

Bedford Park Society

Minutes of the 54th Annual General Meeting of the Bedford Park Society held in St. Albans Church on Thursday 17 May 2018

The President, Nigel Woolner, opened the meeting of the 54th AGM of the Society. The year had, he said, been busy and creative with very active working groups and he paid tribute to the strong leadership of the Chair, Helen Jameson, who then took the Chair.

In attendance: 77 members of the Society.

1 Apologies

Hilary Atherton, David Blackburn, Stephen Bradley, George and Annie Butlin, Chris Carrington, Mia Ivander, Sir Donald Insall, Sue and Duncan Ousley, Hamish Pringle and Di Skingle.

2 Approval of the Minutes of the 2017 Annual General Meeting

The approval of the minutes was proposed by Paul Walker and seconded by Graham Post and approved unanimously.

3 The Chair's Annual Review and Questions

The Chair extend a warm welcome to those who had joined the Society during the past year, and hoped that those attending would find the AGM a good way to hear more about the work of the Society and to meet some of its many volunteers. The review of activities during the year, which has been sent to all members, outlined the main achievements. Last Spring/Summer, time had been set aside to prioritise the issues it was thought were important so that time could be used most effectively. These issues were summarised as follows:

- o work had been started on two projects which would take some time to implement, but which were important. This involved working with both local authorities to secure a co-ordinated approach to planning between Ealing and Hounslow Councils, and the Society's Planning Steering Group, chaired by the Society's Patron Sir Donald Insall, working on the development of this plan. The Society was also seeking to develop a workable proposal for Bedford Corner, working with the Council and the various owners.
- o Maintaining the Society's focus on the history of Bedford Park with a series of events to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the listing of Bedford Park houses, including an exhibition curated by the Society's historical Adviser David Budworth, a co-sponsored Golden Jubilee party with the Bedford Park Festival and a lecture by Emily Gee, London Planning Director Historic England, on the role of heritage and conservation in the future of London. In addition three projects have been developed to enrich knowledge of the history of Bedford Park through the study of residents.

- o The Society was grateful to the family of the late Christina Speight for their generous co-operation in enabling the Society to continue the researches of Larry Dutson and Christina which were published as “Mainly About Bedford Park People”.
- o An Oral History Project had been initiated to explore the more recent history of Bedford Park through a programme of interviews with residents.
- o The series of lectures were continuing which focus on the identity and affiliations of early residents.
- o The new publication, The Journal, provided an excellent vehicle for informing residents of the rich past of the suburb and the Society would be pleased to receive suggestions for future articles.
- o Various initiatives during the year helped boost membership by some 15per cent with 12 new committee members or as Road Reps, and others offered to help with specific projects or on an ad hoc basis. Membership stood at 591 individual members at the end of 2017. Over 70 people were actively involved in some way with the Society. The Society was grateful to its 32 Road Reps for the central role they play in the work of the Society and the crucial role they play in two-way communications between the Society and residents of Bedford Park.
- o the constitution was being updated to bring it into line with modern practice and to conform to the current Charity Commission guidelines. The Society was grateful to Nick Mesquita, Wendy Williams and Paul Walker for the time and thought they had put into this. Certain modifications required the Charity Commission’s prior approval before they could be voted on by the membership.

The Planning Committee was once again kept extremely busy considering 84 planning applications, a significant increase from 75 in 2016, and the work involved commenting on significant elements of the fabric of Bedford Park. The addition of two new members, William Taylor and Charles Wagner, to the team enabled the Society to keep abreast of the challenges of the year, and we were most grateful to them for taking on this work for the Society. More details appear in our written review.

We have once again used our collective voice to improve our engagement with council officers and Councillors on a number of important infrastructure issues this year, which were highlighted in our written report, including commenting on behalf of members on the proposal for a cycle super highway along Chiswick High Road, using a survey of members as a basis for our comments.

A third runway at Heathrow would, in our view, have a significantly detrimental effect on our historic garden suburb, both in terms of the quality of life for those who live here, and the possible degradation of the historic buildings as a consequence of the runway. We therefore continued to monitor developments and to support CHATR who have raised awareness of the issue across Chiswick.

We have held a number of events this year, and were grateful to our Events and Merchandise Committee for making these such enjoyable and successful events. The winter party they organised this year was highly memorable for the performance during the evening by 20 members of the cast of the Arts Ed’s production Priscilla Queen of the Desert, who treated the audience to the show’s final numbers and a rousing encore.

The Society relies on the time and commitment of our many volunteers, and we are truly grateful to them all. We are very grateful to those who have stood down this year, for being so generous with their time and resources:

- George Butlin and Charles Lawrence for their contribution and expertise on planning
- Harriet Benson and Alan Weavis for playing a central role in making our winter parties and other events so enjoyable with their expert and delicious catering and their marketing input
- Nick and Sarah Haimendorf for managing the Society's membership database so effectively.

As is evident from this brief summary of our achievements, it has been another busy year for the Society.

There were no questions.

