



KINGSWOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

AGM 2021 MINUTES

**Meeting held by Zoom video conference on
13 July 2021 at 7.30pm**

Introduction

THE Chair, **Valerie Evans** welcomed everyone to the virtual AGM, saying she was disappointed the meeting could not be held in public but that the decision by the committee to conduct the meeting by Zoom was the right one. She introduced each of the officers to the meeting and explained their roles.

Minutes

THE minutes of the previous AGM, held on 26 March 2019 were approved without amendment.

Chair's report

THE Chair introduced the recently appointed Vice-Chair, **Janine Connick** and thanked her for her support. She then gave a brief overview of the KRA's activities in the 18 months since the previous AGM.

- **The Kingswood Safety Net (KSN)**, a collaborative initiative with the Kingswood Village Community Association (KVCA) had been set up to ensure no-one in the village was left isolated without support during the pandemic. With the last lockdown restrictions due to be lifted in less than a week, the KSN had been put "on ice" but the Chair emphasised that the KSN phone number and email address were still active for anyone who wanted to get in touch.
- **Royal British Legion** poppy appeal - The KRA, in conjunction with local councillors, sold over 150 giant poppies to be displayed around the area. This, together with money raised from poppy-themed face masks made by Janine Connick, had raised over £1,600 for the Royal British Legion.
- **Kingswood Village website** - A grant from RBBC had paid for a major overhaul and refresh of the Kingswood Village website, which is operated by the KRA.

- **Tree Planting** - With the help of a grant from Reigate and Banstead Borough Council (RBBC), the KRA planted a dozen young trees on the Waterhouse Lane approach to the shops from the A217 to replace older trees that had either died or were being killed off by ivy growth. Further trees are in the pipeline.
- **Litter Pickers** - Another initiative the KRA had supported was the local group of litter pickers. The KRA had made a £200 donation towards the cost of personal protection equipment (PPE) and the litter picking equipment.

Planning - The Chair praised the work of the KRA's two planning officers, **John Lang** and **Keith Denyer**. Planning scrutiny was a major part of the KRA's brief, she said, and the previous 18 months had seen approval of the Inspired Villages (IV) development of a retirement community on the L&G site. This had been a close collaborative effort between the KRA and IV. This collaboration ensured that all residents' concerns had been answered and that the public open green space on the L&G site would be protected from development in perpetuity. The next planning challenge for the KRA would be around the development of the station yard site where plans by the Aspire group included three blocks of flats and, most controversially, a Co-op convenience store.

On planning strategy, **Justus van der Spuy** had been instrumental in sending a letter to the Prime Minister complaining about how the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol was increasingly overturning decisions taken by the democratically elected local council. He had also written a 20-page response to the government's Planning White Paper and was in the process of consulting on the possibility of drawing up a legally enforceable Neighbourhood Plan, which might give Kingswood community more teeth in fighting inappropriate development in the village.

Treasurer's report

THE Treasurer, **Adrienne Light**, presented the accounts for the year to 31 December 2020. These showed that subscription income was virtually identical to the previous year and remained constant. Other items of note were a grant of £650 from RBBC for the upgrade to the website, and the money raised for the Royal British Legion poppy appeal which had finally totalled £1,875.

Expenditure generally had been lower due to the pandemic. Although subscription renewals were steady, only a small number used PayPal rather than the more traditional cheques or BACS transfer.

She asked for any volunteers to join in the regular watering of the new trees on Waterhouse Lane. The KRA was committed to watering the trees for two years to ensure their long-term viability.

She showed a slide giving details of the number of times the Kingswood Village website was being accessed. For 2020 the annual total was just over 570,000; for the first six months of 2021 the total was already over 500,000 and she was confident this would reach the million mark by the end of the year.

The accounts had been audited by **David Buckley** who, after a vote, was re-elected as auditor for the following 12 months.

