

MINUTES FOR LEECHWELL GARDEN ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday 1st July 2015 6pm at Leechwell Cottage

PRESENT: Dave Mitchell (Chair), Shirley Prendergast, Jeanette Willington, Jim Carfrae, Keith Rennells, Sue Holmes, David Martin.

1. Apologies Lu Overy, Marsha Cummings, Ed Vidler.

2. Minutes: The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27th May were agreed.

3. Matters arising: Dave went through the few action items in the minutes and noted that they were all either completed or would be discussed later in the meeting.

4. Watering the garden:

Dave demonstrated the solar-powered RainPerfect pump to be used for the irrigation system in the garden. The pump is efficient and can raise up to 83 gallons of water on a full charge. The main limitation is that the controls for the pump have to be sited near the water source (ie, the pool). This affects the siting of the equipment and whether one or two pumps would be needed to provide an outlet near the herb garden.

After some discussion of the options, water butts, and how best to house the equipment to prevent damage or theft, Jim offered to produce a detailed and costed proposal for the committee to consider.

5. Noisy events (and drinking)

Noise: The LGA had received a complaint about the level of noise from a children's party held recently in the garden (for which prior consent had been given by the committee). Contrary to the conditions of the consent, the event had included the use of amplified sound for a Punch & Judy show. Dave had contacted the parents responsible for the party and received an unapologetic reply.

The meeting agreed that Dave had handled the situation correctly. If people chose to ignore the conditions for holding events any future requests they made should be refused. Keith said that making applicants fill in the full SHDC application form was still no guarantee that they would comply with conditions.

Drinking: Sue had been to the garden one evening and saw a group of people having a meal with alcohol at the picnic table, and three young men with cans of beer on the bench near the shed. This illustrated the difficulty of enforcing the prohibition of alcohol in the garden. Options were to point out to people that drinking is not allowed or, if necessary, to contact the Police Community Support Officer.

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6. Garden news

- Jeanette said that gardener Doug would be employed to lay bark chippings on the herb garden to help keep it moist and suppress weeds.
- Shirley reported a further payment to the LGA from the books and plant tables. As the need to cover insurance costs was ending this year, she would be soon be stopping the book stall.
- Sue suggested that the rampant water mint in the garden pools needed clearing for safety reasons.

7. Gardening for Health – No report

8. SHDC update

Keith said that SHDC is reducing its staff by 25%. He will be leaving SHDC at the end of July but Alex Whish and Ross Kennerly would be staying on. A locality officer (yet to be named) would be the community contact for day-to-day work in the gardens and public spaces. Rob Sekula would have a more strategic role, based at Follaton House.

Before he leaves, Keith will organise a meeting in Leechwell garden with Alex Whish and committee members to discuss future maintenance needs for the garden and pool area, and the options for replacing the play structure. He will also arrange a further transfer of funds from SHDC to the LGA.

The meeting thanked Keith for all his help with the garden and wished him well for the future.

9. RHS Pennant Award

Dave and Jeanette will be present at the RHS inspection of the garden on July 8th.

Sue commented that the town's gardens need better publicity and signage – a noticeboard in Heath's garden (for example) could be used to display the map from the Totnes Gardens Trail leaflet.

10. AOB – none

11. Next meeting:

Dave suggested that this could be combined with the SHDC site visit that Keith is to organise (date and time to be decided)