

NORTH CRAY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday 1 June 2010 at 8pm in St James' Church

The meeting commenced with an informal gathering of some 40 members before the formal start of the AGM.

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming, especially on such a wet evening in 'half-term'. He extended a special thank you to Councillor Don Massey and a warm welcome to James Brokenshire, Member of Parliament for Old Bexley & Sidcup and Under Secretary for Crime Reduction and, to applause by the meeting, congratulated them both on their elections on 6 May.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Nik Carter, Joyce Renshaw, Joan and Gerry Clifford and Fred Sheldon.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM HELD ON 22 JUNE 2009

These were taken as read, their adoption proposed and seconded by John and Bridget Harrington, and agreed.

3. HON. TREASURER'S REPORT

In presenting his Accounts, a copy of which had been published in the AGM Newsletter, with an audited copy on display in the church, the Treasurer outlined their content and invited questions. None was forthcoming and their adoption was proposed by Bridget Harrington, seconded by Michael Heath, and agreed.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

4.1 In referring to what had been published in the Newsletter, the Chairman took the opportunity to update the meeting on recent Planning matters:-

Honeydale Farm: Change of use to car showroom: Appeal decision still awaited.

Builders Yard behind 1-2 Parsonage Lane: Public hearing to be held on 3 August.

37 Parsonage Lane: Conversion of garage/stable into a separate dwelling: Appeal decision still awaited.

Weatherleys, 135 North Cray Road: Certificate of Lawfulness for its fencing/contracting business refused by Planning but Planning Control had suggested that the applicant should submit a fresh planning application to regularise this operation. Weatherley's application to extend the roof over existing sheds was granted Planning permission on 27 May.

4.2 The Chairman repeated his disquiet over the number of Planning applications becoming successful on Appeal and over the apparent lack of timely Enforcement action in some instances because of apparent insufficient resources within Bexley Council's Legal Team.

4.3 Turning to the Association's response to Bexley's 'Core Strategy Paper', reproduced in the Newsletter, the Chairman said that the Association would have a further opportunity to comment during the consultation process, and asked members to let it know if they had any views or comments to make.

4.4 The Chairman then reminded members of the tremendous amount of work which was being put into the Association's website to ensure that the residents of North Cray were provided with a wide variety of community information and updates on Planning matters. He invited members to let the Association have suggestions for inclusion on the website.

4.5 Referring to the resurrected Newsletter, the Chairman explained that the current edition was primarily devoted to the AGM and it was planned to include more local issues in the 'New Year' issue. He added that he hoped that members would let the Newsletter Editor have suggestions for articles or other content they would like to see.

4.6 The Chairman then took the opportunity to again ask for members' support with the annual task of collecting subscriptions. This task was a very hard one for a small Committee to undertake and it desperately needed more volunteers to help cover all the roads, or even to act as a collecting point for their neighbours' subscriptions. He advised the meeting that Angela Goodman, Subscriptions Secretary, was present and he hoped that those willing to help her would contact her before leaving. The Chairman proposed that the subscription for 2010/2011 should be £2, and this was agreed.

4.7 In conclusion, the Chairman expressed his thanks for all the help that had been given to him and the Association over the year, especially by Bridget and John Harrington whose guidance and support, to what was a newly-structured Committee, had been invaluable; by Jean Gammons who had worked tirelessly for the Association throughout the year and who had sent him some 554 emails; by Angela Goodman whose efforts to increase the membership level to over 95% (some 400 houses/800 members) had been a fantastic achievement; by Nik Carter who had produced an outstanding website and by Councillor Don Massey, who had given exceptional support to the Association and its members on a variety of issues.

5. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

No nominations had been received for the coming year.

John Harrington proposed the re-election of David Cook as Chairman. This was seconded by Bridget Harrington and agreed.

Bridget Harrington proposed the re-election *en bloc* of the present Officers and Committee. This was seconded by Mario Farrugia and agreed.

The newly-elected Committee for 2010/2011 is as follows:

John Harrington:	President & Committee Member
David Cook:	Chairman
Jean Gammons:	Hon. Secretary
Geoff Waldmeyer:	Hon. Treasurer
Angela Goodman:	Assistant Secretary/Membership Secretary
Nik Carter:	Webmaster
Jacky Cook:	Newsletter Editor
Bridget Harrington	
Michael Heath	
Irene Waldmeyer	

6. OTHER BUSINESS

6.1 Parking in Maidstone Road: Steve Williams reported the problem of obstructive parking arising from Honeydale Farm's boot sales and occasional Farmers' Markets. Councillor Massey undertook to investigate this and to see what might be done to resolve it.

