

Elm Village Tenants and Residents Association (EVTRA)

Annual General Meeting

24th July 2012, The Constitution, St Pancras Road, Elm Village

MINUTES

Attendees: Nigel Homer, Peter McGinty, Alex Hammond, Cara Jones, Maeve O'Connor, Sandra Dystant, Frances Lee, Ed Lee, Peter Wooding, Michelle Barlow, Derek Hayward, Brian Morris, Helene Morris, Sheila Sansbury, Rose Haddow, Pat Macgowan, David Powell
Apologies: Councillor Roger Robinson

Special Notice

At this AGM, we make special recognition of these residents:

John May, a resident of Elm Village and Evtra member, should be formally recognized by Evtra. He has been active with younger residents by organizing a football team and promoting good citizenship through a Sportsman of the Year event.

John's wife Judy May, their daughter Amanda and neighbour Jackie Churchill, also an Evtra member, have been actively fundraising to support breast cancer charities. They have participated in sponsored walks and organized their own fundraising event in the Constitution.

Together, these residents are showing real leadership and are role models for others in our area. Evtra recognizes and commends them.

1. Report from Chair

David Powell introduced Evtra volunteer committee members and apologies and presented a summary of Evtra.

a. Minutes of AGM 2011

We'll put them up on the website – people can review them there. (action)

b. Evtra and Our focus

At a basic level, it's about the houses and streets of our community and the fact that we share

landlord in the common, Places for People (PfP). This means Evtra doesn't include the Fairview building but does include most of what's generally known as Elm Village.

While we can obviously fight individual battles, Evtra provides a discussion platform for group concerns: where there's a collective interest then that's Evtra's area and role.

We need to be active in the wider neighbourhood especially where it's beneficial to us – e.g., the neighbourhood development plans for King's Cross.

Our website, e-mail communications and Twitter account is all set up and we use them regularly to make sure our members get good information.

We are asking PfP to improve the management of estate. This is communicated during organized walk-about on the estate with PfP representative. We encourage repairs and maintain a constructive dialogue.

Security, given where we are, is fairly good. Sheila is our Elm Village representative at the Safer Neighbourhoods meetings where residents have a dialogue with the police.

We run events to help people network and get to know their neighbours. This year we have seasonal carol singing events and the Big Lunch village picnic. There's also the Gardening Club.

2. Treasurer's Report

Pat Macgowan distributed the Income and Expenditure summary for the association which has 74 members. He reported we're about 10 fewer members than for the same period 2011 but expects the numbers to be about the same as we receive late membership dues. Pat ran through the expenses which include items such as the website, events and photocopying.

Ed commented that dues have been £3 every year and questioned whether we might increase it to £4? A quick show of hands concluded this would not be an issue. However, we agreed to keep it going for one more year at £3, meaning we will raise it to £4 in July 2014.

3. Current Topics of Interest to Residents

a. Security/Neighbourhood Watch

Sheila reported that through the Safer Neighbourhoods meetings, the police regard our area as one of their priorities. Recently there has been a group of young non-residents collecting by the crescent. A resident call 101 to report this.

Ed remarked he was unaware of the 101 number and suggested we do a leaflet campaign. The

spring 2012 newsletter did have all the security information including the 101 number. The police had distributed flyers in 2011 with this information. We will also make sure the information is on evtra.org.uk

Nigel gave an update on the Neighbourhood Watch. There are approximately 70 people actively part of the scheme in the Evtra membership. Nigel give periodic updates by e-mail and residents are reporting any suspicious activity. Asad Saeed, our Safer Neighbourhoods officers is also part of the scheme and is able to communicate directly with residents about any safety issues. We had a spate of burglaries early in 2012 but these have died down. However, it can be seasonal, and we simply need to maintain our vigilance and communications.

b. Estate Management and maintenance

Peter gave an update. He noted PFP charges each resident £60 a month for estate maintenance. On the recent walkabout we talked with Tanya from PFP about what the future estate plan might be. The current estate plan is a spreadsheet dated 2007

According to Tanya, PFP is open to changing the plan depending on feedback from residents. The estate was reviewed by a surveyor in January 2012 who looked at windows, roofing, structure, and roads. He noted retaining wall in Rossendale Way needed rebuilding, and noted gutters and cable runs and state decoration. Pfp has offered to share the report.

PFP is scheduled to do painting and decorating, guttering, and installing rainwater harvest systems in 2013. With respect to the window frames, the surveyor concluded that on the whole the window frames were satisfactory. PFP says that if individual has problem with windows then they should raise it directly with the PFP through their helpline. There will not be wholesale overhaul of windows. The retaining wall will need to be repaired out of the estate reserve and is estimated at £30-£40k cost.

