

Kingswood Matters

ISSUED BY THE KINGSWOOD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING of the Association is to be held at the
Village Hall on
Tuesday 28th March 2017 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 Borough Councillors and 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 2017

Looking back over the last twelve months, it has certainly been a year of change and not just in connection with the US presidency or Brexit. At a much more local level, change is also under way in Kingswood. Regular attendees will be aware that each year we have invited a representative from the Surrey Police Service to attend our AGM to brief us on crime prevention matters and update us on any changes in policing methods. Their presentations have always offered welcome guidance and information, but as we learned at last year's AGM, the Service was due to be centralised and we were no longer to have local patrol officers. Flowing on from this centralisation, this year we have been disappointed to learn that the police are no longer prepared to attend local meetings. The Police intend to keep residents informed electronically, but the KRA also will continue to post information on the website and to email members to inform them of any current criminal activity in the area.

Last year it was reported that L&G was planning ultimately to move from Kingswood, although it was understood that the lease had some years yet to run. Since then the property has been offered for sale on the market and the KRA has recently been contacted by a potential developer who was anxious to discuss with us the future of this key site. We will naturally be monitoring the position and we have no doubt the Council will maintain a close interest and involvement as events progress.

More immediately the Station site looks due for redevelopment by Solum perhaps later this year. The KRA has had a number of meetings with the developers, to agree a scheme which is both acceptable to them and which also meets the requirements of the planning brief. We are pleased to report that these discussions have been positive and we are confident that if the currently proposed scheme goes ahead, it would be of benefit to the village. Indeed Solum will be attending our AGM to present their proposals to residents.

Parking in the village has become increasingly difficult in recent times and perhaps for the first time ever, residents are now finding that there are occasions when they cannot park at all. Inevitably there are no easy solutions to this problem, but we are in dialogue with Surrey County Council and with the local retailers to try and find ways to improve the situation if possible.

The grass bank opposite the Kingswood Arms has been cleared and a temporary phone mast is to be erected here pending the redevelopment of the Station site. The stated intention is that the mast will be moved again once the development is complete.

We are working with Surrey County Council to arrange a volunteer clean-up day in the village shortly to deal with litter, weeds, etc. to give our village a much needed spring clean. We hope that with the help of some volunteers for a few hours one weekend, we could significantly improve its appearance.

Finally we have been asked to clarify the position as regards Kingswood Warren Park. There is a permissive path available for use by the public across the open land at Kingswood Warren Park. However to be clear, all of the open land there remains private. Members of the public may walk through the area keeping to the marked path only and must respect that it is not a public park. The permissive path is not a right of way and is therefore closed on one day a year for legal reasons.

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Chairman

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

As national and local planning guidance documents are slow in being drafted and approved, it is worthwhile re-capping on the situation at this time. The overall National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was issued in 2012 and the Core Strategy setting out the Borough plans for growth to 2027 was produced by RBBC and adopted in 2014. Also in 2014, the KRA produced a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Kingswood which was passed to the Council for their use in drafting the Development Management Plan (DMP). The DMP sets out the detailed policies for managing development in line with the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

The Council issued their draft DMP in August 2016 for comment by all. The KRA commented thereon in October 2016. Our extensive comments can be seen on the Kingswood Village website under 'Kingswood Planning Documents'. As before, the KRA have participated with the Banstead and District Federation of Residents' Associations in making these comments.

At the time of writing our concerns are raised that the government may amend the NPPF, particularly with regard to housing in Green Belt and other associated matters.

Local Planning (as at the time of writing 14th Feb)

We continue to receive a steady flow of planning applications for Kingswood but the most significant application in the future will be for the 43 hectare Legal & General office site. With L&G leaving the site in 2018 we believe, subject to confirmation, the site having passed through various hands, has now been bought back by L&G – but not for their own office use.

An application for development of 18 houses on some 0.4 hectares of the Station Yard has been subject of recent amendments and will come before the Council Planning Committee (mid Feb). Also an application for 14 x 2 bed apartments at the old Winscombe Furze Hill site, which was refused in September 2016, will no doubt return as another application or an appeal.

The above three situations could, in due course, add to the traffic difficulties at the St. Monica's Road/Waterhouse Lane junction.

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

MESSAGE FROM OUR COUNTY COUNCILLOR MICHAEL GOSLING

This will be my last contribution as your Surrey County Councillor, I will not be standing in the elections that are in May. With my local party colleagues we have looked hard for a candidate who we believe will serve the residents of Kingswood well should you give him your support on May 4th.

As you will have seen in the national media, Surrey County Council considered, but then abandoned plans for a high council tax increase, which would have been subject to a referendum. The arithmetic, particularly for adult social care will be a familiar thing from the national media. Our problem in Surrey is that we have resident in our county the highest number of people with a learning disability, not just in this country but in western Europe, who also require care and this funding has fallen away making our budget gap wider than elsewhere. To care for all these individuals and until central government acts will mean budget compromises in other directions. These are being worked on at the moment and at the time of the AGM I can give a brief overview. I would prefer however an AGM not dominated by the counties financial problems, but a separate meeting if required to answer peoples legitimate questions.

