



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at
Sandyacres Sports & Social Centre on Wednesday, 25 March 2015**

Attendees: 48 members
County Councillor: Charlie Simkins
Borough Councillor: Michael Claughton
Parish Councillors: Christine Drury, Westwell PC and
Jason Matthews, Boughton Aluph & Eastwell PC
Kennington
Community Forum: Chris Morley
Speakers: Ivor Duffy, Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group
David Beckley, Kent Community Warden Service
John and Rachel Rowe, Westwell Wines

The meeting commenced at 7.34 pm.

Item 1: Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from:

Members: Grahame and Shirley Mountford
Arthur Gurteen
Sue and Denzil Wood
Simon Town
Chris Taylor and Amanda Townley
Michael Howells
Howard Preston
Joan Richards
John Faulkner

Guests: Cllr David Robey

Item 2: Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 13 March 2014

Proposed by Andy Peddle and seconded by Margery Thomas. The minutes were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

Item 3: Chairman's Report

John Hobbs, the Chairman, presented his report:

"Firstly I would like to thank all the members of the committee for all the work they have put in this year to ensure that our Association continues to go from strength to strength. We have a network of committee members who are easily accessible to our members and they have dealt with all concerns and enquiries promptly and efficiently. In particular David Porter our hard working secretary who is the backbone of the Association making sure that nothing is forgotten or overlooked.

I will run through the main issues of the year.

Planning

- We have continued to monitor closely the proposed development sites submitted to ABC as candidates for inclusion in the Local Plan to 2030. Seven of these would have a major impact on the Sandyhurst Lane area. Last year I reported that we had published a report of an opinion survey of all residents in the Sandyhurst Lane area. This showed that the vast majority of residents (96%) were opposed to further development in the area, particularly on green field sites, and we made appropriate representations to Ashford Borough Council.

- We know that the Council has been considering these sites with a view to producing a short list in the near future. At this point, we shall re-examine closely any of the seven sites in our area which are short-listed and respond to the public consultation which is to be held.
- We are aware that Councillor Winston Michael has been involved in some of the work considering these sites and I hope he may be able to update us in the discussion session this evening.

Road safety

- Last year I reported that, after 2 years of lobbying KCC, new road safety measures had been installed at the A20/Sandyhurst Lane junction, including 2 vehicle-activated "SLOW DOWN" signs, but that one of them was not working through lack of an electricity supply. So we continued to lobby KCC, mainly through our County Councillors, Charlie Simkins and Jim Wedgbury and we eventually achieved success in April, with the eastbound sign finally working, over 6 months after it had been installed.
- On other road safety matters, we know that many members are concerned about the speed of some vehicles in Sandyhurst Lane and we have been looking at actions which may be appropriate to control this. Also, road safety is still an issue at both ends of the Lane – the junctions with the A20 and with Faversham Road. We are also aware of residents' concerns about motorway noise and overnight parking of HGVs in the A20 layby and we will have an opportunity to debate these issues further this evening in the Open Forum session.

Road closure

- I am sure that members will recall the closure of Sandyhurst Lane at the A20 junction for gas main installation, starting on 30 June. We had only two weeks' notice of the proposed closure, so we immediately set up meetings and a regular dialogue with the contractors and KCC, with the eventual result that the length of the closure was reduced from the planned six weeks to two weeks and one day, the road being reopened on 15 July.

Power cuts

- Last summer, some residents in the Boughton Aluph part of the SLRA area were suffering from frequent power cuts, particularly in wet weather. So, during August, we carried out a survey to determine the extent of the problem and then lobbied UK Power Networks to fix it. Eventually they found that an overhead line serving part of Sandyhurst Lane had some broken insulators and they carried out the necessary repairs on August Bank Holiday.

Neighbourhood Watch

- The SLRA NW scheme has now been operating for 18 months and seems to have become well established, with 10 separate local areas, each with a volunteer co-ordinator, covering over 300 properties.
- Although we have had one or two actual or attempted burglaries, generally we seem to enjoy a low level of crime, due in no small measure to the vigilance of members and the rapid exchange of information about suspected attempted crimes.

On a more Personal Note

- I would like to thank all our county, borough and parish councillors for their support over the year and wish well to Michael Claughton (Bockhanger) and David Robey (Downs West), both of whom will not be standing for re-election in May. [Michael is retiring and David, who is not present, is moving to Hampshire].
- I would also like to thank Norma Devereese (in her absence) as the retiring Vice-Chair of the Association, following her move away from the area.
- Three years ago I was elected Chairman of the Association following the retirement of Howard Preston. It was a position I took on with enthusiasm although I was very nervous at the thought of following the legend that was Howard. It was a position that I and my fellow committee members all agreed should only last for a maximum of three years. I am therefore retiring as Chairman this evening and following a unanimous vote of the committee I welcome my successor, Tony Bartlett.
- Finally I would like to thank you the rank and file members of the Association for your continued support. Without you the members we wouldn't have the Association we have today and our strong voice in the community. Thank you."

