

NORTH CRAY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of Meeting held on 17 June 2015, 8pm in St James' Church, North Cray

The meeting commenced with an informal gathering of 68 members before the formal start of the AGM.

Upon opening the meeting the Chairman, David Cook, thanked everyone for coming, and said how pleased he was to see so many members here this evening. He then extended a special welcome to Father Peter Keown, the new Priest for All Saints and St James Church, and to Cllr Don Massey of the Cray Meadows Ward, Cabinet Member for Finance & Corporate Services, and added that our MP, James Brokenshire, planned to attend later, if his Parliamentary duties allowed.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Mick Doughty, Tony Morris, Tanya and Malcolm Barr Hamilton, and Carol and Paul Johnson.

2 MINUTES OF THE LAST AGM (1 July 2014)

These (which had been distributed) were taken as read, and agreed as an accurate record. Their adoption was proposed by Mario Farrugia and seconded by Nik Carter.

3. HON. TREASURER'S REPORT

In presenting his Accounts (which had also been distributed) the Treasurer, Geoff Waldmeyer, outlined their content and said that the Association's financial situation (£4,303.82) remained in good shape. Our membership now stood at 360 households (a slight increase on the previous year), with subscriptions bringing in £720. Our main expenditure was on the Newsletter and the AGM. He added that the Committee would welcome ideas on how some of the balance of funds might be used.

No questions were forthcoming and adoption of the accounts was proposed by Rupert Brun, seconded by Jan Brun, and agreed.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REVIEW OF THE YEAR

4.1 David Cook began by reporting to the meeting that our President, John Harrington, had been unable to attend this time, probably the only time in upwards of 50 years. John had become ill whilst staying with his son in Germany, and was in hospital. We are in contact with his daughter and, through her, will be passing on 'get well' wishes to him from us all.

4.2 Before beginning his Review of the past year, David said that he thought he should remind everyone of the primary aim of the Association, which is the protection of North Cray for the overall benefit of its residents – most specifically in relation to unwanted and harmful development and most particularly for the protection of North Cray's Green Belt. We are just a group of volunteer members who feel strongly about protecting our environment. David added that he was saying this because we do receive requests that fall outside our remit or are things

that we can do nothing about. For example, the concern of some that we “should stop worrying so much about Planning issues and deal with the levels of horse manure in Parsonage and Cocksure Lane” and “Can you resolve the problem of insensitive parking in Gattons Way?”. The Committee did appreciate that such matters were of concern to individual residents, but this was not what we are here for. David then turned to some of the issues that the Association did need to consider:-

4.3 Residential Development: Following the unfortunate success last year of the application to build six residential properties at 139 North Cray Road, there had been further residential development applications for Green Belt sites; but we had been mostly successful in helping to obtain refusals for these.

Regarding 139 North Cray Road, a key issue was that the Planning Committee, in approving the extension of the scheme from two to six houses, had stated that had two not already been approved by Planning, the proposal would not have been supported by the Committee. David stressed that this emphasised the importance of Planning being made aware of people's concern at the outset so that it would delegate the decision to the Planning Committee.

A key success in stopping further residential development has been in respect of 63 Parsonage Lane (Orchard View Farm) where Planning refused an application to erect three 4-bedroom houses with detached double garages. These houses were planned to be grouped together in a corner of the plot with what, as it seemed to us, an obvious intention to submit further applications for increased development at this site.

Other refusals were:-

(a) the building of a detached 3-bedroom bungalow at Forest View Stables in upper Parsonage Lane – again, something that would have changed the character of this part of the Lane.

(b) the building of a bungalow in a rear garden in Honeyden Road. This road lies in the Green Belt, and is a small estate dating from the 1920s. Backland development of this kind would have altered its character and set a precedent for Honeyden Road and Barton Road – and beyond.

Other successes (non-residential) included:-

(c) refusal for the continuing use of the land on the east side of the North Cray Road – opposite the Scout Hall- for the open storage of some 50 motor vehicles. We had been unaware of this activity, and are now seeking Enforcement action.

(d) success with Bromley Council, who refused to allow the establishment of a Waste Transfer Station in Old Maidstone Road – where asbestos material would have been handled. A fire here would have created serious problems for our members in Maidstone Road, and in Barton and Honeyden Roads.

4.4 Private Gypsy Sites: the applications from *Little Acre* and *Little Haven* (two intrinsically linked sites in Bunkers Hill) were considered at a 4-day Public Inquiry held in January and April, at which our secretary, Jean Gammons, Sylvia Malt of the Bexley Civic Society and Cllr Don Massey argued strongly against these gypsy sites as “inappropriate development in this Green Belt and Heritage Land”. Our objections were supported by some 50 emails from our members – provided to the Inquiry in response to our Groupmail appeal for members' views.

