



KINGSWOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION AGM 2019 MINUTES

Meeting held on 26th March 2019 at 20:00 at the Village Hall.

Introduction

The Chair, Des Camblin, introduced the platform comprising John Lang (Planning), David Floyd (Secretary) and Valerie Evans, who had volunteered to take over as Chair in the forthcoming year.

Minutes

The minutes of the previous year's AGM were approved without amendment.

Chairman's report

Des Camblin observed that work on the station site redevelopment was now well underway, improving the entrance to the station and the car park considerably, installing improved drainage at the bottom of Furze Hill, and carrying out extensive renovation works to the station building itself.

The future of the L&G site had also become a very live issue during the year. L&G, which still owned the land, had directed Inspired Villages Group to work up a scheme for the development of a retirement village on the site. Understandably, in view of the previous traffic problems associated with L&G, local residents had expressed deep concerns about the impact of any development activity which might take place, particularly in terms of traffic generation.

Des Camblin announced that he was standing down as Chair, although he hoped to remain on the KRA committee and assist in whatever way he could in the future.

Treasurer's report

Adrienne Light explained that the KRA's financial position at year end of 2018 was largely similar to that in 2017. Income from subscriptions was again on a par with previous years. However, at the current low interest rates, income from savings remained negligible. There had also been a greater effort to streamline the membership procedure, with standing orders for annual subscriptions growing steadily. The KRA was now also offering alternative online subscriptions, with the full options of a four-year membership for £20 per household, or annual memberships of £5. These online subscriptions were proving popular with new members and also with some members renewing their subscriptions.

Members also had the option to automatically renew online using the KRA website. Adrienne said that membership secretary, **Dave Saunders**, had been working hard to convert former life memberships to regular subscriptions, whether four years or annual, and that the majority of those approached had agreed to change.

The KRA had incurred some additional expenditure during the year as a result of a public consultation on Boundary Commission proposals for Kingswood in August. This additional expenditure was to cover printing costs for a local petition and the cost of creating an online version on the website. The exercise had been an undoubted success, with many residents signing up to the online petition, and many more responding to the paper version.

Finally, Adrienne thanked David Buckley, the auditor, for his assistance during the year and, after a vote, he was re-elected for 2019.

Election of the honorary officers and committee

All the officers and committee members were offering to serve again in the forthcoming year, and there was also a nomination from a resident, **Derek Llambias**, who wished to stand for membership of the committee.

Des Camblin said he would deal with the re-election of the existing officers and committee as a group, and then invite Derek Llambias to introduce himself and speak briefly about what he felt he could bring to the KRA, before moving to a vote on his nomination.

Since Des was not standing for re-election as Chair, the proposal was that **Valerie Evans**, who had been a KRA committee member for a number of years, take over as Chair. Valerie is a Director of Atkins and a Fellow of the Royal Institute of British Architects. She has global experience of design, engineering and project management consultancy, with over 35 years' in the industry. Des said that, since so much of the KRA's work involved issues concerning planning and design, Valerie's professional expertise would be highly relevant to the role of Chair.

After briefly introducing herself, Valerie was elected as the next Chair. Derek Llambias briefly introduced himself to the meeting and, after the formal re-election of all the existing officers and committee members, he was also elected to the committee.

Your Councillors

Surrey County Councillor **Jeff Harris** began by outlining ways in which he was able to direct money annually to local projects, highlighting the fact that £6,000 had gone in the past year to what were referred to as community gangs, groups which were used to keep the area tidy, cutting hedges and grass and cleaning up certain areas.

He said he currently had available £5,000 for community groups and asked residents to submit their ideas for how that money could be spent.

He also urged people to report any defect to do with local roads – potholes, faulty lighting, obstructions, lack of signs, etc. By reporting it, the defect would be recorded and, if nothing was done about it, he could then get involved to chase up outstanding problems.

One or two residents raised the issue of security in Kingswood, both with regard to former offenders being employed on different projects, and the responsibility for the alleyways that cross several parts of the area.

Cllr. Harris said most security issues were ones for individual residents to deal with, and that the council would never consider closing public alleyways and footpaths.

He agreed with one questioner about the unfairness of the allocation of funds for road maintenance. Such funds, he said, were calculated solely by the number of miles of roads in each county, not the amount of traffic they carried, which meant Surrey received approximately the same funds as Somerset, where road usage was considerably lighter, which he thought grossly unfair.

