

ISSUED BY THE KINGSWOOD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Association is to be held at the
Village Hall on
Tuesday 22nd March 2016 commencing at 8 p.m.

The formal Notice is posted on the Village Hall Notice Board and the Annual Report is published in this Newsletter. Resolutions by members to be proposed at the AGM must be given in writing to the Hon. Secretary not less than 7 days prior to the meeting.

ANNUAL REPORT

The Kingswood Residents Association (KRA) is a non-political voluntary organisation whose formally stated objectives are:

“The Objectives of the Association are the promotion of the welfare of the Community through the good governance of the district in relation to planning, environment, safety and conservation, so as to preserve and improve the amenities of the village of Kingswood”.

The KRA is separate from the Kingswood Village Community Association and the individual Private Road Frontagers Groups who have their own aims and objectives. The KRA works closely with Reigate and Banstead Borough Council (RBBC) through its local Councillors to consult and influence good planning practices. The KRA also works with our County Councillor on SCC matters.

The KRA wants to work for the community as a whole so all Kingswood Residents are welcome to come to our AGM and join in the discussions. Whilst we hope you will join the Association you do not have to be a paid up member to attend.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Kingswood Matters 2016

At last year's AGM, there was a presentation by PC Pearman of the Surrey Police Service, prompted by residents' concerns over crimes which had taken place in the area. By far the most serious had been an armed robbery at a house in Sandy Lane, but there had also been a series of attempted frauds from mail theft. Happily since then, arrests have been made in both cases, so the police are to be congratulated on their efforts.

Again, at last year's AGM, Cllr Parnall reported on the creation of Development Management Policies within the now approved Core Strategy and advised that key elements of the draft Supplementary Planning Document created by the KRA would be incorporated within the DMP. This exercise has progressed since then and we look forward to hearing of the current position at the AGM. As development activity continues apace in Kingswood, it remains important to see stronger measures introduced to help ensure that developers and contractors both adhere to approved works and conduct their operations with consideration for local residents.

During the course of the year, speculation has emerged about the future of Legal and General on the Kingswood site and the possibility that the company might choose to relocate. Nothing has been confirmed officially, but if this were to happen, it would invite questions over the future use of the land.

We have also recently become aware of a proposed project to install average speed cameras on the A217. Whilst residents have at times raised concerns over the excessive speed of traffic on this road, it seems questionable whether the installation of expensive average speed cameras would be cost effective, not least because the traffic flow is regularly interrupted by the presence of roundabouts and traffic lights, so we will be discussing this topic at the AGM.

During the course of the year the KRA website has been upgraded. The new version was launched at the end of last year with the aim of being more user friendly and faster to update. Early feedback has been very favourable.

As spring emerges, residents will see that a 140 metres strip of the grass bank opposite the shops has been planted with daffodil bulbs. This project was funded by Surrey County Council and our thanks go to Cllr Michael Gosling for his support in arranging the funding to make it possible.

Des Camblin
Chairman

PLANNING OVERVIEW BY JOHN LANG, CHAIR, PLANNING SUB-COMMITTEE

It is worthwhile re-stating the position, complicated as it is, on national and local planning documents due to ongoing changes and delays. After the introduction of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in 2012, the Core Strategy was produced by Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and adopted in 2014. The Core Strategy sets out the Borough plans for growth to 2027. RBBC have continued with preparation of the Development Management Plan (DMP) which will set out the detailed policies for managing development in line with the Core Strategy and the NPPF. The draft DMP was supposed to be issued for consultation before the end of 2015 but has now been delayed until early summer of 2016. Compounding this delay has been the issue by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in mid-December of a Consultation Paper on further proposed changes to the NPPF. The proposed changes are significant (e.g. most railway stations would be defined as 'commuter hubs' with an expectation of increased housing density in the vicinity). At the time of writing, the deadline for commenting on this Consultation Paper is 22nd February. The KRA have participated with the Banstead and District Federation of Residents' Associations and comments have been submitted to the DCLG. The KRA are also submitting comments particularly relevant to Kingswood. To what extent the responses may influence the Housing & Planning Bill working its way through Parliament is not known.

Local Planning.

Planning applications and Appeals continue at a steady rate despite many large new houses not selling in the short term. This may have influenced applications for blocks of flats where three sites are now currently under application or at Appeal.

