

BYFLEET, WEST BYFLEET AND PYRFORD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Thursday, 16 March 2023 at 19:30

In the church hall at Our Lady Help of Christians Roman Catholic Church, West Byfleet

1. Welcome by the Chair, Stewart Dick

The Chairman welcomed around 80 Residents' Association (the "RA") members and guests and thanked them for their support.

He welcomed our Member of Parliament, Jonathan Lord and also Councillors Gary Elson, Josh Brown, Steve Dorsett and Amanda Boote. He also welcomed guests from Keeble Brown and Retirement Villages Group.

The meeting was quorate with more than the required minimum of 21 members present. The requisite notice of the date of the AGM had been given in The Resident Newsletter, on the BWBPRA website and via email.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received and were accepted from: Sheila Carroll, Jim Allen, Ian Mason, David Bell, Councillor Daryl Jordan, Helen Orledge, Penny Hoskyn, Bob Tilley, Emma Slaymaker, Carol Leong-Son; Lisa Graae;, Robert Hurles, John Sawtell.

3. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting held on 12 January 2022

The minutes of the 2022 AGM had been posted on the BWBPRA website and distributed to those present. The minutes were agreed as a true record as they stood. Proposed by Dharma Sivarajasingham. Seconded by Andrew Grimshaw.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes not covered by the Agenda

There were no matters arising which had not been actioned or covered by this agenda.

5. Treasurer's Report

Dharma Sivarajasingham, Treasurer, referred members to the accounts for the 12 months to 31 December 2022 which had been circulated.

Dharma noted the current economic climate which had resulted in a decline in advertising revenue and an increase in running expenses.

The accounts had been reviewed and agreed by Alan Fairlie, the Honorary Examiner, who was thanked and re-appointed for the following year.

Approval of the Financial Statement was proposed by Richard Thomas, seconded by Keith Creswell.

6. Resolution: to approve an increase in the subscription from 1 January 2024

It was proposed that the annual subscription should be increased from £5 to £8 with effect from 1 January 2024.

Dharma explained that the costs of producing the newsletters had risen substantially; from £4,519 in 2021 to £7,764 in 2023. In addition, admin costs ie hall bookings, printing of collection envelopes etc had all increased. The annual subscription had remained at £5 for a number of years.

Dharma also noted that the RA provided funds for the Neighbourhood Forums. West Byfleet NF and Pyrford NF were already in receipt of these funds with Byfleet NF becoming eligible once the Neighbourhood Plan was agreed which was expected at the end of 2023, beginning of 2024.

Keith Creswell asked how much of the increased subscription income would be spent on charitable donations. Dharma noted that this had been about £600 in 2021. The Chairman noted that this would depend on the requests which were received and he was expecting there to be applications this year.

There was a concern that an increase might result in a reduction in subscriptions. Dharma noted that many members gave more than the suggested £5, with the average across the villages being £6.50. With a membership of ca.2,300 homes an extra £3,500 could be received.

Dharma noted that extra costs were being absorbed until the increase took place in 2024.

Responding to a question about whether the newsletter should be produced in hardcopy given the rising costs, the Chairman noted how well it was received by many members. He noted that during Covid, the newsletter had only been issued online. This had resulted in a number of communications from members about the re-instatement of the hardcopy. It was also clear that some of the older members were not easily able to access the online version.

The Chair noted that the committee had discussed many times whether the newsletter should continue in hardcopy but had come to the conclusion that it did have a necessary function to fulfil.

The resolution to increase the membership subscription from £5 to £8 from 1 January 2024 was proposed by Stewart Dick, seconded by Wade Pollard and passed without objection.

7. Membership Secretary's Report

Isabelle David, Membership Secretary, noted that she had been in post for 3 years and would now be standing down from the RA Committee. A volunteer was, therefore, being sought to take over the role. She would be willing to work with them during a handover period.

Isabelle noted that she had also received a number of comments about the lack of hardcopy newsletter during Covid. For those who preferred to read the newsletter online it was issued online ca 3 weeks after publication. Members got to read the hard copy before the online version was available.

The newsletter was the means by which the RA could market itself and delivery of the hardcopy allowed many Street Reps to connect with members.

