

Downe Residents' Association - Annual General Meeting

29 March 2019 – Minutes

Meeting opened at 7.36pm
Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence

Dan & Marjorie Kelly, Neil Alcorn & Sally Wells, Sarah and Al Shaw

2. Adoption of 2018 minutes

Proposed: Tony Dixon. Seconded: Zoe Knight. Against: none (unanimously carried).

3. Matters arising (Only items not included elsewhere in the agenda): None.

4. Chair's Report

Through the year

Planning

28 planning applications reviewed through the year (to 4 March). We helped a number of locals – in particular we objected to a development in North End Lane, which helped towards refusal. A sub-committee reviews all planning applications for the area – as received and shared with the committee by Bromley Council. The sub-committee aim to be totally impartial and treat all applications in the same manner. The principle underlying the sub-committee's work is:

- The sub-committee review each planning application with a view to checking that it conforms to planning regulations. There are two outcomes from the committee:
 1. No comment - if the sub-committee believe the application complies with planning regulations, or
 2. The sub-committee make observations to Bromley Council on areas of a given planning application that are, or appear to be, outside planning regulations. In this sense, the sub-committee purely remind Bromley Council planners of their own regulations.

Brief details of all planning applications are circulated on Downe Mailing (once per month), and also shown on the Planning page of the Downe website.

Downe Mailing

Numbers have stayed steady through the year. Highest "opens" are generally for crime e-mails (60 – 70%) followed by roads issues. Content is focused on issues relevant to Downe and the immediate area; "wanted ads" generally not posted - can be dealt with individually on Facebook or Nextdoor, etc.

Facebook

Downe Village Facebook page has now over 300 members. Excellent for those who want to post their own material. Historic pictures a recent theme.

Website

Home page has main events coming up, and carries pictures and text of recent events. Pages for Village Hall, DRA, Village Club, Orchard, Planning applications, village calendar, and lots more; plus help page.

Meetings

DRA has had meetings with Down House (Bryony Blackburn), Biggin Hill (college plans), Bromley Council (budget), Federation (monthly), Friends of Downe School (Chris Tucker).

Costs

The running cost of the DRA is £300 pa (covers website, domain names, Mailchimp, AGM, Federation of Bromley RA's membership)

April

- Shire Lane - after much lobbying of Bromley Council over the disruption caused in Downe by Shire Lane roadworks, we had a real win when the Council agreed to conduct the re-surfacing work overnight.
- The "GDPR" - came into force in May affecting the holding of personal data – an extension of Data Protection Act 1998. A privacy policy was written and approved by the management committee for DRA (on website).
- The Village Hall and the Downe Lottery also have a Data Privacy policy in place.

May

- Loose dogs - The DRA wrote to the owners of the dogs involved. Hopefully had an effect as they have not been seen loose for a long time.
- Constitution - a new version of the DRA constitution was approved by a vote at an "EGM" in May. This updating of the previous one from 1978, enables us to do things like apply for grants, apply for ACV, etc. Key change is there must be a "non-distribution" clause.
- Lime tree – the DRA arranged for watering points for the Lime tree in the village centre. It was felt that it was drying out. Kind villagers have also been watering via these points.
- May Queen – the DRA arranged for road wardens for the May Queen procession.

June

- ACV was re-submitted by DRA. Originally submitted by CAMRA, they felt it was too time consuming. The DRA took it on, but needed a revised constitution. Forms need to be filled in specifying why it is an asset to the community, the names of 20 locals supplied as supporting, and Land Registry documents submitted.
- ACV gives an extra level of planning protection – enables the community to stop any planning application (e.g. change of use to residential purposes) for 6 months while they consider what to do (e.g. community bid).
- ACV approved at an "Officer Panel" in November.

July

- Village Information board - a DRA bid for £6,500 to the NLHF failed twice. Firstly due to an inadequate constitution, secondly the case was not strong enough.
- Third application being drawn up – with much help from Down House, and a change of emphasis to "Darwin's Village". Work continues.

August

- Orchard bench - DRA worked with Friends of Downe Orchard, to identify and progress the installation. Much discussion (and delay) with iDverde (Bromley Council countryside contractors), but with the help of willing volunteers, the

bench (paid for by the “good causes” pot of the Downe Lottery) was installed - on a very hot couple of days!