6.2 Trees in The Grove: A local resident of The Grove, Mr Robert Pearson, expressed his disappointment at Bexley's insistence of replacing its lost malus trees with other species, e.g. silver birches, and stressed that this road was part of a Conservation Area. Councillor Massey reported that he had put forward arguments for reinstating decorative malus trees but Bexley was unlikely to change its policy on this as this species was prone to disease and so maintenance (funding) was a factor. However, he would report to the Cabinet Member the residents' strong feelings about this issue.

The Chairman advised that there were a number of councils who promoted the use of 'native' trees, including the malus, and that there were disease-resistant malus cultivars ideal for street planting. Moreover, some trees advocated by Bexley Council were unsuitable because of their shallow rooting (climate change), continuous seeding (plant litter) and pollen pollution causing distress to many residents through March to May, e.g. birches. He invited Mr Pearson to see if fellow residents in The Grove supported his view and, if so, to advise the NCRA so that it could take the matter up with the Council on the residents' behalf.

6.3 The North Cray Road: A resident put a question direct to Cllr Massey asking if, in his view, Bexley Council did not see problems associated with the North Cray Road as "important" and Cllr Massey agreed that this was probably the case. This sparked a number of strong views being voiced by those attending the meeting.

John Doughty expressed concern at what was, and had been for decades, the twice-daily and ever-increasing problem of traffic jams on this road. For many years this has created frustration for thousands of drivers, illegal crossings over the central reservation, the loss of working time for commuters and severe reduction in the quality of life for those living on or near the North Cray Road. Also, residents' lives were put at risk when emergency vehicles were delayed through the frequent traffic congestion at certain times of the day.

The Chairman said that the Committee had discussed this at length, and the hope that an additional roundabout/U-turn could be created in the Water Lane area but it was felt that the problems of the North Cray Road would only be considered (by Bexley Council) as part of the *Core Strategy* consultation process. Councillor Massey reminded the meeting that this road was not administered by Bexley but by Transport for London. This meant that TfL would need to be persuaded of the need for an additional roundabout. He added that he had tried to get a Pegasus Crossing but this was deemed too costly and, as yet, the lack of one had not led to any serious accidents. There was only one pot of money and many demands on it. The question of a Bexley By-Pass was very long-term and it was clear that, if this came about, the problems on the North Cray Road would be even worse. Regarding speeding, he reported that speed cameras were not being replaced because of vandalism but he assured the meeting that Sgt Steve Rae of the local Neighbourhood Police Team was striving to tackle the problem of speeding.

Note: Immediately following the meeting a short discussion was held between the Chairman, Cllr Massey and James Brokenshire. Cllr Massey suggested that, in view of the strength of feeling voiced at the meeting regarding the North Cray Road, he and Mr Brokenshire were of the view that the NCRA should not wait for Bexley Council (i.e. in later Core Strategy activity) but to take early action in making proposals on behalf of local residents. He suggested, however, that the Association should hold off until he and James Brokenshire had done some research and made appropriate soundings.

6.4 Core Strategy Paper: the Chairman again drew members' attention to this and asked that they let the Committee know if they had any views or comments to make as the Association would continue to play a part in the consultation process.

6.5 Address by James Brokenshire, MP: Responding to the invitation to say a few words, Mr Brokenshire said how helpful it was to have the benefit of the Association's unified view of local issues. He added that he, too, lived in the area and so fully appreciated the problems that residents were facing and he looked forward to working with the Association and the Cray Meadows Councillors in efforts to resolve them. Turning to the question raised by Ingrid Courteny about the future of Queen Mary's Hospital, Mr Brokenshire said that there needed to be a re-assessment of existing plans for this and he then outlined the policy and action being taken by the new Health Secretary. He felt that Queen Mary's could have a very positive, viable future. This was to be a big challenge in the weeks ahead and he would be pushing hard for a reassessment of current plans. Responding to a member's repeated concern about the daily traffic jams on the North Cray Road, Mr Brokenshire said that he had received this message loudly and clearly. He, too, recognised that this matter had serious implications with the danger to residents caused by delays of emergency vehicles and the effect of grid-lock arising from, say, incidents at either end of the road. For these reasons, he would be working closely with Councillor Massey on this issue in future weeks in order to obtain the best outcome for residents.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.