

## **MINUTES**

Of the

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of ELM VILLAGE TENANTS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION**

**Held in the Constitution Cellar, 7pm Tuesday July 9, 2019**

#### **Present:**

Committee: Sandra Dystant, H  l  ne Fawcett, Frances Lee, Matt Long, Peter McGinty, Rob Small, Peter Wooding

Co-opted: Marina Castelobranco, Susan Cokyll (Garden Society), Nigel Homer (website and social media), Ed Lee (Minutes Secretary and Meetings Convenor), Garry Taylor

Apologies: Susan Cokyll

Plus 10 residents

Apologies: Rose Haddow

#### **1 Reports**

##### **1.1 Treasurer's report**

Peter McGinty explained that Pat MacGowan had been obliged to resign for health reasons. He had been an invaluable member of the Committee and the Treasurer from the first EVTRA. He would be missed both for this, his strong encouragement of social events and his warm personality. He was universally liked. Peter therefore proposed that a fitting tribute was one which Pat himself would appreciate – to raise our glasses to him.

The resignation of Pat meant that the office of Treasurer needed to be filled, and Peter Wooding had said that he would be willing to do this. The Committee welcomed and fully endorsed Peter's offer. Peter was declared elected unopposed.

He then gave his report and comments.

The situation was basically healthy – EVTRA's balance at this point was over  1100.

However, it was clear that in the last year the gradual annual rise in surplus had not occurred. He had therefore recommended that the membership fee should rise to  5. This had been accepted by the Committee. It was not unreasonable to make this change as the previous figure of  3 had been unchanged for many years.

He had three points which he said the Committee should look into:

(a) the use of photocopies – was this now useful or efficient?

(b) the cost of the website

(c) he proposed that for communications made to residents at large the Bcc system should be used.

**ACTION: Ed said he would contact Nigel about the latter two points and report back.**

At the point of writing Nigel has replied as follows:

*1. It's £5 a month (ex VAT) for the hosting & email & £20 for the spam blocker.*

*I'm sure there are better deals and would be delighted if someone else who's more tech savvy would like to take over this stuff*

*2. Yes, group emails sent to members are sent bcc*

## **1.2 Report from the Chair**

Peter McGinty listed the considerable number of activities which EVTRA had undertaken.

The most important achievement was that under our pressure PfP made a re-assessment of cost of replacing the sleepers in the retaining wall on Rossendale Way. As a result the previous cost was reduced by £59 000. Had this not happened it would have been added to the Service Charge, with an inevitable rise in payments for residents.

There had however been no action by PfP about the leaning pillar at the bottom entrance of the passage between Bergholt Mews and Rossendale Way. We are particularly concerned because children frequently play there. Residents can decide for themselves whether the PfP assessment that the state of the pillar is no problem is correct.

PfP finally took action about the management of trees, and most had been pruned. However, when dealing with the removal of diseased ash trees next to the crescent, of three trees, two diseased and one healthy, the PfP employees cut down one diseased and one healthy. We continue to press for action to finish the operation, when we plan to plant cypress trees, which will enhance attractiveness, be easier to manage and be less troublesome to residents in dropping leaves.

Our security correspondent continues to keep us informed about local Council and Police initiatives. This cooperation and the watchfulness and action of residents have meant that there have been arrests for drug dealing

As promised last year, we have pressed Camden Council about their failure to apply parking restrictions. We now have a body of information to consider, but this was given to us so late that we have not had time to reduce it to a suggested course of action by tonight.

A written version of the report is available below (Attachment 2)

## **2 Election of Committee for 2019-20**

2.1 The following members were re-elected to the Committee unopposed:

**Sandra Dystant, Hélène Fawcett, Frances Lee, Matt Long, Peter McGinty, Rob Small**

**Peter McGinty (Chairman) was re-elected as Chairman unopposed.**

2.2 Co-opted members.

Peter explained that these are people who are closely associated with the Committee because they are undertaking a valuable role, who receive copies of the minutes, may attend meetings, but are under no obligation to do so. They can contribute to discussion, but do not have a vote. Thus the AGM does not elect them.

He listed the current co-opted members, their duties, and type of commitment involved, not least to encourage people to come forward.

They are: **Marina Castelobranco, Susan Cokyll (Garden Society), Nigel Homer (website and social media), Ed Lee (Minutes Secretary and Meetings Convenor), Garry Taylor.**

**Sheila Sansbury** said that she was willing to continue reporting on security matters and liaising with the Police and other local groups. She gave a brief account of what happens, and expressed her view that these links have had a definite positive effect on our ability to put pressure on drug dealing.