- HGVs – following a DRA campaign (via Downe Mailing) to report HGVs to Bromley Council that had no purpose in the village, the Council were requested to install a number of blue “Unsuitable for HGVs” signs.
- Road safety - Steve became a founder member of a new residents’ pressure group – “Bromley Living Streets” to encourage Bromley Council to take on board residents’ concerns over traffic volumes and speeds, encourage public transport, walking and cycling, encourage a cleaner environment, etc.
- Biggin Hill airshow - DRA negotiated discounted Biggin Hill airshow tickets for residents. The icing on the cake was the ability to use the “VIP” entrance and car parking via West Hill/Milking Lane. Over 100 tickets sold (from memory).

September

- HGVs - 2 poles went up - junction of Shire Lane with High Elms Road and junction with North End Lane. Only one sign - at High Elms Road - the other never arrived. Fix My Street use to report this (now resolved). Five signs were originally requested, and the Council have been chased for the last six months for the others (or at least a valid reason why not). Others wanted at Holwood, Berry’s Green and Church Hill, Cudham.

November

- Remembrance - hopefully the village were pleased with our impressive remembrance display in the village centre/churchyard – commemorating 100 years since the armistice. Included:
 1. Buying and installing a “Tommy” silhouette (anonymous benefactor)
 2. Large street poppies - via donations to the Royal British Legion (anonymous benefactor)
 3. Small wooden crosses
 4. Wreaths
 5. A wonderful hand-constructed poppy display around the tree and a “river” of poppies on the church wall
 6. The Village Club and the Downe Lottery both kindly donated towards the costs.
- DRA represented at Bromley Council Round Table – held annually. A chance to hear Bromley plans for budget and spend and a chance to make views known.

December

- A road safety report/proposal written to address two things:
 1. Inappropriate HGVs in the village – already raised with Bromley Council.
 2. A proposal to lower speed limits in the village - 30mph in the lanes, and 20mph in the High St, and school area of High Elms Road.

January

RajDoot closed down. Previous lease (with Shah) was cancelled in December due to non-payment to the freeholders. New folks negotiated with Shah to start it up again (and pay Shah) before finding out he was not the lessee. Open for a month – to good reviews – before being closed down by the freeholder. DRA wrote to both of the parties solicitors (on behalf of the residents) urging them to come to an agreement to re-open the restaurant. Latest situation - new lease discussions progressing.

March

"Asset of Community Value" on the two pubs formally notified as being listed by Bromley Council

Q&A

Sylvia Snipp: In terms of Downe Mailing, is there someone that has secondary responsibility?

Chair: No, but suggest move toward having another person with secondary responsibility at some point.

Chair: Has anyone seen the loose dogs again (as reported in May)?

Tony Dixon and John Isbell reported seeing one of them (the Rottweiler) has since been seen in Rookery Villas and the home of John Isbell in the last 2 weeks.

Chair: Any further interest in residents tickets for 2019 Biggin Hill airshow?

A: A show of hands indicated that a further request for residents' tickets for Biggin Hill airshow to be put in.

Valerie Benington: Any news on the Teashop?

Chair: Understand the lease agreement was withdrawn from Katrina. Current owner has plans to turn some of the building into residential accommodation.

5. Treasurer's Report

Tony Dixon, Treasurer, presented the accounts.

Noted the activity shown as 'ordinary account' and those considered as 'extraordinary'; resulting in £429.06 loss for the year.

Q&A

Bridget Robbie: Can cost of village hall hire be reduced?

Tony Dixon: No, we need to take a holistic view of the village income, we should not be seeking for discount to the standard charges.

To Adopt the chair's report and accounts:

Proposed: John Isbell. Seconded: Dave Evans. Against: none (unanimously carried).

6. Election of the committee

Chair thanked the retiring committee, with special mention and thanks to Mike Bingold, Nigel Andrews and Alan Perry who were standing down

The following members are seeking re-election:

Dave Evans, John Isbell, Rev. John Musson, Steve Barnes, Abigail Rutherford, Kerry Judd, Simon Farron, Tony Dixon, Kwan Phung.

Chair invited new members to stand for election. None at this time.

En-bloc vote

Proposed: Bruce Anderson. Seconded: Bridget Robbie. Against: none (unanimously carried)

7. Motion to support Green Belt Policy

Over many years Downe Residents have been asked to re-affirm support for Green Belt Policy and the Downe Village Conservation Area. The meeting was asked to re-affirm the established mandate:

- To oppose development within the Metropolitan Green Belt which is contrary to Green Belt Policy and Bromley's UDP, and now The Local Plan (draft).
- Avoid development within the Downe Village Conservation Area which does not preserve or enhance its character.

