

# Kingswood Residents Association

## Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

### Held at Kingswood Village Hall on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2014

**Announcements.** Des Camblin announced that Lynne Sinclair, a committee member of the KRA and road representative for The Glade had recently passed away and expressed condolences to her husband and family.

**Apologies.** Apologies were received from Cllr Ros Mill, Dave Saunders, Stephen Gale-Batten and Keith Denyer.

**Minutes.** The minutes of the AGM last year were approved without amendment.

**Guest speakers.** The first guest speaker was Anita Guy, Senior Engineer with the South West Team, Surrey County Council. She said that drainage and flooding were uppermost in people's minds at present due to an exceptional winter. The high water table also affected roads and there was a list of "wet spots" some of which were in Kingswood.

At present gulleys were cleaned out annually, but the intention was to vary the schedule to address the worst gulleys more regularly. A funding plan was presently being worked up to assess the cost of remedying the flood damage caused this year. An additional £5.3 million had just been allocated by central government to address flood damage in England and the County Council would be bidding for a share of that.

The other priority was potholes. Repair responses ranged from two hours, five days or 28 days depending on severity and safety issues. Utilities caused a lot of damage to the network but the Council was now operating a permit system to control utility work more effectively and to fund inspectors to monitor work quality.

Street lighting was now dealt with under a 25 year PFI contract upgrading 89,000 streetlights in the first five years giving the ability to dim lights between 11.00pm and 5.30am which should save £12 million over the life of the contract.

She described Operation Horizon, a £12 million investment plan to replace 490 kilometres of road throughout Surrey. Both Bonsor Drive and Waterhouse Lane would be included in the later stages of this programme.

864 trees came down in Surrey in the recent storms and many remain to be removed from verges. Highway defects could be reported on the Council website or by email to Cllr Gosling.

Mike Gibson said that a drain cover in Waterhouse Lane was lifted regularly by storm water causing a hazard to road users. He said that the drains in Kingswood could not cope and this had been the case for 15 to 20 years. There was another such problem outside the Kingswood Arms. Anita Guy said that this was being examined. The drainage in Kingswood relied on soakaways and this was a problem identified on the "wetspots" list.

Dangerously uneven and broken paving slabs were reported in Furze Hill. This was noted for investigation.

Guy Kingsbury commented that there was a regular huge flood on the A217 after Shelveys Way and another at the petrol station. These were an accident risk and have been occurring for the last 20 years. He also questioned whether the standard of patch repairs was ever checked as many of them soon broke up and needed to be repaired again. Anita Guy accepted that in the past this had not been satisfactory, but now repairs were checked with photographs taken before and after and a team of inspectors checked the work. As regards the A217 flood problems, drain cleaning was planned. Some funds were also anticipated from a local developer to go towards improving the drainage outside the petrol station.

Mike Gibson asked why patch repairs were not sealed round the edges by over banding which would make them last much longer. Non-slip over banding material was now available and he urged its use. Anita Guy undertook to investigate this question.

The second guest speaker was PC Stephen Pearman of Surrey Police. PC Pearman said that he was the local police officer based at Banstead Police Station. Looking at local crime over the last six weeks in Kingswood, he focussed on burglaries and thefts from motor vehicles. Burglaries have been a concern to residents and recently and he described several cases where goods had been stolen because doors were left unlocked or keys had been left in the lock or nearby. He said that the police would drop a note into houses whilst patrolling the area if they saw preventable security weaknesses.

There had also been thefts from vehicles, mostly contractors vans but cars were at risk too if unlocked or valuables were on view. He urged residents to keep a lookout for any suspicious behaviour and call the police on 999 at once. The police were running extra patrols at present to address these crimes.

He mentioned Immobilise.com which was a website enabling residents to create their own profile to log the serial numbers of phones, bicycles, electrical goods etc. or record jewellery by photographing it and storing the pictures on the website, improving the chances of recovery. Another system called Selecta DNA had been used previously, but kits were expensive whereas the new system was free. He also said that burglar alarms were a good deterrent and he recommended them.

