

Northwood Residents' Association

Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 9 June 2022 at
Oaklands Gate Methodist Church

PRESENT: 12 officers and members of the NRA executive committee, Cllr Ian Edwards, Leader of the Hillingdon Council, and Cllrs Henry Higgins and Richard Lewis, Robert Sisk Manager of Northwood Library, and 60 members.

APOLOGIES: David Simmonds MP, Miles Gillman, Eileen James, Vanessa Edwards

INTRODUCTION

Tony Ellis, chairman, welcomed everyone to the 56th AGM of the NRA.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

Good Evening and welcome to our 56th AGM

How good it is to return to normal and see you all alive and kicking again. Welcome to our regulars and also newcomers. Please indicate if this is your first AGM..... A special welcome to you and I hope this will not be your only AGM attendance.

The usual bits of housekeeping. There is no fire alarm but if you are asked to leave, please leave through the main doors or the Oasis Lounge which is where refreshments were served. There is a toilet for the physically impaired through that door and the main toilets are on the far side of the Oasis Lounge.

If you didn't sign in when you arrived, please do so when leaving.

Once again I'd like to thank the Methodist Church for hosting us and Keith Tabor for using his technical wizardry with the sound system.

There are apologies from MP David Simmonds, who is in Calais on a Parliamentary Committee looking at immigration, and our Vice Chairman, Miles Gillman. We also have apologies from Eileen and James Branney and Vanessa Edwards.

It is a pleasure to welcome the Leader of Hillingdon Council, Ian Edwards, who is our speaker tonight, recently elected Councillor Henry Higgins and Councillor Richard Lewis. Our councillors will answer your questions later in the meeting. Henry was previously a councillor for Harefield where his seat was abolished owing to the reduction in the number of councillors in Hillingdon following the Boundary Commission's changes.

I would like to place on record our grateful thanks to our recently retired councillors Carol Melvin and Scott Seaman-Digby. Carol served for 14 years and Scott 24 years. They were faithful servants to Northwood residents and will be a hard act to follow, especially as the number of councillors in Northwood ward has been reduced to two. It was great to see Carol and husband Andrew at the Jubilee event, particularly as they had travelled up from Kent to be there.

I'd also like to welcome Robert Sisk who is the new manager at Northwood library. He'll be giving us the latest news later in the meeting.

As you will have read in our latest newsletter, our Committee is looking for new blood. Several of us enjoy, if that is the word, the extra £10 per annum that pensioners receive on reaching the age of 80. We are still enthusiastic about our roles but anno domini is slowly catching up. We do need to plan for the future and although I am happy to continue as chairman into my 14th year, there has to come a time for my retirement. However, I am happy to report that we do have a

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young man, half my age who is considering joining the Committee. If anyone is interested in joining us, please do let me know after the meeting.

Northwood businesses are slowly recovering from Covid. Please do use them as much as possible. Don't forget the old High Street where there are many small shops and businesses. It does look a bit tatty and, on several occasions, the Council has promised to upgrade the area but we are still waiting. Parking is also a problem and needs addressing.

On the subject of parking, we feel that the arrangements for Northwood residents who live in Hertfordshire are total unsatisfactory. Our shops and businesses lose business because the high cost of parking for non-residents encourages them to shop in Rickmansworth as parking is free for an hour for residents and non-residents alike and also cheaper for subsequent time. I have asked Councillor Henry Higgins to see if the parking arrangements can be changed to the benefit of non-residents and our shops and businesses. Certainly, there is a case for treating border towns such as Northwood differently.

Some news about our local hospitals. Preparations for the new hospital at Hillingdon are in full swing. Plans have been finalised and will be submitted to the Board for approval next week. Starting next Monday, there will be an exhibition in Uxbridge Library and, following that, meetings will be held throughout Hillingdon. One hopes that the current turmoil in Government doesn't result in a halt to the procedure. Plans have been drawn up to move the Mount Vernon Cancer Centre to a new building at Watford General, plus a new chemotherapy unit at Hillingdon, but as yet, no money has been identified. In the meantime £7.5million has been allocated for backlog maintenance at Mount Vernon to improve conditions as Cancer Centre services there will probably continue for about another 5 years.

Service from our local Safer Neighbourhood Team is very sketchy. Lack of personnel means that we do not get the service we need. However, I must mention our PCSO John Usher. John has served Northwood since 2010 and I cannot praise him highly enough. He is always polite, willing and visible. Unfortunately, he does not always get the support he needs from his superiors. Yet again, we have been informed that the police are unable to attend this meeting.

