

Kingswood Residents Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Held at Kingswood Village Hall on 24th March 2015

Apologies. Apologies were received from David Moroney and Dave Saunders.

Introductions. Des Camblin introduced the panel comprising himself, Adrienne Light acting as both Treasurer and Honorary Secretary and John Lang who served on the KRA planning sub- committee. He expressed the particular appreciation of the committee for the planning work undertaken by John Lang since this year marked his twentieth year in this role.

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

Chairman's Report. Des Camblin reported that the new constitution debated at the last AGM had been formally approved and should now serve the KRA for many years to come.

He also reported on new committee members who had joined the committee over the year as follows
Alistair Sinclair - The Glade, David Floyd – Copt Hill Lane, Janine Connick - Hamilton Place and David Moroney – Eyhurst Close and Eyhurst Spur.

He raised the issue of parking in the village which he felt had been becoming more of a problem over the last year or two. He said that Cllr Gosling would address this issue later in the meeting.

He mentioned a recent armed robbery at a house in the village and said that elsewhere, various attempts at identity theft had also occurred. Stephen Pearman and Liz Charlman were present from the Surrey Police Service and would be speaking about policing in the area.

He reported that the draft Supplementary Planning Document prepared by the KRA had been completed following the informal consultation back in January 2014. The document had been amended following feedback from the consultation and then submitted to the Council at the end of May. It had been well received, but it was always known that the Council would need to ensure that draft was compatible the other various documents which make up planning policy and that the Council was also required to carry out its own formal consultation process.

Nothing further had been heard from the Council until a meeting just before Christmas when it was explained that much work was being carried out on the Development Management Plan, the document which sat just below the Core Strategy and one tier above the SPD. It was explained that ensuring consistence and compatibility between these documents was a major task and also that the consultation process imposed by central government was very lengthy. As a result, the SPD was not likely to emerge in its final form until mid-2017.

He had responded that whilst the KRA was aware that the Council had been working hard to oppose unsuitable planning applications, this task was more difficult in the absence of the full set of planning documents. He had therefore suggested that the KRA draw up an interim SPD to act as a stop gap measure. It had been agreed at the meeting that this option would be considered and since then, a temporary version of the draft SPD had been prepared and submitted to the Council. Meantime the Council had continued to work on the Management Plan which should be drawn up by the autumn and the Council had agreed to share this document with the KRA at that time.

Finally he mentioned that coffee mornings were still being organised every few months in the village hall at which Councillors were present along with members of the KRA committee and the police. These meetings were well attended and offered a regular opportunity to speak face to face about any concerns or to ask questions and he urged residents to attend.

Guest speakers. PC Stephen Pearman reported that he had been looking at the crime statistics in Kingswood, Walton and Tadworth over the preceding months and said that crime levels had been relatively low although one house had been burgled in Tadworth. He said that thieves nowadays tend to steal small valuable items such as electronic goods. They often broke in from the rear, out of sight of the road and he advised that side gates should therefore be kept locked and bolted. It was also common for thieves to use refuse bins to climb over to the rear of the property, so these should not be left in view.

In winter especially, the installation of security lights was effective as was CCTV as both act as a deterrent. He warned against leaving a key in a door lock as thieves often smashed a glass panel to reach the key and unlock the door. He advised that car keys, handbags, jewellery and other valuables should not be left in sight from outside the house. He warned that all windows be closed even if leaving the house briefly.

He advised that nothing of value be left on view in parked cars. Satellite navigation equipment should be put away and any tell-tale marks on the windscreen removed. He said that criminals walk along a row of parked cars trying every door in the hope of finding one unlocked.

He also described how fraudsters called residents on their house phone purporting to be from the police or from their bank saying that their credit card details had been fraudulently used and they needed to act urgently. They would suggest that the resident hang up and call the police or bank back as a security measure, but in fact the fraudster would stay on the line and so is able to take the second call during which they would ask for bank details and pin numbers. Therefore if anyone received such a call and was asked to call back, they should always use another phone. He stressed that neither the police nor any bank would ever ask for a pin number. The fraudster would then send a courier to collect the bank card which they claimed has been compromised. At this point of course they would be in a position to access the victim's funds. These criminals chiefly targeted the vulnerable and the elderly hoping that they would be more easily taken in.

