

Gardens Advisory Group (GAG) Update report to RCC

GAG meeting held 5 May 2017

The meeting heard that the RCC had accepted the presentation submitted by GAG regarding a change to the terms of reference. It was agreed that in future a written report of GAG's meetings would supplement the minutes sent to the RCC. This note represents the first of these reports.

A number of issues were discussed, the main ones being the Speed Garden redesign; setting up a new resident-led inspections process; the development of a communications strategy.

Following comments from residents near Speed Garden it was agreed that a document should be drafted setting out the reasons why a redesign of the garden was desirable. This could then be circulated among residents, accompanied by a survey seeking views, which would be valuable in developing the new design.

A system of inspections of the open spaces around the Estate was proposed and agreed. The plan is to set up five teams of four people, each led by a member of GAG but including other volunteer residents. Prior to each GAG meeting, the teams would inspect specified areas of the Estate and report to GAG. GAG members were selected to head each team. It was agreed that a checklist should be drafted so that teams would know what they should look for and to achieve some consistency in their reports.

It was felt that a communications strategy for GAG was needed. To that end, it was agreed that a proposal for the strategy should be presented as a discussion document at the next GAG meeting.

Other topics discussed included:

- a report from the Fann Street Wildlife gardening group saying that the new pond was settling in and a bird hide was about to be erected in the garden,
- details of the annual Blooming Balconies event to be held on 3 June,
- during the pre-meeting walkaround Beech Gardens were considered to be doing well, Bryer Pond had some blanket weed but was noted to be teeming with wildlife.

GAG Meeting held 9 October 2017

It was noted that the heavy workload of the Estate Office over the summer had caused the postponement of the planned summer meeting. This meeting was largely taken up with reports back on the issues raised at the previous meeting.

The draft document explaining the proposal to redesign Speed Garden, and the draft of the residents' survey, were discussed and agreed with minor amendments suggested. Once finalised, these would be circulated to residents through the BEO's weekly email.

A draft invitation to residents to join the proposed inspection teams was also discussed. It was felt a good idea to revise this to more of an advert style to attract attention, and that those who expressed an interest would then receive the fuller document. The draft checklist was agreed, although it was noted that it was likely to change as the teams got to work. The invitation, once revised, would be distributed in the BEO weekly email.

The discussion paper regarding GAG's communications strategy was received, but given the small number of members present it was agreed to recirculate this to the whole group and discuss it at the next meeting.

During the walkaround the question was raised of the maple tree in Thomas More Garden which has restricted views to some residents in Seddon House. The tree had been pruned last autumn to address this issue, however the tree had grown again, if anything more vigorously, and residents had asked that the tree be cut back again. It was agreed that annual pruning should be requested.