Proposed: Howard Cheswick. Seconded: Dave Witherspoon. Against: none (unanimously carried)

8. Councillor Richard Scoates

Cllr Scoates outlined the increase in the council tax for the year being 5.99% (2.99% increase plus additional 2% adult social care precept). Noted that Bromley still one of the lowest council taxes in London despite receiving one of the lowest central government grants. Council tax represents a small proportion of council funding, c. 25%, hence budget cuts (given one size fits all policy) is affecting Bromley disproportionately.

A key role of the council is to develop planning policies that are suitable for the local area. The local plan is in draft and addresses Green Belt protection and new home targets. The target for new homes is currently 650 each year and policy is to build in the north of the borough to fulfil commitments. The Mayor of London is currently behind his target and feels that Bromley being the biggest borough should have a higher portion of the target (>1,200 dwellings per annum). This has led to the increase in high rise apartment blocks in Bromley. Cllr Scoates mentioned that not much has been done by way of improving associated infrastructure; this is something to be monitored.

HGVs: Concern that new road signs may be of limited impact given drivers simply follow Sat Navs. HGVs required to assist the local farming community are welcome.

New CEO at Biggin Hill. Issues with noise coming from the airport is best raised via the App.

Q&A

Q: Has the new plan (to build 1,200+ homes) been accepted? (Dave Evans)

A: The local plan has been challenged by a developer and so it's status is uncertain. The UDP is in force. The result of the challenge may be that the new homes target is increased.

Q: Has there been any analysis done to mark the current population figures to that that was forecast? Question driven by recent experience in Sevenoaks where population growth was lower than forecast. (Rita Radford)

A: No.

Q: Does the council monitor flight movements at Biggin Hill? (Bruce Andersen)

A: No, Biggin Hill are required to perform within their remit, any noise complaints are recommended to go via the noise reporting App.

Q: Do the new housing targets specify the type of housing to be provided? (Sylvia Snipp)

A: No however big developments are required to include 40% social housing.

Q: The orchard listed as a 'local green space' but no others nominated? (Zoe Knight)

A: Yes, nominations can be made as the process is ongoing.

Q: Any development in the pipeline for Chelsfield Lakes / Hewitts Farm? (Dave Evans)

A: None yet. It is green belt and any application would likely to be categorically refused. There is evidence of foreign entities buying up green belt land opportunistically, however, the land remains protected being part of the green belt.

9. Guest Speaker – Kim Durham of Down House

Kim Durham provided a different perspective of Downe's association with Charles Darwin by providing a history of his relationship with the famous Wedgwood family (his wife was Emma Wedgwood). Presentation of how Wedgwood became the household name it is starting with the creation of the "Portland vase" (exhibited in the British museum). The new £2 coin released this year commemorates Wedgwood.

10. New Constitution

The chair reported that Version 1 adopted by EGM on 15 May 18. Bringing the document up to date was necessary to reflect requirement of bodies we deal with eg. Heritage lottery to whom we applied for a grant, and the council to apply for ACV status for the village pubs. At the EGM shortcomings of version 1 were brought to our attention by resident legal experts and we agreed to reflect these and present an amended version

Version 2 incorporates these amendments has been available to view on website

- Provision to allow an EGM to be called when requested by 10 members included (as per original constitution)
- Wording included to make it clear as to how the committee is elected
- Notice of an GM by email removed to improve inclusivity
- Aims and objectives changed to be those of all members and not just the committee
- Inconsistency rectified with regard to notice required for GMs, now 14 days for both EGM and AGM
- Some wording changes to improve clarity
- Documented formatted for ease of reference

A further amendment relating to independent examination of the DRA accounts was received too late for inclusion and would be held for a future revision of the constitution. In the interests of best practice we propose however that the Accounts are none the less subject to an Independent Examination

To agree version 2 of the constitution - Proposed: Bob Wren. Seconded: Tony Dixon. Against: none (unanimously carried)

11. Any other business

- Julian Bennington (friend of St. Mary's) stated their AGM will take place 10-May; the committee is responsible for preserving the fabric of the church. Currently funds total approx. £11,000 for the refurbishment needs of the church. In 2020, St. Mary's hope to provide open days, tours and tea events.
- Sylvia Snipp: Consider making the village a dementia friendly village. Chair stated the DRA will look into this.
- Valerie Bennington: Consider starting Sunday teas again in order to provide income for DRA. DRA to consider means of fund raising.

The meeting closed at 9.08pm