Peter then called for other volunteers. Two came forward: Jackie Churchill and Andreas Syrimis. They did not propose any specific roles, but will be associated with EVTRA, much in the way that Marina and Garry are.

**ACTION: Ed will check that this is the agreed situation**

## **3 Issues**

### **4.1 Drug dealing – reports and recommendations**

There was a lot of concern about these matters. There were various reports, in particular about the use of more than one house for those purposes.

Various practical measures were mentioned. Contributors speaking for EVTRA said:

(1) Camden Council has a Help Desk which you can be directed to by ringing the normal Council number. They react quickly to reports about dumped syringes.

(2) As ever, residents are advised not to engage with or confront drug dealers or their clients.

(3) But residents are strongly advised to report incidents to the Police, who do act, provided that the report is made as close as possible in time to the incident. If several residents report as a block, or separately about the same incident, this will add weight to the request for action.

(4) Premises used for drug dealing are being used illegally. Concerned residents should therefore report this to PfP. If the latter fail to act, a follow-up is advised, which notes that, as PfP are the landlords, they are ultimately responsible for the proper use of their property. In addition, because they have been notified, they can no longer claim ignorance, and could be cited in future correspondence (e.g. to the Police or Camden Council) as aiding criminal activity, even if only by failure to act promptly.

(5) EVTRA sympathises with the suffering of residents, and is willing to support requests for action. However, residents must realise that, being a small number of volunteers with limited time, such support depends on our normal criteria, i.e. that the resident must first act on their own, and have failed to get action. It was noted that residents should be clear that, in such matters there is ample opportunity for acting anonymously.

Andreas raised the point that there are now CCTV devices, at a cost of not more than £100, which use ANPR. In view of activity by drug dealers using cars, this might be an effective way to reduce the problem.

Jackie and Sheila made various practical suggestions. It was agreed that these should be passed on to residents by the website, by email, on the notice board and possibly in a leaflet.

**ACTION: Ed will get the relevant information from Sheila and Jackie and arrange for the creation and distribution of the various communications.**

### **3.2 Camley Street Forum –report by Peter McGinty**

The Camley Street Neighbourhood Plan had now been published (<https://we.tl/t-jk6OB1Zcir>) – it was no longer a proposal or draft. Publication of the plan means that the Council is now bound by the legislation first to carry out an Inspection, and then to arrange a referendum in which all registered electors in the area affected will be invited to support or reject the plan. All residents in the area will be notified by leaflet at the relevant time.

### **3.3 Mike Jackson**

Mike will be retiring at the end of this year. EVTRA was keen to continue to benefit from his dedication and skill. EVTRA has talked the matter over with Mike, who wishes to remain in contact and is willing to advise. As a first step in this relationship, he will be made an Honorary Member of the Garden Society.

### **3.4. Social spaces**

#### **3.4.1 allotments -picnic table**

Quite a number of residents like to use the allotment space and viewing platform for leisure purposes. It was therefore decided to replace the picnic table. This had now arrived and will be assembled by two strong men (Rob and Matt) in the near future.

#### **3.4.2 South Space – invitations to use and develop it**

Residents were reminded or informed that this space had been very firmly returned to our use by Estate Manager Cherelle Wishart. Nevertheless, single women visitors to the space had felt very intimidated by the resident who had previously caused difficulties,

Ed explained that Cherelle had made quite clear to the resident, in front of witnesses that the situation must change. If therefore any users felt threatened, they should complain to PFP giving dates and details and noting that antisocial behaviour is contrary to the terms of the lease. Apart from our wish to develop the space, such behaviour is unacceptable in our community. A woman alone should be able to go about her business without feeling threatened.

Frances said that there had been a successful Fireworks Night for the children, but that the space was not getting used.

It was suggested that this might change if it became a more attractive spot. One resident who is always keen to develop growing space had gone there to set up pots with flowers, but had felt very anxious. There was a lot of

barking by the antisocial resident's dogs. It was noted that, again, keeping animals is not a right conferred by the lease and is forbidden by it, if animals exhibit antisocial behaviour.

Andreas wondered if the Garden Centre might be willing to help. Ed said it was very possible, as they now have a long tradition of donating a Christmas Tree, and they are a Charity.

