

MINUTES OF THE MONTPELIER SQUARE
GARDENS COMMITTEE MEETING

13TH MARCH 1989

Present:-

Lord Barber
Lady Marshall
Mr. J. MacKay Lewis
Mr. D. Eckhardt
Monsieur Deschamps
Madame Deschamps
Mrs. O'Brien
Mr. D. Quirici
Mr. Davie-Thornhill
Mrs. Slotover
Mrs. MacDonagh

The meeting took place at the home of Mr. David Eckhardt and commenced at 6.30 p.m.

Election of Executive Officers

Mr. Eckhardt took the chair and proposed Lesley MacDonagh of number 2 Montpelier Square as Chairman. This was seconded by Mr. MacKay Lewis and unanimously passed by the meeting. Mrs. MacDonagh then took the chair and the following elections took place:-

Treasurer

Mr. Eckhardt was proposed by Mr. MacKay Lewis and seconded by Lord Barber. Carried unanimously.

Secretary

Mr. Quirici was proposed by David Eckhardt and Lady Marshall was proposed by Madame Deschamps. Mr. Quirici was seconded by Jeremy MacKay Lewis and Lady Marshall was seconded by Lord Barber.

The views of the candidates were then sought. Lady Marshall indicated that in the interests of harmony in the Square, she was not prepared to stand for election this year as there was another

identified candidate. The Committee was anxious to confirm with Lady Marshall that she would continue in her role as "Garden Chairman" (even though the Sub-committee had now been disbanded). Lady Marshall confirmed that she was pleased so to continue and on this basis it was noted that Lady Marshall would not stand as Secretary this year. Mr. Quirici indicated that whilst he was prepared to serve in whichever capacity appeared appropriate, he was not seeking out the role. He was encouraged by Committee Members to take on the appointment and agreed to do so.

The Chairman indicated that she was flattered to accept the position as Chairman on two "conditions", namely that there would be no "re-opening of old wounds" at any future Committee Meeting and secondly, that she would be informed by any Committee Member of action to be taken on behalf of the Committee before it is done. The Chairman is anxious to maintain an over-view and to be in a position to co-ordinate the Committee's action. The Chairman then circulated a suggested Agenda with a copy of a draft Constitution attached. The meeting followed the Agenda and the items covered were as follows:-

1. The Committee

The Chairman indicated that there were differing views amongst Committee Members on the election at the AGM of Madame Deschamps and Mrs. O'Brien. The Chairman indicated that she was sure that the Committee would welcome the contribution of both the ladies to the Committee and it was suggested that nothing further was necessary to be done at this stage on this matter. It was agreed that it was very important to proceed with the business of the Committee. The Committee agreed that we should go forward on this basis.

2. Financial Situation

The Chairman indicated that the first job was to determine the amount of money and the cash flow position in relation to the forthcoming financial year 1989-90.

The Chairman had discussed the matter with the Treasurer and it was agreed that the Treasurer would visit Westminster Council and determine what will in fact be raised by applying the 20p precept. It was not yet determinable from the records since there is some doubt as to what amount each house actually raises. The cash in hand for the entire year is likely to be in the range of £13,570 to £17,857 applying the 20p. precept. It was agreed that having established what the 20p precept would raise, Lady Marshall, the Chairman, the Treasurer and the Secretary would then determine the timetable for the expenditure authorised at the AGM given the anticipated cash flow and what could be done within the budget. The Chairman mentioned that we would not have enough money "in hand" to commence the tree pruning in the next three weeks unless the chosen Contractor would agree to a deferred payment (i.e. after July this year when the first half of the precept is received from Westminster). It was agreed that Lady Marshall and the Treasurer should approach the proposed Contractor on this occasion. This appeared to be the only item of works which was of a "truly seasonal" nature and which we ought to try to get on with. The Chairman also mentioned that there may be scope to bring forward the half year payments from Westminster earlier than July and January in each year given that the residents actually paid the precept in April and October.

3. Community Charge

The Chairman indicated that discussions should take place as soon as possible with Westminster concerning this position when the Community Charge comes into effect in April 1990. Within the primary legislation the mechanism existed for raising a special charge equivalent to the garden rate. What we now had to do was monitor the regulations which would give effect to that legislation and liaise with Westminster to determine whether there

were any other consequences which the Committee should consider. The Chairman will undertake this work and report to the Committee at the next Meeting. The Chairman indicated that she would very much like to call on Lord Barber's services if we needed to approach Westminster at a high level. This brought the Chairman onto the question of whether Lord Barber would feel able to be "President" of the Committee. Lord Barber said that he had indicated that he would offer his services in approaching Westminster or the Department but he did not think it necessary for the matter to be formalised into a Presidency at the present time!

The Chairman indicated that she thought it was a good idea to have some headed note paper printed bearing the names of the Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Lady Marshall as Gardens Chairman. It was agreed that this should be done.

