

Drews Park Village Association

AGM Report 2019-2020 by Simon Evans, Chair

This is the first year since its foundation that DPVA has not had an AGM that members could attend in person. We have tried to compensate by posting this report online, and allowing for questions and answers—which will be visible to all. This report will be shorter than usual, as last year's covered much of the ground in great detail and there have been no significant developments during the year.

I'd like to start by thanking the DPVA Committee who have all supported me during the year and done noble work: they include Peter Bennis, Neil Geraghty, Norma Humphreys, Lisa Penington, and Carol Holmes. I must also give special mention to Judith Pameley who, while not a member of the committee, has led the garden group with great success. I'd like to thank all those living at Drews Park (and they are many) who have helped and supported me over the years.

We have had five meetings since the Last AGM, three of them 'virtual' meetings by zoom due to Covid-19 restrictions.

As a result of unforeseen changes of committee membership last year, I was asked to serve another year as Chair. I am now stepping down from this position, and will also be leaving the Committee. Next year the committee will have new members, (see below), who will be confirmed at the next meeting as will the new Chair who will be elected at the first committee meeting following the AGM.

On the financial front I am happy to report that we have seen a welcome reduction in service charges, as a result of lower insurance and lighting costs, and because we have had no large expenses for maintenance. The sinking fund has a healthy balance of £272,308 and we continue to think that sinking fund contributions could be reduced, although Aster does not agree. Some of you have reported that when you try and pay your service charges online the amount owing varies slightly from that shown on your bill. There doesn't seem to be a simple answer to this problem, but we have pursued it with Aster.

Earlier in the year, we switched from sodium lamps to LEDs for our street lighting. A trial run of two different colours found the majority of those voting preferred a warm white colour. Since the new lamps were installed we have benefited from clearer light, from the fact that not a single bulb has failed (they are expected to last 12 or so years) and from reduced maintenance costs. For the first time since I have lived at Drews Park all the lights come on at night. We had hoped to use a system whereby the lights would drop to half power in the small hours, but this would have cost tens of thousands to install and the idea was not pursued.

At our last AGM, the installation of an additional light at the steps that lead from Wyatt Court down to the bin store, and the addition of a second handrail to the steps was discussed. The cost of adding a light was found to be too high and the lighting in the area deemed adequate. Aster did not proceed with a handrail at the time, but has recently installed one. This handrail is of an inappropriate design. Aster has agreed to remove it, and will consider the provision of a permanent handrail in keeping with the other ironwork in the area.

During lockdown many of us took advantage of enforced idleness to use our grounds to sit and relax in, and to meet (socially distanced) friends and neighbours. We all have Judith Pameley and the garden Group to thank for the improvements made to our grounds and flowerbeds over the last couple of years which made sitting outside all the more enjoyable. In the coming year further work is planned, and steps will be taken to bring more of the planting in keeping with the requirements laid on us by English Heritage. It is planned to plant more spring flowering bulbs, especially crocuses.

Drews Park was intended by the architects and planners who laid it out to be in a park like setting. The lawns and trees do much to create our atmosphere. The DPVA ensures that our several acres of grass are kept in good condition through contact with Aster and our lawn maintenance contractors. Aster, our freeholders, plan to introduce a standard lawn maintenance contract for all their properties but DPVA has worked with them to see that the special needs of our site are met. We are frequently complimented on the appearance of our lawns, which makes the time and effort spent on them worth it.

During the month of October, it is expected that much needed tree maintenance work will take place, including to the limes in Burnham Court and Clock Tower Court. A tree removed in error in Burnham will be replaced, dead trees removed and other essential work carried out.

Aster is currently seeking contractors for the long-awaited programme of stonework repair. Until bids are received, we will not know the cost of this work, which will be met from the sinking fund.

Last year Aster told us that they hoped to review our leases to tidy up some anomalies and inconsistencies. Two of these are parking arrangements, and doors and windows.

Aster feel more clarity is required on parking (who is allowed to park what, and where) as some residents park two or more vehicles and we have had a number of problems with oversized and commercial vehicles.

Doors and windows have long been a problem area. I talked about this subject at length at our last AGM. As you know, recently Savills were engaged to inspect the condition of doors and windows before the next round of painting. The resulting work is being done at leaseholders' expense and arises from a specific interpretation of the lease. The leases give ownership of the doors and windows to leaseholders, which we understand is unusual for leases of this type. Maintenance of doors and windows is divided between leaseholders and the freeholder. You may be interested to know that an incidental result of Savills' inspections was the discovery that many residents seldom or never open their windows because they are too heavy and difficult to move. This is a problem that DPVA may wish to take on board.

Although Aster had expected to move to a programme of painting every six years, the current condition of the paintwork is such that Drews Park will be painted during the 21/22 financial year.

Coronavirus has pushed the task of lease revision into the background but Aster are anxious that it should be done. Changes to leases would require the agreement of a substantial majority of leaseholders.

As always, during the year members of the Committee have dealt with a variety of issues raised by our members. These range from incorrectly parked vehicles, to nuisance caused by dogs

to displays of washing to problems with the bin stores. We don't want you to think that we are a lot of moaners, but rather that we try and help ensure that Drews Park looks orderly and a nice place to live. The appearance of Drews Park is a matter for the community that lives here, and we must take pleasure from the fact that so many people, including visitors from Aster, are surprised at how nice it looks.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Norma Humphreys reports that the expenditure for 2019-20 totalled £216.37 which included £100 in respect of our website and £116.37 for replacement plants. Aster refunded our expenditure on plants as agreed, including a sum carried over from the last financial year.

The current balance at the bank is £296.09 and the deposit account stands at £1,452.17,

The accounts were audited by non-committee members Lynne Farrow and Rosemary Bilsby, (both DPVA members) in accordance with the Constitution.

NOMINATION OF NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Nominated to the committee are:

Judith Pameley - 23 Thurnham Court
Angela Powney - 17 Thurnham Court
Paul Morgan - 6 Cooke Court
Edward Williams - 20 Bowes Court

Simon Evans has stepped down from the post of Chair which he had occupied for the last four years. All members thank him for his diligent and untiring work. He has also resigned from the Committee to allow for work on other projects but will no doubt take a keen interest in the Association.

Carol Holmes was nominated to the post of Chair and as she was unopposed, she will be confirmed in the post at the first meeting of the new committee.

Neil Geraghty stepped down from the Committee and all members thank him for his contribution over the last four years.

Those remaining on the committee for the coming year are Peter Benns, Norma Humphreys, unopposed as Treasurer and Lisa Penington, unopposed as Secretary.

If you have any comments or queries about anything in this report please email us at drewsnews5@gmail.com