hoping to catch up with everyone properly.

A couple of updates from my end of things, if you don't mind passing on:

1. Watering - I discussed the tap installation idea once more with Alex and other colleagues; as you may recall, the cost of installation was the prohibitive factor, and that situation obviously remains the same.

A bowser would cost us several hundred pounds to hire in I'm afraid, so maybe isn't the best long term solution.

We were however wondering about some innovation in collecting enough water on site for such occasions? Given our current climate patterns, and the amount of rainfall we receive in this area each year, it would be good to think we could collect all we need at Leechwell. Some of the collection methods would be straightforward - guttering/water butt on the shed, possibly guttering along the wall too - any other places with hard surfaces where it would be possible to collect and store water?

I'll spend a bit of time doing some research into methods being used by others. But given our limited resources, I would have thought we should be looking at sustainable solutions on site to resolve this longer term.

2. Finances - a bit of previous correspondence on this matter, and I explained our limited parks improvement budget of £6k for 100 parks 300 green spaces across the district. Shirley set out some of the costs for us to see if we can help. SHDC can make a contribution of £250 now to LGA towards some costs incurred, and we'll continue to trawl for available funds over the next few months, both internally and externally. See if we can find a bit more further down the road, so to speak.

Looking ahead, once the equipment insurance requirement set out by the community spaces agreement ends, there may be an opportunity to unburden LGA/TDT from sizeable costs. For info, SHDC does not insure any of its furniture, play equipment etc in its parks. We take public liability for their use, but not the items themselves. If something happens, (decay, vandalism etc) we take it on the chin. This is because insuring every item of equipment and furniture in 400 spaces would result in an astronomical premium!

As ever the garden was looking an absolute picture when I passed the other day, and was buzzing with happy families. A massive thank you to everyone involved in helping to create and then keep this fantastic facility looking so good....wonderful.

Apologies again...next time...you never know! (but I'm on leave 28 Jul - 5 Aug)

Keith