I have spent the last few months trying to list those matters relating to the street environment that because of finances have been held over. I will pass a list of these when it is complete to the KRA and my successor, whoever they are, for the sake of continuity.

In a practical manner, across the division that also include Walton on the Hill, Tadworth and Burgh Heath, I have been working with the residents associations to improve our environment. This includes around Kingswood tidying up those parts of the bank opposite the shops in Waterhouse Lane. The planting of trees both in Tadworth, Walton and Burgh Heath and many other small matters that are important to residents where they live.

I very much enjoyed being your councillor over the last 12 years and I wish you all the best in the future.

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

MESSAGE FROM OUR BOROUGH COUNCILLORS

Dear resident,

The news of Cllr Joan Spiers' death last August left us saddened at the loss of a friend and colleague, and meant that we faced a resultant by-election. Rod Ashford has now joined Ros Mill and Simon Parnall, bringing the Ward Councillor team up to full strength again. Rod is grateful for the tremendous support he received at the polls in what was the very cold month of November. You may be assured that, a team once more, we are working together to deal with the issues we face in Kingswood with Burgh Heath, and to ensure the best for this ward in all Council decisions.

Of particular concern to many residents is the very real uncertainty of the future of the Legal and General site now that the company is in the process of moving its operation elsewhere. We are working together with other councillors and officers to achieve the very best outcome for residents, to strive to ensure that the site remains in commercial use if at all possible - providing local employment and generating revenue for the borough. Please be assured that we are strongly resistant to any proposals to develop green belt land and to breach the soft divisions that give our communities their individual identity.

The station site has been an eyesore for too long with, so often, the disturbance of lorry movements at very inconvenient times. The prospect of appropriate and sympathetic development, with the provision of better parking and access to the station itself, is therefore attractive. We are working to ensure that a scheme is delivered that is properly thought through, which addresses parking problems and conflicts between the various traffic flows within the site, and which safely meets the needs of railway users, both those on foot and those being picked up and dropped off.

The community of Kingswood annually produces a large number of planning applications, each of which is scrutinised and brought to the Planning Committee whenever appropriate. However, sometimes developers and residents take it upon themselves to execute projects without planning permission. The most famous case in the country - that of 'Fiddler's Castle', built behind straw bales - was at the south of our borough. In cases such as this the Council has to take formal action. The 'castle' has now been demolished at the builder's expense and a very clear message sent to the public about the cost and risks of building without planning permission. To back this up and to ensure that the Council's response is firm and timely the Council is now increasing the number of officers on the enforcement team.

We have written much about the Council's DMP (Development Management Policies) which were published last summer in a first statutory public consultation that concluded on the 10th October. Literally thousands of responses were received, together with very significant input from the KRA and other residents' associations. The responses are still being assessed in detail and your comments will result in a new version of the DMP which will be published for the second and final round of statutory consultation later this year. You will receive notification from the Council and be able to see the new documents online and physically at key locations as before.

Please don't hesitate to get in contact with us if you have any issue of concern. Our telephone numbers are appended to our names below.

All the very best.

Cllrs Simon Parnall (830888), Ros Mill (833705) and Rod Ashford (831446)

MEMBERSHIP

Being a member of any organisation means you are interested in what that organisation does and more importantly, what it can do for you. In particular, the KRA helps to protect our collective interests in what happens in Kingswood by working with the Borough Council and County Council to monitor, and – where appropriate - comment on planning applications, press for our needs and concerns in respect of roads and public transport and, in every way that we can, ensure that Kingswood remains a unique and special place to live.

As you have read in this publication, there are a number major issues that could affect all our lives and homes. To be meaningfully acknowledged and listened to, we need strength in representative numbers. At the end of January this year the KRA membership was 53% of residencies in Kingswood. When dealing with any Public Authority, percentage representation is vital. We need to increase our percentage membership so our voice is even stronger and we can represent all our views even more robustly.

The good news is that all the work of the KRA is carried out by unpaid volunteers and the cost of membership remains at £20 for 4 years or a £5 annual standing order – for the whole household, This includes up to 2 e-mail addresses This money mainly goes to pay for the professional advice and those legal and administrative services we need to use to protect all our interests. We also provide an e-mail information circulation service to keep you updated with news and events.

Becoming a member is very easy. Also, if your membership is due for renewal in the coming year, you will get a renewal notice from me, and I respectfully ask that you renew as soon as possible. Below are the options for joining, and how to pay your membership fee. If you have any questions or concerns about the KRA, please contact me or your local road steward (shown on the facing sheet)

You can either e-mail your interest and the details listed below, to me, Dave Saunders, Membership Secretary, - davesaun@btinternet.com. I will then return your membership details plus our bank details so you can electronically transfer your £20 subscription fee or set up your standing order.

or

Complete this form and return with your cheque (for £20 made payable to 'KRA') to
The Membership Secretary,
Mr. Dave Saunders, 3 Oakdene, off Copleigh Drive, Kingswood, KT20 6BN.

Name:.....
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Address:.....
...

Postcode:..... Tel:.....

Email:.....

Signature: _____

Information provided in any format will be for the sole use of the KRA and will not be divulged to third parties.

Dave Saunders
Membership Secretary – KRA
01737 350718 or davesaun@btinternet.com