

NORTH CRAY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of Meeting held on 27 June 2018, 8pm in St James' Church, North Cray

The meeting commenced with an informal gathering of 52 members before the formal start of the AGM. Upon opening the meeting the Chairman, David Cook, welcomed everyone who had turned out and gave a special welcome to guests from other residents associations or groups who had joined us this evening; to Mr Alan Downing, our new Ward Councillor following the retirement of Don Massey, who had been very supportive of this Association; and to Mr Patrick English, Grounds Maintenance Officer, Bexley Council.

1 APOLOGIES

David gave apologies on behalf of Mick Doughty, Michael Heath (NCRA Committee members), and David Jones (prospective new Committee member), all of whom were on holiday. Our MP, James Brokenshire, had sent his apologies for being unable to join us this evening due to a prior engagement; but he had kindly sent a message to us all. At this point David read out James' message (see appx A to these minutes),

2 MINUTES OF LAST AGM (4 July 2017)

These (which had been distributed and were also on the NCRA website) were taken as read. Acceptance as an accurate record was proposed by Terry Cook, seconded by John Harrington, and agreed.

Matters arising

David said that he would deal with Little Acre and Little Haven Stud Farms and with continuing problems on the Meadows under item 6 Matters arising. As regards the Ward Boundary change, this had come into being; the Waste4Fuel activity had now gone; but that water leaks in Parsonage Lane were continuing.

3 HON. TREASURER'S REPORT

David extended a welcome to the NCRA's new Treasurer, Chris Moon, who had kindly taken on this position earlier in the year when Geoff Waldmeyer had indicated that he wished to stand down. Geoff had discharged the post of Treasurer for us for nine years. He had done this carefully and guarded our funds well – and David expressed his thanks to Geoff from us all, when the meeting gave a round of applause.

He then handed over to Chris, who also expressed his thanks to Geoff. He then referred to the audited Statement of Accounts for 2017-2018 that had been distributed to the meeting. He said that there was nothing unusual to report for this year, the bulk of our income came from subscriptions (£792), with more coming from donations (£9) and interest (£1.14). The only non-routine expenditure was £100 to Christian Aid in memory of the late Betty Rhodes. Chris concluded by saying that our finances remained in a healthy position, and expressing his thanks to Michael Heath for auditing the accounts. Chris then recommended that the subscription for 2018-2019 should remain at £2. This was proposed by Christine Moon, seconded by Richard Moon and agreed. Adoption of the Accounts was proposed by Mario Farrugia, seconded by Richard Moon and agreed.

4 CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

David said that there were a number of issues he would like to raise this evening, and to mention three positive results. Looking first at the good news, he said that these were:

48 Parsonage Lane The applicant's Appeal against Planning refusal for the proposed school had been dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate.

Orchard View Farm, 63 Parsonage Lane Disappointingly, the planning officer had recommended to the Planning Committee approval of yet another application to build houses there. Fortunately, the letter of Objection submitted by our Secretary, Jean Gammons, and the subsequent presentations given by her and our former Councillor, Don Massey, to the Planning Committee had convinced it that permission for a housing development on this site should again be refused.

Manor Freehold Farm, 67 Parsonage Lane Planning had received a 'prior notice' of the owner's wish to apply for a change of use of one of the work units. The site was once the infamous Maggot Farm and we were fortunate to have the input of Nik Carter who, from his specialist knowledge of the long-term toxicity level of such land use, was able to provide for Jean's Objection letter detailed technical information. It was his expert advice to Planning which led to its refusal of the application.

The bad news was the renewal of planning permission to build six houses on Green Belt land at 139 North Cray Road. Committee members Mick Doughty and Chris Moon had helped Jean to compose a strong letter of Objection; but planning permission was granted.

5 ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

David reported that all existing Officers and Committee members were willing to stand for the coming year, and he asked our President, John Harrington, to seek the meeting's agreement for their block re-election. This was proposed by Christine Moon, seconded by Richard Moon and agreed.

David then reported that David Jones had been nominated as a new Committee member and that Tony Morris had been nominated as the second Examiner of Accounts. This was proposed by Nik Carter, seconded by Terry Cook and agreed.

John Harrington expressed his thanks to our Volunteer Collectors, who made our Association so strong; and to David.

The newly-elected Committee for 2018-2019 was as follows:

John Harrington: President & Committee Member
David Cook: Chairman
Chris Moon: Treasurer
Jean Gammons: Hon. Secretary
Membership Administrator: Irene Waldmeyer
Webmaster: Nik Carter
Newsletter Editor: Jacky Cook
Other Committee Members:-
Mick Doughty
Michael Heath
David Jones
Tony Morris
Geoff Waldmeyer

Examiner of Accounts: Michael Heath.

Second Examiner of Accounts: Tony Morris

6 CURRENT ISSUES

David said that the lack of timely and vigorous Enforcement action by the Planning department is giving serious cause for concern. The Association did of course recognise that Bexley had an insufficient number of Enforcement officers, and faces many problems throughout the borough; but some issues of concern to us have drifted on for a very long time. This sends out a dangerous message to our local businesses, encouraging them in the belief that they can effectively do as they like! He said that the following were some of the issues where we have, repeatedly, and for some considerable time, been asking for a resolution.

Soil Grading activity on Stuart's land, 57 North Cray Road Its noisy and intrusive nature is causing a real nuisance and distress to people living close by and within earshot of the machinery, which starts operating from 6.30-7am daily. Jean has brought our concerns to the notice of Robert Lancaster, the Head of Development Management. In his response, he explained that the issue is a complex one; but is now under an active planning enforcement investigation and that he is prioritising this. The several residents most affected are now working together as a sub-committee of the Association to achieve a resolution of this long-standing problem.