If fraudsters obtained someone's personal information, they sometimes used it to apply for a loan in that name. They would then try to intercept the victim's post to obtain the security information. They sometimes chose houses with a mail box at the front gate, often out of sight where mail could more easily be intercepted. However in a recent local case, a resident with CCTV. Had been able to provide police with a car registration and good description of the criminal and this was actively being followed up.

He also mentioned a website called "Immobilise". This allowed anyone to register the make and serial number of their electrical or electronic equipment so that if it were stolen and recovered, the police would know who owned it. This was very useful when the police found stolen property but would otherwise have no means of tracing the owner. Jewellery could also be photographed and logged on the website. All data was password protected so it was not accessible to others.

He was asked what types of CCTV were police approved and replied that the police never recommend particular systems, but as long as the system would download to a disc, the data could be used by the police.

Asked about the impact of budget cutbacks, he said that his local team had not changed at all over the last three years, but he was not privy to budget decisions higher up.

PC Pearman said that the majority of crime was committed by relatively few people, but they constantly moved areas to avoid detection. He mentioned that the builders and contractors working in the area are particularly vulnerable as they often had expensive tools and equipment in their vehicles which may be out of sight whilst they are working. There had been a slight rise in crime before Christmas but this had now receded and several arrests had been made.

In answer to a question about a lack of police presence, PC Pearman said that in fact he and other officers drove around the area daily although sometimes their vehicles were unmarked.

The second guest speaker was Cllr Alex Horwood who spoke about the impact of an extension to Gatwick Airport should that be the chosen option of the Davis Commission. There had originally been three serious contenders namely an additional runway at Heathrow, an extension to the existing runway by 6000m, or a second runway at Gatwick and a new terminal. A detailed analysis had been published in November and the final decision should be made in mid- September. Gatwick's biggest airlines favoured Heathrow, but the Gatwick option was less costly at £7.8 billion. He said that the Heathrow proposal might cost double that figure, although both these figures might be low. Major investment in infrastructure would also be required to cope with the inevitable increases in additional passenger volumes.

A plan had been circulated showing an image of the numerous flight paths in and out of Gatwick currently. A second plan showed the routings in more detail. A further plan showed the changes following the introduction of PR Nav (a satellite guided system) and the corridor of the "noise preference" route. Finally a more detailed plan showed the affected communities, but Kingswood did not even appear on this map so very little noise impact was expected. The noise preferential route has been narrowed now reducing the total area of noise impact although increasing its intensity within this corridor.

Air traffic control services were to change at Gatwick because the contractor responsible from zero to 4000 feet was to change to a different company. Control of arrivals would remain unchanged. Asked about the implications on housing he replied that officially an additional 7,500 new homes had been estimated, but MP Crispin Blunt claimed that 26,000 homes would be needed. He personally felt the truth probably lay between these two figures, mostly in the Horley area. For this reason, the Council had already opened discussions against the possibility that Gatwick were to be chosen. The roads including the A217 would certainly require additional investment. The route investment required over the whole region was expected to be around £300 million.

Asked how residents might object, he said that 11,500 people had already objected and he recommended writing to Mr Tom Denton at Gatwick Airport Ltd. He added in answer to a further question that actually if Heathrow were to be chosen, there would be more stacking in airspace which was more likely to affect Kingswood than the Gatwick option. As to timing, a 1979 white paper stated that there was to be no expansion at Gatwick until post 2019. In any event, even if Sir Howard Davis' committee were to decide in favour of Gatwick, it would probably 2025 or 2030 before anything would happen on the ground. A recommendation to government by the Davis committee is now expected in June so it should very soon be clear which option was to be recommended.

Councillors.

Cllr Michael Gosling reported that the cost of adult social care in Surrey was expected to rise to £160 million. If rate capping applied, then it would only increase to around £55 million. This shows the scale of the financial problem. The situation for schools funding was no better. A government funding strategy would have to be approved this summer so it is still too early to say how things would look next year.

