



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at  
Sandyacres Sports & Social Centre on Wednesday, 9 March 2016**

**Attendees:** SLRA Committee: Tony Bartlett (Chair)  
David Porter (Secretary)  
John Hobbs  
John Faulkner  
Bryan Hall  
Andy Peddle

28 members  
County Councillors: Charlie Simkins, Jim Wedgbury  
Borough Councillors: Graham Galpin, Larry Krause, Winston Michael, Philip Sims  
Parish Councillor: Jason Matthews, Boughton Aluph & Eastwell PC  
Central Ashford  
Community Forum: Emily Neighbour  
Kennington  
Community Forum: Chris Morley  
Speakers: Inspector Dave Smith, Kent Police  
PCSO Angela Burden, Kent Police  
PCSO Gary Carr, Kent Police  
Councillor Graham Galpin MSc, Ashford Borough Council  
Trevor Richards, British Wool Marketing Board

The meeting commenced at 7.34 pm.

**Item 1: Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received from:

Members: Marc & Anne Westbrook  
Howard & Janet Preston  
Joanna Clarkson  
Arthur Gurteen  
Don Murrell

Guests: Cllr Luke Powell

**Item 2: Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 25 March 2015**

Proposed by Bryan Hall and seconded by John Faulkner. The minutes were approved as a true record.

**Item 3: Chairman's Report**

Tony Bartlett, the Chairman, presented his report:

"Let me start with an apology, yes I know – it's not the best way to start - but I do apologise if our reports are a bit longer than you are used to – not because we like the sound of our voices, but because we have had a very busy year. It started soon after our last AGM when we had Borough and Parish elections. We lost some of our long serving councillor friends but I'm happy to say we acquired new ones and we look forward to their support. At the same time the Borough council's consultation on its Community Governance Review (CGR) was underway. This included proposals to create Urban parishes covering the existing Central Ashford and Kennington Forum areas. As those living there know these include properties on the town (even numbered) side of Sandyhurst Lane and the two estates, Potters Close and Hoads Wood Gardens.

Following representations from members that they would like to once again, become part of the Westwell Rural Parish, rather than any new Urban Parish, the SLRA undertook a survey of ALL the unparished

residents in that area (the 145 properties in the Bockhanger ward). 48% replied and 79% of those who responded were in favour of moving the Westwell parish boundary to include them. With this mandate from those directly affected, we made a recommendation to ABC that the Westwell parish boundary be realigned to add all these properties into the Westwell Parish. This recommendation was supported by both the Central Ashford and Kennington Forums. After endorsement by the ABC officers and its Task Group, our recommendation passed unopposed through the Committee and full Council stages. Subject to approval by the Boundaries Commission, the new boundary will come into effect at the May 2019 election.

As I am sure you all recall much of the summer was dominated by Operation Stack and I am pleased to tell you the Association was active in representing your views and reflecting your anger at the continuing disruption we all suffered. We wrote to Paul Carter, Leader KCC, Damian Green our MP and Gerry Clarkson, Leader of ABC, pressing for a solution and, with Cllr. Christine Drury, Chair of the Westwell Parish Council, campaigned live on BBC radio demanding a solution, not only to Stack, but the ongoing problem of anti-social HGV parking. As one of many such voices we were pleased when the Chancellor announced in the November Budget, funding of £250 million for a permanent solution.

Your Committee sees the measures to relieve Operation Stack very much as an opportunity to deal with the problem of long-term lorry parking that blights the area and has correspondingly responded to the Highways England consultation and lobbied our MP and councillors to encourage them also to support an overnight parking facility, open at all times, not just during Operation Stack. This was a difficult decision as, at the same time, we recognised that, as an Association founded to preserve our own rural character, we must require any such solution be achieved with a minimal environmental impact.

Moving on to our perennial issue of road safety, we know that many members are still concerned about the speed of vehicles in Sandyhurst Lane. During the year we have been exploring actions which may be appropriate to control this. However, our approaches to KCC have met with little or no enthusiasm to fund any such measures on the grounds that the accident record does not merit it. We will continue to keep the issue alive and would welcome any substantive evidence you get to support the case. In fact, I personally witnessed the parked car of one of our committee members being hit by a speeding motorbike when we were all collecting Governance questionnaires. Remarkably the young rider was unhurt although the car, the bike and his pride, were all damaged. Speed was definitely the cause.

Another perennial is, of course, the threat to our countryside from housing development. We continue to monitor closely the progress of the council's Local Plan and have formally complained to ABC on several occasions about the continuing delay in bringing forward their proposals as this is causing property blight in several parts of our area. Our Secretary will bring you up to speed on the latest position. We will wait until the Plan's publication and seek your views on the facts as presented before responding to its consultation. Decisions on the two sites which fall in Boughton Aluph & Eastwell parish, will be devolved to them as part of their developing Neighbourhood Plan.

