

Northwood Residents' Association

Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 20 April 2023 at
Oaklands Gate Methodist Church

PRESENT: 12 officers and members of the NRA executive committee, David Simmonds MP, and Cllrs Henry Higgins and Richard Lewis, and 73 resident / business members.

APOLOGIES: Sue Mansfield, Simon Kelly, Jon Marx, David Atkin, Jennifer O'Dwyer, Elaine Silove

INTRODUCTION

Tony Ellis, chairman, welcomed everyone to the 57th AGM of the NRA.

Unfortunately, our planned speaker, Colonel Read from Northwood HQ has recently had to cancel his engagement and apologised that he cannot find a replacement. Happily, we have an excellent alternative, MP David Simmonds.

I'd like to welcome Cllrs Henry Higgins and Richard Lewis who will answer your questions at the end of the meeting and members of our Safer Neighbourhood Team are also very welcome

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT:

You will have read in our latest newsletter that I have made an appeal for younger members to join our Executive Committee and I am very pleased to be able to report that two comparative youngsters, i.e. about half my age, have volunteered and will be introduced during the election process. The agenda states that we are seeking approval to extend our committee to 16 members. This will give us more flexibility. In particular, I would like someone to volunteer to liaise with our schools.

I cannot emphasise enough the important part that Road Stewards play in the efficient running of the NRA. Some of them are having to resign owing to anno domini. I would ask members to volunteer, please.

The main role is to deliver newsletters 3 times a year in their locality, to keep members' details up to date and to feed back any comments. It's a good way to meet your neighbours. If you are interested, please contact our chief road steward Paul Barker.

This is the 14th AGM I have chaired and, as no-one has volunteered to take over from me, I have offered to stand for my 15th year.

It has been a busy year. We celebrated the late Queen's Jubilee with a well-attended musical Jubilee in the Park, had several pop-up events where we have met residents and on a very cold evening before Christmas, we co-hosted a carols evening with Holy Trinity Church. In October I attended a presentation at the Royal Chelsea Hospital where, together with Northwood Hills RA, we were awarded with a Field Maple tree sapling which came from the Jubilee Tree of Trees. In January we attended a ceremony at Chestnut Avenue Recreation Ground where the Deputy Mayor planted the tree. The tree was presented in a silver-coloured, embossed urn which can be seen here on the platform. In conjunction with Northwood Hills RA we also purchased 4 trees which were planted next to the Jubilee tree.

A few words about the old police station. Along with many Northwood residents, we objected because of concerns relating to congestion and air pollution in what is already a very busy part of Northwood. This was also the view of the Council's Planning Committee who refused the application. We want to make it clear that we will raise the same concerns for any other community use of this location.

The recent large increase in parking charges was most unwelcome. It has a large impact on our neighbours in Hertfordshire and also Hillingdon residents. Our neighbouring Residents' Association, Eastbury, has carried out a survey which concluded that many of its residents no longer use Northwood and shop in Rickmansworth. To the detriment of Northwood's traders, Three Rivers and Harrow Councils now offer an hour's free parking. Unfortunately, Hillingdon Council is tone deaf to our pleas to offer a similar arrangement. I question whether the strapline "putting our residents first" is still justified.

Moving on to our local hospitals. Hillingdon Hospital's plans for the new build at Hillingdon are proceeding apace. The

Northwood Residents' Association

Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 20 April 2023 at
Oaklands Gate Methodist Church

plans were approved by Hillingdon Council and have been submitted to the London Mayor for approval. This is a rubber-stamping exercise. The hospital has received funding to move to the final stage of the detailed planning and formal approval is expected soon from Government. The four acute hospitals in north west London comprising Imperial Group which includes St Marys, Charing Cross and Hammersmith, Chelsea and Westminster which includes ChelWest and West Middlesex, North West London which includes Northwick Park and Central Middlesex and Hillingdon which includes Hillingdon and Mount Vernon have formed a collaborative to improve care to patients by maximising the use of facilities such as radiology and operating theatres. They have also decided to open a centre of excellence at Central Middlesex Hospital for routine orthopaedic operations. The Hillingdon part of Mount Vernon will continue to be fully used for many years to come. As you know, the Cancer Centre is hoping to move to new premises at Watford General but, as yet, no funding is in sight. In the meantime £7million is being spent to upgrade the old buildings which will be used for at least another 5 years.

As you will be aware, a judge has ruled that some local councils, including Hillingdon, can take the Mayor's decision to implement ULEZ to a judicial review. We have been told by some local business owners that the implementation of ULEZ will mean that some of their employees will have to seek employment elsewhere. The NRA Executive has formally objected to the implementation of ULEZ.

