



**Minutes of the Meeting
held on 15 April 2025, at 8pm
via Zoom**

Present: Peter McCluskie (Chair), Francine Barsam (Hon Secretary), Steve Morris (Hon Treasurer), Adrian Hodgson, Helena Benes, Colin Gregory, Revd Emily Kolltveit, Dominic Rose, Judy Smith, Jonathan Waxman and Shazia Riaz Ahmad (Minutes Secretary)

Guest: Maureen Dor

Apologies and absences:

1. Apologies for absence were received from Shelley-Anne Salisbury, Steven Rowe and Asher Budwig.

Council and Committees:

2. **New Chair:**
Peter McCluskie, newly elected as Chair at the AGM will combine the roles of Chair and (existing) Honorary Secretary. Peter's key areas of focus will include reviewing the RA's structure and strategy and membership recruitment/retention.
3. **New Hon Secretary:**
Francine Barsam was welcomed as the newly elected Honorary Secretary. Her primary responsibility in this (revised) role will be overseeing Suburb News advertising which is now a major source of revenue for the RA. She continues as Secretary of the Publications Committee.
4. **Guest:**
Maureen Dor was welcomed as a guest. She is one of the RA's representatives on the Trust's Planning and Policy Committee, succeeding Emma Howard. Maureen was attending the meeting with a view to considering offering herself for appointment to Council.
5. **Council and Committee Structure:**
The Chair had circulated the revised *Councils and Committees* document and invited further comments or suggested amendments. Council approved the document as drafted.

RA Finances and Membership:

6. **Honorary Treasurer's Report:**
The Treasurer presented the financial statement for the first quarter and addressed the following key points:
7. **Financial Reporting – Friends of Lyttelton Playing Fields:**
The accounts for the Friends of Lyttelton Playing Fields are now incorporated into the RA's accounts and listed as a separate restricted fund. In line with Charity Commission guidance, these funds are reported separately to ensure transparency and appropriate fund management. Any surplus at year-end will be carried forward into the following financial year.
8. **Grant Allocations:**
The Treasurer provided an update on current grant allocations for the year:

£4,000 – St Jude’s LitFest
£1,500 – Children’s Garden Project
£750 – North London Music Festival (piano prize)

9. **Remaining Grant Budget:**

Based on current figures, approximately £16,000 remains available for future grant allocations this calendar year.

10. **Defibrillator Programme – Update and Funding**

Gren confirmed that the first defibrillator has been funded by Fellowship House.

11. The next priority location for installation is the Free Church Hall. The funding arrangements are as follows:

- U3A has committed £700
- The Free Church Hall will cover installation and ongoing maintenance costs
- A funding gap of approximately £500 remains

12. It was proposed that this shortfall be met through a three-way split:

£200 from the RA, £200 from the Trust and £200 from Fellowship (who agreed to match the RA’s contribution).

13. The Council agreed to contribute £200 towards the defibrillator installation at the Free Church Hall.

Action: Treasurer

14. Gren also confirmed that all defibrillators installed through this initiative will be accessible 24/7, registered with the London Ambulance Service, and listed on *The Circuit* — the national defibrillator network.

15. **RA Reserve Fund – Future Allocation:**

The Council held an initial discussion regarding the possibility of reducing the RA Reserve Fund, which currently stands at approximately £75,000, in order to allocate further support via grants. Council members shared ideas on potential initiatives, with a consensus emerging around supporting significant projects that would have a lasting and meaningful impact on the Suburb — particularly those benefitting younger generations.

16. **Clarification on RA vs Trust Grant Applications:**

Dominic raised the issue of ongoing and longstanding confusion between the RA and the HGS Trust, particularly in relation to grant applications. He shared that he had recently spoken with representatives from two local schools — Henrietta Barnett and Brookland Schools — who believed they had applied for funding from the RA, when in fact the applications had been submitted to the Trust.

17. Dominic confirmed he will follow up with both schools, whose pending grant applications appear to be a suitable fit for RA funding.

Action: Dominic

Publications:

18. In the absence of Shelley-Anne, the Chair confirmed there is no update on publications.

19. **Advertising**

Francine confirmed that a substantial number of advertisers have already committed to the upcoming issue of Suburb News, the deadline for which is 1st May. She is also actively exploring additional advertising opportunities for the following two issues and noted that advertising interest is currently strong.

20. The Chair added that a new estate agent has approached him with a request to advertise both in *Suburb News* and *Suburb eNews*. In addition, Peter has discussed the possibility of the estate agent sponsoring a Lyttelton Playing Field planter and had directed him to the appropriate link.

21. **Distribution**

The Chair confirmed that Emma Howard will (for now) remain on the Publications Committee to oversee Suburb News distribution until new, permanent arrangements has been sorted.

Events:

22. **Summer Fair, Saturday 7 June:**

Adrian reported that planning for the Summer Fair 2025 is progressing well, with the committee scheduled to meet shortly after Easter.

23. A growing list of individuals and groups have expressed interest in participating.

24. The emphasis remains on maintaining a non-commercial atmosphere, with a focus on local community groups.

25. The maypole has been confirmed, and it is hoped that Morris dancers will also be providing musical entertainment on the day.

26. **Children's Carnival, 9th February 2025:**

The Children's Carnival was well attended and positively received by the local community. Some confusion arose around whether the event was exclusive to members, indicating a need for clearer communication in the future. There is significant potential for this and similar events to grow and become a regular fixture in the RA's calendar.

