

Sopwell Residents Association
Annual General Meeting - 10th May 2016, held at Mandeville School

Those present: Rick Taylor (chair), Sandy Norman (acting secretary), Len Lewsey, Steve Peters, Martin Reed, Jennifer Taylor, Sophia Joyce, Willem Hofland, Jack Hill, Peter Segers, Janet Edwards, Fred Edwards, Jo Welch, Joan Saveger, Jean Smith, Lorraine Hobbs, Andrew Johnstone, Dominic Tang (treasurer), Cllr Iain Grant, Janet Charles, Maggy Douglas, Cllr Eileen Harris, Michael Walker, Mark James, Jo Cooney, Natalie Sturman, Cllr Sandy Walkington, Adelle Stapleton, Anatolie Jacobson.

1. Welcome and introduction: Rick welcomed everyone to the meeting adding that he was delighted with the turnout. He particularly welcomed SADC Councillors Eileen Harris and Iain Grant and County Councillor Sandy Walkington.
2. Apologies received from: Cllr Janet Smith, Barry and Linda Bateman, Liz Klir, Fran Burroughs and Shakir Rahman.
3. The minutes of the AGM held on 14th May 2015. Their approval as an accurate record was proposed by Mark James and seconded by Andrew Johnstone. All were in favour of their approval.
4. There were no matters arising from the minutes.
5. To receive and adopt audited accounts
 - Dom Tang (Treasurer) distributed copies of the statement of accounts to year end 31st March 2016. He explained the content of the accounts which ended with a closing balance at bank of £2,804.17.
 - He also tabled a Schedule of SRA Assets and there was discussion as to where the marquee was kept. Christoph Lutz to be asked, although it was thought the marquee was kept at St Julian's Church.
 - Willem asked that the unsold 'Memory' books be included on to the schedule of assets.
 - The accounts were audited by Andy Sharpe.
 - Mark James proposed that the accounts be adopted, subject to the amendment above. The proposal was seconded by Len Lewsey. All were in favour.
 - Rick thanked Dom for his work in keeping the accounts in good order throughout the year.
6. To receive and adopt Annual Report of the SRA presented by Sandy Norman, a resume of which is given below:
 - Committee structure and changes: Peter Wares, a longstanding member of the committee, is not standing for re-election. Sandy announced that she would not be standing for re-election as she was moving out of the Sopwell area. Steve Peters has joined the committee during the past year. There are presently vacancies on the committee and it would be good to welcome new members to join the committee to help the association continue its various activities.
 - Sandy said she was happy to become an ex-officio member to help steer the new secretary and help new committee members fulfil their roles.
 - Activities and Events:
 - i. Sopwell Memories Project: The website continues to be popular with nearly 50,000 views during the year. Several new postings have been added.
 - ii. The five free history walk leaflets were a 'sell out' there were two reprints.
 - iii. In August 2015 we had a charity stall at a Saturday market to promote Sopwell Memories which was a great success. We displayed photos, maps and memorabilia of Sopwell. We were visited by the Mayor and all three Ward councillors.
 - iv. The book is still selling but slowly. All monies received goes towards community projects and activities.

- v. Walks: With the help of Countryside Management Services a bat walk was held on 20th August 2015. Due to the indisposition of the 'batman' Roger Harvard the walk was led by Michael Iseard, Project Officer from CMS. The event was fully booked with about 28 people showing up.
- vi. A walk led by Chris Pudsey was supposed to have been held in November as part of Sustainable St Albans week but was abandoned because of the bad weather.
- vii. The annual litter pick was held on 6th March 2016 as part of the Clean for the Queen event to mark the Queen's 90th birthday. About 20 people turned out on a very cold day and collected about 30 bags of litter and recyclables.
- viii. Willow tunnel: The willow tunnel suffered from damage by vandals last year and Hazel Godfrey, the willow expert, had to do a lot of patching up. It was given a haircut in August by a group of keen Sopwell volunteers. Hazel thinks this group is now competent to take the annual maintenance on themselves, and Barry Bateman is leading a group to do just that, so anyone interested in helping with the tunnel maintenance should contact Barry.
- ix. 150th anniversary of the London Road – Hatfield Railway; the Alban Way is what remains of this long abandoned line and October 2015 saw the 150th anniversary of the opening of the railway line. A group of dedicated enthusiasts organised a splendid celebration event. As part of the celebration, on 18th October SRA had a stand at the London Road station with a display of leaflets, photographs and information about the line from a Sopwell perspective.
- x. Conferences and meetings:
 1. We held six committee meeting during the year May 2015/2016.
 2. Rick Taylor attended meetings of the Combined Group of Residents Associations.
 3. Rick Taylor attended meetings of the City and Neighbourhoods Committee of St Albans City & District Council.
 4. Willem Hofland attended two meetings of the Bus Users Forum
 5. Willem Hofland attended four meetings of the Tenant Services Forum
 6. Sandy Norman and Jack Hill attended a meeting of the Friends of Sopwell Nunnery Open Space Management Group
 7. Jennifer Taylor and Linda Bateman attended a thank you party for volunteer groups in December 2015 at the House of Commons hosted by Anne Main MP.
- xi. Communications: We have produced two newsletters in the past year, edited and produced by Barry Bateman and delivered by a band of newsletter deliverers. Our website www.sopwell.org is managed and updated regularly thanks to Peter Segers.
- Rick thanked Sandy for her report which was hampered by the fact that the Powerpoint presentation she had prepared could not be shown. The adoption of Sandy's report was proposed by Janet Edwards and seconded by Len Lewsey.