In past years we have complained about the quality of local policing. I'm happy to state that our local SNT has a new sergeant, Gareth Blackburn, who has made considerable improvements. We are also very grateful to our long-standing PCSO John Usher who continues to do a sterling job. As I mentioned in the latest edition of our newsletter, OWL is a very important tool for fighting crime. If you are not a participant, I would urge you to join. Details are in the foyer and in the newsletter.

Those of you that have registered your email addresses with us will be accustomed to receiving regular communications from us. Many residents aren't registered and miss out on these communications. If you are one of the latter, please do register with our Chief Road Steward.

As usual, we ask you to continue to support our local shops and services. A thriving High Street is essential to the wellbeing of Northwood.

We are near to completion of implementing a new computer database. We are indebted, in particular, to Chief Road Steward Paul Barker who has burnt the midnight oil doing the necessary groundwork.

Lastly, I'd like to express my thanks to and admiration for Ros Plume who continues to produce our newsletter. I think you will agree with me that she does a splendid job. Thanks Ros.

Now it's my pleasure to invite David Simmonds to address us. He will also answer questions for about 10 minutes.

DAVID SIMMONDS MP

Noted that there are strong communities in this constituency, with considerable contributions made by local residents' associations, being particularly engaged with councillors and the NHS etc.

This year has been much affected by Putin's invasion of Ukraine increasing the cost of living, and keeping up the pressure already imposed by Covid. Parliament's work included:

- Support for the national economy, businesses and households
- NHS recovery from the stress of Covid and positive comments have been received on access to NHS services
- ULEZ – originally intended to improve poor air quality in central London, but inappropriate for many outer London boroughs with far less pollution. It will impose an unfair impact on lower paid workers and emergency service workers. The expansion has not been planned or thought through. David Simmonds has produced a written amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration bill currently going through the House of Lords to say that the consent of the local area must be obtained before ULEZ can be implemented.

Northwood Residents' Association

Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 20 April 2023 at
Oaklands Gate Methodist Church

In fact, Heathrow is the main source of pollution in Hillingdon, and ULEZ is not relevant to that.

Local issues included:

- The Police Station. After information from Trevor Sherling of NRA, David Simmonds wrote to the Planning Department to ask them to take traffic considerations fully into account in their assessment. In his opinion the building is not suitable for a community centre because of the traffic and access needs.
- David Simmonds has held surgeries, visited local schools and organisations, he hoped that the community spirit would come out for Coronation celebrations
- Work is now under way at the Cottage Hospital
- David Simmonds is aware of changes at the Royal Mail office
- The Football Club does excellent work in making the game available for local youngsters, and Cllr Higgins has helped them with several issues including parking.
- The tennis courts in Chestnut Avenue are being refurbished
- Mount Vernon has bright future for a long time, with some functions being rationalised.

David Simmonds thanked the Chairman and the Committee for the enormous amount of work done, often behind the scenes, and the Councillors who give good service to locals in Northwood.

Questions:

Pat Collis asked whether anything has been done to help the Muslim population of Northwood find accommodation for their community centre. She was told that a new development in Harefield is proposed.

Alvan Seth-Smith asked about a new bus service between Northwood and the Hillingdon Hospital. The councillors may wish to comment on this with their access to the London Mayor.

President Valerie Mellor gave David Simmonds a vote of thanks which was warmly endorsed by the meeting. She also suggested he could use his meetings with schools to promote knowledge of Residents' Associations. She recommended signing up to his newsletter, which shows what a 'power house' he is.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Rashmi Chauhan 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 this year paid over £2000 for:

- a donation to MHA Communities, Northwood for a seaside holiday
- a new gazebo
- two new trees at the recreation ground
- A Road Stewards Reception

In addition, £1000 to Radio Mount Vernon to pay for new equipment

He asked for further 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:

Northwood Residents' Association

Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 20 April 2023 at
Oaklands Gate Methodist Church

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
Vijay Kotecha - membership
Rajen Shah - IT

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

PROPOSAL TO INCREASE THE SIZE OF THE COMMITTEE

The request to increase from 14 to 16 was approved unanimously.

COUNCILLORS QUESTION TIME

Tony Ellis noted that the potential Muslim members hoping to use the Police Station building are now going back to the URC church in Hallowell Road, as the Joel Street URC is for sale.

Anna MacKenzie asked why there appeared to be no progress on her proposal last year to improve the ground outside the Green Lane Car Park. Cllr Henry Higgins has been chasing this and was recently promised costings soon. He said he would pursue the matter with Council officers.

Anna MacKenzie asked why developers appear to be able to take down listed trees. Cllr Higgins replied that the Planning department is mindful of the need for their protection and in one case 14 trees had been permitted to be taken down if 24 were put up in the area instead. Tony Ellis noted that the NRA objects to every tree that has a TPO being cut down or reduced. 60% of these applications are however approved.