Reigate and Banstead Borough Councillor **Simon Parnall** began by bringing residents up to date with the latest developments on the borough Development Management Plan (DMP): he said a few very minor changes had been made to the final document which residents could view and comment on, and thanked everyone who had taken part at any stage of the long consultation process.

Boundary Commission changes to local wards meant all local councillors would be up for election on May 2, 2019. Because of these changes, Chipstead, Kingswood, Woodmansterne and Burgh Heath were to become one ward represented by two councillors. Because Lower Kingswood had now become part of a different ward, Councillor **Rod Ashford** would no longer be one of the KRA's local councillors. Cllr. Parnall paid tribute to the work put in on behalf of the KRA by Cllr. Ashford.

Cllr. Ashford thanked everyone who had supported his work on behalf of the residents of Kingswood and said he was passing the baton on to **Caroline Neame** at the May elections.

Since he would still be representing the residents of Kingswood until then, he urged them to be vigilant in reporting fly-tipping which, he said, had become a major problem in his part of the area, Lower Kingswood, particularly around the Stubbs Lane recycling site. He urged residents to contact himself or Cllr. Parnall directly to report any incidents they found.

He also returned to the issue raised by an earlier question about offenders who were employed on local community projects; in particular the claim that some offenders who were on probation had been found moving security cameras on individual properties. Cllr. Ashford said that, as far as he was aware, the council only used those who had been given community service orders on such projects and that they would never be allowed onto private properties. He asked the questioner to provide details and he would follow it up.

INVITED SPEAKERS

Inspector Angie Austin and Sergeant Kelly Clifton-Sinclair of Surrey Police

Insp. Austin said that because of issues that had been raised previously about police 'visibility' in the Kingswood area, she wanted to explain how a large portion of the force's workload meant there were not officers constantly patrolling the whole area.

Demands on police time included finding and dealing with missing people, often dementia sufferers or children, dealing with vulnerable adults with mental health issues who could often be suicidal, many cases of domestic abuse – which accounted for a large part of the violent crime her division deals with, and could often involve officers investigating dozens of previously unreported incidents of such abuse - dealing with unauthorised traveller camps, and even having to mediate in difficult family disputes involving children.

She explained that there were currently 547 crimes under investigation in the borough. The police had, at any one time, a maximum of 19 deployable officers who had to conduct those investigations, as well as be available to turn out to investigate any other potential crimes or domestic situations.

She and Sgt. Clifton-Sinclair said that, although the complaint they heard was that residents never saw a police officer in Kingswood, all incidents in the village were logged and, where necessary, investigated. There had been successful operations carried out around the problem of vehicle theft, both commercial and personal. These police operations often happened in the middle of the night when no-one was around to see the police presence. In fact, Insp. Austin said, police not being visible in an area was regarded as a good thing since it generally indicated a lack of crime in that area. Burglary rates in the borough were down more than ten per cent on last year, and burglaries in Kingswood were a small percentage compared to other parts of the borough.

Sgt. Clifton-Sinclair gave some advice on how neighbours could be more vigilant about themselves and each other and, in response to an earlier question about alleyways in Kingswood, said the problem was not so much access from those alleyways, but a lack of security at the front of many properties which allowed potential burglars to walk up the driveway, shielded often by trees and hedges, and easily gain access to the rear of the house.

In response to a question about whether the newly-introduced private security patrols were proving helpful, Insp. Austin said it was difficult to measure whether any drop in crime rates was linked to the security patrols or police successes in apprehending several regular offenders.

Paul Wyborn, area manager for Govia Thameslink (holding company for Southern Rail)

Paul Wyborn introduced himself as area manager for the High Weald and Sutton area, which included Kingswood, and outlined the scale of Govia Thameslink's overall operation: one million passenger journeys each day, using 3,600 trains, making it the largest rail operation in the UK.

The previous year he had addressed the AGM about the upcoming major overhaul of rail timetables [*May 2018*] and how it would affect Kingswood; this year he was back to report on the results.

Since the timetable changes, he said, Kingswood had a better, more evenly-spaced service in both the morning and evening peak periods. There were now seven trains to London Bridge and six to Victoria during the morning peak, compared to seven to Victoria and four to London Bridge previously. The journey time to and from Victoria had increased to 53 minutes from 50, but the London Bridge journey time was down by two minutes to 48 minutes. The last train from London Bridge now reached Kingswood at 11.47.