Surrey County Council was the highways authority and responsible for parking management, although the committee responsible tended to adopt whatever policy local Councillors suggested. He considered that more yellow lines were not the answer to Kingswood's growing parking problems. Parking seemed to be particularly difficult in the mornings and this must eventually impact on the shops. If they begin to fail the whole village would suffer. He invited comments from residents to consider how best to use and control the available parking spaces. He asked residents to put their thoughts in writing and he promised to consider these ideas before presenting them to committee.

Cllr Joan Spiers then spoke and reported on the negotiations between the Reigate and Banstead and a company called Silica. The proposal was to make the Council a centre of excellence and provide extra income, but Silica demanded desk space plus the transfer of staff from the Benefits Department. She had studied the figures and decided that the deal was totally unfair to the Council so she had spoken to the new leader about this. Silica wanted to obtain all the existing services, benefits and financial transactions and they wanted the IT improved at the cost of the Council. They had added an 8% margin for themselves and for Council staff to be transferred to the company under TUPE. They would have earned £250,000 in the first month whilst income to the Council would only have been £74,000 per year. As a result the offer has been rejected by the new leader Vic Broad.

There were to be no more government grants by 2020 so it is known that the Council would have to find ways to make more money. Cllr Spiers reported that five years previously, the Council had had 1,800 staff, although when she resigned the as Leader, this had been reduced to 550. She understood that staff numbers were now down to 480. She believed that the Council could and would make the money needed because between 2011 and 2015, savings of £6,153,000 had been achieved. If a million pounds a year of savings could be made, then it would not be necessary to put up taxes. She said that the new Leader was a successful businessman and she was confident that he had the expertise to achieve this target.

Cllr Simon Parnall said that his role centred on planning and there had been some 220 applications in the current year in this ward alone. Many were straightforward but some were controversial and he invited anyone with a planning concern to contact him. Some applications which had been refused went to appeal to be heard by an inspector sent from Bristol. The Council then presented evidence supporting its refusal and by and large the Council was winning these appeals. Some were lost but he argued that this was important as it was an indicator of how hard the Council was pushing to maintain planning standards.

During the last year, the Core Strategy had been approved which was the framework for planning in the Borough for the next fifteen years or so. Within that framework there were to be Development Management Policies (DMP) and these were being created at present. Elements of the draft document created by the KRA were being taken on board within these policies. The importance of having a policy on construction management for example as set out in the KRA document had been accepted and was to be included in the DMP. Other policies related to the RASC, but it was important to recognise local differences here, which is where the KRA could contribute by characterising what was special about Kingswood. Spatial policies in the DMP were being designed to take account of these local differences.

Backland development was another key issue and there were various tools being written into the DMP which would be used to keep this under proper control. This document was to go out to public consultation by the end of this summer. Unfortunately the consultation was required by the government to be in two stages which lengthened the timeframe, but he likened the process to a jelly setting in that the contents of the DMP would gain status as emerging policy during the process. He mentioned that anti-social behaviour was sometimes a problem but the Council had now organised a joined up team between the Council and the police to deal with this called the JET team (telephone 01737 276300).

He also mentioned that Cllr Spiers was Mayor elect for the Borough for next year and he congratulated her on this appointment. She replied that she remained first and foremost a Councillor for Kingswood.

Hon Treasurers Report. Adrienne Light said that the financial position was largely the same as the previous year. Income and expenditure were both very similar and at very low current interest rates, income from savings was very modest. This year there had been an effort to streamline membership levels. The KRA used to offer life membership many years ago, but had long since stopped as these

were wholly uneconomic. Indeed all current life members had been written to asking them if they would be prepared to volunteer to relinquish their life membership in favour of reverting to the normal four year subscription and the majority had kindly agreed to do this. Standing orders were now available on renewals to make the process simpler and more convenient. There were no questions on the accounts and they were duly approved.

The reappointment of the Auditor David Buckley was also proposed and approved.

Election of officers and committee members. The officers and committee members were all standing again for the forthcoming year. In addition to those on the platform, the officers comprised Dave Saunders as Membership Secretary and Mike Gibson responsible for the Roads and Transport sub-committee. The honorary officers were all duly proposed and re-elected. The committee members comprising Tom Corrigan, Amanda Smith, Terry Wardle, Richard Lewis, David Floyd, Stephen Gale-Batten, Barry Miles, David Moroney, Chantal Cox, Guy Kingsbury, Alistair Sinclair, Valerie Evans, Michael Sutcliffe, Keith Denyer, Carole Morris, Janine Connick and Suzanne Palmer. All committee members were proposed and duly elected. Des Camblin reported that there remained two vacancies on committee and if anyone was interested in joining, they would be most welcome.