4. Railings

The Chairman reported that there seemed to be a general consensus within the Square that to replace the iron railings would be of great benefit to the Square and also to the security of the Gardens. It was also agreed the optimum time to progress this project would be around January 1990 when the benefit of the Poll Tax saving would be evident to residents in the Square. It should be borne in mind that we would not be fully in funds from the 1990-91 precept until January 1991 and we should therefore envisage a Contractor's start date of after 1991 - unless we decide to raise the money other than by precept or to borrow against the precept. The Chairman's suggestion was that we should use the next few months to investigate the practicability of using the existing concrete base to mount the railings - (the benefits being not only in cost saving but also in doing less damage to the garden), grant status, conservation area consents etc, and competitive quotes projected to say January

1991. It was suggested that a working party on railings consisting of three members of the Committee be set up to progress the railings suggestion and to report at the next Committee meeting. It was agreed that Nicholas Davie-Thornhill should be Chairman of the Working Party and that Jeremy MacKay Lewis and David Eckhardt would be the other members. At this stage it was clarified that at any type of Working Party meeting, the Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary and Garden Chairman would be entitled to attend and contribute ex officio.

5. Associated Committees

The Chairman indicated that the Committee existed "in order that the Garden may be kept as a Garden or ornamental ground for the use of such inhabitants". She felt that the terms of reference therefore centred purely on the Garden. Mr. Eckhardt had raised an important point regarding the need for support for other worthy Committees such as "Neighbourhood Watch" and the "Parking Committee".

It seemed sensible to hold meetings of these Committees consecutive to the Gardens Committee meeting. This would encourage (but not oblige) the Garden Committee members to become members of these other Committees and ensure that only one evening was necessary to attend all three meetings. It was agreed that David Eckhardt should be Chairman of the Neighbourhood Watch Committee with Madame Deshamps and Eileen O'Brien as the other members. It was agreed that Dan Quirici should be Chairman of the Parking Committee. Mr. Quirici raised the question of liaison with senior management at Harrods to be aware and hopefully to influence their plans for late opening etc. It was agreed that the officers would try to arrange liaison with Harrods.

6. Need for Brief Constitution

The need for a Constitution for the Committee had been

raised. Simon MacDonagh had drafted a brief Constitution following discussions between David Eckhardt and Lesley MacDonagh and the draft Constitution is attached to the Agenda (and copied with these minutes) received support. It was agreed that everyone should consider the draft Constitution between now and the next Committee meeting. Jeremy MacKay Lewis suggested that the Constitution should be operated by perhaps this year's Committee and next year's Committee to see how it operated in practice before it being adopted as "the Constiution" at an AGM. This suggestion was considered to be extremely sensible. It was agreed that we should bear in mind when commenting on the Constitution that we did not want to go into too much detail nor was there any implication that if a matter was not covered under the Constitution that the Committee was not empowered. Lord Barber indicated that it may be useful to amend item 7 to say that the date of each AGM will be fixed "if practicable" at the preceding AGM to give the Committee some flexibility in case there was a problem subsequently with dates. It was agreed that members would feed comments on the Constitution to the Chairman so that these could be included in the Agenda for the next Committee meeting.

7. The Underground Car Park

Mr. Thornhill and Mr. Eckhardt had raised the question of investigating an underground car park. It was felt that whilst appreciating the merits of investigating whether a car park could be provided without detriment to the Garden or any individual Square owners and at what cost, it would be inappropriate for the Gardens Committee to carry out such an investigation and indeed, they would be exceeding their powers. The Committee should, of course, discuss the implications of any proposal for the "keeping of the garden" and so the suggestion was that if those residents who would like to investigate the car parking proposal brought forward a report, the report would be

considered by the Committee in the light of its effect on the gardens. It was, therefore, likely that Mr. Eckhardt and Mr. Thornhill would investigate some inventive ideas, draw up a feasibility study and at some appropriate time in the future (probably with experts reports in place), report back to the Gardens Committee.

8. Next Committee Meeting

It was agreed that the Executive Officers should agree on a date for the next meeting which would be after 5th June and be notified to other Committee members. The venue will be decided, but it is likely to be at 2 Montpelier Square with subsequent meetings alternating between the Treasurer's house and the Chairman's house. The Neighbourhood Watch Committee and the Parking Committee will be held immediately after the Gardens Committee.

9. Any other urgent business

A number of matters were raised and it was agreed that under the auspices of the Parking Committee Mr. Quirici would investigate the issuing of residents' permits to shop workers etc. It was suggested that we should invite representatives from the Police, Knightsbridge Association, perhaps the Environmental Health Department and others to briefly address future Committee meetings and to generally "raise the profile" of the Gardens Committee and the Montpelier Square residents. Mr. Quirici is to invite a representative of the Police to the next Committee meeting for a short address.

The meeting adjourned at 7.55 and Mr. Eckhardt was thanked for his hospitality.

Signed.....

Dated.....