

Kingston Village Action Group

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3 November 2020

1 Present, virtually: Vicki Scott, Tim Ambrose, Steve Berry, Barrie Lambert, Rob Watson, Tony Wheeler. **Apologies:** Dinah Morgan.

2 Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September were agreed, as were those of a special meeting at The Juggs on 13 October, held specifically to discuss the future of the former allotment site.

3 Matters arising

3.1 Kingston Calendar

It was agreed, with some regret, that producing a calendar was unlikely to raise money and could even result in a loss. Steve would inform Gerry Bennett - who had already taken a number of photographs – and apologise to him. The possibility of using some of these photos to produce postcards remained.

3.2 Parishes in Bloom

Tim's article for The Kingston News including quotes from the respective chairs of the KPC and the Action Group, had appeared in the November issue. This included photos – reproduced in black and white only - of some of the crocuses on Snednore and of volunteers planting primroses.

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3.3 Relationship with KPC

Vicki and Fiona had met to smooth over relationships between the Action Group and the Parish Council which had come under strain of late, particularly over differences of approach regarding the allotment site. This meeting had been seen as a success.

3.4 Environmental Policy

As a result of some confusion, Tony had been unable to take part in the Zoom meeting held on 2 November with members of the KPC although Vicki had attended. A draft Policy would be discussed at the next meeting of the Council.

4 Finance

4.1 There had been some positive response to the appeal for financial support for the Group in the November issue of The Kingston News and donations totalling £270 had since been received or promised, with a little more in prospect. As a result, the account balance was now £475.44, of which £73.99 was owed, for the hire of the

turf-cutter and the purchase of a large rake (see 5.2 and 6.2 below, respectively). In addition, one – unknown - person had bought four tickets for the Lewes Lottery, identifying the Group as a “good cause”. If these tickets were to be purchased monthly, this would boost the annual income of the Group considerably, from £172 to £338.

4.2 Steve reported that the grant application to the “Community Chest” scheme run by Hall and Woodhouse made earlier in the year had been unsuccessful. No reason had been given.

5 **Management of the village greens**

5.1 Steve had been unable to find out when the final cut of the grass on the (Juggs) green was due but the sudden change in the weather meant that those areas where cutting had been limited would now remain uncut until next spring. After the first cut in 2021, volunteers would need to clear all the cuttings from those areas of the site designated for wildflowers to avoid a build-up of fertility in the soil which would put them at a disadvantage.

5.2 With the permission of the KPC, an area of turf had been completely removed from the same village green using a hired turf cutter, supplemented (when this broke!) by some very hard manual labour. The stripped area had then been raked before being planted with a small number of plant plugs and sown with wildflower seed.

5.3 This work, which took place over several days in October, attracted the attention of many of the young children using the playground after school and of their parents. An explanatory sign produced by Crispin Holloway who had organised the work saved him and the other volunteers involved constant explanations. Both younger and older enquirers had welcomed the initiative and there had been no complaints to date.

6 **Former allotment site**

6.1 More than 100 hours of work on the site had been recorded involving 19 individuals. Almost all of this time had been spent cutting back and digging up bramble, bindweed, ivy, nettle and other deep-rooted plants. Those people and 18 others were now on a group e-mail, to all of whom Steve had been sending regular “bulletins” charting progress.

6.2 Lewes District Council’s contractors had removed more than two tons of cut vegetation in three visits. The Group had bought a rake to help with the clearance as Steve had been unable to buy a mattock as agreed at the last meeting. The rake would be useful when clearing leaves elsewhere in the village

6.3 The KPC Clerk had confirmed by e-mail that work on the allotment site would not be covered by the Parish Council’s insurance in the way that work by Action Group volunteers elsewhere in the village was. The likely annual cost of the insurance needed was around £100.

- 6.4 At a special meeting held on 13 October, it had been agreed to appeal to the wider community through the “Kingston Massive” What’s App group for ideas about the future of the site. There had been positive responses but none suggesting the change of course discussed at the meeting – i.e. from allotment to community garden/orchard.
- 6.5 Several meetings had been held on the former allotment site. One, with the head teacher, resulting in an invitation to the Group to write to Years 5 and 6 at the school outlining the current situation at the site and soliciting ideas. Steve would do this. A meeting with Peter May, of the Sussex apple tree project, concluded that there was room only for three substantial trees (apple, pear, greengage, plum or other) although cordon trees could be an additional feature. Standard trees would cost around £20-00 each. The Kingston WI might be willing to pay for one of these. Lesley Healey of Common Cause had also visited the site and offered useful advice.
- 6.6 We needed to follow up Rob’s approach to the local garden centre which had offered pallets that could be useful in constructing a compost area and to make use of our registration with Social Farms and Gardens, a body which provided a number of services “to support communities in sustainable ways”.

7 Next Meeting

This would be at 5-00 pm on Tuesday 17 December.