139 North Cray Road Jean drew the attention of Planning to the unauthorised storage of cars there on behalf of Toyota, and the sale of used cars, as long ago as March 2017. Bexley's refusal of planning permission for car storage is now being considered by the Planning Inspectorate under the Appeal process. But no Enforcement action seems to have been taken regarding the sale of used cars, despite repeated requests by Jean and despite Chris having provided them with evidence from *Autotrader* back in January.

There has still been no response to Jean's repeated requests for an update on the position regarding the temporary gypsy sites of Little Acre and Little Haven on Bunkers Hill. Nor an update on the position of the blocked Footpath 137 running from upper Parsonage Lane.

David said that it is these failures to respond that are so frustrating, and he will again be seeking a meeting with Robert Lancaster, the Head of Development Management.

The Meadows David said that of the many emails sent to the Committee, by far the most were about Aggressive Dogs, Unlawful Fishing, Threats to Wildlife and Quad Bikes. All these incidents are on the increase. Our Safer Neighbourhoods police team are doing all that they can to police the Meadows, but they are few in number and have many other demands to meet throughout our ward, and are hindered by restrictions on what actions they can take.

It has been suggested that what is needed is for a small team of members who regularly visit the Meadows to form an action group. A dedicated action group could do much to help the situation by advising on Notices, considering what else might be done to protect the lake and its wildlife and being ready to quickly alert the police or the Environment Agency if they see anything happening that needs an urgent response. Without the active support of such a group, David said that there was little that the Association could do. He asked that anyone willing to be part of a group of this kind to contact The Committee, or talk to Jean after the meeting.

David then said that we had with us this evening Mr Patrick English – the Grounds Maintenance Officer for Bexley Council – who had agreed to talk to us about the problems Bexley faces, and what action it is taking.

Patrick explained to the meeting that he was one of four Grounds Maintenance Officers (GMOs), and that he looked after the south of the borough. A Warden Service was in existence, as well as the council's standard call centre – and the GMOs work with their local Safer Neighbourhoods police team. Patrick further explained that the GMOs had no Enforcement powers, but they did their best. This was followed by a lively debate from the floor, particularly focusing on the lack of signs where wildlife is most vulnerable from attacks by dogs, and questioning why there was no fencing around the lake to protect it. Patrick said that he would look into the provision of new notices to draw the attention to dog owners of the need to safeguard

wildlife etc. He would also pass on the suggestion that fencing be erected around the lake, even if only partial. His talk ended with a round of applause.

David reported that our local Safer Neighbourhoods police team had been unable to send anyone to address us this evening; but that they had provided us with a statement on their work (see appx B).

Data Protection Regulations Referring to these new regulations wef 25 May 2018, David stressed that the Association really did need members to formally confirm their agreement to it holding their name, address and email address. Disappointingly, the majority of those emailed by Nik last month have yet to respond and so, to comply with the new regulations, he had had no option but to delete them from the Association's *GroupMail/NewsMail* service database. This meant that, until they do re-subscribe, the Association cannot send them any such information. David stressed that whenever it needed members' help with planning applications it was vital that it was able to contact them quickly.

7 OTHER BUSINESS

David invited our new Councillor, Alan Downing, to address the meeting:

Alan explained to the meeting that he had been a councillor for 16 years, adding that the new St Marys and St James Ward was a very big area to be covered by only two councillors. He added that he loved the Meadows and walked his dog there every day, and like our members would like to see more litter bins provided. Alan said that he worked closely with our local police, and had served on the Planning Committee for 14 years. Regarding Enforcement, he said that today he had spoken to Robert Lancaster, the Head of Development Management, who had told him that he now had only one and a half Enforcement officers to cover the whole of the borough. It was hoped that the strength would be increased soon to two and a half officers, and three and a half by the end of the year. Alan urged our Association to get together with a committee affiliated to the Old Bexley & Sidcup Conservative Association in order to join forces for a united front.

Alan then took questions from the floor. These included members' concerns about Stuarts' Soil Grading Works; the inadequacy of the fortnightly green bin collection, fast moving vehicles in lower Parsonage Lane and the need for the restoration of a mirror on the corner by Weatherleys, an additional U Turn on the North Cray Road towards Bexley Village; the infrequent bus service; the air pollution that would follow any extension of the Congestion Charge to our area; and the problems created by SE Railway's new timetable. Alan undertook to follow up these concerns, but explained that an additional U turn on the North Cray Road and bus services were a matter for TFL.

Our Constitution: David said that this had last been revised as long ago as June 2003. It is on our website and he asked that if anyone felt that there was a need for an urgent addition/correction update to please advise the Committee.

Proposed Social Evening David said that he had been planning this for September this year; but with most members not as yet having re-registered for *NewsMails* it would now need to be deferred until t next year. Outline details would be given in the Autumn *Newsletter*, and full details sent out by *NewsMail* in the Spring of 2019.

Mill Meadow David reported that Jean had submitted a strong Objection to an application to build houses on this Green Belt land, part of the Old Bexley Conservation Area. The Association did not normally comment on planning applications outside its area; but North Cray and Old Bexley are now part of the same ward, and so the site is part of our local environment, as well as being a threat to our Green Belt.

“Side-by-Side” David said that Jean had brought to the meeting some copies of Sylvia Malt's book, which told the stories of the local people who had fought in the two world wars. These were for sale at the special price to NCRA members of £8.

“History of North Cray” David reported that Jean would be updating her book for a reprint by the Association.

David then thanked Jean and Nik for all their hard work (this was followed a round of applause); and our Volunteer Collectors; the Committee; Christine Moon for having taken on at short notice the task of counting our AGM Notification into roads and then taking these to our Volunteers; Patrick and Alan for their presentations (again, another round of applause). He closed the meeting by thanking everyone for attending.

The meeting closed at 9.45pm