REACH Initiatives:

27. Jonathan provided an update on upcoming REACH initiatives. Two events are being planned to engage stakeholders around environmental improvements and planning processes:

27.1 A **private meeting** with architects and the Trust to discuss consent-related matters

27.2 An **open meeting** with local residents to raise awareness and promote sustainable home renovations

28. The initiative aims to engage homeowners, architects, and estate agents at the point of planning or renovating, encouraging the adoption of energy-efficient technologies such as heat pumps. REACH also intends to publish updated environmental guidelines to support this initiative.

29. Gren is in the process of setting the dates.

Trees and Opens Spaces (T&OS):

30. **Minutes**

Colin confirmed that the minutes from the last T&OS Committee meeting were circulated with the Council papers.

31. **Areas of Focus**

Colin reminded the Council of the committee's three primary areas of focus:

- Street Trees
- Planning Applications related to trees
- Open Spaces

32. **Street Trees:**

Colin reported that the committee remains very active in monitoring and supporting street tree initiatives. The RA provides funding for both replacement trees and the planting of additional trees where gaps exist.

33. **Tree Surveys and Replacements:**

Barnet Council conducts a tree survey every three years and, for safety reasons, removes a number of trees. The council's policy is to replant these trees, and T&OS works closely with them to ensure this commitment is upheld.

34. **Planning Applications – Trees:**
The committee regularly monitors: planning applications involving trees. Residents must apply for permission to carry out works on trees, and T&OS submits representations where there are concerns. However, objections are limited in effectiveness unless the tree is protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). In some cases, the committee may recommend that a TPO be applied. All planning applications related to trees are reviewed by Peter Falk.
35. **Open Spaces:**
Colin continues to represent the RA on the Hampstead Heath Consultative Committee.
36. **Northway Gardens Padel Courts application:**
Maureen reported that the online public consultation period for the application, via the LBB website, had a deadline of 10 April. The Chair confirmed that comments could still be sent to LBB via email right up to the date of the planning committee meeting (not yet set). To date there had been 123 objections and 38 expressions of support.
37. The committee discussed a range of issues potentially impacted by the proposal.
38. **Biodiversity and Community Gardening Initiatives:**
Dominic provided a comprehensive update on several ongoing and upcoming biodiversity projects:
39. **Kids Gardening Club:**
The Kids Gardening Club recently featured on *Gardeners' World*, generating considerable interest and positive feedback from both children and the wider community. Dominic is currently in contact with the programme's producers to explore a broader feature that would spotlight the Suburb, tying its identity back to the founding vision of Dame Henrietta Barnett.
40. The club has resumed activities and is now working on a new project: the development of a woodland area adjacent to the Inspire Centre.
41. **Britain's Biggest Living Garden:**
The *Britain's Biggest Living Garden* project continues to gain momentum. Dominic shared that the RA has been approached by the environmental charity Earthwatch, with a proposal for a collaborative initiative involving Cardiff City Council. The idea would be to replicate and scale the lessons learned in the Suburb to promote urban biodiversity in other cities.
42. **Lyttelton Planter Campaign:**
The planter campaign for Lyttelton has so far raised £2,200. Dominic plans to re-engage local schools once they return, inviting them to adopt a planter and participate in additional fundraising efforts.
43. **Sponsorship Request from the RA:**
Dominic requested that the RA sponsor a planter with a contribution of £300. The Council approved this request. **Action: Steve / Dominic**
44. Adrian enquired about the long-term maintenance of the planters. Dominic responded that several schools located near or adjacent to the park have expressed interest in taking on some of the maintenance responsibilities.

Other matters:

45. **Meeting with the Trust:**
The Chair will arrange a liaison meeting between the RA and the Trust to strengthen collaboration and address ongoing shared issues.
46. **Life Membership:**
The Committee unanimously agreed to award *Life Membership* of the RA to Emma Howard, in recognition of her exceptional leadership and outstanding contribution as Chair of the Association.
47. **Membership Administration:**
Council reviewed the challenges associated with the administration and ongoing management of RA membership.

48. **Membership and Marketing:**

The Council noted with the ongoing slow decline in membership. Steve observed that one contributing factor may be the discontinuation of mass postal mailings to non-members, previously used for outreach. This change was primarily due to rising postage costs, which have made the practice financially unsustainable.

49. In response, the Council discussed a range of initiatives aimed at boosting membership and re-engaging the wider community.

50. A key proposal was to produce a themed edition of *Suburb News* clearly outlining the benefits of becoming a member and including a direct invitation to join the RA.

51. Following discussion, it was agreed to trial the marketing and promotion of membership within the remit of the Events Team. This approach is intended to support an integrated strategy that aligns community engagement with event-based outreach, enhancing visibility and encouraging greater participation/

52. **RA Standing Orders:**

The Chair circulated the proposed amendments to the *Standing Orders* document for the Council's review and approval. Members were invited to consider the revisions and provide feedback.

53. The Council approved the proposed changes, subject to the following two amendments:

55.2 Clause 36A: Update the notice period to **21 days** and **remove the final sentence** relating to expenditure by means of electronic communication.

55.1 Clause 36C: Amend reference to specify **"the Chair."**

54. A revised copy of the *Standing Orders* will be circulated to Council members. **Action: Peter**

Upcoming Meeting:

55. **Next Council Meeting:**

The date of the next Council meeting has been *provisionally* confirmed for **15 July 2025 at 8.00pm via Zoom** as Fellowship House is not available on that date. *Action: Peter*