

BAGC meeting 14 March 2013

Minutes

Present

Jane Smith, Bruce Badger, Randall Anderson, Garth Leder, Tim Macer, Robert Barker, David Bradshaw, elected; Brian Parkes, Speed; Phil Sharples, Thomas More; Gillian Laidlaw, Mountjoy; John Whitehead, Breton; Gordon Griffiths, Bunyan; John Taysum, Bryer; Stan Booth, Andrewes; Mary Bonar, Wallside; Sarah Hudson; Pat Spicer, Shakespeare

Also attending: Two residents from Bryer Court and Caroline Swash from Willoughby

Apologies: David Graves, Simon Ebbins, Alberto Garciga, Richard Collins, Nigel Dixon, Cliff Paice

1. The AGM

The chair reported that John Barradell, the Town Clerk, had agreed to speak on the City and residents. Roger Howorth will man the membership desk, with two volunteers.

Tim Macer will organise drinks with help from Gillian Laidlaw, David Bradshaw and Pat Spicer.

Sarah Hudson will run the roving mike.

Robert Barker will send out notices and election nomination forms. The chair hoped all the elected members present would stand. The honorary secretary pointed out that some elected members did not have a good attendance record, and we needed to think about succession planning.

2. Street scene

The chair reported that, following an outcry from residents about the new furniture on St Giles's Terrace and Ben Jonson Highwalk, BA officers, house group representatives and John Tomlinson had a positive meeting with Steve Presland, the new head of street scene, and his assistant director Victor Callister. Residents conveyed their concerns about the current installation, the inadequate consultation, the lack of maintenance and money being available only for new features. Steve had been asked by the town clerk to draw up a new method of consulting: he accepted something had gone wrong, and would take seriously the Twentieth Century Society's comments, which he had only just seen. However, he couldn't remove the furniture without committee approval, so he proposed to plant on St Giles's Terrace as intended in March, to ensure no seats were nearer to Gilbert than the old ones, and to re-run a consultation: if the feeling was that the furniture should be removed, it would be. Residents suggested elements that a good consultation should include; Steve had no problem with these, and added he'd like to involve members more. Agreed: Steve would draw up the new process and come back to us.

3. GSMD and planning variation

The chair reported the BA and local house groups had met the chairs of the Arts Centre and GSMD, about their proposed application to keep the new GSMD building open after 11pm. The GSMD/Centre had thought further; they planned few late evenings, and they suggested that smaller events could exit via the stage door (away from Speed House), backed by a written management plan with limits on the extended use which could form a planning condition. We agreed to await their proposal, remembering that Speed and Willoughby residents may not agree. Brian Parkes reported Speed's AGM: residents had sent a resolution opposing any change to elected members. Tim Macer reported that Willoughby house committee felt the same. He also reported on a meeting that he and Brian Parkes had had with Barry Iffe (GSMD) and Leo Thomson (BAC) at which they seemed to be backing off: late events might not prove commercial, and their conference plans may prove optimistic. Agreed: Tim to send a meeting note to

Barry and Leo. Robert Barker commented that he would like to see the planning condition sealed before any licensing hearing.

4. Sound monitoring

Tim Macer reported that the BA's latest request is for baseline re-testing as specified, including across the octave range, as EHS agreed was best practice. The Arts Centre said City surveyors had refused, saying it would cost more to measure across the range. John Tomlinson had queried this. Agreed: the BA would persist with this inquiry. Bruce Badger reported the Ombudsman's provisional judgment was to accept that the City had done the right things, but Bruce had responded with lots of information to dispute that: he was awaiting a further response.

5. Concrete

Randall Anderson reported that the meeting, between the chairs of the BA and RCC and the chair and deputy chair of the BRC, had been postponed till after the election. The BRC chair had said that no irrevocable decision would be made before all had met. Meanwhile, the BEO had held two open briefing sessions on the concrete works for Mountjoy and Bunyan residents. Gillian Laidlaw said the BEO had removed the advance charge for the works from the current service charge bill, and offered to chase the Q&A from these meetings. John Whitehead was dismayed that the BEO's consultant had not noticed that Breton already had many abseiling eyebolts, yet inserting eyebolts accounted for about 30% of the costs. Randall also reported that English Heritage had not yet approved the material for the final surface repairs. Agreed: the chair to write to the BEO asking that an audit is kept of the reason for any repairs, to aid any apportionment of costs for initial defects versus wear and tear.