With regard to re-development of part of the builder's yard adjacent to Kingswood Station, nothing further has been heard in recent months following presentations in the Village Hall by Solum Regeneration in August 2015. We are not aware of any planning application for this site (as at 11th Feb). An article on this subject, written by the KRA Chairman, can be seen in the December 2015 issue of The Village Voice.

In October we had a meeting with the Council Planners and two of our local Councillors on the subject of 'Enforcement', or really lack of enforcement. There are several ongoing situations of work taking place without approval or contrary to approved drawings. The Council are reviewing their enforcement procedures but the end date of this process is not known. Without restriction these instances will only encourage others to follow.

KRA Planning Lists for Kingswood are issued fortnightly and can be seen on the informative Kingswood Village website under 'Planning'.

Parking for the shops in the Village remains a problem at busy times.

John Lang, KRA, Chair of the Planning Sub-Committee

MESSAGE FROM OUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR MICHAEL GOSLING

Before I wrote this I read my last year's contribution. Apart from one or two items many things still appear to be the same. The number of people, both children and adult requiring assistance from social services continues to increase. The need for school places is still there and although we have built significant numbers into the primary school system, they are quite logically followed by a need for more secondary places, which again brings us to the question of the budget.

The total budget is just under £1.7 billion of which half is pass-ported through, for example £500 million to schools. Approximately 50% is so called discretionary. The majority of this is funded in an area like ours by council tax. This year we received £109 million from the government as revenue support grant (RSG), and a further grant of £6 million which is been rolled into this core fund. We will lose the total amount in two years starting this April. The next financial year's loss 2016/17 is £50 million with the balance in 2017/18. We had anticipated this loss within four years but this was totally unexpected. The council is working hard to bridge the gap and at the time of writing we are still waiting for the government to comment on our request for transitional funding.

By increasing the council tax by 3.9% an additional £24 million can be found to bridge the gap. This is 1.9% on the normal precept, plus 2% for social care. However social care costs are increasing by demand by £20 million per year, year on year and an additional 2% produces only £12 million. So you can begin to see where the gap is. The interesting part of the budgeting exercise will be the departmental budgets which become available with the service costs prepared against the funds available during the latter parts of March.

Surrey County Council on new formula for business rates will lose £17 million in three years' time and will receive only £1 million from the better care fund when on a population basis we could have expected £28 million. We are the highest loser of any council in the country and the situation for our boroughs and districts is no better.

The question, on a local basis, is then to ensure how we can continue to invest in the roads and other items important to our living environment in Kingswood and the surrounding area. It is the intention to complete the horizon programme which has done much to improve many road surfaces.

It is my intention to try and pay attention to wider environment on land owned by Surrey County Council in the coming months. Most of these are small matters, which once they are done and the place is tidy, will seem natural. In this respect I am working with the KRA when necessary and any resident that cares to comment and draw matters to my attention.

I apologise for speaking so much about money, because it is your council tax. It is though the only manner in which we can fund local services and it will be for the best for us all when in the near future apart from specific government grants where we will act as agents for central government we can be responsible for our own destiny.

Please contact me if you have any questions, my email address is michael.gosling@surreycc.gov.uk or telephone 01737832897.

Best Wishes

Michael Gosling
Surrey County Councillor
michael.gosling@surreycc.gov.uk

MESSAGE FROM COUNCILLOR MR SIMON PARNALL

Dear Resident,

It has been a privilege to serve another year as Borough Councillor for Kingswood with Burgh Heath, a year in which the majority of my work has continued to be centred around planning policy, planning applications and planning appeals - the majority of which are in relation to properties in Kingswood itself. I try to be as responsible as possible in looking at every application and pulling cases to the Planning Committee (on which I serve) where appropriate.

I am challenging the Council's officers over several quite recent cases of poor planning enforcement - where developers (often residents of course) construct buildings, walls and fences either without planning permission or deviating from permission that has been granted. As a result of my challenge, together with other Councillors, the Council is upping its game here and more formal enforcement processes and timescales are being established. However, this isn't a problem unique to Planning and the Council. Frontage owner committees in Kingswood are very aware that walls and other structures are being built on road verges without the permission of Costain, often with the result that the verges are subsumed into properties, our common land is lost and the character of our roads changed forever. And no-parking principles are being openly flouted on the private roads. As a Councillor I can continue to do my bit in respect of planning, but we all need to work together to keep our neighbourhood special, making sure that new residents are aware of the character of the roads and verges, the uncluttered highways and the shared space we treasure.