Isabelle noted that membership numbers had dropped slightly but had actually risen in West Byfleet, possibly due to the number of new housing developments. There was now a strong presence on Broadoaks.

Isabelle thanked the Village Membership Officers – David Bell (West Byfleet), Jed Allen (Byfleet) and John Tiller (Pyrford) for all their support.

She noted that there was currently no Village Representative for West Byfleet, a role which had been vacant for more than a year. David Bell was also standing down as Village Membership Officer. Volunteers were urgently needed.

Isabelle thanked the Street Reps for all their hard work and noted that there were still some streets which were not covered. Volunteers were needed.

8. Chairman's Report

The Chairman opened his remarks by noting the need to recruit more committee members and urged anyone with an interest in local affairs to volunteer. Younger members were particularly needed.

The Residents' Association would be 95 years old this year and was still going strong. The RA communicated via its newsletter which was provided to members in hardcopy and made available on the website. This was the means by which the villages and the work of the RA could be showcased.

The Chairman urged everyone to visit the RA website which provided a lot of extra information.

The Chairman reported on the appointment of a Health & Wellbeing Officer and the work which was being carried out with the health centre. A very useful guide to making appointments either at the centre or with other medical facilities had been put together and was available on the RA website. The Chairman also noted that anything published about the health centre was done so after consultation.

With an increasing focus on climate change and sustainability an Environment Officer had also been appointed. Currently the mandate is to communicate the many initiatives that have been undertaken by both Woking Borough Council and Surrey County Council to improve the environment and reduce emissions.

For its part the Residents' Association had set up a very successful seed share scheme and was recording fruit trees within the villages. It was seeking to enlarge and expand its involvement in protecting the environment.

The Chairman noted the amount of time which he spends on planning applications having also taken on the role of Planning Officer. A comprehensive monthly report was presented to the committee noting activity and any action taken by either the Residents' Association or the Neighbourhood Forums who also have an important role to play on planning matters in their particular areas.

The Chairman kept abreast of council activity and what was happening at Westminster. The Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill currently going through Parliament will be of significant importance to local communities and neighbourhood forums.

The Chairman ended his report with three bullet points:

The number of affordable homes being built in Woking Borough was less than 50% of target. In 2022/23 587 new dwellings were delivered which figure included no affordable homes.

Whilst the battle to protect Green Belt at West Hall had been lost, Woking Borough Council at the request of the RA had placed a blanket Tree Preservation Order (TPO) on land released from Green Belt. The developer was expected to be Taylor Wimpey who were also developing the Wisley airfield site. Their application is for 1700 homes on that site. Interestingly at their recent result's presentation they had announced a reduction in housebuilding activity in the current year of up to 36%. It is not know what this might mean for the West Hall site.

The Chairman also noted the new Diagnostic Hub at the Woking Community Hospital and thanked Jonathan Lord, MP who had been instrumental in securing this facility for Woking. The future of the Community Hospital had been uncertain in the lead up to Covid but now we could look forward to an expanded and improved facility.

The Chairman thanked the Committee and Street Representatives for their important work.

The Chairman also wished to thank Woking Borough Council employees in particular who he had found to be immensely helpful, approachable and accessible.

9. Neighbourhood Forums

i. Byfleet

Andrew Weiss, Chair of the Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum, gave a brief summary of activity.

The new committee had redrafted the Neighbourhood Plan which had now been submitted to Woking Borough Council for comment. It was hoped that a response would be forthcoming by end March and indications were that the Plan could be adopted by end of 2023 or beginning 2024.

Andrew noted the six areas identified as key issues for Byfleet: to preserve the history and character of the village, preserve, maintain and improve green spaces, promote a successful and flourishing village centre, ensure an effective and sustainable infrastructure, particularly in relation to flooding, roads and drainage, ensure good quality, suitable and sufficient community facilities for Byfleet residents and encourage a successful and thriving business district.

More information available at www.byfleetforum.co.uk

Andrew noted that regular meetings were held with Julie Fisher, Chief Executive and Ann-Marie Barker, Leader of Woking Borough Council. The three Forum chairs and the RA were invited to these meetings.