He said one of the next tasks was looking at whether the number of splits or attachments at Purley could be reduced, thus further reducing journey times, although he could not put a timescale on this next phase.

Using a series of visual displays, he showed how performance had improved, claiming this made his company one of the most reliable train operators in the country.

In response to a question about bus replacement services at weekends, he said these would probably always exist but Network Rail, who maintain the tracks, had successfully completed major maintenance work on the direct Brighton line by closing it for nine days to carry out work that, if only done at weekends, would have taken 86 weekends. He could only surmise Network Rail's intentions but felt that this model may be used for future track maintenance.

He also promised to look into one questioner's assertion that the six 'Kiss and Ride' spaces in the new station car park were massively under-used and could better be turned into regular parking spaces to ease congestion.

Phil Bayliss, director of Legal and General (L&G), Keith Cockell, chairman of Inspired Villages Group (IVG), and Jamie Bunce, CEO of IVG

The Chair, Des Camblin, began his introduction to the final group of speakers by explaining that, while the L&G site had been unoccupied for some time, it was clear that such a large and valuable site could not possibly remain unused indefinitely. Furthermore, the scale of the land and buildings inevitably meant that a major project of some kind would emerge. In the event, he said, L&G had asked Inspired Villages Group to work up a scheme for a retirement village development on the site. The scheme was still being formulated, but the speakers had been invited along to outline the concept as it had been devised to date.

Jamie Bunce began by explaining that IVG was formed in 2017 when Legal and General bought their company. It had so far built six retirement villages with over 1,000 residents and aimed to start eight schemes a year, with Kingswood currently being their proposed flagship scheme. Because the development was at such an early stage, he said, none of the speakers would be able to answer detailed questions, but they were proposing to hold a two-day public exhibition on the site in May when much more detailed plans and proposals would be available. They were, however, well aware of the concerns over such issues as traffic impact and the challenges of dealing with the large amount of construction traffic that would be needed for such a major project, but they believed a retirement village such as they were proposing would benefit the whole area.

He then introduced Phil Bayliss, the director responsible for L&G's investment in retirement communities across the UK.

Mr Bayliss explained why he believed that a world-class retirement village of the type outlined by IVG for Kingswood was a perfect fit for L&G, while offering open access for villagers to many of the assets enjoyed by the IVG community.

Mr Bunce emphasised the company's commitment to working with the Kingswood community on all aspects of the project from the building programme to the problems of access for construction traffic. He said he understood villagers' concerns and that the company wanted to be 'good neighbours'.

The company envisaged the planning application being submitted in July and, hopefully, being approved by December. *[At the time of writing, no decision has been announced on the application.]* This would enable a start date on construction in September 2020, with completion in late 2025.

He understood, in particular, concerns about the green belt status of the whole site but pointed out that the car park occupied green belt land and there were some substantial buildings on green belt there already.

That said, the company would continue to make available to Kingswood residents and others the undeveloped green belt land currently consisting of playing fields to the east of the site.

Keith Cockell said his company was proud of the environments IVG delivered on their retirement village sites, offering opportunities for people who wanted to remain in the area and keep their independence but might need some assistance. This, in turn, enabled family homes that were no longer needed by elderly relatives to be released onto the market, encouraging new, younger families to move in.

Although the company was still working on the early stages of the Kingswood scheme, he envisaged about 50 permanent staff being employed there, the vast majority of whom would live locally. He said there would be a leisure centre, pools, gymnasium and tennis courts for IVG residents that would be open to the wider local community. There would also be shops and a business centre, but those shops would do nothing to take away from the vibrant collection of shops already in the village. The green spaces would be protected and enhanced, with walks and trails around those areas which would be open to everyone. The company, he said, wanted to 'celebrate' the green spaces on the site.

The budget for upgrading the main building, Kingswood House, a listed building, was currently just over £70million and would include underground parking, and an anticipated theatre and cinema, as well as a possible NHS short-stay unit for IVG residents.

IVG faced many challenges, not least in creating apartments in both the main building, which would be very modern in style, and in the St. Monica's building, an Arts and Crafts property where much more traditional design and materials would be used. The company were consulting with the local authority and Heritage England on how best to accommodate the many conflicting needs on the site.