PFP will look into the tiling on street signs and cable trays that are in a state of disrepair. PFP is also seeking to clarify what they are responsible for given that it's often the cable companies that cause the damage.

PFP note that their Leaseholders Handbook is available on their website. We will put it on Evtra website. (action).

Evtra would like to see the estate kept to a good standard of repair as it maintains the value of property and quality of life. There is some staining on brick work and brick work replacements by residents with different coloured bricks which starts to take our community down in terms of a good standard.

Ed remarked that we've heard these same points from PfP for a decade and they have yet to actually show any signs of acting on our requests. They never do anything. He noted that PfP told us 2013 was going to be a big overhaul to improve the condition of the estate. He believes we need to take them to the ombudsman with a formal complaint.

David believed any formal complaint will need to be well-researched to stand up. On a longer term basis, we could buy the freehold and run the estate as a co-op. This will require considerable organization and dedication but has been achieved in other communities.

David also noted that when we get the new PfP asset management plan it will need a lot of scrutiny. But it's important to review it as it's our money. He asked whether we pull together a small group to review the plan. He also asked if anyone knew a surveyor who might help us (may need to pay for this expertise); to ensure we get what we want and it's affordable.

This new phase with PfP and maintenance requires us to be active and not complain – to take it up a gear. Pat thought the recent conversation with PfP was more useful than it had been in previous years.

Peter Wooding and Peter McGinty offered to look at the maintenance plan and see if they can identify a surveyor to also volunteer their expertise.

In terms of escalating to a formal complaint there were 3 votes. The majority of people understand that at some stage we may have to escalate, but prefer to see what results from the most recent discussions.

Ed responded that PfP do take notice when you indicate greater restlessness i.e. ombudsman. All were agreed that we do not want to be in the same conversation this time next year.

c. Participation in Neighbourhood Planning

David reported that Evtra was invited to review 103 Camley development (currently used as a taxi area). The new building will be student and private housing. This had opened up the whole issue of the future of Camley Street

Camden & Islington Councils have published a Vision for the Area (available on Evtra's website). Evtra is engaged and we have put in a submission for Elm Village. We would like the Camley Street and Elm Village area to be green corridor. Our concern is that others may see Camley Street as the "ashtray or dumping ground for King's Cross." Without Evtra, there is no representation for Elm Village.

Evtra has been supporting the development of a King's Cross Neighbourhood Forum which, through the Localism Act, will be the main vehicle for neighbourhood planning. We've joined with other area community groups. Peter and David are representing Evtra. We will put a link on the Evtra site so that residents can add their name to the news list to stay in the loop on this neighbourhood planning process. (Action)

Ed noted that change is going to happen in this area and expressed his gratitude to Peter and David. If we get it right, through active participation we become part of King's Cross. This is beneficial for all of us. If we don't stand up, then Camley Street could become the dumping area for King's Cross which will have opposite effect. We should urge our neighbours to support this.

d. Garden society, community events and communications

Ed requested the May family be formally recognized for their contribution to Elm Village. See Special Notice on page 1.

The Big Lunch was a great success with about 30 people gathering on the canal side allotments in June. There will be another family event at Christmas. We explore doing another social event in September.

4. Any other business

a. Membership and volunteering

Cara raised the question about membership and participation in Evtra for residents who rent privately. David responded that the issues discussed vis a vis PFP should be dealt with by their land lady. However, he noted that Evtra is for everyone who lives in the PFP area and so membership and participation in is open to all.

b. Window Frames

Peter raised the issue of the PFP budget that shows £700k for wooden framed windows and £200k for PVC windows. This could be 20 years in the future. If they brought forward the replacement of windows, this will remove the budget expense allocated for painting. This should be raised with them.

5. Election of Committee

Maeve announced that she was stepping down as a volunteer on the Evtra Committee. We

thanked her for her all her hard work and dedicated and agreed will will find a date for a more formal recognition and celebration of Maeve.

Cara Jones is willing to take Maeve's place on the committee, which will give us much needed representation on Barker Drive. David will follow up to get Cara up to speed with induction.

All agreed on current Committee volunteers and roles.

6. Reception

Actions

1. Put 2011 AGM minutes on the website – people can review them there. (Nigel)
2. Put PfP Leaseholders Handbook it on the website. (Nigel)
3. Put a link on the website for residents to add their names to the neighbourhood planning updates (Nigel)
4. Small group to review maintenance plans (Peter)
5. Look into September event (David/Nigel)