Cllr Spiers commented that the KRA committee had made the Councillors' lives much easier in that they helped to keep Councillors up to date and informed with local issues and concerns. She said that the committee had done a fantastic job and had her personal thanks for the time and energy put in. Des Camblin thanked Cllr Spiers on behalf of the whole committee.

Any other business.

The suggestion was put forward that the parking problems in the village could be solved effectively if some of the open land in Bonsor Drive were purchased and planning permission obtained to use this for parking. He acknowledged that this was green belt land but was hopeful that the KRA together with the Council could address this successfully.

Des Camblin reported that a letter had been received from Mr Van der Spuy proposing three resolutions. Unfortunately the letter was received after the deadline for formal resolutions, but its contents could still be raised under the heading of any other business.

The first point raised related to the KRA membership fees which were currently £5.00 per year. Mr Van der Spuy felt that because the KRA is so active in opposing inappropriate planning applications sometimes involving professional advice that a fighting fund should be maintained and a higher subscription would greatly assist with this. The committee had recently been reviewing the subscription level anyway and had checked what other local associations charge. In fact most associations charge less than the KRA excluding Chipstead which charges double the KRA subscription. It is thought that Chipstead is also a fairly active association so this may explain the figures. He invited an entirely informal opinion from the floor as to whether it was thought that increasing the subscription to say £10 per annum to maintain a better fighting fund would be supported by residents. By a show of hands there was an overwhelming opinion in favour of this approach.

The second point raised was that on the rare occasions when the KRA has organised a social occasion, this has been very successful and helped to bring the community together. It was therefore suggested that volunteers be sought to organise an annual street party.

This would obviously depend on finding volunteers willing to undertake such a project, but if people could be found who were willing to devote the necessary time just to organise a street party without taking on other committee responsibilities, this would be of interest.

Thirdly, Mr Van der Spuy suggested that the KRA produce a welcome pack to be given to residents newly arrived in Kingswood to help build awareness and membership. In fact this had already been done and 150 of these had been issued to local estate agents to give out to new residents. The membership secretary also wrote to all new residents of whom he is aware to welcome them and introduce the KRA.

A question was asked as to the current status of the builder's yard by the station. Des Camblin explained that Southern Rail had pulled out of the deal with a developer which had been over ambitious as regards the number of houses which could reasonably be built on the site. The KRA with the support of residents had drawn up a draft planning brief which had subsequently been endorsed by the Council. He expected the rail company to revisit this matter when they felt the time was right, but the scale of any future development proposals for the site would now be defined by the brief.

Guy Kingsbury spoke and encouraged residents to support KADDS Kingswood Amateur Dramatics and Dance performances and other events in the village hall. He urged residents to help promote the community where possible.

Another resident from Beech Drive expressed concern about the damage caused to the roads by contractors. He asked what could be done to make them contribute to the cost of repair. Des Camblin replied that where a site was subject to Costains covenants, a capital sum was charged towards damage to the roads and verges. This did not always apply, but Costains were quite good at recovering payment whether strictly payable or not.

Secondly the KRA planning draft contained a plea for the Council to write in contractor controls which would allow this to be addressed by means of prevention rather than repair. Cllr Parnall added that other Councils had already drawn up such policies and he was looking at these to establish what measures were most effective to control contractors. Westminster and Kensington & Chelsea had been worst affected and had been developing policies on this subject. The new DMP would therefore contain measures to deal with this. Des Camblin welcomed this as he felt that in the past, there had been reluctance by the planning authority to become involved if the road in question were private. Cllr Spiers assured the meeting that this had now changed and cited a recent example which she encountered personally where the planning officer had attended and threatened to close the site down.

Cllr Gosling said that inconsiderate parking by contractors on any Surrey highway would be dealt with firmly. More often than not there was scope for contractors' vehicles to park on the site itself, but they rarely did so unless forced.

Meeting closed at 10.00pm.