

**MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE
WIMBLEDON PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**
Held at 8.00 pm on Thursday 20 October 2005
in St Austin's Hall

Members of the Executive Committee Present:

Iain Simpson (Chair)
Cecile Bridgens (Vice chair)
Andrew Dalton (Treasurer)
Tony Brown (Acting Secretary)
John Slater (Membership Secretary)
Michael Moore
Ken Ball
James Manktelow

Guest speaker.

Stephen Hammond MP

Panel members:

Rt Hon Sir John Wheeler JP DL (Chair)
Cllr Elizabeth Howlett AM
Cllr Stephen Alambritis
Superintendent Peter Dobson
Inspector Paul Carter

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the AGM. A special welcome was extended to the guest speakers and the panel

1. **Minutes.** The minutes of the 2004 AGM were provided to all those attending. No comments or corrections and no matters arising. The minutes were approved.

2. **Chairman's Report.** The Chairman commented first on the successful campaign on subscriptions. Membership had increased to the level of about 4 years ago. Now about 25% of households were signed up. This healthy position was reflected in the accounts. John Slater was congratulated for his considerable efforts.

- Local people were not happy with the way in which Wimbledon Park had been policed. A rapid turnover of beat officers did not help. This would be the topic of the discussion to be chaired by Sir John Wheeler later on.

- Thanks were given to Michael Moore for his hard work and attention in installing and maintaining the flower boxes on the railings in Arthur Road. They had proved a good addition to the street scenery.

- The Association had worked with the Wimbledon Park Heritage Group and through the joint efforts of many contributors, the paddling pool had been opened six weeks earlier than usual. It was generally felt by the committee that the Council should be able to provide the funding and the community should not have to put their hands in their pockets every year.

- Due to the excellent work of Sim Comfort and the Council the WPHG had been awarded grant funding of £50,000 towards the replacement of gates in the park. This would both improve appearance and security. Further, the Athletics track and the pavilion in the park were in the process of being upgraded by the Council.

- Planning matters. There was a limit to the time that Committee members could devote to this issue as they had other jobs to do. Residents groups had protested vehemently but unsuccessfully over the plans to place a telephone mast at the corner of Revelstoke Road.

- The Chairman concluded by stating concern over the lack of progress over Wimbledon Park Hall. A year had elapsed since the bidding had closed. We would like to be further ahead.

3. Treasurer's report

Andrew Dalton stated that this had been a very successful year for subscriptions although all the income was not reflected in this year's accounts-it was apportioned. However the balance sheet showed the position on this.

- We had spent £900 more than income. This was attributable to the money spent on the paddling pool and a decision to write off uncollectible advertising debts. However advertising for the newsletter was well supported and a good reduction in printing costs had been negotiated. Overall the accounts did however show a healthy bank balance.

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There were no further questions. It was resolved that the accounts be adopted. Proposed by John Slater and seconded by Cecile Bridgens. The Chairman thanked Andrew for his efforts and for ensuring the books were in good order.

4. Front Garden Awards:

Michael Moore stated that the judges were not necessarily looking for the best display but the best given the space available. They would be happy to rope in new judges next year. The winners were:

Best container-51 Ryfold Road

Best all year-2 Stroud Road

Overall winner-83 Kenilworth Avenue

5 Councillor's Report: Delivered by Tariq Ahmad.

Achievements included the resurfacing of roads in the ward, e.g. Ryfold and Durnsford, after much pressure on the Council.

- Since September 2005 the Weir Road recycling facility had been reopened. They hoped to get weekend opening hours extended so it would close at 6pm and not 4pm
- Planning meetings had taken place with Richard Rawes. On the issue of the telephone masts the Council had 'stonewalled' on why a policy could not form part of the Unitary Development Plan. If Wandsworth could veto their installation why couldn't we? However Stephen Hammond had held meetings with Vodaphone and produced a stay of execution (on the plans for Revelstoke Road) All present were urged to write to Vodaphone expressing their objections
- Regarding Wimbledon Park Hall the developers that had put in the bid now wanted to lower the price and extend further at the back (this being opposed by resident groups). Legal opinion was being taken over whether the Council was entitled to revert to previous bidders.
- The Plough Lane development-over 500 units- was going ahead. It was hoped that a community hall would form part of this development
- Councillor Ahmad concluded by complimenting the police for their very hard work in keeping the community safe especially since the events of 7th July.