Extra item – County Councillor Sandy Walkington and District Councillor Eileen Harris

- Sandy Walkington carries the highways portfolio for the Sopwell Ward on HCC. He discussed various items of concern raised from the floor, including:
 - The poor resurfacing in Holyrood Crescent, grass verges are not being properly managed.
 - HCC has cut the budget for roads again.
 - There is a small budget for speed cameras; there could be mobile speed cameras which are solar powered.
 - Primary school places – HCC believe there are enough primary school places in St Albans. There is only going to be one 'bulge' class which is going to be at St Peter's. Meanwhile there are children in the north part of Sopwell who are having to go to Margaret Wix in New Greens.
 - There was some discussion about the footpath from Ramsbury Road to Old London Road.

- Cllr Harris had a meeting that morning to look at the final two tenders for the new playground for Holyrood Crescent. It has been apparently a real battle to get any money and Cllr Janet Smith is working with the CNC to get money. It will be a playground for young and older children.
7. Election of Management Committee
- The members of the management committee prepared to stand for re-election are: Barry Bateman, Jack Hill, Willem Hofland, Mark James, Steve Peters, Martin Reed, Adelle Stapleton, Dom Tang (treasurer), Jennifer (minute secretary), Taylor Rick Taylor (chair).
 - Rick reminded the attendees that Peter Wares has decided not to stand and thanked him for his tremendous support. We have gained Steve Peters but still have six vacancies. Sophia Joyce has shown an interest in joining the committee. With Sandy leaving the area there is urgent need for a new secretary.
 - Rick thanked all the members of the committee for their hard work and support during the year.
 - The re-election of the committee as above was proposed by Janet Edwards and seconded by Len Lewsey. All were in favour.
8. Announcements
- Maggy Douglas's 'Sopwell Secrets' Walk – 32 people attended the first walk. There will be a second walk taking place on 22nd May at 2.00 p.m.
 - There is another bat walk planned for Thursday 25th August, meeting at the Nunnery Open Space seats. The event is being run by CMS and booking should be made via their website.
9. Local Resident, Fred Edwards, gave a very interesting talk about his memories of Riverside Road Fisheries and answered many questions from the audience. He announced that there was to be an open day at the Fisheries on 16th July starting at 10.00 a.m. to which everyone would be welcome.
10. Open Forum – questions and discussion from the floor, comprising:
- Cllr Harris advised that a bus shelter in Cottonmill Lane has been requested. A replacement is still awaited to the bus shelter outside the Abbey Station.
 - Concern about the lack of lighting on the big bend in Cottonmill Lane beyond Mentmore Road.
 - Cllr Harris reminded the meeting that faulty street lighting can be reported to HCC on-line.
 - Strengthening work to the Cottonmill road bridge is to be carried out.
 - Speeding in Cottonmill Lane is an on-going concern and residents have completed a survey but so far with no result.
 - Cllr Harris raised the matter of Leyland Avenue Youth Club, which is to be redeveloped as housing. It is going to Planning. Sandy said that this is one of our community assets.
 - It is believed any redevelopment of the King Offa will include some community facility.
 - Litter picking – we always seem to have it near the green spaces. There are other areas of the Ward that need clearing.
 - A house in Trumpington Drive has hedges overhanging on to the pavement. HCC are involved in sorting this.
 - There was discussion about the pedestrian level crossing.
11. And finally – Jennifer Taylor made a presentation on behalf of the Sopwell Residents Association members and committee to Sandy Norman for all her years of action on the committee, firstly as chairman then secretary.
- Rick closed the AGM with thanks to everyone for attending and inviting them to refreshments.

[Post AGM note: Subsequent to the AGM, the following people have joined the management committee: Jo Cooney as joint secretary with existing member Adelle Stapleton, Maggy Douglas and Janet Charles.]