6. Planning

Randall Anderson reported that, with the help of the sustainability group and the road traffic adviser, he had submitted a set of comments on the plan. He said we would hear more, and could respond further. John Whitehead asked if anyone had heard anything about the police wanting to sell their Police Section house in Golden Lane: no one had.

7. Licensing

Robert Barker referred to an application by Amber, in City Point, to open till 4 am on Saturday night (currently 2 am). Willoughby and Speed reported no particular problems: Amber were good at managing people exiting, though there were sometimes minicabs in Moor Lane, where they were not meant to wait. Agreed: Robert to ask the applicant whether they sought to change clientele, and in particular to do promoted events (which had caused the trouble at Parker McMillan). He would then comment on the application.

8. Sustainability

Sarah Hudson reported that she was seeking a meeting of the SWG before the City submits its HECA (Home Energy Conservation Act) report, on 31 March. Through an FOI request, she had discovered that the City had done nothing. Agreed: Robert Barker's suggestion to ask for a report to the RCC/BRC on compliance with HECA. Sarah is to meet Ruth Calderwood, the City's air quality officer, re the City's bid for the Mayor of London's new air-quality funds. Beech Street was a possibility but there were other schemes. Robert Barker was concerned that any suggestions for improving Beech Street ventilation should not breach the tunnel roof, and that projects, including planting vegetation to absorb particles, shouldn't breach the listed building guidelines.

10. Membership

The chair reported membership figures of 1014 members who renew by standing order.

11. RCC

Randall Anderson reported:

YMCA – The BRC and two other committees had agreed to residential use, but they still need planning permission. It might be helpful if the BA supported the application. Robert Barker asked whether the approval was within the original shell (yes) and run by the BEO (not sure).

TV – VFM are OK with the contract terms. However, they have been quoted £1m rather than £750k for installing the infrastructure, so they now want to run the final cables only to those flats who sign up to the service: others could adopt the service later, but with an installation fee. Randall was not opposed in principle, but wanted to see the details, due from VFM by the end of March. Matt Collins was concerned the window for free installation might be too short, and the subsequent installation fee too high; he also wanted residents not to pay to maintain two systems at once. David Bradshaw thought this was a completely different proposition from the original offer that everyone would be installed for free, without having to buy any service.

Beech Gardens – the BEO is now tendering, and hopes the work will start in June/July, and take about twelve months. Listed building consent is not needed because they are replacing the hard landscaping. They are committed to consult on the planting, and are still working on an appropriate non-slip tile.

12. Virgin Action construction on Bryer pillars

John Taysum had circulated photos and plans. He had had a not very informative reply from the BEO. Randall Anderson had spoken to the listed building officer in planning, who decided the construction did not need listed building consent because it was out of sight. However, the construction seemed to have no planning permission at all. Agreed: Randall to go back to planning; Jane to ask Michael Bennett whether the works had landlord's consent and why residents weren't consulted; John Taysum to write to the Town Clerk.

Estate security

David Bradshaw reported one incident on the Highwalks where a young teenager had been approached and touched by a stranger. Police were aware and were trying to track him down. Stan Booth said last night the Andrewes car park box had been unmanned, no one in the other boxes knew, and the mobile number wasn't working, so no one was answering the phone. David Bradshaw said he would take it up.

Access

Robert Barker had reported to the City that two of the new dropped kerbs in Silk Street/Moor Lane were too steep. Officers conceded they were; the proper drop had not appeared on the plans and no one had noticed.

Crossrail

There was a complaint about bus stops keeping moving in Moorgate: the chair would raise this at the Crossrail liaison meeting in April.

14. AoB

Pat Spicer wondered whether the residents of Frobisher liked the planting on the sculpture court. The chair reported that she thought that they had been happy with it.

Meeting ended at 10.00 pm

Next meeting

AGM 25 April

Officers election meeting 2 May