

KRA

KINGSWOOD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

AGM 2023 MINUTES

Meeting held in Kingswood Village Hall on Tuesday, March 21 at 8.00pm

Introduction and minutes

AFTER WELCOMING everyone to the 2023 AGM, the Chair, **David Floyd**, asked for - and received - a unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the previous AGM. He then went on to deliver his annual report on the KRA's activities of the past year.

Chair's report

STRATEGY WORKING GROUP – the KRA had conducted an in-depth review both of its functions and the way it was run and, as a result, had drafted a code of conduct, a code of financial governance and a revised and updated constitution – the last of which would be submitted to the AGM later in the meeting for a vote of approval.

STATION SITE DEVELOPMENT – building work on the station yard site appeared to be progressing well and it was expected that, as a consequence, flooding issues around the adjacent junction would be resolved.

LEGAL AND GENERAL SITE – throughout the past 12 months, the KRA had kept in close contact and consultation with those involved in the development of the site: Legal & General (L&G), their financial arm, L&G Capital, and the Inspired Villages group which were developing the site as a retirement community. Although the financial downturn of 2022 had seriously impacted the timetable for the project, L&G was keen to see the development proceed and was conscious of the impact on the community while the project was effectively stalled. The Chair had had assurances from both L&G and Inspired Villages (IV) that they would be working to keep the site safe and secure with regular building and site inspections and ground maintenance. Work was also going on to secure a continuation of the planning approvals granted by Reigate and Banstead Borough Council (RBBC) which were due to expire in September 2023. Furthermore, IV had assured the KRA that it would provide the necessary financial support to keep the site tidy and secure in the coming months – a pledge the KRA would be monitoring.

Treasurer's report

THE TREASURER, **Adrienne Light**, presented the accounts for the year to December 31 2022. She said there had been no special village projects to be taken into financial account and, as a consequence, the accounts were of a routine nature. Subscription income for the year was largely unchanged at £2,876 and surplus income continued to be transferred into a Scottish Widows savings account. The accounts had once again been audited by David Buckley who was re-elected as auditor for the next 12 months.

Election of honorary officers and committee

THE CHAIR reported that several key figures were stepping down from their positions in the KRA. Adrienne Light had done 'a brilliant job over the years' in several key positions and would, he said, be sadly missed - as would **Des Camblin**, a former KRA Chair and, more recently, the chair of the expanded planning sub-committee. A newer recruit, **Justus van der Spuy**, as Vice Chair had led the Strategy Working Group with enormous energy and drive, enabling it to achieve much in its short period of existence, but was also standing down.

Sadly, the Chair recorded the passing of two other long-standing KRA committee members - **Janine Connick** and **Tom Corrigan** – and paid tribute to the contributions they had made to the organisation over the years.

The election of the KRA officers and committee members was, as is customary, taken as a block vote, proposed by **Valerie Evans** and seconded by Justus van der Spuy. It was approved unopposed.

Votes on the new constitution

VICE CHAIR Justus van der Spuy explained that there were two resolutions: the first was a procedural matter to ensure that the existing sub-committees within the KRA continued to function without interruption under the new constitution. He explained that the changes to the constitution were significant in that they allowed more time for resolutions to be considered before they were voted on at the AGM, as well as allowing for postal and proxy voting to encourage more members to take part in the KRA decision-making process. Similar changes had already been successfully introduced within the KRA committee itself.

Both resolutions were approved without any objections. There was one abstention on the vote for the new constitution. The Chair concluded this section by appealing for more volunteers to fill both officer vacancies on the committee and several road rep vacancies.

Local councillors

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL

REBECCA PAUL began by explaining that most of the queries she received were about matters concerning Surrey Highways, even though this was a relatively small part of the work done by Surrey County Council (SCC) whose main areas of responsibility were adult social care and children's services. Social services, she said, took up two-thirds of the county's entire budget while roads accounted for a relatively small amount. However, she appreciated that this was the area where most residents' concerns lay.

She told the meeting that the situation regarding potholed roads was improving, with the council tripling the response teams dealing with this problem, although she conceded that the only real long-term answer was road resurfacing rather than repairing potholes. One of the main problems was the fact that the utility companies had free rein to dig up roads to carry out essential repairs whenever they needed to. The council was lobbying to get this balance of power changed more in Surrey Highways' favour.

From the floor, Bob Gunn said one of the problems was the unsatisfactory standard of repairs to roads by the utility companies once they had finished their work. He asked if there was any way to force those utility companies to return to make good such sub-standard repairs. Cllr. Paul said one answer was to pursue the utility companies more rigorously for shoddy workmanship and that people should email her if they noticed faulty repairs, as well as reporting them on the Surrey Highways' website. One innovation Surrey had introduced was a 'lane rental' where utilities paid for the time they had to close traffic

lanes for repairs; she believed this would make the utilities more conscious of the need to get their work done quickly and efficiently.

