

Sopwell Residents' Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Wednesday 21 May 2008 at Marlborough Pavilion, Old Oak

1. **Welcome:** The Chair (Giles Hanford) welcomed the Association's guests, who were councillors Eileen Harris, David Poor and Roger Axworthy.

The Chair thanked Janet Smith for all her hard work in Sopwell.

The Chair pointed out that Sopwell maps and photographs are on display, introduced the agenda for the meeting and explained that a representative from Hertfordshire Highways was due to speak but had cancelled; a statement will be read out later in the meeting.

The Chair confirmed that the Association is looking for new members, Abbey Station monitors and volunteers to deliver the newsletter. He then invited all attendees to join in for refreshments after the meeting to celebrate the Association's 5th anniversary.

2. **Present:** Ananda Armstrong-King, Cllr. Roger Axworthy, Frances Burrows, Moira Connell, Cllr. Robert Donald, Janet Edwards, Giles Hanford (Chair), Cllr. Eileen Harris, Nicola Hayes, Jack Hill, Edward Hosell, Adam Hunt, Mark James, Andrew Johnstone, Liz Klir, Val Langford, Len Lewsey, Sandy Norman (Secretary), Sue Oliver, Cllr. David Poor, Rebecca Prebble (Minutes), Chris Pudsey, Jose Sena, Helly Sawyer, Michael Sutton, Joanne Tang, Rick Taylor.

Apologies for absence: Chantal Burns, Jill Gipps, Christoph Lutz, Linda Bateman, Richard Stacey (Hertfordshire Highways).

3. **Minutes of last meeting:** The minutes of the last AGM of the SRA were approved. This was proposed by Cllr. Roger Axworthy and seconded by Mark James.
4. **Matters arising from the Minutes:** It was reported that there were no matters arising from the Minutes.
5. **Annual Report:** The Secretary (Sandy Norman) presented the 2007/2008 Annual Report, which is Association's 5th report. This year the SRA's focus has shifted from primarily assisting residents with issues best dealt with by our very able ward councillors, the Council, Hertfordshire Highways or the police, to additionally identifying specific areas where the Association can be proactive; specifically, bringing the community together and making Sopwell 'greener'.

The Secretary thanked Association members who worked hard and achieved a lot last year and have now stepped down (Christoph Lutz, Pamella Marshall, Len Lewsey, Anne Fenton). She welcomed new Association members (Mark James, Ananda Armstrong-King, Rebecca Prebble, Adam Hunt and Jose Sena) and reiterated that more new members are always welcome.

This year, the SRA has been active in a range of issues and events.

- We helped organise Sopwell's successful Larks in the Parks 2007, held two open meetings, produced two newsletters, organised two litter picks, planted even more bulbs and joined the Council's voluntary Tree Wardens Scheme to monitor trees in the area.
- The Association additionally responded to the Council core strategy issues, assisted Tavistock Avenue residents submit a petition to Hertfordshire Highways regarding the condition of roads and pavements and obtained agreement from Hertfordshire Highways that the paving slabs damaged by illegal crossovers will be replaced with tarmac.
- The Association assisted tenants improve their Council properties, including double-glazed replacement windows in Monks Close and we continue to work with the police and Neighbourhood Watch.
- Recently the Association 'adopted' the Abbey station via the Abbey Community Rail partnership (which aims to improve unstaffed stations).
- The Secretary confirmed that the SRA's website service provider will be changed next year and the Association will focus on improving the site as a means of communication.

The Secretary reminded residents to contact the Association with their views and requirements, and confirmed that she is stepping down as Secretary and will continue to take an active role on the Association primarily in respect of environmental matters.

Those present accepted the Annual Report. This was proposed by Joanne Tang and seconded by Rick Taylor.

6. **Statement of Accounts:** The Chair invited any questions regarding the Accounts. Chris Pudsey clarified that the donation to St Julian's was in respect of use of the hall for Association meetings. There were no questions and the Accounts were adopted by those present. This was proposed by Mark James and seconded by Jose Sena.

7. **Re-election of management committee:** The following members were re-elected: Ananda Armstrong-King, Chantal Burns, Jill Gipps, Giles Hanford, Jack Hill, Adam Hunt, Mark James, Sandy Norman, Rebecca Prebble, Chris Pudsey, Jose Sena, Helly Sawyer, Joanne Tang, and Rick Taylor.

