

Minutes of the AGM of the Albert Square and St Stephen's Association

Held on 25th November 2021 at St Stephen's Church

Present: Leo Pilkington, Charlotte Buchdahl, Viv Aylmer, Neil Sanders, Michael Leapman, Blake Klein, Matthew Leopold, Geoff Parsons, Paul Mawdsley, Darshak Shah, Paul Orssich, Susan Bewley, John Howard, Lyn Woodcraft

Apologies: Penny Howard, Florence Eshalomi, Emma Robb

Welcome

Geoff Parsons in the chair opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

Minutes of 2019 AGM

The minutes of the previous meeting as circulated were approved.

Chairman's Report of ASSA Activity

Geoff started by thanking Bill Wilson who had served as chairman prior to his retirement earlier in the year. Geoff explained that as chairman he did not do much work, but that the real effort was made by the ASSA Committee members.

In 2019 ASSA had been reasonably active but in 2020 the COVID pandemic brought activities to a halt. This year ASSA had run a fuller programme of activities again: Trash and Treasure and Freshview had taken place. Viv Aylmer had coordinated the garden maintenance – an area which needs more input from ASSA members to help with this. The Eastern pavement extension was previously maintained by Peter who had now moved away, so there was a particular need to people to help with that.

One continuing area of concern was that of litter on our streets. Lambeth Council had recently changed contractor from Veolia to Serco and so far we had not seen great service from the new contractor. Penny Howard had been spearheading a campaign against litter which was greatly appreciated, but Penny was now travelling regularly to Italy. Geoff encouraged all to help by clearing the areas outside their own homes.

Traffic

Darshak Shah gave an update on traffic. Darshak explained that he had been involved in traffic campaigns for a number of years, both within ASSA and as part of the Save Our Streets group. Lots had happened since the last AGM, most notably the creation of the Low Traffic Neighbourhood. This scheme was introduced during pandemic. Lambeth Council has been monitoring traffic since the creation of scheme. There has been a 95% decrease in traffic at the points where the roads have been closed. There has been an increase on traffic on St Stephen's Terrace as more people use streets on the western side of the LTN to access the rest of the LTN triangle. Residents have raised

concerns on both the volume and speed of traffic on St Stephen's Terrace. Residents of the Mursell estate have also raised concerns about traffic using the road through the estate as a cut-through.

Formal consultation on the LTN had taken place in September and October. ASSA made a submission broadly supporting the scheme but asking for amendments to reduce volume of traffic on St Stephen's Terrace. ASSA had also made the suggestion that rather than lavish more effort and money on improving the areas immediately around the traffic barriers, money should instead be used on other areas of the triangle.

Darshak took questions from the floor. Susan Bewley asked if ASSA strategy was to work alone or with the SOS group. Darshak explained that ASSA does both. ASSA made our own submission to the consultation, but continued to work with SOS. Susan stressed how working together with other residents associations had been crucial in delivering the LTN.

Michael Leapman raised the issue of large Co-Op lorries reversing around the corners and the increase in traffic on South Lambeth Road and other roads around the border. He was personally against the LTN.

Paul Orsich commented that traffic has increased, but he thought levels were tolerable. However, he noted that the speed of traffic had increased. Paul also raised the issue of the bin outside his house which was still being used for domestic waste. He advocated the conversion of the bin to a dog waste bin.

Leo Pilkington asked if the camera that monitored the LTN restriction on Albert Square caught motorcyclists who rode on the pavement. Geoff suggested raising this with the Council as use of the pavement is dangerous.

Events

Paul Mawdsley then gave an update on ASSA events. Since the lifting of COVID restrictions we had held two successful events: the Trash and Treasure street sale held in early June, and the Freshview event in October. Support for Trash and Treasure was strong in terms of stall holders, with a good number of stalls setup on all the ASSA streets, but customers and sales were down on prior years. Paul attributed this to a reduction in drive-by traffic due to the LTN and also due to the event being held quite soon after the end of lockdown, when many people were still limiting their activity. ASSA planned to hold the event again next year, in its usual slot of early May.

The Freshview event was an opportunity for ASSA members to come together to help tidy the streets and maintain the communal beds and planters, with the council providing a skip and top soil. Paul reported that the event had been supported by a small but enthusiastic team of helpers.

