

WIMBLEDON PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at 8pm. on Tuesday 19th October, 2004
at St Austin's Hall ,Christ the King, The Crescent.

Present: Iain C. Simpson (Chairman)
Cecile Bridgens (Vice Chairman)
Andrew Dalton (Treasurer)
Tony Brown
David Salmon
Paresh Modasia
Ken Ball
Nigel Israel
Sue Knibbs CBE
Ceri Sheeran

Ex Officio: Cllr Oonagh Moulton
Cllr Beth Mitchell
Cllr Tariq Ahmad

Minutes: Minutes of the AGM held on 14th October 2003 were circulated prior to the commencement of the meeting

The Minutes were approved. Proposed by Nigel Israel, seconded by Sue Knibbs, and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising: No matters arising, which would not be dealt with during the course of the meeting.

Guest speaker: Andrew Judge, Leader of Merton Council. Due to pressing engagements Andrew had requested to speak at the beginning of the evening.

Andrew stated that, in general, the Council is indebted to the commitment of local residents' associations. Regarding the business plan for Wimbledon Park Hall, the Council is seeking to provide a new community facility on the site with a community trust to run the facility. The Council's emphasis is on nurturing community organisations, balancing local need with meeting requirements at all levels. To date, 76 expressions of interest had been received, in response to the Planning Brief, before the deadline of 29th October 2004. It will be the Council's decision as to delivery and price.

The Council is planning the budget several months in advance; for 2005/6. Concerned to maintain expenditure. Key focus on quality of street scene, environment, fly-tipping removal, damage, graffiti, abandoned vehicles. £3m spent in this area since 2001.

Council tax level: Merton traditionally has financial issues going back to 1970/80 carrying £90m of debt not covered by assets, creating £6m. interest per year. It is the 10th highest in outer London. Need £11-12 million cuts/savings for next year's budget. Aim to balance quality universal services with those who are vulnerable to maintain independence and protect them with low Council tax.

New community plan – at the end of this year the Council will be consulting on a new Community Plan for the next ten years, i.e. to 2015. How would you like the Borough to look in 2015; range of services, kind of community, improvements? Volunteer sector and business sector should respond with their views..

Questions:

Q. James Manktelow queried proposed 6 storey height of proposed new hall. What is the Council's position with respect to the 76 tenders; where does the WPRA supported brief come in this area?

A. Planning brief specifies that any building is in line with adjoining properties. Roof height would not be at variance with those either side. Project supported by the Cabinet when considered this year. Towering over back gardens is a planning issue – objections can be

brought to them – it is a quasi judicial committee of back- bench people who listen to residents’ concerns.

Q. Will ‘no parking’ work’?

A. ‘no parking’ developments have worked in other parts of the Borough and because of proximity to station it is appropriate.

Q Who has expressed interest in the development?

A. AJ does not know who has expressed interest. Whoever is awarded development of the site would have to work closely with Association. Community Trust must be representative of local people – will be looking at how wide the membership is – so that views are representative of local people.

Q. AJ was asked if the Council was supporting any particular bid.

A. No

Q. Will it be a high quality development

A. Yes. It will reflect quality at the front and back. The Brief does require stepped build at the back. Full Cabinet will decide at meeting either 15 November or 20 December.

Preferred developer would then go forward with an application 2005. Want it to be soon so that there is no issue of dereliction. Because this is public money there has to be a high degree of transparency.

Q. Will local facility to be run on commercial basis?.

A. Detail of how hall is run has to be settled – i.e. how community trust is set up.

Q. Will residents be able to discuss and have direct negotiation with the developer.

A. This would be encouraged.

Q. Hussein – is he favoured?

A. No. Council has no relationship with Mr. Hussein. Council will be looking dispassionately at offers for the site and what is good value.

Q. The Council spent £250,000 providing more car parking (for council workers in Morden) but no parking for residents.

A Not necessarily true. Staff have jobs which require movement across the Borough. Council does encourage public transport. If near stations, car use is discouraged.

Stephen Saul – just because residents live near a station does not mean they do not need a car.

Q. Roger Gallier: If it is going to be a community facility there must be car parking.

A AJ noted.

ICS thanked Andrew for taking the time to attend the meeting and answering important questions for residents. Association will be having regular public meetings as the development proceeds and seeking input from residents.

Chairman’s Report

Newsletters: three newsletters were produced during the year despite having lost the previous editor. Grateful to advertisers. Thanks to Noel Rankin for his tremendous work done on advertising over the last 18 months. 2300 copies are printed at a cost of £1,300. Ceri Sheeran was thanked for his exceptional contribution in producing the newsletter over the last 7 years, despite his busy occupation.

Graffiti: WPRA has been successful at keeping graffiti at bay. Objective has been to clean as soon as possible which tends to deter the perpetrators. The Heritage Group through Sim Comfort has been very active in the Park and local area. Pat de Jesus at the Council is very receptive to calls for help but lacks resources.

Beat Manager: PC Harry Hallgren has become our Beat Officer after a year of not having one.. After Christmas he will pass on to a new officer, as he has been promoted to Sergeant.

Public Transport Forum: The WPRA made a request to route the 156 to Wimbledon via St. George’s hospital periodically, but Transport for London found no real cause for change. With

the development of Plough Lane, there may be bus services to St. George's and the matter will be pursued.

