

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held
on Tuesday 15 March 2022**

Attendees: SLRA Committee: Tony Bartlett (Chair)
David Porter (Secretary)
Bryan Biggs
Fred Dunkerley
Bryan Hall
John Hobbs
Graham Mullaly
Sue Wood

28 members
1 non-member

County Councillor: Charlie Simkins
Borough Councillor: Winston Michael
Parish Councillor: Tessa Wyatt, Westwell Parish Council
East Kent Police: Andrew Judd, Volunteer & Neighbourhood Watch Liaison Officer
dha Planning: Patrick Reedman, Associate Director
Hannah Atkins, Associate

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 7.18 pm.

Item 1: Apologies for absence

Apologies had been received from:

Guests: Cllr Larry Krause
Cllr Christine Drury
Members: Grahame & Shirley Mountford
Andrew Smith
Don & Rose Murrell
Teresa Baker and Roger Taylor
Desmond Henley
Janet Preston
Shena & Mike Cullen
Sue Rochester & Phil Coast
David Betts
Charles & Heather Slater
Yvonne & Les Chandler
Chris & Tony Tester
Wendy Bartlett
Stuart & Carol Clay
David & Barbara Harbron

Item 2: Approval of the minutes of the AGM held on 17 March 2021

Proposed by Bryan Hall and seconded by Sue Wood. The minutes were approved as a true record.

Item 3: To note Officers' Reports

The reports from the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer had been published in advance of the meeting:

Chair's report:

As we hopefully emerge from the worst of the pandemic your Committee has reflected on the lessons that we have learned from the last two years.

We are now using Zoom for all our Committee meetings and will probably continue to do so into the future. We also gave thought to how we could streamline tonight's meeting to make your attendance at our AGMs more valuable. We believe you primarily want to hear from, and ask questions of us and your elected representatives. So, to save time this year the Secretary, Treasurer's and my Chair's report are now being made available to you electronically in advance.

Don't forget you can still ask questions of us during the resultant extended Open Forum.

Despite the on/off restrictions during the last 12 months much has happened.

Planning and Development. The greatest threat to our Mission Statement to **Protect the Rural Nature of the Area** remains poorly controlled housing and commercial development against which we are always vigilant. To this end we review all Planning Applications, large and small, which arise in our area and, if appropriate, respond to any consultation.

But in July 2021 we became aware that across both the Ashford Borough and the surrounding areas any such large scale development became impacted, and effectively stopped, by the Natural England concerns of nitrate and phosphate pollution of Stodmarsh Lakes and the Stour river catchment areas. The immediate practical effect of the NE advice was that planning applications for housing development (and some other types of development involving overnight accommodation) within the Stour catchment area cannot be approved until a process of formal assessment and mitigation of the potential effects on the Stodmarsh Lakes has been demonstrated.

Dealing now with the major issues in our area:

Elvey Cottage - after robust objections from the SLRA and others this was refused by ABC and that decision upheld by dismissal of an Appeal by the Planning Inspectorate. ABC are now in discussion on Enforcement action to be taken on the unapproved building.

Lenacre Hall Farm – after a full planning application for 21 dwellings on land at Lenacre Hall Farm was refused and the Appeal dismissed, an earlier hybrid application for up to 79 new dwellings was resubmitted. Again the SLRA reiterated its objections and, with others, opposed. However immediately before the November 2021 Planning Committee the application was withdrawn.

But despite the constraints of the adopted BA&E Neighbourhood Plan, any forthcoming review or underperformance against the Ashford Local Plan 2030 means we must **watch this space!** for any attempts at resubmission.

Eureka Park - the developers, Quadrant Estates, launched a public consultation on their outline proposals. The SLRA responded, criticising their use of the Covid pandemic as an excuse to hold their consultation online only and again reiterated our concerns. The Developers held Zoom meetings with the affected Parish Councils to which I was invited both as a Parish Councillor but also as representing the SLRA.

In December a formal outline planning application was submitted for a reduced number of housing units and commercial space with on-site environmental mitigation proposals. The SLRA acknowledged that the plans now show NO vehicular access into Sandyhurst Lane but sought details on the means of enforcement and asked for it to also be confirmed as a condition throughout the seven-year construction phase. We also commented on road safety issues affecting SHL and acknowledged that, whilst the required landscape buffer behind properties along Sandyhurst Lane was mostly in evidence, it should be extended to include **all** relevant points. In response to members concerns we also raised a number of other environmental issues and seek to be included on any Master Planning Group. As I commented earlier, we shall remain vigilant on these **and any future applications.**

We have continued to strengthen our ties with, and support to, our three local Parish Councils.