6. Guest Speaker Stephen Hammond MP

The Chairman introduced Stephen Hammond as a Councillor in Village Ward since 2005 and our MP since May 2005.

- Stephen Hammond commenced by paying tribute to residents' associations of which there were 31 across the Borough. Their work was vital for local democracy.
- He congratulated the Committee for their efforts in boosting numbers; the Councillors were praised for their hard work much of which was 'unseen' Issues that took up his time and attentions included those areas of social deprivation in the constituency; the changing nature of the town centre and the impact of the change in the licensing laws. He commented on the large number of immigration cases in his surgery. The Home Office was in chaos taking over 18 months to deal with applications. Such delays were inhumane and unfair.
- He then talked about his maiden speech (comparing it to his predecessor Sir Cyril Black) and the issues he had raised in committee and the House that concerned Wimbledon
- He spoke of the work of the Heritage Group and the indefatigable Sim Comfort. Sadly parks and leisure spending was given low priority. After talking to a number of residents groups he supported the development of local 'Friends' groups who would deal with funding issues (e.g. new bedding plants/ keep the paddling pool open) and negotiate with the Council on the management of parks. These groups could have the status of charitable trusts which could assist in fundraising.
- The move towards community policing in each ward would be accelerated
- The Council planners should pay closer attention to their own guidelines and not act in contradiction of the UDP or Conservation Area criteria. Permission had been obtained from the Council re the telephone mast in Revelstoke Road, but stay of execution obtained. Stephen had put forward 10 alternative sites which Vodaphone were considering. Their response would be publicised
- All present were invited to raise concerns by writing to him at the House; alternatively email, details on the website. Stephen concluded by saying he was sure it would be another year of strength for WPRA
- Chairman thanked Stephen Hammond and was delighted that he had got to grips with so many issues in such depth in so short a time.

7. Panel Discussion Chairman Iain Simpson introduced the panel members:

Sir John Wheeler would chair the discussion. MP for Westminster from 1979 to 1997. Patron of Wimbledon Park Heritage Group.

Councillor Elizabeth Howlett London Assembly member for Merton and Wandsworth.

Councillor Stephen Alambritis Cabinet member for diversity community engagement and partnerships. Ex football referee.

Superintendent Peter Dobson. Previously Chief Inspector in this area.

Inspector Paul Carter. In Wimbledon since 1995. Community and Partnership Inspector since 2005.

Sir John Wheeler spoke first. He said we were fortunate to have someone with so much vision and commitment as our MP. His ideas over parks management were marvellous but needed to be worked on.

- Many years ago nothing could be done over social problems like graffiti and 'job' crime. The police didn't have the resources. Now police have no shortage of recruits and are able to provide a better service. Tribute was paid to Sergeant Nick Tittle and the problem solving skills he had brought to bear.

- Wimbledon Park is a Grade 1 listed Park. In summer it has around 5000 visitors every weekend. Their visits should be conducted in comfort and safety. Thanks are due to the Community police officers in achieving this. But they come and go, and this does not help consistency of approach.

- Where can progress be made? We look at Sim Comfort's dogged determination which has produced £50000 in grant funding - a remarkable success story.

- However if volunteers can achieve so much by hard work and commitment, why not others? We are let down by London Underground. They simply do not deal with the graffiti problem. It is despairingly awful. In Wimbledon Station we have had the same graffiti for years. The situation has not changed. What is wrong with the management of the station? Who is accountable? Why no big clean up? Unless the problem is tackled the area will spiral down.

- In this area there is underreporting of crime. The business community in Arthur Road is very frustrated. They would like to see improvement and change in the policing. Why is there such imbalance in this ward?

- The graffiti in Revelstoke Road has been there for several weeks. It should be removed in 24 hours. We can't win otherwise.

