

Minutes of the Manor House Gardens User Group meeting
13 October 2009, Pistachio's Café

1. Apologies:

Apologies were received from Andrea Breugelmanns (AB), Rowan Bosworth-Davies, Carolyn Bosworth Davies and Maire Fitzmaurice.

In Attendance:

Jim Mallory JM (Chair), Angela Joy AJ (Vice Chair), Rosalyn Burbidge RB (Secretary), Nick Pond (NP, Lewisham Council), David Plumer (DP), Sheila Peck (SP), Richard Bainbridge (RB2), Peter Richardson (PR), Aysin Djemil (AD), Peter Williams (PW), Kim Ropek (KR), Jeremy Carden (JC), Michael Hunt (MH), Dave Browne (DB), Siobhan Stewart (SS), Stephen Eaton (SE, SNT Lewisham Police), Chris Thompson (CT, Glendales), Sue Byford (SB), Anne Fisher (AF), Sally Tattersall (ST).

2/3. Minutes of Meeting 21 July 2009:

Proposed by SB as accurate record; seconded by AJ. No matters arising.

4. Report on the pond:

NP from Lewisham Council presented a detailed report on an investigation into the botulism in the pond that killed the wildlife over the summer. The report gives a timeline of events and proposes action for the future prevention of similar incidents. Key points to note: Martin Hyde at the Parks Dept said the incident highlighted deficiencies in current procedures and noted the importance of checking the water regularly (spot checks increased to weekly over the summer period), improving communication between Lewisham council and Glendales, and between Glendales and MHGUG, and improving the public's understanding of the issues – namely that an abundance of bread in the water causes the pond environment to be more susceptible to botulism in the warm months. Both the aerator and the fountain are now in full working order and running off separate electricity supplies so that if one fails, it does not trip the other.

Moving forwards, action will focus on: providing **clear and consistent guidance** to the public on what they can throw into the water and educating them about the **risks of botulism from bread in the water**; making suitable **bird grain available, at cost**, in Pistachios so that those that wish to feed the birds can do so safely.

5. Northbrook School:

JM updated the meeting on the issue of Northbrook School's use of the Gardens when they return to their new building. MHGUG's position remains focused on three key elements:

- (a) the arrangements being made by the school for alternative sports ground provision, so that MHG can continue to balance the use of the Gardens by all users;
- (b) the use of the side fire gate into the Gardens by the school;
- (c) the promise that the school would both upgrade and maintain the MUGA and tennis courts if usage was agreed.

JM said that the next step was for the MHGUG Northbrook sub-committee to meet again with Lewisham Council and the Head Teacher to further discussions – likely to take place some time in November.

RB2 informed the meeting that the projected date for the school to move back into the Taunton Road site was January 2011. MHGUG therefore has plenty of time to negotiate.

6. SNT:

SE introduced himself as the Lee Green SNT rep. He asked the meeting if there were any issues they wished to raise. PR raised 'dog-baiting' in the area; SE said that dog-baiting had been going on in Manor Park and had been dealt with by the SNT. Some thought it possible that the activity may now have been displaced to MHG. Some neighbours had heard 'excitable' dog activity in the park and surrounding area late at night. SNT had not had many reports of this, but urged the community to report any such instances if they heard them. The SNT needs reports to be able to act, and are able to juggle their shift patterns (for example after midnight) if reporting consistently indicates that action of this type is required. SE highlighted the new dog legislation, due to come into force at the end of the year, that makes it compulsory for dogs to be on leads in public places.

7. Fundraising Activities:

The stall that MHGUG has placed outside the café during the Farmer's Market has resulted in a slight increase in membership and some funds. AJ has also been recruiting in Chalcroft Road; JM urged others to recruit down their street and asked for volunteers to man the stall for the upcoming Farmer's Markets on 7 Nov and 5 Dec. AJ and JM will do the former; AF and SB the latter. AD said that he had booked a band for Christmas music in the park on 5 Dec and 19 Dec. AJ may explore whether a local school choir was interested in singing on these dates.

AJ visited the Abbey Building Society to pay outstanding bills and sort the signatories on the accounts. AJ is now the only remaining signatory on the account. AJ and JM will explore with Barclay's Bank in Blackheath what is required to open a bank account so that MHGUG can have more flexibility over funds. RB raised the possibility that an association bank account required articles; JM will report back to the next meeting.

8. Manor House Library:

SB has raised a number of issues with MHL as follows:

- (a) the disabled lifts have been out of order for some time. The public has also reported to SB that the lifts appear unsafe. A woman with a pram reported that her child put their fingers down the lift recess; allied to this, PR raised the issue of the lack of appropriate signage to the disabled entrance to MHL (the sign for the entrance appears at the top of the steps on the portico);
- (b) disabled parking – the gates to the library remain closed with a sign for disabled users to call a telephone number if they require assistance to access parking facilities. Lewisham council maintains that this is necessary due to unauthorised parking by non disabled members of the public;
- (c) the size of the tables in the workspace areas are prohibitively small;

Lewisham's response has been very unsatisfactory and PR and SB will continue to pursue. PW responded to RB's question about whether any of the disability related issues contravened the DDA; it is necessary only to provide the facilities, not maintain them. The council could not therefore be held accountable for either the lift being out of order or the parking inaccessible. MHGUG nevertheless considers the council's position unacceptable and will be lobbying for action.

9. Glendales:

CT took away action points on the following:

- (a) the need to clear away notices that were stuck to the park gates. MHGUG allows 'not-for-profit' notices by community groups etc, but not commercial ones;
- (b) JM raised the issue of conker trees on behalf of AD who was unable to attend. Countryfile had highlighted the trial of a procedure that may cure the conker trees of leaf-miner infection, which weakens the growth of the tree and may eventually kill it. PW and NP reported that trials had indicated that the process was not problematic, but results were inconclusive. NP took away an action for Lewisham council to look into the matter further and report back.
- (c) PW raised the maintenance of the children's play equipment. A rung is missing from the climbing frame, the swings have been removed and the baby swings appear to have considerable wear and tear. CT said that he was awaiting the arrival of links to restore the large swings. He undertook to explore the replacement of the rung and the baby swings. CT reassured the meeting that the children's play area is inspected fortnightly;
- (d) SB said that the Rangers office window was covered in notices and leaflets, such that people could not see if anyone was in residence. Users had reported that they thought this was off-putting and intimidating;
- (e) AD requested that the CCTV cameras be checked to ensure they are working;
- (f) PR asked about when the results of the competition for the new contractor would be known. NP said the issue would be decided at Christmas and the new contractor will begin in April 2010.

10. DONM:

After some discussion of venues, it was decided that the next meeting would be held in **The Parish Room, Church of the Good Shepherd**, Handen Road, on **Tuesday 19th January at 7.30pm.**

11. AOB:

JM wanted to extend and record, on behalf of the MHGUG, his gratitude to JC for his assistance in re-printing the MHG information leaflet, which will be ready soon. JC has organised funding for the re-print and JM felt this would be enormously beneficial. Leaflets will go round local schools and be available in the Gardens.

Actions:

- RB2 to provide RB with the number for the Church of Good Shepherd booking secretary; and RB to book the Parish Room for the next meeting **(completed)**;
- PR and SB to continue to discuss MHL issues with Lewisham Council and the committee;
- JM and AJ to explore the possibility of a bank account with Barclay's in Blackheath;
- AJ to explore whether local school choirs wish to sing in MHG during the Christmas period;
- Glendale actions as at Para 9.