**Chairman's report.** Des Camblin said that the last year had been an important one in planning terms both at strategic and local level. The Core Strategy had been subject to lengthy negotiations and had been expected to be approved last spring, but external factors delayed this and even now it was not approved. There seemed to have been a sea change meantime as the Planning Minister had written to the Head of the Planning Inspectorate regarding the Reigate and Banstead plan stressing that it was for the Council not the Inspector to review green belt boundaries. MP Crispin Blunt had also sent a short statement to the meeting in which he had claimed that this was an opportunity for the Council to renegotiate the Core Strategy housing numbers.

At the last AGM, the idea of forming a Neighbourhood Forum or a Parish Council to give Kingswood an official say in planning had been discussed, but there had been too many unanswered questions and the process would have taken much too long to implement. Instead therefore the KRA subsequently accepted an invitation from Cllr Parnall to draw up a draft document which would ultimately be issued as a Supplementary Planning Document by

the Council to which Appeal Inspectors would have to have regard. This could be produced in a reasonable timeframe and was strongly supported by local Councillors.

Local planning consultant Richard Humphreys had been retained to advise and the draft duly prepared. A public consultation with residents and local businesses took place in January with about 1,200 questionnaires sent out and well over 300 returned. This was an extremely good result and the quality and clarity of the responses had also been excellent. Discussions could now proceed with the planning department to agree the draft before the Council arranged a further consultation with residents. Meantime the draft document would remain on the website for residents to consider and offer further comment if they wished.

Des Camblin thanked Richard Humphreys for all the additional time he had spent without charge beyond the original fee agreed and for the quality of advice given. He also thanked Cllr Gosling for guiding the KRA in obtaining a grant which covered a significant portion of the cost involved and Cllrs Spiers and Parnall for offering printing, copying and other support from the Borough Council.

The priority for next year once the Core Strategy and the SPD were in place was to discuss enforcement with the Council as the value of these documents depended entirely on how effectively they were policed. It was appreciated that Council resources were finite and if the KRA could agree with the Council how best to achieve a better information flow and work together on this, then the residents of Kingswood would clearly benefit.

He reminded the meeting that KRA surgeries were held every few months in the Village Hall attended by Councillors, committee members, the police and others so that residents could meet face to face to discuss any issues or concerns. The next surgery was likely to be in May.

**Councillors' reports.** Cllr Spiers was invited to address the meeting and spoke of the Core Strategy which would determine what could and could not happen in Kingswood. Originally it was to include an objectively assessed housing need of 930 homes per year. This had been challenged by the Council and it had been reduced to 460 homes per year, a target which Cllr Spiers said could be met. The Inspector had accepted that figure and subject to some small modifications, the plan had been accepted by him as sound and legally compliant.

However, MP Crispin Blunt had spoken twice against the plan insisting that the numbers should be further reduced to 350 per year. Cllr Spiers felt that this further reduction would never be accepted by the Inspector and he did indeed reject it. Crispin Blunt then emailed all the Conservative Councillors urging them to his point of view and as yet, the Core Strategy had not been passed.

A leading Counsel in London had been consulted on the legal position and advised that the Core Strategy in its current form was as good as could be achieved and recommended that it be approved. It had taken seven years and £3.5 million to reach this point. If the plan were to be withdrawn and re-written it had been estimated that it could take a further two years and £2 million and there was a danger that a higher housing number might result. Although the current plan reserved some green belt land, this would only be used as an absolute last resort and in any event the land in question was poor quality scrub land. Cllr Spiers warned that delay was dangerous as developers were eager to take advantage of the situation with no plan yet in place.

Cllr Parnall then spoke and agreed that the Core Strategy would determine planning decisions for the next fifteen years and so was very important. The Chairman of the

Planning Committee had seen Nick Boles with Crispin Blunt and the Chief Planner for the UK. Amendments had been suggested to take the possible sacrifice of green belt land out of the Core Strategy altogether. This was being looked at currently to see if changes could be made to that effect. Cllr Parnall felt that this would be very worthwhile, provided it could be done quickly.

At present every area was treated the same in planning terms and he wanted to ensure that each area was assessed individually, hence the need for the Supplementary Planning Document. Cllr Parnall had been pleased to work with the KRA on this task and said that an extremely high quality document had been produced by the KRA.

