

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at
Sandyacres Sports & Social Centre on Wednesday, 13 March 2013.**

Attendees: 60 members

4 non-members

County Councillor: Charlie Simkins

Borough Councillors: Michael Claughton and Winston Michael

Parish Councillors: Christine Drury, Westwell PC and

Jason Matthews, Boughton Aluph & Eastwell PC

Central Ashford

Community Forum: Jim Davies

Kennington

Community Forum: Chris Morley

Speakers: Daniel Carter, Ashford Borough Council

Tudor Price, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Item 1: Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from:

Members: Sue & Denzil Wood

Marc & Anne Westbrook

Mike & Shena Cullen

Arthur Gurteen

Roy & Linda Dowley

David & Maureen Betts

Joan Richards

Don Murrell

Guests: Cllr Jim Wedgbury

Cllr David Robey

Item 2: Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 13 March 2013

Proposed by Tony Bartlett and seconded by Len Bunn. The minutes were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

Item 3: Chairman's Report

John Hobbs, the Chairman, presented his report:

"I am pleased to report that the Association has had another successful year as we go from strength to strength.

I would like to thank David our secretary and all the other committee members for all the hard work they do behind the scenes to ensure this is a successful Association that is looking after the interests of the local community. Our aim is to make our area a safe and pleasant place to live. We aim to welcome new residents and to look out for each other.

The major activity for the association during the year was the setting up the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, which was launched in September at a meeting of residents. Although there are over 300 properties in SLRA area, we preserved the local character of the NW scheme by setting up 10 separate NW areas each of 30+ properties, each with its own volunteer coordinator. The scheme appears to be working well with all resident association members automatically included in Neighbourhood Watch. It is important, however, that members are aware that Neighbourhood Watch is two way traffic and they should report any criminal activity or anything suspicious to their co-ordinator.

In May we said goodbye to our two retiring KCC Councillors, Richard King & Elizabeth Tweed and we welcome Jim Wedgbury and Charlie Simkins who have already been very helpful in our efforts to persuade KCC to improve road safety. After 2 years of lobbying KCC, new road safety measures have been installed at the A20/Sandyhurst Lane junction, including 2 vehicle-activated "SLOW DOWN" signs (which operate at over 55 mph). We are still lobbying to get one of them connected to the electricity supply, nearly six months after it was installed.

There have not been any controversial individual planning applications. Our main focus has been on the development sites submitted to Ashford BC as candidates for inclusion in the Local Plan to 2030. Seven of these would have a major impact on the Sandyhurst Lane area. We have carried out an opinion survey of all residents in the Sandyhurst Lane area and had a very high response rate – over 43%. The vast majority – 96% were opposed to further development in the area, particularly on green field sites, and we have made appropriate representations to ABC. We are working closely with our colleagues in BA&E PC, BA&E RA and Westwell PC on these planning issues.

We are very pleased to report that membership has risen by nearly 70% over the year and we now have well over a third of all residents in membership. The Secretary will provide detailed statistics in his report.

Some committee members are keen to gauge the views of members on holding social events such as quiz nights, dancing, wine & cheese evenings or even a summer fete at Sandyacres and perhaps we can explore this a little in Q&A's.

We have installed a new notice board opposite the footpath to Sandyhurst Farm and refurbished the millennium seat in Hoads Wood Gardens. Some of the road signs in the area were in a very dirty condition and one of our committee members has cleaned almost half of them and we hope that within a short time the remainder of them will look much brighter than they do at present. We are taking a pride in our neighbourhood.

I would like you all please to show your appreciation to our committee members with a round of applause. Finally I would like to thank members for their continued support."

There were no questions on this report, but Cllr Charlie Simkins said that, at the previous evening's meeting of the Joint Transportation Board, he had sought assurance that the installation of the interactive SLOW DOWN sign on the A20, which was awaiting connection to an electricity supply, would be completed this week. He was still awaiting that assurance.

Item 4: Secretary's Report

David Porter, the Secretary, presented his report:

"I'm pleased to report that over the past year we've been very active, with the committee meeting regularly every two months to take forward the issues which are of concern to residents.

The committee meetings we've held over the past year have had an average attendance of 7.4 and have addressed a wide range of issues, including planning, road safety, noise, the Ashford Local Plan and Neighbourhood Watch. We spent a lot of time on setting up Neighbourhood Watch in ten local areas, each with a committee member acting as a local coordinator. We were assisted by local police volunteers and PCSOs and the scheme was launched on 25 September last year at a meeting in this room. All members of the SLRA are automatically enrolled in their local Neighbourhood Watch scheme.

On membership, as the Chairman mentioned, we've had an excellent year with a growth approaching 70%. We now have around 35% of our catchment of about 340 properties in membership, compared with only around 20% a year ago. That means we've just under 120 members compared with less than 70 this time last year. We're also delighted that the majority of members now pay their annual subscriptions by standing order as this dramatically reduces the administrative burden and ensures that we have a stable core membership.