The Inspector's decision is still awaited, but the Committee were shocked at the behaviour of one or both of the applicants who, without any permission, closed the road in both directions on two Saturdays whilst two large mobile home sections were delivered on a transporter lorry. These were too large for the Lane to take – especially the second delivery- which carved sections out of the banks on either side of the lane and caused destruction to trees. More pertinently, trees not belonging to the owners of *Little Acre* and *Little Haven* were chain-sawed out of the way in total disregard for the law and other peoples' property. Although the homes were delivered to *Little Acre* we understand they were then transferred across to the *Little Haven* site. All this, of course, in advance of the Inspector's ruling! David added that he had managed to get down to the site and photographed and videod the chain-sawing activity – copies of which were provided to Planning. The Inspectorate was uninterested and could/would not pass this information to the Inspector.

4.5 Groupmail Service: Reminding the meeting that the Association had launched this service in the autumn, David said that many members had already joined-up by providing their email address. The purpose of the Service is that the Committee often needed members' help in fighting a specific cause, when it needed local residents to make individual submissions – particularly on Planning issues- as a letter from the Association counts as a single letter and will not ensure that a case goes before the full Planning Committee. As already mentioned, the Planning approval for 139 North Cray Road last year was not helped by the fact that Planning did not get the level of objection from local residents needed to cause the case to go before the full Planning Committee. However, before the Public hearing in January into the *Little Acre* application some 50 separate objections were logged by Planning and passed to the Inspector. It may not be successful but this will have been as a result of other factors – notably failure of enforcement, delayed determination and failure by Bexley to provide suitable alternative sites (the last two points possibly being politically linked). David added that the Groupmail service had already proved a fantastic success – currently covering about one third of our members - but we needed more members to join so that we can create a groundswell of local opinion and pressure when really important issues arise. Moreover, this was a fantastically efficient way of us getting urgent information to members when needed, including passing on crime prevention information that has been provided to us by the Police. David urged that those present, if they had not already done so, to please submit their email details via our website – and to urge their neighbours to do the same.

4.6 Ongoing need for Volunteers: David informed the meeting that in several roads we still had no Volunteers willing to collect subscriptions and deliver our annual Newsletter. These were upper North Cray Road, Honeyden Road, Maidstone Road and High Beeches. The task in these roads was currently being undertaken by the secretary and other committee members in addition to their other responsibilities – and Volunteers here would be very welcome!

Regarding the Volunteers we did have – including the new ones who came forward last year to look after part of The Grove and Gattons Way – Christine Moon and Chris Moon - David said that we cannot thank them enough for their support. The help they give is invaluable! Thank you. He added at this point a thank you to all the members of the Committee for the efforts they have put in over the year- in particular to Jean Gammons who works tirelessly on all our behalfs.

4.7 Using NCRA Funds: David said that it was always important that the Association maintains a small fighting fund to allow it to start to take or seek representation and or legal advice should any serious issue arise. He reminded the meeting that at last year's AGM (and in the subsequent Newsletter) that with funds of around £4,000 the Committee thought it would be a good idea if some of that fund were to be used now for the benefit of the community. It did put a few ideas

forward but asked members to come forward with their own ideas. Sadly, no suggestions were forthcoming.

So, having thought further, the Committee believes that we should start by arranging something that would be of local interest and would bring the community together. An idea it had would be to arrange locally themed audio-visual presentations (serious and amusing) that would be of local interest and would bring the community together. Perhaps a presentation by a local community group, eg the Lamorbey & Sidcup History Society or the Friends of Footscray Meadows followed by a buffet with wine/soft drinks – say at the *White Cross*. David asked that members let the Committee know what they think.

- 4.8 Waste4Fuel** (Cornwall Drive, Crittalls Corner): David said that as those present might have heard, agreement has been reached for this recycling site to be cleared by the end of the year. This success has been as a result of the efforts of Bob Neil, MP for Bromley & Chislehurst, and our own James Brokenshire by putting pressure on the Environmental Agency.
- 4.9 Subscription for the year 2015-2016:** in closing his Review of the year, David said that this year the Committee were not proposing any change to the current subscription (£2). The meeting indicated its agreement with this.

5 ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

David reported that all existing Officers and Committee members were willing to stand for the coming year, and no new nominations had been received for any of the posts. He was, therefore, seeking the meeting's agreement for the block re-election of existing Officers and other Committee members.

The re-election of the Officers was proposed by Nik Carter, seconded by Gerald Cliffden [?], and agreed. Re-election of the remaining Committee members was proposed by Trevor Jones, seconded by Mario Farrugia, and agreed.

The newly-elected Committee for 2015-2016 was as follows:

John Harrington: President & Committee Member
David Cook: Chairman
Jean Gammons: Hon. Secretary
Geoff Waldmeyer: Hon. Treasurer
Jan Brun
Rupert Brun
Jacky Cook
Mick Doughty
Michael Heath
Irene Waldmeyer

Examiner of Accounts: Michael Heath.