There were no questions on this report.

Item 4: Secretary's Report

David Porter, the Secretary, presented his report:

"We have had another very active year, with the committee meeting four times 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 7.8 and have addressed a wide range of issues, including planning, road closures, road safety, noise, power cuts, flooding, the Ashford Local Plan and Neighbourhood Watch.

We have carried out one or two member surveys during the year. When the Highways Agency carried out some retexturing work on one carriageway of the M20, we tried to establish whether the motorway noise problem had been affected in any way. The results were inconclusive, with some residents adamant that the noise had increased, a few who thought it had decreased and a majority of 58% who thought there was no significant change. However, we were left in no doubt that motorway noise remains a very important issue for many residents.

On membership, we have continued the steady growth in numbers and we now have as members nearly 40% of the 340 households in our area. Our membership has more than doubled over the last three years and we are grateful for the support and interest shown by residents.

We've tried to keep members informed in a timely manner by the use of email bulletins and by keeping our website up to date with pertinent local news. There have been around 70 email bulletins over the past year in addition to the Neighbourhood Watch alerts sent by local co-ordinators.

We also do our best to answer queries from members and put members in touch with one another when they have shared interests. One example of this is the issue of flooding, which has seriously affected a few members in three different parts of Sandyhurst Lane. Should these members wish to set up a sub-group under the auspices of the SLRA, it would be a welcome development; members may wish to discuss this later in the Open Forum session.

We've also continued to deliver a printed quarterly summary of our activities to those members who don't have email facilities, or prefer not to receive information by email. We also display this bulletin on our notice board opposite the footpath to Sandyhurst Farm, though this was sadly interrupted in August when a hedge cutter in the adjacent field sliced through the top of our brand new notice board. I'm pleased to report that, after some negotiation, we were able to recover the full cost of the necessary repairs.

May I add my own thanks to the Chairman's for the support we receive from our county, borough and parish councillors on a variety of issues and we greatly value our close working relationships with them and the bodies they represent. Thanks also to the editor of the Westwell Eye for publishing the occasional article we submit; sadly the equivalent Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish magazine has now ceased production.

Last but by no means least thanks to you the members for your responses to our surveys, your support and your friendly emails and calls. We greatly value your membership and look forward to another year of working to protect the interests of all who live in the Sandyhurst Lane area."

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 £1,526.01, compared with £1,023.87 at the 2014 AGM.

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, 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
Joanna Clarkson
John Hobbs
John Faulkner
Bryan Hall
Doug Harman

Desmond Henley
Don Murrell
Andy Peddle
David Porter
Evan Thomas

Item 7: Change of Chairmanship

John Hobbs formally announced his retirement after three years as Chairman and said he would remain a committee member. He said that his successor, Tony Bartlett, had been unanimously elected by the committee.

Item 8: Any Other Business

There was no further business. The formal AGM closed at 7.54 pm.

The remainder of the meeting was chaired by the new Chairman, Tony Bartlett

In his opening remarks, he thanked John Hobbs for his stewardship over the last three years, during which the membership had more than doubled and the Neighbourhood Watch scheme had been reintroduced. John would be a hard act to follow, but we were fortunate to retain John's wise counsel on the Committee. He thanked John on behalf of all members.

There followed two presentations by guest speakers, an Open Forum discussion and a final presentation and wine tasting.

Ivor Duffy, Chief Finance Officer, Ashford Clinical Commissioning Group

Ivor explained the 'architecture' of the NHS in England, including 212 Clinical Commissioning Groups, which commission for hospital services, not GPs, pharmacies, dentists or opticians. He also outlined the financial and workforce challenges and differences between regions (eg the funding is just over £1,000 per patient in this area compared with £1,400 in Medway, a more deprived area). Efficiency savings approaching 3% were due to be made next year.

Achievements included a national award on care homes and spending on mental health had doubled in the last two years. Priority areas for the next year were mental health, urgent care, planned care and long term conditions. Care plans would be developed for the top 2% of patients next year and for 3% the following year. A Five Year Forward View had been published in October 2014; this would fundamentally change how the NHS works, breaking down barriers in how care is provided, eg GPs managing community care

The concept of the Multispeciality Community Provider involved groups of GPs combined with nurses, community health services, hospital specialists, mental health and social care. The patient would be placed at the centre. Community networks: consultation events have been held in a series of meetings with stakeholders and more are planned. A value for money review is also in progress.

