

Thornhill Square Association

Meeting 7:00 p.m. 28 November 2022

St Andrews Church Hall, Bridgeman Road, London N1 1BQ

1 Attendance

1.1 Present

Antonio Becchi, Simona Becchi, Karen Bizon, Rachel Everard, Marianne Fox, Robert Fox, Neil Harrison, Sophie Haslam, Brian Keating, Nick Marston, Roz Marston, Anna McKane, Christopher McKane, Claire Milne, Robert Milne, Mel Myers, Heloise Palin, Will Palin, Nigel Rogers, Philip Rutnam, Barbara Segal, Rachael Swynnerton, Toby Taper, Caroline Titley, Bill Tuck, Sergio Uristani and Oliver Wright

1.2 Apologies

Victoria Buhler, Barbara Firebrace, Patrick Firebrace, Stephanie Hartog and William Newton,

2 Previous meeting

2.1 Notes

The notes for the meeting of 1 December 2021 had been posted on the web site and were formally approved.

2.2 Matters arising

Nothing was discussed.

3 Operations

3.1 Election of the Committee

The following were appointed without objection:

- Chair: Anna McKane
- Secretary: Robert Milne
- Treasurer: Stephanie Hartog
- Event co-ordinator: Roz Marston

3.2 Use of funds

Brian Keating (on behalf of Stephanie Hartog) summarised the accounts for 2022. As at 28 November 2022 the main account held £2,768.18 (received occasionally for filming, mainly in Thornhill Crescent) and the gardening account held £1,132.17 (received regularly for maintaining two beds and supplemented by gifts from residents).

4 Activities

4.1 Gardening

Anna McKane mentioned how greatly Thornhill Square Garden had improved since volunteers had started to do the gardening (initially on just two beds, which remain the only two paid for by the Council). The numbers of volunteers rose because of the lock down but has now fallen back. More would be very welcome, especially as there are now nine large beds to look after without Council assistance. The meeting noted also that Thornhill Crescent Garden, too, had become very much better in recent years.

4.2 Railings repair

Anna McKane (on behalf of Patrick Firebrace) described the progress on arranging to the railings to be repaired. An application for listed building consent had been submitted; it proposed the replacement of broken cast iron bases by painted pre-cast concrete ones. Initially just one section of the railings would be restored.

The sterling effort to find a way of repairing the railings was widely admired, but there was a note of caution. The problems were not confined to the bases; rectifying them could need very large sums of money. If Historic England looked with disfavour on the proposals, large national funding bodies might well follow suit.

Moreover, the funding bodies are likely to require works besides the restoration of the railings, to improve the park in various other ways. They might also require matched funding, but the Council is unlikely to put repairing the railings high on its list of priorities. A programme to mend and redecorate the surviving railings, with work done largely by volunteers, could perhaps be put in place speedily without the funding complications of wholesale restoration.

4.3 Church matters

Caroline Titley, the new vicar of St Andrew's Church, introduced herself. She is responsible for a parish bounded essentially by the Overground track, Liverpool Road, Copenhagen Street and York Way and including the Church on the Corner as well as St Andrew's Church. The faults in the west end, east end and tower present major problems. The netting around the tower has been replaced, surveys have been commissioned, and the Cloudesley Foundation has agreed to support a fundraising officer; these are the initial steps in a journey that might cost £5,000,000. Her background as chief executive of a housing association should be very relevant.

5 Any other business

Philip Rutnam drew attention to the Open House Festival this year. Though it was the thirtieth such annual Festival, it was the first in which Thornhill Square had been involved. He and James Dunnett had shown groups of visitors around Thornhill Square, West Library and St Andrew's Church, pointing out that the neighbourhood was an excellent example of Georgian urban planning (albeit built in Victorian times). The event attracted about two hundred visitors, so repeating it next year would be well worthwhile.

Robert Milne mentioned a survey of energy consumption by householders that is expected to be conducted in Thornhill Square, Thornhill Crescent and Huntingdon Street. The intention is to begin to find how best to meet the future energy needs of terraced houses, especially where they are listed or in conservation areas. Subsequent discussion of the Council policies in this area mentioned the petition advocating the simplification of relevant planning rules, the forthcoming Climate Emergency Conservation Area Toolkit and the advice by the Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings on secondary glazing and other insulation techniques.

6 Actions

There will be separate further discussions on the railings and future events; people interested in taking part should contact tsa@antelope.org.uk so that they can be included. All are welcome, regardless of whether they attended this meeting.