Jason will give a brief update on the Plan's progress during the Open Forum. Neighbourhood Plans, and Hothfield Parish is now considering developing one, are statutory documents which must be taken into account in planning decisions made by any local planning authorities. The need for the resulting empowerment of the local community was demonstrated this year when, without going into detail, we had a situation in our SLRA area where residents sought to invoke the BA & E Parish Design Statement (the PDS) to resolve a fencing dispute. This proved unsuccessful as, although adopted by the Parish Council, the PDS was unenforceable as it had as yet no statutory weight. A situation which would have not arisen once the NP is in place.

The SLRA has committee members who are actively involved in the BA&E Neighbourhood Plan evolution, thus ensuring that the views of our local residents are properly represented in the development process.

The SLRA committee also continues to scrutinise and comment back to ABC on planning applications made within our area. As David, our Secretary will now report the Committee has also dealt with a number of other issues and concerns raised by members.

The SLRA Neighbourhood Watch scheme has now been operating for nearly three years and is well established, with its ten separate local areas, each with a volunteer co-ordinator, covering over 300 properties. Recognising that the NHW is only expected to notify us of local burglaries from premises and theft from motor cars, we have been talking to our PCSOs to get information from them on other criminal

activity in the area and our monthly crime statistics. This will help us provide you with more comprehensive information about what is happening and what to be on the look-out for in our area.

We welcome the introduction of a new NHW scheme in Boughton Aluph & Eastwell and the one planned for Westwell. We look forward to working together with these initiatives to ensure efficient and comprehensive coverage throughout both parishes.

Now looking forward to next year, there are still items unresolved which will demand our attention, two I have mentioned - the Local Plan and the Lorry Park. Others that we can see evolving include the future of the Golf Club, the impact on traffic volumes in Sandyhurst Lane from J10a and more especially the start of the Chilmington Green development and A28 widening, when Godington and Sandyhurst Lanes risk becoming even more of rat-runs for access to and from the M2 and North Kent avoiding any road works on Great Chart road and Drivers Roundabout congestion.

With much still to do, your Committee would like to thank you, the members of the Association, for your support and remind you it is only through your continued membership and support that the Association has the strong voice needed to represent you and our community. On your behalf, I would like to thank all our county, borough and parish councillors for their past, and I hope future, support. And finally on a personal note, I would like to publically thank my Committee colleagues for their time, dedication, help and guidance, without which much of what I have just reported would not have happened, and of course to thank our Secretary, David Porter, for his tireless efforts and without whom, nothing would have happened."

There were no questions on this report.

#### **Item 4: Secretary's Report**

David Porter, the Secretary, presented his report:

"As you have heard from Tony's report, we have had a very busy year and this has been supported by the committee, both by holding meetings and, increasingly, by exchange of emails to progress matters as quickly as possible. The committee has physically met four times and the meetings have been well attended by an average of seven members.

We have addressed a very wide range of issues, not only those which Tony has mentioned but also issues such as flooding, mains drainage, litter, dirty road signs, inconsiderate parking by participants in the Ashford Marathon and many other subjects. Incidentally, the dirty road signs were subsequently cleaned by Medash Signs Ltd and we extracted a promise from the Marathon organisers to manage parking better in future.

Our membership has remained stable with continued support from nearly 40% of the 345 homes in our area. We keep in touch using email bulletins on a wide range of subjects, from bin collections to election results, from road closures to updates on Operation Stack, and much more. We also post a wide range of news and information on our website.

We also answer queries both from members and, quite often, people who are contemplating the purchase of a property in the area. These can be on a very wide range of subjects, from planning applications to more obscure subjects – the most obscure this year was on the relative health effects of dog poo and horse manure!

We also continue to deliver quarterly printed news summaries to those of our members who choose not to receive information by email and these are also displayed on our notice board, which is located by the post box opposite the footpath to Sandyhurst Farm.

Our Chairman said that I would bring you up to date with the latest position on the Ashford Local Plan and the so-called submitted sites for development. In that context, I should like to pass on some comments we received yesterday from Councillor Luke Powell. Luke, of course, represents Bockhanger ward and unfortunately cannot be here tonight, but his comments in summary are as follows:

Firstly, Luke believes that whilst Ashford does need more housing, his preference is for development to be focused on the town centre. He argues that dense urban development is more sustainable and that it is vital to have more people living and working in the town centre, if it is to be revived.