5 Treasurer's Report, Questions and Adoption of Accounts for the year ending 31 December 2017

The Treasurer highlighted the following key points:

The income of the Society during 2017 amounted to £12,237. The increase in income was derived from a combination of a successful lecture, increased subscriptions and film company donations. Expenditure was £7,974 giving a surplus on ordinary activities of £4,263. This year there was further investment in communications, with continuing improvements to the website, a new style Annual Review and Journal, and a new recruitment brochure to attract new members and improve the profile of the Society in the community.

No further transfers were made from the Society's Revenue Reserve to the Strategic Reserve, maintaining the latter at £20,000. The Society holds the Strategic Reserve in order to be able to deal with any exceptional expenditure which might be needed to protect the architectural heritage and amenities of Bedford Park, for example legal or consultant costs of contesting a particular scheme.

The Society also held £13,966 from the Tom Greeves fund which arises from a legacy given by Tom Greeves to be used by it to support and promote one-off projects for the benefit of Bedford Park and the surrounding area. Income of £527 was earned during the year on the fund assets, which were held by the Charities Aid Foundation, and £1,098 of these funds were used to purchase exhibition display panels and £500 as a contribution to the cost of the Chiswick Timeline with the agreement of the Trustees of the fund.

The Society therefore had at the end of 2017 net assets of £50,913. These comprise the strategic fund of £20,000, the Tom Greeves fund of £13,966 and the general revenue reserve of £16,947. The accounts had been reviewed by the Society's independent accountant. Her review did not constitute a full audit which was not required under charities law for a charity of the Society's size.

The Treasurer was then asked the following questions:

- a) Concern that the Society only sought a quotation from one company for its insurance needs. The Treasurer explained that he was only aware of one insurance company which gave very competitive rates in this field and that this company was used by many charities. The cover included protection against trustees improperly taking money and public liability.
- b) Mary Chapman pointed out that considerable funds were held in reserve. It was explained that it was important to maintain the strategic reserve of £20,000, the Greeves fund could only be spent on matters within its remit and was outside the control of the Society. This left around £17,000. It was regarded as prudent for charities to have enough in reserve to cover one or two years' running costs. However, consideration was to be given to projects that would require funding including the educational remit of the Society.
- c) Dick van den Broek asked how much expenditure related to regular costs as opposed to exceptional costs. The Treasurer explained that it was difficult to distinguish between regular and exceptional costs.
- d) Moira Black asked about the accounting of the Greeves Fund. The Treasurer said that the capital was invested with the Charities Aid Foundation and the Society was only aware of the income and not the capital sum invested. The Society made recommendations to the Fund Trustees on its expenditure eg. £500 contribution to the Timeline project. If the Society ceased to exist then the Fund was to go to the Victorian Society. In answer to another question, it was stated that around £500 interest accumulated per annum.

The approval of the Treasurer's report and the adoption of the Society's accounts for the year ending 31 December 2017 were proposed by Nigel Woolner and seconded by Ruth Clarke and passed unanimously.

7 Election of members to the Executive Committee of the Society

The Chair reported that there were two nominations to the Executive Committee, Nick Mesquita and Raj Parkash. A statement by each of them had been placed on the website. Their appointment was proposed by Margaret Kirkham and seconded by Justin Morris-Wyatt and approved unanimously.

8 Adoption of the new Constitution

Nick Mesquita said that a note about the new constitution had been sent out with the agenda papers and that a copy of the proposed constitution was on the website. It had been unchanged since 1984 and it needed to be modernised in many ways. The new version of the constitution incorporated elements recommended by the Charity Commission. It clarified the role of the trustees and introduced maximum terms of office for committee members and officers. It reflected changes in Bedford Park such as the declaration of the Conservation Area. A number of questions were raised by members:

- a) Robert Gurd questioned the maximum time limit of 9 years for committee members to serve and whether this was not too long. It was explained that typically members might join a committee on their retirement and that 9 years might be an appropriate time to serve and that it was not always easy to find replacements. It was also possible to co-opt members for up to a year.
- b) Torin Douglas asked whether the Society's boundary could not be the same as St. Michael's parish. In reply it was agreed that this possibility could be borne in mind at a later date.
- c) Elizabeth Thrussel asked about the provision for the Society to own property. It was explained that this was a standard paragraph in a constitution but that the Society had no intention of owning property.
- d) In answer to another question, if the Society ceased to exist then any surplus from the Greeves Fund would go to the Victorian Society but that it was considered unnecessary to deal with this in the constitution.

Those present were then asked to consider and, if thought fit, pass the following resolution, to which Rule 14 of the Constitution of the Society applies:

"It is resolved that, pursuant to Rule 14 of the Constitution of the Society, the document tabled before the meeting and initialled by the Chairman for the purposes of identification be adopted as the Constitution of the Society in substitution for the existing Constitution and all other prior governing documents of the Society, such adoption to take effect with effect from the close of business of the meeting or such later date as is provided by the Charities Act 2011"

The adoption of the above resolution was proposed by David Turner and seconded by Robin Coutts and passed unanimously.

The Chair thanked members for attending and concluded the meeting.