Election of honorary officers and committee

THE Chair said all the officers and committee members were offering to serve again, apart from **Derek Llambias**, who had resigned because of personal reasons. All were duly re-elected for the next 12 months.

Your councillors

SINCE RBBC councillor **Simon Parnall** was on holiday, an overview of the council's work was given by **Cllr. Tim Archer**.

He began by thanking the village residents and the KRA for supporting the Kingswood Safety Net initiative. The pandemic had had a huge effect on RBBC's ability to fully serve the community and meant priority had to be given to certain essential services – like dustbin collection – over others. The weekly amount of rubbish generated during the pandemic was the same as during the Christmas period. A large part of this was cardboard from home deliveries and he pledged there would be no limit on the amount of cardboard RBBC was willing to collect from every household.

The council had distributed more than £40million of government money in grants to small businesses, as well as easing business rates to help struggling companies.

Home working had contributed to a large rise in planning applications, as well as seeing an increase in planning enforcement activity by the council.

The council had been responsible for 'repurposing' the Harlequin Theatre in Redhill, which was no longer being used as a theatre, into a food hub and community centre to help deal with some of the effects of the pandemic.

He concluded by saying he was happy to see the community pursuing grants for such initiatives as the tree-planting and litter pickers.

Cllr. Caroline Neame, also for RBBC, thanked the KRA for the help it had provided to the council during the pandemic, describing it as a 'powerful association'.

FOR Surrey County Council, **Cllr. Rebecca Paul** paid tribute to her predecessor, **Jeff Harris** – a view echoed by the Chair. Cllr. Paul said she was sure locals would welcome new drainage work about to start on Bonsor Drive, where a new soakaway had been identified and gullies were being improved.

The Chair of the KVCA, **Bob Gunn**, said that, in co-chairing the KSN he had been pleased and impressed with the services and responses of both Surrey County Council and RBBC in his dealings with them.

Ian Johnston, a resident of The Chase, asked Cllr. Paul if Surrey County Council could look at reducing the speed limit on Outwood Lane between Surrey Downs Golf Club and The Ramblers Rest in Chipstead from 40mph to 30mph to bring it in line with the rest of Outwood Lane. Cllr. Paul promised to pass on his request to the relevant officers in the council, and The Chair said she would raise it at the next KRA committee meeting for Cllr. Paul to report any feedback.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Nicky Browne and Rachel Goddard of The Oak Cancer Centre at The Royal Marsden in Sutton.

THE speakers provided an illustrated presentation on The Oak Cancer Centre, due to open on The Royal Marsden site in Sutton in December 2022. The building will house outpatient, day care and diagnostic and research facilities in a £75 million purpose-built six-storey building. The project manager, Rachel Goddard explained the background to the decision to build the new centre and the advantages it would bring to patients, illustrating her talk with a series of slides showing what the finished facility will look like. Building work was on track for a phased opening of the centre at the end of 2022. **Janine Connick** asked about any new arrangements for parking on the site and was told this was still subject to review in the light of the proposed new acute hospital being planned for Epsom St. Helier NHS Trust.

Alex Maguire of Surrey Police

INSPECTOR Alex Maguire, the Surrey Police Commander for Reigate and Banstead, who took up his post in June 2020, explained to the meeting the resources he had at his disposal to deal with crime in the north area of the borough, which includes Kingswood. These included a Neighbourhood Policing Team with, typically, two or three sergeants and 12-15 constables on any one shift. This team would be the one that normally dealt with 999 calls and other emergencies. There was also a Safer Neighbourhood Team of three sergeants and a growing cohort of other officers, five Community Support Officers, a dedicated 'Designing-Out Crime' Officer whose job was to liaise with individuals and businesses on how to make their area safer and less vulnerable to crime, and Youth Engagement Officers to liaise with local schools and youth groups to try to tackle anti-social behaviour.