Secondly, Luke reports on a meeting he had with the planning officers and the Leader of the Council to discuss possible major developments in his ward, in the context of the long awaited Local Plan.

It is Luke's understanding that the development of Ashford Golf Club is unlikely to be in the Local Plan. It appears that a development on Trinity Road will be in the draft Local Plan. He has made clear his view that any development on this site must have no access on to Sandyhurst Lane and that there should be a substantial buffer between any development and the backs of the properties on Sandyhurst Lane. Luke believes that the planning officers agreed with both of these points but, most importantly, cautions us to wait and see what actually appears in the draft Plan.

There are, of course, a further 4 sites which are in our area but not Luke's and we can look further at the little we know about them when we come to the Open Forum. The latest information we have on the overall Plan is that Ashford Borough Council are planning to publish the first draft of the Plan next month, including the short list of submitted sites.

Incidentally, on another issue, Luke Powell also said that he thought it made eminent sense for the Bockhanger part of Sandyhurst Lane to be within Westwell Parish and feels it is anomalous that it is not already so. That is quite a noble thought on his part, because when the boundary change is made in 2019, Sandyhurst Lane will no longer be in his constituency.

Finally, may I add my own thanks to the Chairman's for the support we receive from all our county, borough and parish councillors; we greatly value our close working relationships with them and the bodies they represent.

And, of course, thanks to you the members for your responses to our surveys and your friendly emails and calls. We greatly value your membership and your continuing support."

There were no questions on this report.

#### **Item 5: Treasurer's Report**

Don Murrell, the Treasurer, was unable to be present. The Secretary reported that the SLRA bank balance currently stood at £1,760.84, compared with £1,526.01 at the 2015 AGM. A vote of thanks was recorded to the Treasurer and his staff for their continued work in managing the Association's finances.

#### **Item 6: Election of Committee**

All of the existing committee members offered themselves for re-election. There were no further nominations. All candidates were duly elected unopposed:

Tony Bartlett	Doug Harman
Mike Cullen	Desmond Henley
Joanna Clarkson	Don Murrell
John Hobbs	Andy Peddle
John Faulkner	David Porter
Bryan Hall	Evan Thomas

#### **Item 7: Any Other Business**

There was no further business. The formal AGM closed at 7.58 pm.

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There followed three presentations by guest speakers and an Open Forum discussion.

#### **Inspector Dave Smith, Kent Police – Managing Rural Crime (with PCSO Angela Burden and PCSO Gary Carr)**

As head of the rural liaison team, Dave Smith said their strategy was to reduce harm, tackle offenders and work in partnership with others. They worked with over 120 partners, such as the RSPCA, Natural England, Trading Standards, etc.

Wildlife crimes included habitat destruction of protected species, hare coursing, catching fish during closed season and illegal sales (eg ivory). Recent successes included catching armed trespassers using covert cameras. Arrests often included those wanted for more serious crimes, including murder. Environmental crimes included fly tipping and vehicles being driven illegally over Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The Country Eye app for mobile phones was proving very effective for crimes such as fly tipping. Heritage crimes included theft of valuable items such as historic cannons, coins etc.

Dave Smith and the two PCSOs all stressed the importance of engagement with local communities, eg by having a presence at events such as ploughing matches. The presentation concluded with a short video illustrating rural policing and its relationship with the rural community. [This video is available to view on the SLRA website "Useful links" page ([http://sandyhurst.co.uk/Useful\\_Links.html](http://sandyhurst.co.uk/Useful_Links.html))].

### **Councillor Graham Galpin, Ashford Borough Council – Town Centre Regeneration**

Graham Galpin said that Ashford was undergoing change and had always done so. It had a long market history, a long railway history and a long military history.

Graham ran through the current 'Big 8' projects: CQ38 (an 8,000 sq ft office building in Dover Place), J10a of the M20, Ashford College, Chilmington Green, International signalling (upgrading of signalling for new Eurostar trains from 2017), McArthur Glen (expansion of the Outlet Centre), Elwick Place (new cinema and restaurant complex) and Jasmin Vardimon (world class dance company).

On the town centre, Graham commended the new website "Love Ashford" as one of the country's best digital high streets and the T-CAT team which was doing an excellent job keeping the town centre clean and tidy. The 'Made in Ashford' initiative, in which six local businesses were offering their products to town centre shoppers, was very successful and the Council had purchased Park Mall and Wilkinsons, the former to revitalise it and the latter to receive a guaranteed income for 5 years. All the vacant shops (originally 10) in Park Mall are expected to be filled this year. Further afield, Conningbrook Lakes now provides Ashford with an excellent country park.