His regular work involved looking at every planning application of which there had been 177 in the last year including those relating to trees. Most were determined by officers, but all are reviewed at Councillor level. Inevitably some applications went to appeal and in the last year 11 were dismissed and seven allowed. The Council therefore won most, but there were still some shocking appeal decisions and the SPD would discourage this in future by providing a framework to which appeal inspectors would have to have regard.

In answer to a question about the difference in the housing target numbers, Cllr Spiers said that Crispin Blunt had only attended one meeting when the Core Strategy was being put together. He appeared twice in front of the inspector but had been dismissed both times. She warned that a change of government might also change the whole situation and the only safe path was to secure the Core Strategy. Cllr Gosling added that the Surrey population had been growing at record levels increasing pressure on housing. Guy Kingsbury asked what the Councillors delaying the immediate approval of the plan hoped to gain.

Cllr Parnall explained that he wanted to delay for a short time only to hear if the reference to the sacrifice of green belt in the plan could now be removed provided. Cllr Spiers clarified in answer to a question that all types of dwelling including flats counted towards the target number. John Lang asked if recent flooding would mean a rethink on the land available for building, but Cllr Spiers assured the meeting that it did not and the Council was assessing flood protection in any case. A questioner asked if it was true that building regulations could not require preventative measures to be designed into new houses, but this was unconfirmed.

Cllr Gosling then spoke, saying that from the 21<sup>st</sup> December until a week ago, the emergency team had been working round the clock and was still clearing up. Storm damage had been estimated at £10 million. School places were still a huge problem and with a target of 460 more houses a year the pressure would only increase. This would cost £40 million a year for the next 25 years. The number of older people in the County was also rising increasingly and represented a huge cost. Most of Cllr Gosling's time was spent on the Health and Wellbeing Board which seeks to integrate medical and social care. It also meant treating more people at home. It was thought that one person in eight need not attend hospital in future so the hospitals would have to re-plan for this. Also by working more closely with GPs the right treatment could be applied first time saving time and cost.

**Proposed constitution.** Des Camblin reported to the meeting two resolutions from local resident Mr Van der Spuy, seeking to postpone consideration of the constitution and setting out a consultation process involving all residents, not just those at the AGM, to consider a draft constitution culminating in a special meeting three months hence. He explained that Mr Van der Spuy had been unable to attend the AGM personally and asked if anyone was

present to speak on his behalf. Mrs Rosemary Satchell spoke in support of these resolutions. She said that Mr Van der Spuy had identified a number of concerns with the proposed constitution and also felt that a matter of this importance deserved consultation across residents as a whole and not just those attending the AGM.

Des Camblin read out the resolutions and read out in full a supporting letter from Mr Van der Spuy setting out his reasons for proposing this course of action. He argued that Mr Van der Spuy's letter sought to define each aspect of the constitution in more detail than the proposed constitution. He felt that this represented a different approach to the constitution and residents must decide which they thought more appropriate. Des Camblin suggested that the proposed constitution had been deliberately kept short, informal and inclusive consistent with the spirit of the KRA. He stressed the informal nature of the association. For example even residents who were not members were welcomed at the AGM. They were asked not to vote, but it was taken on trust that they would respect that request. He also did not favour the proposal that honorary officers should be required to seek a mandate from members before acting on certain matters, since this would in turn require a clear definition of which matters should be subject to mandate. He pointed out that the committee was elected annually and if residents felt that any officer was not serving the KRA well, they were entitled not to re-elect them. He said that the KRA was a simply a village residents association. The document the KRA proposed had been taken from the model constitution recommended by the National Organisation of Residents Associations. It was in use with many associations across the country and he felt that it was appropriate for use by the KRA.

A resident commented that he agreed broadly with what the Chairman had said. The draft had been sent out to all residents and he thought it should be tried. Having said that, he said that it was pleasing that someone had taken the trouble to comment on the constitution. Des Camblin agreed that it was a healthy sign when residents involved themselves in important issues.