- Chairman Iain Simpson is right to press for CCTV. When we reassemble we will get answers to the major issues, CCTV, management of Wimbledon Station and graffiti.

Elizabeth Howlett then spoke. She introduced herself as a GLA Assembly member since 2000.

She said she knew Wimbledon very well; as a magistrate she was responsible for putting away those guilty of these offences. She is on a number of committees and had great respect for the work of the Metropolitan Police Service who done a great job in dealing with the recent terrorist outrages.

- The main objective was safer neighbourhood policing; but funding was not guaranteed. Waiting for Government confirmation. If agreed neighbourhood policing should mean 5 officers in each ward. This may not be enough for the busier wards, e.g. with main railway stations. In that case the Government will have to come up with further funding.

Next speaker was Superintendent Peter Dobson.

He said the main problem was people's perceptions and the fear of crime rather than crime itself. In fact residential burglary had gone down 50% in Merton; however people don't feel safer.

- Different tactics have been employed such as community policing, then crime fighting squads then community policing again. The model for safer policing-in each ward 1 sergeant, 2 P C s and 3 DSO (support staff) This would be in 2 phases; this ward was anticipated to have this in April 2006 or later in the year. They are aiming to double the size of neighbourhood watches, which at present cover 30% of households. There will be an initiative of local beat managers approaching households to make householders feel safer.

Stephen Alambritis then spoke.

He paid tribute to two successive good constituency MP's. He said the current aim was to get a safer neighbourhood status and commended the work of Commander Woods and the excellence of Councillors Tariq, Beth and Oonagh.

Regarding the phone mast debate- we now have more mobile phones than people in this country. We must keep up the pressure.

- Regarding the Community hall, there was a tendency for developers to overbid; the Council was very concerned about this.

- Other issues- CCTV. Could charity shops monitor footage?

- On behalf of the Council a pledge was issued. Next year and the year after that, Council Tax would not go up by more than 2.5% per annum

Q. - Iain Simpson

There are inequalities where one ward gets funding and another does not. Police presence stops 'chance' crime and defuses criminality. Crime statistics are subject to underreporting. Shopkeepers often don't bother to report crime. We need an explanation as to why a ward is allocated 'half' a beat officer.

A. Superintendent Dobson- we have increased manpower to the extent of 2000 extra officers; however there are other demands on time in particular the fight against terrorism. However in 12 to 18 months time all wards should have the new policing model

Sir John Wheeler - comment

We need to get the threat assessment right. It is necessary to get empathy to tackle problems neglected for many years. We have to work harder. We are not interested in the problems in other areas; council tax payers deserve a better return.

Elizabeth Howlett - comment

We do however need to take into account that the crime rate in other parts of London is extremely high.

There then ensued a general discussion when points raised from the floor included the use of helicopters, the degree of paperwork and inefficiency resulting (this acknowledged by the Superintendent), reluctance of police to enter premises where a crime has allegedly been committed (the need for a dynamic risk assessment was explained) and the pros and cons of cyclists riding on the pavements.

Reelection of officers

Iain Simpson then retired and John Slater took over the meeting. All officers put themselves up for reelection.

- Chairman - Iain Simpson - proposed Malcolm Connell, seconded Tony Mendes
- Vice Chair - Cecile Bridgens - proposed Chris Simpson, seconded Jill Farmer
- Treasurer - Andrew Dalton - proposed Tony Brown, seconded Cecile Bridgens
- Secretary - Judith Centofanti - proposed Tony Mendes, seconded Iain Simpson
- Membership Secretary - John Slater - proposed Pat Gomez, seconded Cecile Bridgens

New Committee members:

Pat Gomez - proposed Jill Farmer, seconded Cecile Bridgens

Existing members: Ken Ball, Tony Brown, Nigel Israel, James Manktelow, Paresh Modasia, Michael Moore, David Salmon, Ceri Sheeran. Proposed Tony Mendes, seconded Chris Simpson.

The Chairman thanked the members of the committee for their efforts during the year and there being no other business the meeting concluded at 10.20pm.