### **Trevor Richards, Vice Chairman, British Wool Marketing Board - Wool Production & Marketing**

Trevor Richards, a Westwell sheep and arable farmer, described the wool market in the UK in the context of world markets. Sheep in the UK are reared predominantly for meat, with only 2% of the income being from wool. There are 25 million sheep in the UK (1.2 billion in the world) and the UK produces 3% of the world's wool. 80% of UK wool production goes into carpets, because the quality of the wool is variable, coming from 60 different breeds. In Australia and New Zealand, where there are only 3 breeds, high quality wool is produced for the clothing market. Despite its inferior fire resistance and biodegradability, the main competition to wool is synthetic fibre, aggravated at present by the low oil price.

Of all the former Marketing Boards (eg Milk, Egg, Hops, etc), only the British Wool Marketing Board remains. Wool ceased to have a guaranteed price in 1992 and has at times fallen below the cost of production, ie shearing sheep. The role of the BWMB is to provide a means for 45,000 sheep farmers to sell to 100 merchants and includes shearing and collection via 11 UK depots, through grading and testing to auction, R&D and marketing. The Campaign for Wool was launched in 2010, under the patronage of HRH the Prince of Wales, to promote the superior qualities of wool and stimulate demand. Prince Charles has played a major role in driving this campaign.

### **Open Forum**

- **Neighbourhood Plan**

Jason Matthews, Chairman of Boughton Aluph and Eastwell Parish Council, gave an update on several community projects and on the development of the parish's Neighbourhood Plan. This will set out the preferred sites for development, their size and the corresponding infrastructure requirements. The aim is to produce a 'blueprint' for sustainable development, prepared by local residents. When completed and adopted it will become part of the Ashford Local Plan to 2030 and will have to be consulted when planning applications within the parish

are being considered. A survey of all parish residents and businesses is to be undertaken in the near future, with analysis scheduled for May/June and the first draft Plan later this year.

- **Neighbourhood Watch**

John Faulkner asked the police representatives to look at improving Neighbourhood Watch with better communication and a wider range of information than at present. Dave Smith agreed to look into the issue and provide appropriate feedback.

- **Town centre regeneration**

Tony Bartlett asked Graham Galpin how the 'Portas' and 'Sainsbury's Section 106' funding might affect the town centre regeneration. Graham replied that it had been invested in pop-up shops, events etc and would circulate details of where the money had gone. There was some remaining, allocated to the Farmers' Market.

- **Kennington Community Forum**

At the Chairman's invitation, Chris Morley updated the meeting on the plans to create a Kennington Community Council. This would take place in 2019, at the time of the next Borough and Parish Council elections. Before then there would be extensive consultation to determine what residents would like to see following the creation of the Community Council.

- **Road safety**

Mrs Strover raised the issue of speeding vehicles along Sandyhurst Lane (including motor cycles which could often be heard going very fast). David Porter said that, with the help of Cllr Charlie Simkins, the SLRA had recently approached KCC Highways with a request for funding to install traffic calming measures in Sandyhurst Lane. However, this had been refused on the grounds that the traffic accident record did not merit it. With reference to speed limits, SLRA had originally lobbied for extension of the 30 mph speed limit in the western part of the Lane to the entire length, but had succeeded only in getting a 40mph limit in the rest of the Lane (in 2005) because for most of that stretch there were dwellings on one side only of the road.

Jason Matthews pointed out that Boughton Aluph & Eastwell parish council had been instrumental in getting two speed indicator signs in their half of the Lane and suggested a similar action by Westwell parish council in the remainder of the Lane. Tony Bartlett said he would take that back to Westwell PC.

- **Lorry parking**

Tony Bartlett referred to a meeting about nuisance lorry parking which had taken place in Westwell on 2 March. John Hobbs, who had been present, said that the meeting had been assured by KCC/ABC representatives that proposals were to be brought forward to reduce or eliminate lorry parking on the verges of main roads and slip roads. Cllr Charlie Simkins said that he knew that residents felt strongly about this issue and that it was getting worse in this area because of lorry clamping elsewhere in Ashford. He would keep up the pressure to find a solution.

Cllr Jim Wedgbury said that KCC will lobby to get the law changed to increase powers to deal with this problem. KCC were also looking at the erection of height barriers in laybys to keep lorries out whilst allowing cars in.

Margery Thomas said that the Joint Transportation Board (which had met on 8 March) was likely to prioritise the A20/Potters Corner to deal with the lorry parking problem, due to potential safety risks. The Chair promised that the SLRA would review future JTB Minutes and circulate items of concern to residents.

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The meeting closed at 9.46 pm.