

Sopwell Residents Association

Annual General Meeting 1st July 2013 at St Julian's Church

Minutes

Those present:

Councillors Sandy Walkington, Janet Smith and Eileen Harris	Linda Bateman Barry Bateman	Jo Welch Anne Wares
Rick Taylor (Chair)	Peter Wares	Adelle Stapleton
Sandy Norman (Acting Sec'y)	Jack Hill	Ananda Armstrong-King
Dominic Tang (Treasurer)	Peter Segers	Steve Peters
Willem Hofland	Sophia Joyce	Andrew Johnston
Liz Klir	Felicity Boyce	Mark James
Frances Burrows	Kate Bannister	Roz Poor

1. Welcome and introduction from the Chair.

The chairman, Rick Taylor, welcomed everyone to the AGM. He drew the meeting's attention to the successful double event which took place on 18th May when we had the formal launch, by the Mayor, of the Sopwell Memories Project coupled with the SRA's 10th Anniversary celebration.

2. Apologies for absence – Janet Edwards, Len Lewsey, Rob Sharman, David Poor

3. To approve minutes of last AGM – 28th May 2012

The minutes of last year's AGM have been posted on to the SRA website and copies were available at the AGM. There were no comments on the minutes. Jack Hill proposed and Ananda Armstrong-King seconded the proposal that they be accepted as a correct record of the meeting. All were in favour.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

None.

5. Annual Report

Sandy Norman, acting secretary, presented her annual report, a synopsis of which is set out below. The full report can be found on the Sopwell Residents Association website:

SRA is now recognised as the voice of Sopwell and the preserver of the past. A list of everything achieved over the past ten years was collated by Jennifer Taylor for our 10th birthday party in May this year.

Committee structure and changes - During the year, Barry Bateman agreed to join the committee and has proved to be a useful member having taken over the role of newsletter editor, and Jennifer Taylor joined the committee to be minutes secretary. Our treasurer, Rob Sharman has unfortunately decided to resign from the role but we hope will remain active on the committee. Dom Tang has willingly agreed to be his successor. We will be losing Ananda Armstrong-King this summer not just from the committee but also from Sopwell. This will be a great loss to the association.

The following people have put themselves forward for election/re-election: Barry Bateman, Jack Hill, Willem Hofland, Mark James, Sandy Norman, Rob Sharman, Adelle Stapleton, Dom Tang, Jennifer Taylor, Rick Taylor and Peter Wares.

The following are prepared to be re-elected as officers: Rick Taylor as Chair, Dom Tang as Treasurer. Sandy Norman wishes to shed her role of secretary to concentrate wholly on the More Memories Project and requested someone to come forward to take on this role.

Activities and events:

Sopwell Project The biggest event last year was, of course, the launch of the book written and compiled by yours truly, *Sopwell, a history and collection of memories*, which took place at Sopwell House on 20th May. Anne Main MP and Councillor Eileen Harris, the Mayor elect, formally launched the book and the day was a great success.

In July, the SRA applied for and was successful in receiving a Heritage Lottery Funded Grant of £10,000 under the All Our Stories programme to continue to collect memories and research the history of our area. The More Memories Project was formally launched on 18th May this year and will last until 30th April 2014. Our tenth birthday was also celebrated at the same time.

Autumn walk Our annual history walk took place last September. Chris Pudsey led the walk as Councillor Eileen Harris was occupied being the Mayor. Chris used our book on the History of Sopwell to illustrate one of the many interesting walks around Sopwell: Mandeville to New Barnes.

Litter pick We had our annual litter pick on 7th April. Thank you to all those helped pick several bags of litter and recyclables. Particular thanks are due to Jack Hill for all his efforts.

Willow tunnel and weaving workshop Following the construction of a willow tunnel last year, pupils from St Peter's School attended a willow weaving workshop where they made fish and butterflies using willow. The tunnel was reshaped in February and the new growth was tied into the existing structure.

Jubilee Street Parties In June last year, despite the dreadful weather, street parties to celebrate the Queen's Diamond Jubilee were held in Boleyn Drive, Holyrood Crescent, Prospect Road, Ramsbury Road and St Julians Road.

Larks in the Parks This was held on 24th June last year and was another successful event. The SRA had stalls to sell plants and our History of Sopwell book. Over 300 people attended.

Bat walk This successful event was organised on 7th September by the SRA in conjunction with Countryside Management Services and funded by the remainder of our lottery funded Community Spaces Sustainability grant.

Bulb planting On 21st October, over 300 bulbs were planted on the island green space in Abbots Avenue. The resulting display this Spring proved that it was a worthwhile event.

Conferences and meetings

- Peter Wares attended several meetings of St Albans City Forum.
- Sandy Norman was invited by St Albans and District Council to attend the annual Green Flag Award ceremony on 19th June to receive the Green Flag for the Nunnery Open Space.
- Sandy Norman attended a meeting of the Combined Group of Residents Associations on 15th October.
- Sandy Norman attended the St Albans Civic Society Awards where our Fenny's Boardwalk got a favourable mention.
- Sandy Norman spoke at the St Albans Local History Conference on 27th October. Barry Bateman also attended.
- Jack Hill and Rick Taylor attended the St Albans and District Strategic Partnerships Conference.
- Christoph Lutz and Ananda Armstrong-King attended a thank you party for volunteer groups in December at the House of Commons hosted by Anne Main MP

Communications We have produced three newsletters in the past year and held two open residents' meetings. The website www.sopwell.org.uk is updated regularly thanks to Peter Segers. As part of the More Memories of Sopwell project, we have started a regular blog post on blog.sopwellmemories.org.uk.