The Platinum Jubilee celebration, held jointly with Northwood Hills RA was a great success. The weather was perfect, picnics and music enjoyed and even 7 bobbies turned up. Thanks to all who worked so hard to make the day so fantastic.

Committee members have continued to work hard on your behalf.

Miles Gillman has liaised with Ruislip Woods and dealt with all our publicity

Ros Plume has been a busy secretary answering all members' email/web queries. She reminds us that residents can use our website to send queries directly to the committee member responsible for the topic in question. As editor, she has continued to produce our excellent newsletter.

Rashmi Chauhan looks after our money.

Paul Barker keeps our road stewards in order, sends out emails to members who have registered their email addresses and distributes the newsletters to Area Road stewards. We currently have just under 2000 households as members. Regular communication with members is imperative so please do ensure that Paul has your current email address.

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Philip Green took over liaison with businesses recently. We currently have 33 paid up members

Andrew Egan deals with environment and is constantly in touch with Thames Water with regard to flooding.

Amir Lakha keeps us up to date on local health matters

One of our busiest members is Trevor Sherling. Since 1st October he has dealt with almost 200 planning applications and where it is necessary to protect neighbours' positions, he has objected to over 40 of them. He has spent many hours on the Old Police Station. We understand that Iron Aid has recently said that they are to submit additional information. We cannot comment further until we have seen this new information.

Hoda Lacey chairs the Police Northwood Ward Panel and liaises with the local police.

Peter Landsdown deals with Traffic and Highways. The comprehensive traffic study that was carried out 4 years ago has been kicked into the long grass because of lack of funds. The Council is due to hear 2 petitions about a pedestrian crossing at the traffic lights at the corner of Green Lane and Rickmansworth Road.

Sue Mansfield is our minutes secretary.

Frances Meyer resigned as Membership Secretary – thank you Frances for your many years of service. The young man I mentioned earlier has agreed to a trial period as Membership Secretary and will be co-opted onto the committee if this is successful.

Finally, no Chairman's report would be complete without a word of thanks to our Area Road Stewards and Road Stewards who deliver the newsletters, collect subscriptions and pass on gossip. Folks, you have heard me say many times that you are the main arteries of the NRA and without you, we would not exist. Thank you all – keep up the good work. There is a map in the foyer showing where we have a vacancies – so, if you are interested, please contact Paul Barker after the meeting. I cannot emphasise enough how important it is for us to have a full contingent of road stewards

Without further ado I will pass the meeting over to the Leader of the Council. There will be time for questions after his talk

CLLR IAN EDWARDS, Leader of Hillingdon Council

Cllr Edwards served as a Police Officer for 30 years and has been a Councillor since 2014. He took over as Leader early this year.

He began by commending the professionalism and hard work of Northwood Residents Association. Shown by the Jubilee event, which was supported by the borough as well as many street parties, which encouraged communities to come together.

He was glad they had a good working majority in the Council and are working to keep Hillingdon a low-cost authority. There is still a Covid impact and they intend to maintain spending on mental health, social care and isolation. They are seeing a 'squeeze' on income and have updated the 5-year budget plan so compared to 2021's £2.2bn it is now £3.8bn.

In February 2022 the plan needed £30m savings over 5 years, of which £25m were identified. That is now £60m and they will bring some of the savings forward, and some increase in Council Tax will be needed but it should be very much less than 10%. They will continue to look for more savings. Their record is of £11m pa over the last 10 years.

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Senior posts have been combined and their salaries cut. The recent reduction in councillors saves £1/3m.

The principle is to protect front line services and investment in facilities.

Weekly refuse collections will continue.

The borough aims to work more closely with the Police, and revamp handling of anti-social behaviour.

There are considerable gains to be made in better technology, though people who do not use technology will continue to be supported. A phone call to a person costs at least £1 to handle, but an on-line transaction costs pennies. More on-line reporting and payments will be used.

The Civic Centre, which costs £1.5m pa to heat and light, was built to house 2000 workers; there are now only 500 there, so outlying staff will be brought in and their premises repurposed.

Support for facilities will be maintained.

Electric vehicle chargers are being installed and the borough will ensure any profit from them comes to the borough. There will be investments in roads and pavements, when savings have been realised, mainly where they are major walking routes.

A new Leisure Centre will be built at West Drayton. Cranford Park will be revitalised.

The council will maximise the use of Housing revenue for tenants.