The SLRA were pleased to positively contribute to the development of the Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Neighbourhood Plan, which largely complements and supports our Mission Statement and vision for the future of the area. The Plan was adopted by Ashford Borough Council in October and must now be used in the planning process.

Traffic issues. Obviously our collaboration with the Parish Councils extends into road safety issues so I am pleased to acknowledge that, following our campaign for speed management measures in Sandyhurst Lane, Westwell Parish Council has used our data as part of its wider Highways Improvement Plan (HIP) submission and successfully secured KCC funding towards some behavioural change measures for the 30mph part of the Lane including enhancing its perceived rural nature by white lining at the edges rather than through the centre of the road and painting "30" repeater signs on the road surface.

We now look forward to working closely with BA&E PC as they develop their HIP to include their part of the Lane.

Infrastructure & Environment The SLRA, again working with Westwell Parish Council, brought to the attention of KCC several dangerous deep holes which appeared in footpath AW134, between Sandyhurst Lane and Kingsland Lane.

KCC closed the footpath for three weeks in April/May whilst the landowner was required to make repairs to ensure the footpath's safety. Further repairs were made in June, after some holes re-appeared.

In December, following complaints from a member, we raised with Westwell PC the issue of the damaged and overgrown footpath between Potters Corner and Watery Lane making its use by joggers, pram and mobility scooters users unsafe and, in parts, impossible. As a result, KCC have arranged for an inspection visit by our Parish Warden to which we are invited.

Flooding has again been an issue and the SLRA has worked with partners and residents to get remedial action implemented.

We also raised the issue of unauthorised tree felling on Eastwell Estate with both ABC and Forestry England and are continuing our pressure for enforcement and mitigation action.

News and Alerts. We continue to monitor the websites of the relevant public bodies for local news, events and issues affecting our community and keep our members informed by our own website, members emails and or quarterly summaries.

Neighbourhood Watch. We continue to receive and circulate local updates of crimes and ASB in our areas sent from the NHW team at Kent police and ensure we share any reports of suspicious activity reported to us by our members to the local community. **Let's continue to act to protect ourselves.**

Covid -19. From the outset of the pandemic we facilitated and publicised details of the network of our members who kindly volunteered to help and support those in the community who we were vulnerable, unable to get out for shopping or just needed a friendly phone call. **On behalf of our Community we thank you.**

Now looking forward to the Summer when we will join the whole country in celebrating HM The Queen's Platinum Jubilee we do not want to compete with anything planned elsewhere so a Working Group has been set up, led by John Hobbs and Fred Dunkerley to liaise with Sandyacres and the Parish councils.

Your suggestions for events are welcome - please email us!

On a more sombre note, the Boundary Commission England (BCE) has already undertaken an initial consultation and has a follow-up one planned in March/April on their proposals to equalise the size of electoral Parliamentary Constituencies by rearranging the Constituency boundaries.

We have publicised the local proposals on our website, but the Committee felt this was too political an issue for this Association to take any position on your behalf.

Details of a Petition supporting the position of Westwell PC is also accessible from our website.

Conclusion - a busy year past and, we are sure a busy one to come.

Personally I would like to thank all my fellow Committee members for their continuing commitment and efforts over the year and promise you our continuing best efforts in the future. If anyone wants to join us on the Committee, please contact us.

Finally we welcome our new members but also thank you, as well as them, for your continued interest, care and support to this, OUR Community.

Tony Bartlett.

Secretary's report:

Since last year's AGM, the committee has met 5 times by Zoom. All the meetings were well attended by an average of 8 members, many of whom felt that meeting online made more efficient use of time.

We were pleased to welcome to the committee Graham Mullaly, following his election at last year's AGM.

We were also pleased to welcome as a co-opted member Susan Wood, who was actually re-joining the committee, having been a committee member and Secretary until 2008 when she left on her appointment as Clerk to Westwell Parish Council, a post from which she has now retired.

The Chair's report covers all the major issues we have dealt with over the year. As Secretary, my duties include submitting our formal responses on key issues and consultations to local authorities and other relevant bodies. I also ensure that the SLRA views on matters of concern to members are communicated to Councils, utility companies, road race organisers, local farmers and other relevant stakeholders.