Dennis Sare asked for assurance that the NRA will object to Northwood College's application to have floodlights on until 11pm. Cllr Higgins noted that as he is the Chairman of the Planning Committee he cannot comment at this meeting on a specific application. Trevor Sherling said the NRA has objected to the proposed Sunday use.

A question referred to the proposed Police Station development, and it was firmly pointed out that the opposition was solely on the grounds of traffic and air pollution, nothing to do with religion.

Valerie Mellor asked why parking permits are now charged for Hillingdon residents at £75 pa, when they used to be free. Cllr Lewis replied that Council Tax rate for a Band D house is at least £250 cheaper in Hillingdon than in surrounding authorities, and that the money is hypothecated to pay for the cost of administering the permits.

Ann Temmink asked why nothing has been done about pavements in Roy Road and Hallowell Road, despite many problems and asking about them at last Year's AGM. Cllr Higgins was sympathetic and said he had tried hard to get this issue resolved, but was told that officers had inspected the pavements and reported that they are not critical. Tony Ellis said pavements in Kewferry Road and Moor Park Road also need attention and that the council has said they are up to standard. Tony asked the councillors to obtain details of these standards, hoping that something can be done before the elderly population of Northwood is harmed and sues the council.

Philip Green, representing the Northwood businesses, said the businesses are very concerned about car parking charges and ULEZ, and they are suffering. Also, the Green Lane car park gets a lot of noise and criminal acts are performed there as there is no policing after dark.

Northwood Residents' Association

Minutes of the AGM held on Thursday 20 April 2023 at
Oaklands Gate Methodist Church

Cllr Lewis said that crime in Northwood has not had a major increase. Hoda Lacey pointed out that burglaries in the Gatehill estate have gone up 22%. Cllr Lewis agreed a recent spike in crime. Hoda pointed out there is drug taking but people are afraid to take photographs. Cllr Lewis said they have set the Ward Panel priorities, to align them with the issues of burglaries and anti-social behaviour, and the police have said the third is domestic violence against women. Tony Ellis queried whether Ward Panel priorities are communicated upward, as there is no feedback. The new Superintendent's recent talk did not have concrete facts about what is being done. David Simmonds suggest we invest in magnetic signs the police can put on the hire cars they are obliged to use, to show residents that they are in the area. Philip Green pointed out David Simmonds had recently said there is £15,000 in the ward budget which can be applied for.

Miles Gillman asked about a missing speed camera on the Rickmansworth Road, can councillors put pressure on to get it replaced? Cllr Lewis said these are moved around the borough. He will enquire when we can get it back.

Des Sullivan asked about the shuttle bus service between Northwood and Hillingdon Hospital. Tony Ellis said it is an hourly service paid for by hospitals, primarily for staff movements, but always there is room for patients too. And Hillingdon Hospital is talking to TfL about a new service with future new hospital.

Des Sullivan then asked about speeding in the Rickmansworth Road. This is police matter, and often it turns out to be local residents speeding recklessly.

Caroline Young asked what she should do with probable drug offence photos she has taken from her kitchen window. Cllr Higgins asked to see them.

Chris Ireland noted that the pavements beside the Golf Club are also in a bad state. Cllr Higgins agreed it is a TfL responsibility but they will pass it on.

Vanessa Edwards stated that our Councillors are only as good as the officers they send reports to. Social care is not good enough and Hillingdon Council is not listening or accountable.

Bob Batchelor, having been the Chairman of the Residents Association for a year, said he is staggered that Tony Ellis has done this for fourteen years and praised him and the other volunteers for the work they do.

John King asked about the bump in Eastbury Road. Cllr Higgins said he has reported it. John then asked about discarded parking tickets, could the car registration number be put on the ticket to identify the culprits?

Ann Temmink said there are too many nail bars and estate agents and such in Green Lane. Can we control the businesses that open up. Cllr Lewis noted that retail is changing with far more shopping on line affecting all high streets. Cllr Higgins noted that some, such as the Health Food shop, also do a lot of on-line business. Ann then noted that many children today cannot identify trees, could the NRA label them? Miles Gillman said Northwood College are keen to encourage children's knowledge and they are taking over the notice boards in the Gravel Pits.

Brian Greenan raised a concern that the Police Station could now go on fire, after Planning Permission has been refused. Cllr Higgins said that the Planning Committee had told the owners of the building they have a duty of care to the listed building. Cllr Lewis said he had met with the owners who are very aware of the importance of the building and concerned to care for it.

Tony Ellis described the OWL communication facility, and said it was a very valuable facility which only 30% of our residents are using and encouraged everybody to use the newsletter to find out how.

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