**ACTION: Andreas will investigate this.**

### **3.4.3 Notice board**

Frances said that she felt it was time to refresh the notice board. She is about to try a new initiative. Useful information and security warnings are increasingly passed on by email, but we intend to invite residents to submit poems to be shown there, and also there will be a space for the drawings and paintings by residents' children.

## **4 Invitation to residents to raise issues (also known as AOB)**

### **4.1 Parking zone**

Peter then invited residents to raise any issues. There was a strong demand for a discussion of the parking situation.

This matter had been raised earlier, but had been put aside, as it could be raised at this point. Ed had said that as promised last year, Peter had pressed Camden Council about their failure to apply parking restrictions. It had taken a great deal of time and effort on Peter's part to get answers, but these had finally been provided. We now had a body of information to consider, but this had been given to us so late that we had been unable to come up with suggested action by this meeting.

Peter McGinty then gave an update on the parking issue, together with his advice about further action.

In 2012 Camden had carried out a series of procedures as required by law, in order to redefine parking zones. Though members had not been informed, he was sure that Camden would have carried out the legal minimum.

This redefinition gives no priority to local residents except in defined areas. In brief, one has no right to park in front of one's own house, to the exclusion of others. In order to make use of the defined areas residents must purchase a permit, which exempts them from other charges. People who park in these areas without a permit are then subject to fines.

Before 2012 Elm Village had its own zone, CA-Z. In 2012, as part of a total redefinition of all Camden parking zones, Zone CA-X was redefined to include Camley

Street, Barker Drive and Elm Village. Parking is unrestricted except in some spaces on Barker Drive and Camley Street.

Thus the state of affairs before 2012 had been abolished. In Peter's view efforts to act on that basis were therefore a waste of effort, and he would not be prepared to put effort into such endeavours.

In addition residents needed to understand that protests such as we had so far made could not produce results. The officials concerned could only implement the rules as they now existed – they had no powers to change them.

The only way he had found to counter this was to raise a formal petition to Camden Council to restore the previous situation. He was prepared to take on the task of writing and putting the petition on the Camden website.

There was then more general discussion, at the end of which it was agreed by the meeting:

(a) that the matter would be further discussed by the Committee at their next meeting, as planned, in order to decide action

(b) though it was possible that some residents might not agree, those who had come to the AGM agreed that Peter should begin the process of making the petition.

(c) Though Peter (and others on the Committee) were not inclined to follow the lines of action favoured by some members (e.g. to claim a refund of permits paid for which had been rendered unnecessary), residents were of course at liberty to take such action on their own behalf, to link up with others of the same mind and, if they wished, to propose that EVTRA should support them.

#### **4.2 EVTRA policy on issues**

Peter said that this matter illustrated well the position which the Committee found itself in. As he had said earlier, we have a small number of people who are volunteers, and have other pressures on their time. There was a limit to what any of us could do. This meant that the Committee had agreed to restate a position which has had to apply for that same reason in the past, namely:

Matters will only be considered if someone raises them. We can all see many matters which might ideally be addressed, but we cannot go looking for work. So in the first instance either a Committee member or a resident has to request that an issue be an agenda item.

Most important, the critical point, even if it is agreed that the issue should be pursued, is that someone has to be prepared to oversee the process, and push it

forward. There may of course be several people involved in reality. If such a person cannot be found, the issue has to be put aside. It can no longer be the case that, because people want something doing, the Committee is expected to do it. A case in point is the use of houses for drug dealing, which was covered in 3.1 above.

A concerned person must first raise the matter with the Police, PfP and Camden Council. If those efforts are not acted upon, then the role of EVTRA is to support and add weight to their efforts.

## **6 Chairman's closing remarks**

Peter closed the meeting at 7.59pm, thanking those who had made the effort to attend.

## **ATTACHMENT 1**

EVTRA ACCOUNTS SHEET

## **ATTACHMENT 2**

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The volunteers on the Committee have continued to be very active over the past twelve months.

As ever, dealings with Places for People have taken up a lot of our efforts.

But the most important achievement was that under our pressure PfP made a re-assessment of cost of replacing the sleepers in the retaining wall on Rossendale Way. As a result the previous cost of was reduced by £59 000. Had this not happened it would have been added to the Service Charge, with an inevitable rise in payments for residents. We are particularly grateful to our co-opted member for advice which strengthened our case.