Kenilworth Green: Pat de Jesus and a team of Resident volunteers filled 30 bags of rubbish; roses were planted against the brick wall;

Financial position: although sound, subscription collection remains an issue.

Wimbledon Park Hall: The Association intends for there to be full consultation with residents regarding the social and financial objectives of a community hall facility. It is hoped that it will be an appropriate facility and legacy for the future generations.

PC Harry Hallgren, Beat Manager

After having no Beat Officer for a year Harry has taken over. However since he has now been promoted to Sergeant, he will be leaving and will be introducing Darren Dearing as the new Beat Manager. He stressed the strong community feeling, and commended the efforts of all those who have been tackling graffiti in the Park and elsewhere. His main focus has been on solving the problem of abandoned vehicles in the Plough Lane area together with DVLA, burglaries in three Wards – Hillside, Wimbledon Park and Trinity, bogus callers (artifice burglary), vehicle crime – 4 arrests made. Of the 20 Wards in the London Borough of Merton we are one of the safest at 16th in terms of crime.

Q. Abduction of a young boy in the Park taken to East Putney. Park Rangers do not patrol after the Park is closed.

A. Problem with the Park is getting the resources – a Ranger is there until closing time; Police have to assess the level of activity at closing time; it is a large area and not near housing.

Sir John Wheeler (Patron of Wimbledon Park Heritage Group) - sympathised with the plight of these individuals; Ranger frightened of being attacked and has been told not to intervene for legal reasons. There is a drugs problem usually beyond the pavilion. The Park can be entered from Southfields entrance and railway and golf club. Need pressure of Police, which they accept, and the Council bearing in mind there is only one employee.

Cllr. Moulton – Ranger budget has been cut, the only increase was to house someone in the Hut.

Graffiti: Sir John Wheeler questioned whether London Underground should take responsibility for clearing graffiti on railway bridges, which then spreads into the Park, canoe centre etc.

Harry said they have no say. Pat de Jesus bends their ears regularly. Sir John Wheeler said people elected on to the Council could be invited to assist.

Chairman – no one taking responsibility at the moment;

Sir John suggested Councillors call meeting. Ahmad, Elizabeth Howlett, SW Trains (Ahmad sits on regeneration panel and park rangers once again will be cut. Agrees to see what Elizabeth can do. It is a case of constantly putting up a good fight to retain effective policing and Cllr. Ahmed will take this up with Elizabeth Howlett.

The Chairman thanked Harry for his excellent contribution whilst Beat Officer for the Ward.

Treasurer's Report: Andrew Dalton

Copies of the accounts circulated at the beginning of the meeting.

Commented on poor subscription income. Otherwise finances healthy.

Accounts – Sir John Wheeler proposed approval of the accounts and Mrs Pinna seconded.

Chairman thanked the Treasurer for his excellent work throughout the year.

Mrs. Maria Pinna said everyone should watch for planning applications and report it if they are concerned.

Observation: opinions on hall; there were a lot of planning issues with various buildings in the area which people were concerned about.

Issue that the way in which planning is handled within Merton that we need as an association to watch out for. To alert WPRA

Subscriptions:

John Slater explained that the subscriptions were going to be slightly increased. (the first time in many years). He also agreed to join the Committee and become Membership Secretary.

Fee levels: PROPOSED to raise subs levels for 3 years from £5 to £9 and create a standing order basis; 10 year - £15; Life - £25. Subs will be logged and receipted. Roger Gallier proposed, Sue Knibbs seconded motion.

Front Garden Awards

The Chairman thanked Sue Marsh and her team of judges for their hard work in drawing up the shortlist.

Final judging was done by Michael Moore, Iain & Chris Simpson and Cecile Bridgens.

Michael Moore announced the winners and presented the prizes.

Best Summer Garden – 26 Normanton

Best Container Garden – no winner

Best All Year-round – 44 Kenilworth. - Voucher presented but given back for planting bulbs in Kenilworth Green

A.O.B.

James Manktelow again raised the issue of New Hall Height. Wanted WPRA to take position that they will oppose any development higher than 162-4 Arthur Road and out of keeping with scale.

ICS responded that the planning brief states that the building has to follow the roof line of Ibex House. Any height development in excess of existing roof line of Arthur Road would be unacceptable. Also building needs to be stepped at the back.

Q. James suggested a resolution ... “support a balanced view as far as design of build is concerned, economic necessity and design”. Perhaps set up sub-committee to oversee and liaise on this issue. People particularly concerned (Crescent Gardens) co-opted onto the committee with a watching brief.

Election of Officers

James Manktelow nominated as Committee member:

Chairman – Iain Simpson: proposed Sir John Wheeler, seconded Roger Gallier

Vice Chairman – Cécile Bridgens: proposed Chris Simpson, seconded Tony Brown

Treasurer – Andrew Dalton: proposed Tony Brown, seconded Sue Marsh

Membership Secretary – John Slater: proposed Judith G, seconded Thay Robson

Judith Centofanti offered to be Association Secretary and was proposed and seconded

Committee members

Ken Ball, Tony Brown, Nigel Israel, Paresh Modasia, Ceri Sheeran, Michael Moore, James Manktelow.

Sir John Wheeler thanked the Chairman for his conduct of the meeting and work throughout the year.