My duties also include keeping databases and the website up to date and sending out over 120 members' emails each year. These have been on a very wide range of subjects, including planning, traffic issues, road and footpath closures, local election results, lorry parking bans, bus services, the "tip" booking system, Operation Brock, Ashford 10 & 5 mile runs, Ashford 10k run, overgrown footpaths, defibrillators, post collection times, water works, power cuts, parking, bin collections and so on.

We also carried out a small reorganisation of our Neighbourhood Watch schemes and now have ten rather than nine local schemes (as we did at the inception of our Neighbourhood Watch schemes in 2013).

Overall, a great variety of issues has kept the committee and the secretariat very busy over the year. Our membership has remained stable and includes 43% of the 347 homes in our area.

Finally, may I record the Association's thanks for the support we receive from our county, borough and parish councillors and the relevant officials in councils, the police and many other bodies we deal with; we greatly value our close working relationships with them and the bodies they represent.

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

David Porter

Treasurer's Report:

SANDYHURST LANE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION				
Income & Expenditure 3 yrs to 28/02/22				
	2 mths to 28/02/22	2021	2020	2019
Bank Balance b/fwd 31/12/2018	2398.04	2210.37	1686.39	1974.32
Add Income				
Members fees	405.00	670.00	735.00	790.00
Donations Received				
Raffle proceeds				
Interest received	405.00	670.00	735.00	790.00
Less Expenditure				
Postage			9.59	6.06
Printing & Stationery		42.00	51.00	113.75
Defibrillator & Training		320.28		620.60
Website		59.99	118.65	59.99
Zoom subscription		57.56	28.78	
AGM exps				226.78
Cards		2.50	3.00	4.75
Neighbourhood watch stickers				21.00
Donations				25.00
Sundry				
	0.00	482.33	211.02	1077.93
Bank Balance c/fwd	2803.04	2398.04	2210.37	1686.39

The reports were noted. There were no questions raised.

Item 3: Election of Committee

All of the existing committee members, listed below, offered themselves for re-election. In the absence of any further nominations, they were duly re-elected. Proposed by Norman Thompson, seconded by Alison Porter.

Tony Bartlett (Chairman)
 Bryan Biggs
 Fred Dunkerley
 Bryan Hall
 Doug Harman
 Desmond Henley

John Hobbs
 Don Murrell (Treasurer)
 Graham Mullaly
 Andy Peddle
 David Porter (Secretary)
 Sue Wood

Item 8: Any Other Business

There was no other business.

The formal AGM closed at 7.30 pm.

Open Forum

The following questions were first addressed:

1. It is six months since the Elvey Cottage planning appeal was dismissed. The building still stands. Can someone - Ward Councillor, Parish Council or SLRA update us on what Enforcement action has been taken by ABC and to what effect. If not can we follow up please?

Cllr Tessa Wyatt said that the latest email on this issue from Ashford Borough Council to Westwell Parish Council (7 March 2022) confirmed that the enforcement team was currently in discussion with the owner. For formal regularisation, it would be necessary to reduce the height of the roof.

2. The 2023 Constituency Boundary Commission proposals show Downs West ward being in Faversham and Mid Kent, not in one of the two new Ashford Constituencies. Has KCC a view on this and are they responding with county wide proposals?

Cllr Charlie Simkins said that, whilst he was not specifically aware of that potential change, he would check if the Secretary could send him details. He said that Parliamentary boundary issues were not really a matter for the County Council.

3. The recent storms created a lot of damage locally. Have Quadrant taken over responsibility for maintaining the Buffer Zone yet and who do we contact?

Patrick Reedman said that Quadrant manage the land and he would pass them this question. Further questions could be channelled through him or James Bidwell at Quadrant. Cllr Winston Michael also offered to pass on questions to Quadrant.

4. What is SLRA planning for Queens Platinum Anniversary?

Fred Dunkerley said that the SLRA was in the early stages of planning a "street party" at Sandyacres on 5 or 6 June 2022. It was likely to be a "bring your own" picnic event, but with liquid refreshment available from the Sandyacres bar and entertainment. Cllr Tessa Wyatt said that Westwell Parish Council would be lighting their beacon and holding a picnic event.

The Chair asked whether members would prefer an event or the installation of a permanent feature (eg bench, tree planting). The general consensus was to have both. The Secretary would be asked to survey members to establish preferences.

5. We would like to bring up the ongoing issue of flooding over various parts of the Sandyhurst Lane. The dyke has not been maintained properly and the drainage of the field is still not good. Road flooded on Christmas Eve.

Cllr Charlie Simkins said he would provide an answer if the Secretary could forward him details.