Des Camblin asked if Surrey County Council was acting in concert with other local councils in the south-east of England in its demand for a fairer road pricing deal from central government. Cllr. Paul had led a petition to get a more equitable settlement which took into account not just the number of miles of roads in a county but also the number of cars using those roads. These criteria would substantially increase Surrey's road spending budget. She said there had not been much uptake in other areas since many councils took a more 'holistic' approach to overall funding of highways rather than concentrating on her specific idea for tackling the problem. She said another major problem was the last-minute nature of government funding, with councils only learning of their highways allocation immediately prior to the new financial year. Councils would be able to plan much better if they knew several years ahead what their budgets were going to be, rather than waiting for a last-minute scramble. This was the way business worked and it would benefit local authorities and, consequently, their council tax-payers enormously.

Cllr. Paul was also asked about parking in the village and the fact that all the designated spaces were usually occupied but with no sign of enforcement of the time limits set for parking. She replied that responsibility for parking enforcement was being transferred from the borough council to SCC, which would be working with RBBC to identify problem parking areas. The questioner should email her and she would make sure the issue was raised.

Finally, Justus van der Spuy asked what the reasoning was behind the fact that social care had to be funded at local authority level while the NHS was funded at national level. Cllr. Paul acknowledged the anomaly and said that integration of all healthcare provision was one of the main issues being addressed by central government in consultation with local authorities and others but that solutions would be only in the long-term.

REIGATE AND BANSTEAD BOROUGH COUNCIL

CONTINUING THIS theme, **Cllr. Simon Parnall** explained that, historically, people moved out of London as they grew older and that it meant a greater burden fell on hospitals in areas such as ours: the problem was that people who had earned and paid their taxes in London ended up under care in Surrey with the financial burden falling locally. He agreed that the only real long-term solution was an integrated health and social care system.

However, as his main theme he said he wanted to focus on the importance of the Green Belt to places like Kingswood and how it helped preserve the individual character of areas such as ours, rather than allowing it to be subsumed in urban sprawl from outer London which, he pointed out to his audience, began on our doorstep on Chipstead Valley Road at the border with Coulsdon.

He told the AGM that the next big planning landmark for the area was the new Local Plan which has to be in place by 2027 and on which consultations were already underway. The Local Plan would determine what is and isn't allowed in planning terms. In his opinion, the special character of Kingswood was determined by several factors, in particular the protection offered by designated Green Belt land coupled with the effectiveness of the local council in enforcing planning regulation.

He said RBBC had an exceptionally high rate of success in seeing its decisions upheld if the developer appealed to the Planning Inspectorate. In major projects the council's success rate was nearly 100 per cent and on smaller ones it was approximately 85 per cent. He attributed this to the fact that planning applications to RBBC were judged entirely on whether or not they complied with local planning policy. He said that too many other local authorities rejected planning applications simply because they felt them to be unsuitable, inappropriate or 'they just don't like it' rather than making their decision based purely on whether or not the application complied to the letter of local planning policy.

On the subject of planning policy, he was asked by one questioner, Shirley Clark, about how planning policy fitted in around designations such as Conservation Areas and Residential Areas of Special Character – both of which apply to parts of Kingswood. Cllr. Parnall replied that RBBC had recently designated lots of new Conservation Areas and that in each case the character of the area was different; it was very important for the council to understand those differences when trying to reach its decisions.

He said that, equally, people who lived in Conservation Areas needed to be able to talk to their local council about what they might be able to do, for example, over such issues as increasing energy efficiency through double glazing or solar panels. The council's planning policy decisions needed to allow people to make sensible decisions that enabled them to meet energy targets *and* lead comfortable lives rather than their lives being 'preserved in aspic'. He agreed with Justus van der Spuy that the council needed to be able to reconcile the protection of the character of certain houses with the ability to meet modern energy targets. The problem was not so much in modern buildings where technological advances meant things like 'invisible' solar panels could be installed but in retro-fitting such modern technologies to older buildings.

He concluded by urging residents to take part in council consultations, particularly over the 2027 Local Plan and other issues that will, undoubtedly, affect them.

Any other business

THERE BEING no other business, the Chair said he wanted to thank Cllr. Paul for swift action in getting some yellow parking lines repainted when the matter was raised with him by a local resident. He went on to thank everyone for their attendance at the AGM and invited them to stay behind after the formal business of the evening to enjoy a drink and a chat with fellow residents and KRA members.

In conclusion, on behalf of the village, Bob Gunn thanked the Chair and all officers and committee members of the KRA for what he described as 'the huge amount of work they put in on behalf of Kingswood'.

The business of the meeting closed at 8.44pm.