Mrs Rosemary Satchell said Mr Van der Spuy's proposals reflected a concern that the content of the SPD could affect the value of local properties, yet very few of Kingswood residents were at the AGM and she felt that this had to be a major concern. Cllr Parnall responded by explaining that the KRA had produced a draft which the Council would assess, following which it was required to go out to public consultation based on what the Council believed was right for Kingswood. Des Camblin added that apart from the recent consultation with residents during which 1,200 households and businesses had been consulted, the second consultation would be controlled entirely by the Council. Furthermore the draft SPD would remain on the KRA website, available for residents to read at any time. The working party which included Des Camblin, Adrienne Light and John Lang, could be contacted about any issue or concern residents had with the SPD. The KRA would welcome views from residents and was not about to agree the final form of the draft SPD without giving residents every chance to comment.

Tom Corrigan observed that the draft proposed had been carefully prepared by a solicitor and was properly drawn up. A vote was then taken on the resolutions put forward by Mr Van der Spuy which were rejected. The resolution to put the proposed constitution into immediate effect was approved with just two abstentions.

**Treasurer's report.** Adrienne Light reported on the accounts showing that income had been very similar to the previous year. Expenditure was also broadly in line with previous years apart from the professional fees to Richard Humphries relating to the KRA. On the balance sheet, the Surrey County Council grant mentioned earlier was shown as a debtor item as it

had only been received in 2014. She invited residents to make contact with any questions either through the website or by telephone.

**Election of officers.** Des Camblin then dealt with the election of officers. All the committee members were willing to stand again and Alistair Sinclair had very kindly offered to stand as road representative for The Glade. Suzanne Palmer had offered to represent Forest Drive. The election of officers was approved. The honorary auditor David Buckley had agreed to stand again and was re-elected.

**Any other business.** Mr Van der Spuy had written to ask firstly about the relationship between the KRA and the road associations. Des Camblin explained that road frontagers had no formal link with the KRA. It was up to the residents of each road to set up their own arrangements and it simply happened that in a number of cases, the KRA road representative also served on the frontagers committee for their road.

Secondly Mr Van der Spuy proposed that residents' awareness of planning matters needed to be improved and he had suggested that all planning applications be brought to the attention of all KRA members. John Lang responded that he already notified the relevant road representative of any application in that road and fortnightly published the full list of all applications on the website. The additional work now proposed would be a considerable task, but he would be happy to help if a volunteer came forward. A resident suggested that the KRA should reinforce to residents that all applications were available to be viewed on the Council website.

Rosemary Satchell commented that in the case of the Kingsworthy House appeal, a number of residents in the Glade had been unaware that it was going to appeal. John Lang replied that it had been notified at the time to a number of people in the Glade, but he also reported that just that day, he had received an amending application for this property.

Suzanne Palmer reported that it was now possible for any resident to set up an alert on the Council website which would automatically inform them that a local application had been made. Cllr Parnall accepted that there was a limit to the number of people the Council could notify of each application, but the alert system could certainly assist. He stressed that if there was a well-run residents association, it was often left to the association to police planning, but residents needed to write in themselves and object in numbers. Des Camblin agreed but said that this did not always happen. He cited a recent example where the KRA had pressed residents to object in numbers but relatively few had responded.

Mr Van der Spuy also commented on the Chairman's report which he assumed meant that negotiations to conclude the document had been proceeding without reference to residents. Des Camblin assured the meeting that no negotiation of the content of the document had taken place as yet. He had informed the Council at the outset of the project that the draft which would be published on the website for consultation with residents would be exactly as the KRA had drafted it and that had been the case. No discussions had taken place during the consultation period and the only meeting since had been purely to clarify the Council's views on the content so that the most up to date position could be reported to the AGM. To date the document had not been altered in any way therefore.

Cllr Parnall confirmed this statement and commented that the main issue to be addressed in the draft SPD was the section dealing with the control of contractors during construction. The KRA and the Council were in full agreement that this area needed to be much more tightly controlled and the draft had deliberately highlighted this issue. However devising

effective and enforceable controls would require careful thought and this was likely to be the main area for discussion in finalising the draft.

There being no other business the Chairman closed the meeting at 10.10pm