Cllr Charlie Simkins was then invited to provide an update on KCC activities. A balanced budget had recently been agreed, but there were concerns about rising inflation as the budget figure used was only 3%. Bus service cuts were in prospect, both from KCC subsidy reductions and Stagecoach commercial reductions. The 123 bus route (which serves Sandyhurst Lane) was likely to cease and residents were encouraged to participate in the current public consultation.

In answer to a question, Hannah Atkins said that discussions were taking place between Quadrant and KCC with a view to providing bus services in the Eureka Park development, using Section 106 funding.

Cllr Winston Michael was then invited to provide an update on Ashford Borough Council activities. He outlined progress with land supply and building, drew attention to the public hearing in Ashford for the Parliamentary boundary review, reviewed plans for the former Odeon cinema site, discussed the "Reclaim the Streets" campaign to improve public safety, drew attention to the availability of Government grants to fund events to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, said that ABC was doing a good job in addressing the "Stodmarsh" issue, drew attention to the £150 Council Tax energy rebate being paid for bands A to D, promoted the "All Change for Ashford" event to take place in the town centre on 28 April, mentioned a £174,000 grant received by ABC for the provision of electric vehicle charging points, said that he would try to arrange a recently requested dog waste bin near footpath AW137, drew attention to potential traffic issues following McDonalds' successful planning application for a restaurant near the Tank roundabout, discussed the decision by Brompton Bicycles to move their headquarters from Birmingham to a site on the flood plain near Ashford Designer Outlet and said that Ashford is building a "tree trail" with decorated trees and animated art.

The Chair asked what plans were in place for dealing with the Stodmarsh issue at Eureka Park. Patrick Reedman said that 3 wetland areas were to be created, 2 by the existing lake. He said that Natural England was largely supportive of their approach.

The Chair asked Cllr Wyatt to provide an update on the plans for new road markings in Sandyhurst Lane. She said that, as part of Westwell PC's Highways Improvement Plan, the white lines in the 30 mph zone would be moved from the centre to the edges of the carriageway and 30 mph repeater signs would be painted on the surface at intervals. Leaflets describing the measures would be delivered to residents next month. Simon Edwards asked why the measures were not being implemented in the 40 mph zone which he felt was more important. He felt there had been a lack of communication between the two parish councils. Following discussion, the Chair undertook to write to Boughton Aluph & Eastwell Parish Council, raising the concerns which residents had expressed.

The Chair asked what measures were planned to control access from Sandyhurst Lane to/from the Eureka Park development. Hannah Atkins said that there would be no access for cars and motorcycles. Discussions had been held with the Public Rights of Way team at KCC. Some form of bollard restriction was likely, to restrict access to permitted users only. It was not clear at this stage how or if restrictions could include vehicles such as electric bicycles.

The Chair asked the timescale for building Eureka Park. Patrick Reedman said that the development had to be carefully phased so that impact did not run ahead of building mitigation measures. It was too early to give a start date. There would be no construction traffic using Sandyhurst Lane.

Cllr Wyatt provided an update on The Wheel pub, which now had new owners. It would take up to 6 months to be modernised and re-opened.

The Open Forum concluded at 8.33 pm.

There followed an invited talk at 8.48 pm:

**Planning and Ecology by Tara Hall, Senior Ecologist, Native Ecology
A summary of wildlife legislation and planning policy. A look into the behaviours and ecology
of European protected species that are widespread throughout Kent.**

Tara described how ecology impacts on the planning process. An ecology survey may be required, starting with a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to identify protected species and their habitats. Protected species include great crested newts, bats, otters, hazel dormice, badgers. Some are protected under European legislation (retained after Brexit), including the 18 bat species found in the UK, others under other legislation such as the Wildlife & Countryside Act (eg reptiles, water voles) and the Protection of Badgers Act.

Tara explained how surveys were carried out, at appropriate times during the year for different species and using various types of equipment (eg bat listeners, camera traps for badgers, corrugated steel for reptiles, etc). She explained the processes of mitigation, compensation and enhancement following the assessment. Measures could include bat boxes, bee bricks, wildlife corridors, pond creation, wildflower meadows, reptile translocation, etc.

Tara also explained the European Protected Species Mitigation Licence which may be required after planning permission has been granted, and the concept of Biodiversity Net Gain as an approach which aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than beforehand. This will be mandatory by the end of 2022, but householder applications and permitted developments are exempt.

The Chair thanked Tara for a most interesting and informative talk.

The meeting closed at 9.28 pm.