Action was being taken to address anti-social behaviour in Byfleet.

ii. West Byfleet

Wade Pollard, Chair of West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum, gave an update.

The AGM had been held recently at which the Forum's plans for improving the recreation ground using NCIL money had been outlined. As well as improvements to the tennis courts and installation of exercise equipment on the recreation ground there were plans for the provision of a community facility for sport, local organisations ie scouts, guides, toilets and possibly a café. The Forum had been working with councillors and the project was now with Woking Borough Council to progress.

Most of the construction work on Broadoaks Park was now almost complete. Social housing was fully occupied, Charrington Manor was fully open and assisted living would soon be finished.

Construction work on Botanical Place was progressing according to plan.

It was interesting to note that Surrey County Council had designated West Byfleet as its 15th largest conurbation. Hopefully, this might mean further investment in the area.

Wade thanked the RA for funds to support day-to-day costs.

iii. Pyrford

Andy Grimshaw, Chair of Pyrford Neighbourhood Forum, gave an update on activity.

Andy thanked the RA for the annual grant which covered the day-to-day costs but noted that, in addition, a number of very successful fundraising activities had been organised with more in the pipeline. For the first time, a Wildlife Calendar had been produced and offered for sale in the village, at the Village Show and at various other events where the Forum had a presence. The Forum would also be benefitting from the Co-op Local Community Fund.

Chief focus of activity for the Forum was the Heritage Conservation Assessment Project. There were also plans for planting trees and shrubs in an area which it was hoped could be dedicated in memory of Queen Elizabeth II.

The Forum also monitored planning applications within the village and commented accordingly.

The Forum had NCIL money to spend in the village; £14k had been spent on refurbishment of the Cricket Club and £14k would be spent on the Village Hall.

10. Elections

Notification of the Annual General Meeting having been printed in The Resident, on the RA website and via email to members, the following, nominated and seconded, have offered themselves for election:

Chair	Stewart Dick
Vice	Ian Mason
Secretary	Lynette Davies
Editor	Robert Munford
Planning Officer	Stewart Dick
Advertising Manager	Robert Munford
Health & Wellbeing Officer	Carol Leong-Son
Environment Officer	Helen Orledge
Events Coordinator -	Gary Elson (with effect from 5th May 2023)
Committee members	Sheila Carroll & Dharma Sivarajasingham

Village Representatives:

Byfleet:	Eleanor Grady	Deputy	Jean-Pierre Frossard
West Byfleet:		Deputy	Liz Leese & Emma Slaymaker
Pyrford:	Andy Grimshaw	Deputy	Gordon Brierley

These appointments were agreed without contest.

As a matter of record (not being elected):

Ex Officio Committee members:

Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum	Andrew Weiss
West Byfleet Neighbourhood Forum	Wade Pollard
Pyrford Neighbourhood Forum	Andy Grimshaw

Other Officers:

Website Officer	Anita Flavell
Village Membership Officers	Jed Allen (Byfleet), John Tiller (Pyrford)

Vacancies:

Membership Secretary	Treasurer
Rights of Way Officer	West Byfleet Village Representative
West Byfleet Village Membership Officer	

11. Any Other Business

There were no items of other business. The above formal meeting was closed.

The meeting's Guest Speaker, Robert Bowtell Group Sustainability Manager at Retirement Villages Group Ltd was introduced and warmly welcomed. Robert gave a very interesting talk on the approach that RVG were taking with

regard to sustainability for the Botanical Place development in the centre of West Byfleet focussing principally on creating a sustainable community.

The areas explored were why RVG was interested in sustainability, how it was building a sustainable development, the approach to creating a vibrant and integrated community and looking to the future.

Robert emphasised that residents in RVG communities were encouraged to get involved with local community activities and this would be a good source of volunteers.

A number of general questions about the development were posed and answered by Spencer Neal of Keeble Brown. The subjects covered were the retail offering, the provision of a pharmacy and the pressure that an increase in the older population would pose on the medical centre.

Gary Elson, WBC Councillor, thanked Robert for his engaging talk and proposed a vote of thanks.

The meeting closed at 21:00