

# **Kingswood Residents Association**

## **Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**

**Held at Kingswood Village Hall on 22nd March 2016**

### **Apologies from Keith Denyer, Michael Sutcliffe and Norma Mcdowall**

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

**Police Report** Inspector Angela Austin spoke of the new arrangement recently introduced for policing in Kingswood. She acknowledged that the changes were money driven, but said that they were also designed to manage threat, harm and risk. Burglary reports were down about 30% on last year and were especially low. Whilst sex offences were up by 154%, very little of this was due to attacks by strangers. Mental health and missing people amounted to around seven cases a day so quite a lot of resources were applied to that. She said that a crime victim under the old system would have been interviewed by several different officers which was not the most efficient process, but this system was being changed.

Resources were limited so the police had to assess where they had a realistic prospect of gaining enough evidence for a successful prosecution and not devote time to situations where this was not possible. She advised that reporting crime could be done on line or by phone dialling 101. Under the new arrangements, rather than having identified officers for each locality, there was to be a much larger team with responsibility for Reigate and Banstead, but without allocated officers to individual areas. Thus whilst the current team was 44 officers, as of the following week the new borough wide team would comprise about 140 officers. They would also no longer be using civilian investigators.

A question was raised about the unsatisfactory way in which a reported fraud case had been addressed. It was explained that the crime reporting system operated through a call centre and that had not changed. The police were duty bound to follow up and give feedback so she undertook to look into this case. David Moroney asked if the unsatisfactory multi handling of crime reporting described earlier would change as part of new arrangements. It was confirmed that it would be streamlined so that one investigator would follow through each crime report. Guy Kingsbury asked how many of the 140 strong team would actually be on duty at any one time and it was explained that the team would work on a five-rota basis, but the strength would be flexible depending on what was happening at the time. A question was asked whether the loss of civilian support staff would now tie officers up with administration tasks. She said that historically the police had dealt with a lot of tasks which were not strictly police work, but these were now being directed to other agencies.

### **Chairman's Report.**

Des Camblin wanted to highlight the main issues with which the KRA had been involved over the last year. Chief among these was redevelopment which continued apace in the area, seemingly irrespective of the political or economic climate. At the AGM last year, Cllr Parnall had advised that certain elements were to be promoted from the draft SPD originally prepared by the KRA, for inclusion in the Development Management Policies. It was to be hoped that this would give the relevant issues more weight, although these documents had not yet been seen and were awaited with interest.

The KRA had expressed concerns about the scale of development permitted on each plot, the proximity of development to adjoining properties, the proper protection of trees and the need to ensure that the landscaping proposals in planning applications were actually implemented.

The impact on the wider community was also a concern. He said that the existing Voluntary Considerate Contractor Scheme was completely ineffective. Genuinely considerate contractors needed no intervention and inconsiderate contractors would ignore any voluntary scheme. The KRA had therefore been pressing for formal planning consent conditions to be imposed by the Council.

He reported that during the course of the year the KRA had been in discussion with the Council to seek stronger planning enforcement. He acknowledged that this was not a straightforward issue as it was not contrary to planning law to commence building without consent and this was only required prior to occupation. Although the Council routinely warned that development which was commenced without consent was at the owner's risk, nevertheless an owner would obviously resist much more strongly if faced with a refusal once a building was complete.

He reported that L&G were to leave Kingswood, raising question the future of the land as it would impact on the whole village. The KRA had circulated a recent press statement from Crispin Blunt suggesting that Surrey County Council might be interested in taking the building as its headquarters, but this suggestion had been dismissed by Cllr Michael Gosling who reported that the building had already been inspected by the Council and found to be unsuitable. L&G were already reducing their occupation and planned to leave by mid-2016. Their lease however ran until 2025 so there was no immediate issue.

Des Camblin said that the station site was now the subject of a new scheme by Solum Regeneration which had been exhibited in the village hall last year. Several Councillors and KRA members had met with Solum, but the KRA had felt that the proposals were for an over intensive development with inadequate car parking. Solum had now withdrawn its initial scheme in light of this and was proposing to work up a revised scheme with a completely new team and was offering to work up the scheme in consultation with the KRA. This cooperation did not imply KRA support at this stage, but they would meet with Solum as long as their comments were being taken on board.

### **Guest speakers.**

Representatives of Surrey County Council had been invited to outline proposals for the installation of average speed cameras on the A217 to reduce excessive speed and improve traffic flow. The presentation team comprised Mr Duncan Knox, Mr Mathew Jezzard and Miss Zena Curry. It was explained that this project was to be funded by a Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) which distributed grants to help the local economy. Proposals which developed growth were considered by LEPs which awarded grants for central government with a contribution from the relevant Council. It was explained that a number of key roads including the A217 were tactical diversion routes for the M25. Planned roadworks, events like the Derby or even local accidents also caused disruption and required management. The solution proposed was a combination of average speed cameras and active information signage. The cameras would replace the existing aging Gatso cameras. There would be entry and exit cameras covering the stretches in between the roundabouts and they would operate remotely. He gave the example of the A9 in Scotland where cameras had been installed with a significant reduction in speeding.

MathewJezzard spoke about monitoring the traffic flow. ANPR cameras were also being installed which would both gather traffic volume data and provide valuable information to Surrey Police. The system would build up intelligence on journey times and identify problems in real time. Existing CCTV cameras could be used as well as the dedicated traffic cameras to assist.

Traffic information would be displayed by variable information signs to inform drivers of traffic disruption and through a twitter feed particularly at rush hour. Radio stations would be informed and the latest traffic information would also appear on a website.