The following members were re-elected as officers: Giles Hanford as Chair, Helly Sawyer as Vice-Chair, Rebecca Prebble as Secretary and Jill Gipps as Treasurer.

The Chair invited other residents present to join; there were no volunteers at this stage.

Acceptance of the committee was proposed by David Poor proposed and seconded by Janet Edwards.

Councillor Robert Donald, leader of the Council, gave an interesting presentation entitled “Historic St Albans becoming Hertfordshire’s premier community”, in which he discussed the current challenges facing the Council and what actions are being taken (keeping the District special, reducing our Carbon Footprint and traffic congestion, improving the state of our residential roads and pavements, improving our leisure facilities, recycling, providing more affordable housing and keeping Council Tax rise below the rate of inflation). In the second part of Cllr. Donald’s presentation, he described the Local Strategic Partnership, which is a Body representing the local community set up by the Government to produce and implement the Community Strategy.

The Chair invited questions. Helly Sawyer asked what the Local Strategic Partnership plan to do for children in Sopwell. Cllr. Donald explained that the Children’s Trust Partnership is not yet running but there are leisure activities running (through Leisure Connections) and projects for regular football and craft and dance are being planned. He confirmed that youth facilities are not the responsibility of the District council. Helly Sawyer explained that regular activities, such as a youth club, are needed to enable outside agencies to engage with the children.

Jose Sena pointed out that the jumps at the Marlborough Pavilion are overgrown and not maintained and Cllr. David Poor explained that the Council need residents to help take ownership and supervise. He said that there are plans for a football pitch and mobile skateboard facilities. Cllr. Eileen Harris described the ‘multi youth games agency’, which will tour the district.

Cllr. Donald confirmed that Laura Cronshaw is the acting chair of the Local Strategic Partnership and that Matthew Green has responsibility for 11 – 19 years olds.

Cllr. Donald left copies of his presentation for residents and the Chair thanked him for his time.

8. **Hertfordshire Highways:** The Secretary read out a Briefing Statement from Richard Stacey, Assistant District Manager (South & East) of Hertfordshire Highways. In the Statement, Richard Stacey apologised for not attending the meeting and that this is in line with Hertfordshire County Council policy (that as it is not possible to attend all residents' association meetings within the St Albans area, none will be attended).

Richard Stacey reiterated in his Statement that all roads and footways are prioritised each year but it is not possible to do everything at once. To clear some of the maintenance backlog the County Council committed an additional £20m over the last 2, years and plans to invest a further £10m this year, as part of one of the council's 7 key challenges ('dealing with worn out roads and pavements'). To have an input into the annual maintenance programme, residents can give feedback via their local member or by contacting Richard Stacey and asking to make a representation at the Highways Joint Member panel meetings.

The Statement read out confirmed that to report a fault, residents can do so via www.hertsdirect.org.uk or 01438 737 320.

9. **Larks in the Parks 2008:** Nicola Hayes gave an update on Larks in the Parks, which will be held on Sunday 29 June 2008 from 12.00 until 17.15.
10. **Summer walk:** Chris Pudsey and Sandy Norman provided details of the Summer walk, to be held on Sunday 27 July 2008 at 15.00 in support of the Woodland Trust's 'summer of hugs'. Participants on the walk will be able to 'hug' (measure) some of the larger trees in the area. Further details were provided to all attendees in a flyer 'Celebrating Green Sopwell'. It was agreed that leaflets would be delivered to schools early in July.
11. **Questions and issues raised from the floor:**
- Ray Saunders, Matthew Hale and Ian Bailey (Royal Mail Social Club) raised the car track at the Marlborough Pavilion. The Council have given the go-ahead to re-open it and some door-to-door consultation had taken place by Matthew Hale, but some residents were very concerned about the lack of consultation from the Council, when it will be in use, and noise pollution. The Chair concluded that the proposition needs refining and an opportunity for feedback is required.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and invited them to join the SRA's 5th birthday celebrations with tea, coffee and cake.

12. The meeting closed at approximately 9.40pm.