It is planned to share resources with neighbouring boroughs for efficiency.

The Chairman congratulated Cllr Edwards on maintaining services through the pandemic.

Questions:

Robert Silk asked what the future of libraries is. Cllr Edwards said Northwood Hills would get a new library and he was much in favour of libraries generally.

Bertie Savan asked about digital inclusion for less computer-literate residents. Cllr Edwards said they plan to make residents aware of opportunities and improve digital inclusion overall.

An unidentified woman opined that the Council concentrates on the south of the borough. Cllr Edwards denied that and pointed out Cross Rail has caused a lot of building work there.

Howard White asked if planning decisions took into account the number of houses in a road changing character at the same time. Cllr Higgins, of the Planning Committee, replied that they have to consider each application on its own merits.

Anna MacKenzie said too many mature trees are being cut down by builders who promise to replace them but do not. Cllr Edwards said the Council want to extend greenery and enforce replacement trees of appropriate size, not just whips which are then allowed to die.

Anne Temmink said the pavements at Roy Road and Hallowell Road are particularly bad. Cllr Lewis commented that that is a walking route through to the High Street.

Leo Manfredi asked about the Low Emission Zone. Cllr Edwards said air quality is important and he is against the ULEZ charter.

Tony Ellis asked for the Council's view on fly tipping. Cllr Edwards said it should be reported asap with photographs if possible.

Valerie Mellor gave Cllr Edwards a vote of thanks which was warmly endorsed by the meeting. She also thanked the other speakers at the meeting.

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ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Rashmi Chouhan presented the accounts which were approved unanimously. Subscription rates remain unchanged at a minimum of £2 per household and £10 per business. He pointed out the Association has considerable resources and asked for ideas for projects to benefit Northwood.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS. President Valerie Mellor conducted the election of the chairman, who then conducted the elections of the other officers. There being no new nominations for the officers' positions, the following were elected for the year with no one present dissenting:

Chairman – Tony Ellis; Vice Chairman – Miles Gillman; Treasurer – Rashmi Chauhan; Independent Examiner – Chris Rogers

ELECTION OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. The Chairman introduced each of the members standing for (re-)election. Those elected for the year, with no one present dissenting, are:

Paul Barker - membership and chief road steward
Andrew Egan - environment
Philip Green - business membership
Hoda Lacey – police liaison
Dr Amir Lakha – health matters
Peter Lansdown - traffic and highways
Ros Plume - secretary
Trevor Sherling - planning advisor
Sue Mansfield - minutes

ELECTION OF PRESIDENT Valerie Mellor was proposed as President. This was agreed with no one present dissenting.

NORTHWOOD LIBRARY

Robert Sisk, who took up the senior position three months ago, outlined the activities at the Library:

- Optimise shelf space by monthly reports on use of individual books.
- Supply refuse bags
- Longer hours, open at lunch times, and until 7 pm on Tuesdays
- Early-onset dementia group supported by the borough
- Children's chess club, supported by DoE helpers
- Reading Group
- Tiny Tales – twice a week for pre-school children
- 500 children every summer are encouraged to keep reading throughout the holidays
- Every last Saturday of the month: Meet Your Councillor, 10.30 – 11.30
- On-line apps free to Library users:
 - o to search for, reserve and renew books
 - o Borrow audio books – download to phone or computer
 - o Press reader – access to 600 UK newspapers and 1000s worldwide
 - o Which subscription
 - o 110 language classes
 - o Ancestry use
 - o Britannica
- Work spaces for students

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COUNCILLORS QUESTION TIME

Les Bater asked about fly tipping beside the Cancer Shop. Cllr Edwards said they should take enforcement action against the owners of the land, but the Council cannot just collect the rubbish or it would become a recognised tip. Rosemary Mastin enquired about rubbish left on roads after the main collection, as bags had been torn open by foxes etc. Cllr Edwards said his preferred solution was for the refuse vehicle driver to photograph the remains in the road and alert a street cleaner to make a special visit to clear it up. Also better to get residents to use green bins for food waste as then bags are less attractive to foxes.

Beverley White complained that she had had her dustbin stolen, and was advised to report it.

Richard Lewis thanked the organisers of the Jubilee Event. The Chairman particularly thanked Richard Plume for his enormous efforts for this, together with Ros Plume and other members of the Jubilee Committee.

AOB

John Buxton congratulated the Association for supplying the clock.

There being no further questions, the chairman thanked everyone for participating and closed the meeting at 21.45.