This information could also be used to alter new upgraded traffic signals which can have a range of pre-set sequences to address particular traffic problems. The bid had been approved in May last year and installation would begin this spring and continue over a two year period. He said that the thrust of this project will encourage more businesses to this area by tackling congestion actively. A questioner asked if the poor condition of the local road surfaces was not a greater priority. He accepted that in many places the surface was not in good condition but explained that Surrey County Council has suffered significant budget cuts. It had applied for grants from the LEP to assist with this, but these tended to be on major routes whereas some of the worst surfaces were in side roads.

A resident asked how many people would be needed to monitor the information and was advised that no additional staff would be required. Guy Kingsbury said that it was a fallacy to think that this project could bring business to the area when it was almost entirely green belt. The decision had been guided by consulting with firms in the region to find out what they felt would promote business. Those firms had responded strongly that what they needed was more consistent journey times on key roads. The improvement to journey times would be measured, but he accepted that the financial return from the project would not be measured.

Susanne Palmer was concerned that if the traffic signage would warn drivers of a blockage, this would simply direct traffic through the villages. This risk was appreciated and he agreed that they would need to consider traffic warnings carefully to avoid this, but this would be better than simply leaving congestion to fend for itself. He was asked about accident data on the A217 and replied that this was all logged and listed on [crashmap.co.uk](http://crashmap.co.uk).

A resident observed that as congestion was severe at peak times, ANPR might in future be used to calculate a different tax rate on vehicles using our roads at peak times. The government was indeed looking at innovative ways to encourage more efficient use of roads and that kind of thinking was going on, although the results of this would no doubt take some time to be introduced.

### **Councillors.**

Cllr Michael Gosling spoke of the Revenue Support Grant which was now due to be lost over the next two years. In the next financial year the Council would lose £50 million. There was some transitional relief returning £12million but they would lose the balance of RSG £69million in the following year and by then they will not receive any RSG funds at all. The Council will also start to lose by clawback, some of the expected business rate amounting to another £17.2 million in the year after that which will limit Council services. He clarified that the actual gross spend for adult social care is £430 million (£370 million net). They need to put up Council tax by 3.99%, but 1.99% is the maximum before they are required to go out to referendum. The additional 2% is ring fenced by regulation for Adult Social Care. Because people were living longer and have more issues in old age, so the cost of care was rising. A change in the law meant that the Council had to provide a service to everyone irrespective of how much they could contribute to their own social care.

There was a road project called Project Horizon which had so far resurfaced 200 miles of roads. He said that filling potholes was not cost effective in the long term, but some damage could be area patched whereas other roads like Preston Road needed completely resurfacing. This year he was also looking at pavement repairs including Bonsor Drive and he asked residents to tell him which pavements concerned them. He pointed to the litter problem in the village and he proposed that volunteers had a clean-up day with the support of the Council. A resident observed that during the presentation on average speed cameras, it had been said that Surrey County Council had to contribute £750,000 to the scheme and asked why this was obligatory. Cllr Gosling confirmed that this was a requirement if the grant of the rest of the funding was to be available. He said that he had not been informed about the proposals in advance and because he had been concerned that

the scheme had not been available to the public, hence his suggestion of the presentation at the AGM.

He had not been consulted about the project and said that the A217 was last widened in the 60s to cope with a very different traffic load. He felt that more immediate road layout issues should have been addressed first which would have both reduced accident risks and improved traffic flow. He agreed that the lights on the Tadworth roundabout did need renewing as they did not vary with demand. He was asked about the road surface between Forrest Drive and Bonsor Drive and he agreed this needed resurfacing.

Cllr Parnall spoke about his work on planning. He urged residents not merely to rely on the KRA to object if they are unhappy about a nearby development. People in Kingswood do not tend to write in and they really should. He also spoke of enforcement and said that he regarded this as important, but enforcement was not just a Council issue. In the private roads people build on the verges, so it was important to work together. Once the policies were in place, then even planning inspectors had to abide by them. The draft documents would be available this summer and a letter would be sent to every resident inviting comments. The consultation would take two years, but the policies would gain weight with inspectors as the process went on.

He spoke of the JET team which had been set up to address complaints from residents. This offered a single phone number for assistance on public nuisance, noisy neighbours, abandoned vehicles fly tipping etc. although unfortunately the Council could not help with fly tipping in private roads. The number for the JET team was 276300 and was operating 24 hours a day.

Guy Kingsbury spoke about tree protection. He stressed that any resident could apply for a tree preservation order on any land and should do so for any trees which may be at risk. Cllr Parnall explained that trees are assessed for TPO application but any tree of adequate worth could be protected.

Cllr Parnall said that the Borough Council was suffering the same financial reductions as the County Council but had been made aware of this in good time and had planned accordingly.

Adrienne Light presented the Treasurers report. She said that the subscription would remain at £5 a year, but a standing order facility was now in place to make payment more convenient. The membership secretary had also been working to request residents to convert life memberships to annual membership. Road reps were also working to boost Membership levels. Carole Morris had worked hard to design the new website and it was hoped that it would be of more benefit to residents. The KRA email system was also being used increasingly and she said that if any resident was not receiving emails they should let her know. As Cllr Gosling had said, there was to be a tidy up day in the village in May for which volunteers would be welcome. Daffodils had been planted on the bank opposite the shops funded by the County Council.

A resolution to approve the accounts was proposed. and also to re-elect David Buckley as Honorary Auditor and this was both approved

A resolution to re-elect the officers and committee was proposed and approved.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 10.03pm