Insp. Maguire said the last year had seen a reduction in the number of burglaries across the borough and he intended to maintain this downward trend. A Joint Action Group, under a neighbouring borough commander, Vinny Wagjiani, had taken the lead in trying to co-ordinate this anti-burglary drive, including initiatives on social media, poster campaigns such as that against catalytic converter theft, proactive patrols and the promotion of marking kits to identify stolen goods.

There had been recent notable successes in driving down burglaries, including one suspect who was linked to seven or eight burglaries in the north area and was now facing at least five years in jail.

In response to a question from the Chair he reported that a suspect had been arrested after suspicious behaviour was picked up on a Ring video doorbell on a house in Waterhouse Lane. Such footage was an invaluable aid to crime detection. The suspect was now barred from the area as part of his bail conditions.

On the issue of road safety, **Mike Gibson** asked if the police would back a reduction of the speed limit along the whole length of Outwood Lane. Insp. Maguire said it would be up to Surrey Police's speed management team to do a survey and come to the appropriate decision.

Mike Gibson also raised the matter of large lorries ignoring the width restriction on Outwood Lane, often leading to gridlock when a large vehicle became stuck. Insp. Maguire said he would look at the problem and try to target it in the short-term.

Jamie Bunce, CEO of Inspired Villages

THE final speaker was Jamie Bunce, of the Inspired Villages (IV) group, developers of the L&G site, which is to be converted to a retirement community. He brought the meeting up to date on plans for starting work on the site. Covid had caused considerable delays, which meant work on the site had not gone ahead as planned last August. He regarded this as merely a 'stall' in the process; IV was still waiting for approval to proceed with the work from L&G Capital, the owners of the development site.

In response to a question from the Chair he said he had no news on when approval to proceed was likely to be given. In the meantime, IV remained committed to working closely with the KRA. He reiterated the company's commitment to keeping the green space land on the site available for use by the public in perpetuity.

In reply to a question from **Bob Gunn**, he explained the company's net zero carbon targets for the site, going from an initial net zero target in regulated energy by 2025 to net zero in operational energy by 2030 and a complete net zero target by 2035.

Ian Johnston asked about the impact of construction traffic on the village and was advised by the Chair that this was fully addressed in the planning documentation. He also asked about the impact of residents using the local shops on parking in the village. Jamie Bunce said there was a series of initiatives to counter this, including IV car clubs, a taxi service and mini-buses, and reiterated the fact that IV were committed to helping keep the Waterhouse Lane shopping area as a vibrant part of the village.

He was also asked about suggestions at an earlier stage in the consultation process that there might be a pharmacy and other retail outlets within the retirement village that would be open to use by Kingswood residents. He said it remained IV's intention not to compete with the local shops but have other offerings. These could include such outlets as a pharmacy, greengrocer's, fishmonger or butchers.

Mike Gibson pointed out that there were only approximately 50 parking spaces in the village, half of which were used by staff at the shops, leaving only one or two parking opportunities per shop. He also asked Jamie Bunce if he was aware of the impending development of the station yard site which would only add to the village's parking problems. The Chair interceded to say that the station yard site was a long way off and that this issue should probably be deferred until the next AGM.

Any Other Business

The meeting concluded with three more questions/observations from **Ian Johnston**.

He asked what plans were in place for the KRA's role in planning scrutiny when John Lang and/or Keith Denyer no longer felt able to do the job. The Chair replied that the KRA team was expanding, with Justus van der Spuy examining planning policy, but she invited any volunteers who were interested in planning matters to get in touch.

Ian Johnston said he wanted to point out that ash dieback was an increasing problem in the area and wanted to make residents aware that, where their trees overhung public roads/paths it fell to the owners of the property in question to take appropriate action since they would be responsible for any subsequent litigation.

Finally, he urged the KRA to consider raising its subscription rates since these had been in place unchanged for at least the last seven years. The Chair said she would raise the matter at the next KRA committee meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 9.34pm.