The early summer will see the first public consultation on the Council's new Development Management Policies, documents which define specific policy features and which provide a framework by which Kingswood and every other special part of the Borough may be recognised for individual character and density. These documents address issues raised by a number of residents' associations - including high quality input from the KRA - and we are pleased that they will offer new protections and address common complaints about new developments.

By now, most people are aware of the new Joint Enforcement Team or JET. This is a combined force of Police and Council officers who work closely together and who can provide a fast and robust solution to all aspects of persistent nuisance - from abandoned vehicles and antisocial behaviour to fly tipping and dog fouling. The number for JET is 01737 276300 and you can phone at any time. If the matter is a real emergency, then always dial 999.

If I can help you in regard to any topic, or if you have specific questions or comments relating to planning, please do feel free to contact me either by email (simon.parnall@me.com) or by telephone at any reasonable time (01737 830888), and I will be only too happy to talk with you. Or perhaps you might like to drop in to one of the Village Hall 'surgeries' that are held periodically, where we can talk about matters that concern you over a cup of coffee.

With very best regards,

Simon Parnall

MESSAGE FROM COUNCILLOR MRS. ROS MILL

You will see from the report written by my fellow ward councillor, Simon Parnall that our battle against inappropriate development continues in Kingswood. However future planning policies and increased enforcement will do much to support residents and councillors in maintaining the character of Kingswood.

As a member of Executive with responsibility for Leisure and Wellbeing in the Borough, I was delighted to be involved with the building of the Tadworth Leisure Centre. Since opening it has seen membership grow steadily and is used by a large number of community groups and local residents.

As a Council we have done well in maintaining front line services but the latest Government cuts will challenge our financial stewardship a year earlier than expected. However we are committed to regeneration and growth in the Borough and have established a reputation for being a financially sound and commercially successful Council. Our latest peer review puts us among the top councils in the country.

One of the most important aspects of my role of a local councillor is being able to assist ward residents with their problems and concerns. Once again it has been a busy year but a very successful one in this regard. As you know Cllr. Mrs Joan Spiers has been Mayor this year but despite her enormous workload she has also continued to support local residents where possible.

Cllr Ros Mill

MESSAGE FROM MADAM MAYOR MRS. JOAN SPIERS

Dear Residents,

This year has been strange for me. The Mayoral role has been a privilege and honour to represent this Borough. A Borough that has gone far in my time on council 32 years. Interesting and enjoyable work.

Many things have been done over the years, but I realize that is so much more to do, and I look forward to getting back on the back benches, and being able to represent you fully again. I have been kept in touch with all the council papers and by Ros and Simon, but I may not comment on them as I must represent the whole borough whatever their political persuasion.

The pool is now finished as I said it would be last year, and I had the delight of opening it. I pop in now and again and it is always full, and well used.

This year we had a competition for young people to draw my official Christmas card. The prize was twofold. Firstly the winner had her picture on my card, and the runners up had theirs printed on the back of the card. In addition to this the young person who won became Mini Mayor for the year. A young lady named Josie won, and we arranged for robes to be made, exactly like the Mayoral robes, at no charge to the charge payers, a pair of my sleeves, a neck piece and a pair of my gloves. She looked magnificent and her family are very proud of her. Other boroughs have the card competition, but I am led to believe that we are the first with a Mini Mayor. She turned on the lights in Reigate, attended the Holocaust memorial, which was moving and very informative. The schools made it special. We had over 300 people to that event, and a survivor from the Kinder Transport, who was just wonderful.

Last week we had the first Arts and crafts show in the Town Hall. Twenty eight stands joined us and the food was supplied by Time Well Spent. The charges for the food and drinks were given to my charities. That event made £780 for my charities, a great deal of money with no overheads.

I was also delighted to accept many events outside the borough and enjoyed meeting up all the Surrey Mayors. Well the last eight months have been challenging, but mostly inspiring. Four more to go, and then back to real work.

Recently a family in Kingswood contacted me about the planning department and the fact that they had a moving date, but no signed off documents from the council. Their solicitors were not happy to complete and moving day was two days later. After many telephone calls to and fro, the documents were completed in time, and the family moved in the day after completion.

What a joy, my ability to get things done is still in tact!!

As I said to begin this piece, I am looking forward to being Cllr Mrs Joan Spiers again and not Madam Mayor. Back to the old delightful life, meeting you all during the year.

Kindest regards to you all

Joan Spiers