Rick thanked Sandy for her excellent report and asked if there were any questions relating to Sandy's report. Jo Welch asked if she could put comments on the blog. Ananda Armstrong-King proposed that the reported by adopted and this proposal was seconded by Barry Bateman. All were in favour.

6. To receive and adopt examined statement of the Annual Accounts for 2012/13 presented by Treasurer Elect, Dom Tang

Dom circulated copies of the Statement of Accounts for year to 31st March 2013.

He started his report by giving the good news that the final printing costs for the book had now been paid and so all future income from sales goes straight into SRA funds.

Dom presented the accounts, which were divided into three sections as follows, with the closing bank balance against each section: 1. The Sopwell Book Project - £808.54; 2. The More Memories Project - £9,052.90. This figure takes into account the Lottery Grant of £10,000. 3. Other Activities - £367.76.

In summary (Book + MM + Other):

Opening bank balance	£1,872.10
Movement for the year	<u>£8,357.10</u>

Closing bank balance	£10,229.20
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Rick expressed his thanks to Dom for presenting such clear accounts especially as he had only recently taken over the role of treasurer.

Jack Hill proposed that the accounts be adopted and Anne Wares seconded their adoption. All were in favour. The account examiner's report content will be discussed at the next committee meeting.

7. Election of Management Committee

All the existing management committee members were prepared to stand for re-election, with the exception of Ananda Armstrong-King, who is moving away from St Albans. However, Sandy made a plea for someone to come forward to take over the role of secretary to enable her to concentrate on the Memories Project. Linda Bateman proposed the existing management committee be re-elected en bloc, which was seconded by Liz Klir. All were in favour. Unfortunately for Sandy, no one came forward to claim the role of secretary.

8. Announcements

The history walk will take place on Sunday, 15th September under the leadership of Councillor Eileen Harris and further details will be published in the next newsletter and on the website..

9. Presentation by Carl Cheevers, Principal Partnership & Engagement Officer at SACDC on the topic of the Localism Act

Carl gave a synopsis of the function of the Localism Act and how it affects the community. In a nutshell, it means that power for the running and ultimately ownership of community assets is passed to the local community so that residents may use these assets as they think fit.

Under the terms of the Act groups within the community have a right to go to the Council and challenge the way services are provided. This would include things like neighbourhood planning which would give local communities greater say on planning issues, including new housing and shops, within their area.

A list of all the 'assets' within Sopwell Ward is being drawn up, which includes, for example, all green spaces and children's play areas, shops, Marlborough Pavilion, the youth club, the wildlife garden.

An on-going project still under discussion with the Council is the Marlborough Pavilion.

Carl explained that £0.5m is allocated each year to local groups and there is a community grant fund of £75k.

Janet Smith said that in 2006/7 three different groups came forward to try to run the Marlborough Pavilion but each discovered how much would be involved and decided it would be too expensive and would create too much responsibility.

There was considerable discussion about the functions of the Localism Act which culminated in a decision that the top three assets in the Ward were St Julian's Church, the Marlborough Pavilion and the green spaces.

However, the old youth club in Leyland Avenue was considered a better site for a community centre. Carl divulged that the Council is discussing the possibility of the King Offa pub or the Marlborough Club are being discussed as a venues for a possible community hub, similar to that in Cunningham Ward.

Rick thanked Carl for leading such an interesting discussion.

10. Questions and general discussion

Sophia Joyce, who has recently moved to Cottonmill Lane, raised the question of the speed with which drivers go down the lane. Rick said that this is one of the biggest causes of complaint to the police. Councillor Janet Smith advised that apparently the speeding problem in Cottonmill Lane does not meet the criteria for making any alterations to the road; in other words, no-one has been killed yet. Under the Council's campaign for 20mph zones, it is understood that this may extend to Sopwell. Sophia asked if the SRA could organise a speed control sign. Janet advised that there is such a scheme being piloted in Wheathamstead but the control has to be monitored by a member of the public.

Sandy Walkington, newly elected councillor to Herts County Council, has raised this question at HCC and he suspects he will get the same answer as Janet. The HCC has told him that the road bridge in Abbots Avenue over the railway line, which is in a terrible condition, is due for 'major patching'. Belmont Hill is also planned to be resurfaced in an attempt to lower the speed humps, for which apparently the Council won an award when they were installed. Sandy Walkington advised there is a £90k budget for road improvements in the Ward. Sandy said he would like to hear from residents when they find badly broken paving slabs; these will be replaced by tarmac and not new slabs. He has a £10k localities budget to go to good causes. He wants to make sure that there are small deserving groups requiring help with any project benefit from this money.

Mark James advised the meeting there are moves afoot to start an official foodbank in St Albans to be operational by October 2013. Currently the Vineyard Church is running their own foodbank on a Monday and several other local churches are collecting non-perishable foodstuffs which will be distributed to needy residents around the district.

Sandy Norman reminded the meeting about the Community Café which takes place every Thursday morning at St Julian's Church and which is proving to be a great success.

The meeting closed, followed by refreshments.