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

- Channels of communication are vital. It had not been good enough in the past, eg for the merger of Ashford and Canterbury CCGs
- Many patients calling 111 were not aware of the availability of weekend services in some areas (eg Tenterden)
- Public education about the service could be improved
- The minutes of stakeholder meetings were not readily available

In response to these points about communication, Ivor Duffy said that one of the CCG members represented patient consultation and was in touch with all patient groups. Nevertheless, he would take back the general point about communication and see how it could be improved.

The Chairman said that SLRA stood ready to pass on any information, eg via the website.

Dave Beckley, Kent Community Warden Service

Dave Beckley explained the Community Warden Service. There were currently 71 uniformed wardens in the Ashford area. Their role was non-confrontational and relied on communication and knowledge of the local community to solve problems.

Dave had started 9 years ago and covered the areas of Hothfield, Charing and (now) Challock. Much of his time was spent helping people in Hothfield such as travellers, visiting schools and working alongside the police and trading standards. He advocated the use of smart water as an aid to identifying property if it was stolen and recovered. Some smart water kits were to be given away by the service in the near future.

Following the recent public consultation and review of the service, twelve teams in Kent will be merged into six (Ashford will be merged with Shepway) but there will be no loss of uniformed staff. The key target was to reduce anti-social behaviour.

In the ensuing discussion, the Chairman asked why Westwell was not covered. Christine Drury said that she was happy that the focus of the work was in Hothfield and that Westwell did receive excellent service from Dave Beckley when it was required.

There was further discussion about the low profile of the service. Dave Beckley said that they were not permitted to advertise and the press officer had been a casualty of recent cost savings.

Open Forum

- **Planning**

A display of the seven 'submitted' sites in the SLRA area for consideration for the Ashford Local Plan to 2030 had been mounted in the room. Ashford Borough Council is due to announce a short list of sites for public consultation in 2015. Michael Cloughton said that he had spoken to Simon Cole (Planning Policy Manager at Ashford BC) but that no updates were currently available.

Christine Drury said that the leisure site behind Kingsland Lane (DW11) was not connected to the site it was supposed to serve (Woodside, DW9) and therefore pointless. Christine provided background on the history of the largest site, Beechbrook Farm (DW12). It had been used as the building yard for the high speed rail link and the Government had subsequently wanted to build houses on it. However, a successful campaign had seen it returned to agricultural land. At the time of the last Local Plan, the Inspector had declared it as a green field site, which was helpful. However, she envisaged a big fight in the future.

- **Road safety**

The Chairman said that road safety and vehicle noise were still a concern for many residents. Speeding was a perceived problem on Sandyhurst Lane together with safety at the junctions at both ends the Lane. During the year we had a serious collision at the A20 end involving a member and a foreign lorry exiting from the layby. There were also complaints of bad driving practices when lorries both enter and exit the layby. Motorway noise and noise from parked lorries continues to be a disturbance. The Committee was very conscious of these concerns and sought ideas on potential some solutions.

A recent traffic survey in Sandyhurst Lane had given dubious results as it had been conducted when the gas main work was underway. The Chairman asked whether members would be prepared to assist in a new survey and about eight members indicated that they would. Further ideas would be welcomed.

- **Flooding**

The Chairman said that a number of residents along Sandyhurst Lane had recently suffered substantial and expensive flooding. Mike Cullen described in more detail the problems of flooding from the land opposite, negotiations with insurance companies, land owners and the local authority. He referred to a map, prepared by Howard Preston, detailing the sites where flooding was occurring.

Mike Cullen offered to chair a new committee for those affected by flooding. This was warmly welcomed and the Chairman said the SLRA would offer the new committee full support to operate in the name of the Association wherever it may help to achieve its objectives. Interested members were invited to contact Mike Cullen at mtcullen@btopenworld.com.

- **Kennington Community Forum**

Chris Morley updated the meeting on the results of the petition to secure a community governance review by Ashford Borough Council. The Forum had been successful in achieving over 1,000 signatures and Ashford BC had now agreed to conduct a borough-wide review. It was intended to consult stakeholders on proposals for local Community Councils by 30 October 2015 and to complete the review by February 2016 for submission to the full Council. However, implementation would not occur until May 2019.

John Rowe, Westwell Wines

John presented some interesting facts about UK wine production. There were over 470 vineyards, covering about 1,880 ha and producing 4.5 million bottles pa. Despite the relatively small size of the UK wine industry, it had won more international trophies for sparkling wine (15) than any other country.

Westwell Wines had a 5.2ha vineyard producing three varieties of sparkling and one of still wine by bottle fermentation. This includes storage up to five years, during which the wine develops complex flavours.

John's presentation concluded with a very enjoyable wine tasting session.

The meeting closed at 9.27 pm and was followed by tea and biscuits.