In response to concerns about the volume of traffic such a retirement village would create, he said that the traffic plan IVG were working on envisaged 78 per cent of the occupants bringing a car with them, although the company hoped to manage this with the help of a resident-based car club for sharing vehicles or an IVG co-ordinated village taxi service.

Mr Bunce added that in IVG's existing homes, they calculated only 50 per cent of residents used a car every day, while 16 per cent used their vehicle only once a month.

In response to questions, the speakers said that all the retirement apartments were likely to be occupied by those over the age of 65. There would be around 200 apartments of varying sizes on the car park area and a further 100 within the main building. They assured another questioner that this was the full extent of the planned development and that IVG would sign whatever legal agreements were necessary to assure no more development on the site in the future.

The existing sports fields and associated areas would be used, among other things, to encourage activity among the older residents, while still being accessible to all in the area.

Mr Bunce assured another questioner that a report on the logistics of such a building project and its impact on the area had been commissioned. Among the things it would be looking at were transport access to the site during construction, and the effect on local infrastructure of potentially 500 new residents coming into the area. He said that once this report had been completed and studied, the company would be in a much better position to present all the options at the two-day public exhibition on site in May.

On the question of infrastructure, Mr Cockell said that studies of IVG villages showed residents were 50 per cent *less* likely to visit their GP than the average, and 80 per cent less likely to visit hospital.

The audience was told that there would be a wide range of different-sized apartments in the main building and on the car park land. In the main building 30-40 per cent would be one-bed apartments for single occupancy. There were many pricing points but the estimated costs would range from £400,000 to over £1million.

Another resident questioned being able to build on the car park land since it was within the green belt. Cllr. Simon Parnall assured the questioner that when the council received the planning application from IVG it would be subject to the same process as every other application, which would include such considerations.

In response to another questioner about the pressure such a number of elderly residents would undoubtedly put on GP services, the speakers said this would be a subject for consideration by the local NHS; if it was felt a separate GP practice was needed for the IVG development, it would be up to the NHS to approach IVG. Following local concerns surrounding an IVG village in Warwickshire, a satellite NHS GP practice had been set up within that village.

One resident in the audience asked what IVG/L&G's method was going to be for engaging with the local community over the proposed development.

The speakers emphasised that they were liaising closely with the KRA, with fortnightly on-site meetings and that every resident would have a chance to be involved with discussion surrounding the project at the two-day public exhibition, where more detailed plans would be outlined. The questioner pointed out that some of the most crucial issues concerned the size of the construction operation and the workforce needed, traffic management during and after construction, as well as routing for the supply of essential utilities to the site. The speakers emphasised that they wanted the KRA to have input into all the questions surrounding the project before the exhibition, and before a detailed planning application was submitted to the local planning authority.

Thanking the speakers, the Chair, Des Camblin, said the KRA under its new Chair, Valerie Evans would hopefully be the conduit between residents and IVG to ensure that there was direct feedback from the residents regularly presented to IVG, discussed, and acted upon.

Any Other Business

The Chair said that one resident had contacted the KRA recently to express concern about the association's data protection measures. She was concerned that her contact information had been passed on to a third party by the KRA. Des Camblin said he wanted to assure everyone that the KRA never passed members' contact information to any outside organisation. In fact, the KRA membership secretary was under a standing instruction not to release membership data even to other committee members. He said that, of course, the KRA sometimes relayed information to members about local events or charities, but that such information was invariably routed through the KRA and never released to outside parties.

Finally, one resident asked what the incoming Chair's opinion was on the proposed IVG development.

Valerie Evans said she believed the success or failure of the project, both in its current, preliminary stage, and further more detailed stages, would rest on how much IVG was willing to collaborate with the KRA in addressing the issues raised by the whole village community, of which the KRA would be a vital conduit. Other options for the site, in terms of more intensive housing development, she believed presented a greater danger to the community. Details that had been sketched out so far seemed to indicate that IVG was sensitive to local concerns and the views of the KRA, particularly concerning the preservation and enhancement of the green belt. IVG had kept the KRA very closely involved in all their discussions so far and she was confident that if this attitude continued throughout the process, the scheme would progress in a way which would best preserve and enhance the character of the village as a whole.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 22:11.