We've tried to keep members informed in a timely manner by the use of email bulletins and our website. We try not to send too many emails, particularly as we now have Neighbourhood Watch emails as well, but even so there have been around 70 email bulletins over the past year.

We've also continued to deliver a printed quarterly summary of our activities to members who don't have email facilities, or prefer not to receive information by email. We've also tried to publicise our activities by contributing articles to publications such as the Westwell Eye and the Boughton Aluph & Eastwell parish magazine and, as our Chairman mentioned, we also have a brand new notice board which we try to keep up to date with the latest news about the Association.

We very much appreciate the strong support which the SLRA enjoys, as evidenced by the rapid growth in membership and by the strong response to our recent survey on development sites. We greatly value your membership and ask members to encourage their friends and neighbours to join and give us their views on local issues so we can better represent the interests of all residents.

That concludes my report."

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 £1,023.87, compared with £552 at the 2013 AGM. 63 members now paid by standing order.

He noted that the improved balance had been greatly helped by the generosity of one or two companies associated with committee members which had absorbed costs of printing, postage, stationery, sign making, sign erection, the new notice board, etc. Consequently the Association had been able to keep a firm control on costs and, together with the growth in membership, this has contributed to the SLRA's improved financial position.

There were no questions on this report.

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
Joanna Clarkson	Desmond Henley
Norma Devereese	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 7.55 pm.

Following the formal meeting, Jim Davies and Chris Morley outlined the roles of the Central Ashford Community Forum and the Kennington Community Forum. Part of the SLRA area [even numbered houses in Sandyhurst Lane from 4 to 196, Maidstone Road south of Sandyhurst Lane, Hoads Wood Gardens and Potters Close] were outside Parish Council areas and could benefit from becoming part of Community Councils. A petition was underway to try to get 1,000 signatures to require Ashford Borough Council to carry out a Community Governance Review.

There followed two presentations by guest speakers

Daniel Carter, Principal Policy Planner, Ashford Borough Council

Daniel outlined the planning challenges facing Ashford Borough Council, particularly in relation to the Ashford Local Plan to 2030. He emphasised the need to determine our own housing needs based upon firm defensible evidence and of balancing local wishes with market pressures.

He described the process for the Local Plan to 2030. We were now in the informal scoping phase, engaging with stakeholders, examining the issues and how they can be tackled. Exercises included Plan It, discussing issues with local communities. The Council was obliged to conduct the recent call for site submissions. They would continue to engage and start the housing assessment process (SHELAA) to determine the housing need and establish an evidence base. It was also important to determine the infrastructure necessary to support growth in housing and employment.

On timescales, the draft plan stage was scheduled for mid-2015 and this would be the start of formal public consultation. Before that, there could be some informal consultation on some aspects of the spatial approach in late 2014.

An interesting and wide-ranging discussion followed, including the following points:

- In response to a question from John Faulkner, Daniel Carter denied that Ashford BC was late in delivering a Plan. Four plans had been put in place since 2008 and they were now effectively reviewing an existing plan, rather than putting a new one in place.
- Tony Bartlett asked if the jobs-led approach introduced in 2011 was still Ashford BC policy. Daniel Carter said it was, but they were no longer given targets by others; they were required to meet an objectively assessed housing need. However, it was a further debate to decide how much extra to build to encourage jobs growth.
- Winston Michael said many of his constituents asked why we cannot have a 'brown field only' development policy. Daniel Carter said that there was limited brown field availability and that the current plan only runs till 2021; we were now looking forward to 2030.
- Michael Claughton had concerns about the level of extra road traffic generated by housing growth and cited the development near Drovers roundabout as an example. Daniel Carter said that KCC ran traffic modelling tests and sometimes needed new development to pay for upgrading roads.
- Christine Drury welcomed the SLRA's voice running in parallel with that of Westwell PC and others. She expressed concern that some residents felt their properties were blighted by the current site submissions and urged that the sites should be filtered as soon as possible.
- Len Bunn asked for a map of the sites, which Daniel Carter was able to supply.
- Jason Matthews expressed concern about green belt development but Daniel Carter assured him there was no designated green belt in the borough.

Tudor Price, Business Development Manager, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce

Tudor outlined the work of the Chamber of Commerce. It was made up of over 1,200 members who paid dues in return for a range of benefits. It was part of the British Chambers of Commerce network. The Chamber organised over 125 events each year and had three main areas of operation: Membership, Business Support and International. Tudor went on to describe the work in more detail, touching on a wide number of activities including start up programmes, networking, grants for SMEs, policy and representation, events, discounts and benefits, etc.

A lively discussion ensued.

The presentations were followed by tea and biscuits.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.