Susan Bewley suggested involving other SoS member associations with our events and coordinating events across the triangle, to get a larger take up. Susan also flagged that she was organising a group of local litter pickers who would be picking litter after the weekly bin collection, when there was often a lot of rubbish on the street.

Planning

Matthew Leopold gave an update on planning issues. He reported that ASSA was working well with other association. Matthew was still trying to get added to relevant distribution lists at Lambeth Council, so he asked all ASSA members to flag any planning applications that they become aware of.

Garden Maintenance

Geoff gave an update on local gardening efforts. There was some great planting in the area but we had a real need for help from more residents. Ideally an individual would take responsibility for each of the communal beds.

Litter

Geoff encouraged ASSA members to take individual responsibility once a week to clear outside their home, in addition to a team that would make more sporadic efforts. Leo raised the issue of the flower beds on the Albert Square approach road which become a little trap, mostly for items discarded from cars that park on the road. Geoff suggested an increase in signage although others were sceptical that these would be effective. Paul suggested encouraging Lambeth to issue fines perhaps using Community Warden / Traffic Wardens. John Howard flagged that the biggest problem areas for litter were the areas around the Co-Op and the Albert Square approach road, which were away from people's homes. These areas would need the attention of a litter team.

Leo raised the issue of rubbish being dumped around the bins on the Albert Square approach road. This is exacerbated by the fact that the locks on the bin holders do not work. ASSA will raise this with the council.

Susan raised the use of a WhatsApp group to encourage participation in litter collection efforts. Paul explained that the Google Groups mailing list has around 55 members and efforts were made regularly to increase subscription. Matthew explained that ASSA were planning to increase the reach of email list via a door knocking campaign when the weather improved and the days were longer.

Finance

Paul presented the financial report, which covered a two-year period. He explained that income and expenditure had both been low, with £350 of income from filming company donations, and expenditure of £126 over the two-year period. Total assets now stood at £1,967.

Election of Committee

The following were elected to the ASSA committee:

Adam Brain	Matthew Leopold
Blake Kline	Paul Mawdsley

Charles Glanville	Penny Howard
Darshak Shah	Sid Stiles
Geoff Parsons	Sundiatu Dixon-Fyle
Grace Campbell	Takita Rakocija
Leo Pilkington	Viv Aylmer

Geoff Parson was re-appointed as Chairman
Paul Mawdsley was re-appointed as Treasurer
Blake Kline was appointed as Secretary

Any Other Business

Lyn Woodcraft raised the issue of a building project on Wilkinson Street. Permission had been granted for work which previously would have been refused by Lambeth Council. ASSA had objected to the application, supporting Lyn and her neighbours. Lyn queried if there had been a policy change at Lambeth that might explain why this application had been permitted when similar application had always been refused. Concern was raised that there is no appeal or correction mechanism, below launching a judicial review, for overturning planning applications that have been approved. Geoff agreed that ASSA would write to our local councillors flagging concern about not being promptly informed of planning applications and also to flag concerns on this specific application.

Paul flagged the recent resubmission of a planning application on Fentiman Road to excavate a large basement extension. Whilst outside the ASSA area, ASSA had previously objected to the application to avoid a precedent for such developments being allowed. He encouraged residents who were concerned to resubmit their objections to the new application.

Paul also provided details of a proposal change to the polling station arrangements for the ASSA area. Following the change in local council ward boundaries, the ASSA area will fall within a new Oval ward from May 2022 onwards. Associated with this change, Lambeth Council has proposed a change in polling stations, with ASSA residents asked to vote at Ashmole Primary School (near Oval station), rather than at the Bolney Meadow Community Hall. This proposal was open to consultation at the moment. Paul had already registered his objections and encouraged others to do the same. Paul would send details of the consultation to the ASSA mailing list.

John Howard raised the issue of access to the rear alley behind Aldebert Terrace. John was of the view that the current process of obtaining keys for access, which was in the sole control of the owners of 14 Albert Square, was not appropriate given all residents of the south side of Aldebert Terrace have a right of way to the alley. It was agreed that ASSA would engage with the owners of 14 Albert Square to attempt to broker a better arrangement for obtaining keys.

Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next AGM would be held in June 2022, to re-establish the previous schedule.