EVTRA and the Garden Society have been active in reclaiming and making more attractive various parts of the green environment.

In addition we made strong representations and obtained action on a tree and ivy which were both causing inconvenience to other residents, and were felt to be a potential danger to users of the canal towpath. Action was finally taken, but despite our pressure PfP do not seem to share our concern about the bulge in the canal wall.

Similarly, there has been no action by PfP about the leaning pillar at the bottom entrance of the passage between Bergholt Mews and Rossendale Way. We are particularly concerned because children frequently play there. Residents can decide for themselves whether the PfP assessment that the state of the pillar is no problem is correct.

PfP finally took action about the management of trees, and most have been pruned. In addition PfP arranged for the removal of diseased ash trees next to the crescent. You will



be fascinated to know that of three trees, two diseased and one healthy, the PfP employees cut down one diseased and one healthy. We continue to press for action on the remaining diseased tree, since the advice we have is that it is not obvious when the tree will become a danger to the public, as at some point it will.

EVTRA is looking ahead to when the removal and grinding down work is completed, as Mike Jackson has suggested a plan to plant cypress trees, which will enhance attractiveness, be easier to manage and be less troublesome to residents in dropping leaves.

Our security correspondent continues to keep us informed about local Council and Police initiatives. This cooperation and the watchfulness and action of residents have meant that there have been arrests for drug dealing. This has increased in the past year, not least because at least one house is being used by such people.

We cannot stress enough the important things to do, when you become aware of drug activity. First, you should not try to approach or confront such people, as they are unpredictable and potentially violent.

Second, report the matter to the Police as soon as possible. They stress that if you delay, there is typically nothing they can do. You may not see action, but from their confidential reports to us, they do act.

With regard to the new problem of the use of houses, you should complain to PfP, insisting on anonymity. If they do not respond or act, EVTRA advises that you should make a second attempt to get action, pointing out that, as they are now aware of the problem, they are almost certainly guilty of aiding criminal acts by negligence.

As promised last year, we have pressed Camden Council about their failure to apply parking restrictions. We now have a body of information to consider, but this was given to us so late that we have been unable to reduce to suggested action by this meeting. We can report that some residents are proposing to withhold their permit charges as they feel that there is no benefit in buying a permit.

EVTRA has also pressed PfP to deal with the nuisance of estate agents' signs. Since this is against the terms of the lease, they have accepted that we may remove them, which we now arrange to do.

I have now to report very sad news which we received recently. Many of you will know Pat MacGowan, who was a founder member of EVTRA, and has been the Treasurer ever since. He carried out this task with quiet efficiency, and was always very helpful in supporting requests for expense which would enhance the life of the village.

Sadly a few weeks ago he informed us that he had to resign from both the Treasurer post and the Committee for medical reasons. We know that he has been very ill, and the future is very uncertain. We are sure that you will wish to support the good wishes which we sent to him.

This left an important gap, which we are both happy and grateful to say that another long term resident, Peter Wooding, has offered to fill. He will be formally proposed when we elect officers in a few minutes' time.

To end on a happier note, as Pat would wish, the Garden Society thrives, the plots and greenhouse are in full use and there is a waiting list. And one member has led the successful creation of a herb plot, which residents are at liberty to take from, provided of course that they do so in moderation.

We are about to try a new initiative with the notice board. Useful information and security warnings are passed on by email, but we intend to invite residents to submit poems to be shown there, and also there will be a space for the drawings and paintings by residents' children.

**EVTRA ACCOUNTS SHEET 2018 to 2019****BALANCE AT 10 JULY 2018      £1,254.33**

Date	Item	Value
24/08/2018	Subs	£42.00
24/08/2018	Donations	£3.00
24/09/2018	Subs	£48.00
24/09/2018	Donations	£4.00
30/10/2018	Key 1 Member ?? [a}	£3.00
<b>TOTAL IN</b>		<b>£100.00</b>

24/08/2018	Photocopy (cash)	£17.40
10/10/2018	New Lock and Keys	£40.00
30/10/2018	Photocopy [a]	£16.20
01/11/2018	Web Renewal	£71.94
05/11/2018	Sparklers for Party	£14.99
16/11/2018	Food and Drink for Party	£14.00
07/12/2018	Website Spam Filter	£19.53
<b>TOTAL OUT</b>		<b>£194.06</b>

**SURPLUS / DEFICIT      -£94.06****BALANCE AT 10 JULY 2019      £1,160.27**