

Minutes of Heatherside Ward Residents Association Meeting

(23rd January 2017 7.45 p.m. Pine Ridge)

Present

Committee members - Kirsty North, Caroline Hibberd, Katherine Sargent, Rev. Larry Bain

Co-opted committee members - Andy Ward, Peter Ludlow

Heatherside Tree Warden - Phil Green

Heatherside Ward Surrey Heath Borough Councillors – Paul Ilnicki, Ian Cullen, Jonathan Lytle

Surrey County Councillor – David Ivison

Surrey Heath Borough Council Officers - Paul Watts (Tree Officer) and Steve Harris (Greenspaces Team)

Surrey Heath Borough Council Planning Committee representative - Edward Hawkins

Approximately 50 local residents

Agenda Items

1) Welcome and Introductions

Kirsty welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for attending. She noted that the meeting was well attended in comparison to previous ones.

2) Update from the chair on previous and upcoming events

Kirsty gave an update on the Christmas activities which the association had hosted around the Christmas tree. She thanked those who had been involved in providing the tree and lights etc. and those who had helped with the Christmas events - Andy Ward, Scott Green, Phil G, Grant Newman, Rezaul Laskar, the Staff and children of Heather Ridge School and their parents, David Ivison, Rev Larry Bain and Dr Williams. There was loud support from the audience for the Christmas festivities.

Kirsty also spoke about the table top sale HWRA are running on the 25th March. We are looking for stallholders for this event. Either selling craft items or any unwanted belongings you may wish to sell. Unfortunately, if we don't get enough interest for this then the event may not go ahead. If you would like to have a table please contact us either at our Facebook page or at heathersidewra@gmail.com.

3) Presentation from Surrey Heath Borough Council on the Wellingtonia Avenue works

Paul Watts and Steve Harris very kindly agreed to come along and talk to us about the ongoing works on the Wellingtonia Avenue. Paul is the Arboricultural Officer at the council and Steve is the Greenspaces Team Leader.

The works to clear the land between the Wellingtonias and remove the younger trees and shrubs which have grown up are something which the council have been hoping to do for some time. It was explained that the council had previously received quotes of between £50K-£60K. However, Glendale who are the main greenspace contractors at Surrey Heath had offered a one off price of £7k to do the work. This was far too good a price to turn down so the go ahead was given to begin the project. Although some notice was given to local residents, the short timescale between agreeing to the work and it beginning meant that residents couldn't have been told about it earlier.

There was a question from the audience at this point as to what justification there was for the large scale land clearance and vegetation removal. Paul and Steve explained that the council were trying to restore the avenue to the way it was originally intended to be, as a significant historic feature in the landscape. They explained that it held particular historic value due to the age of the trees and was originally planted in 1865. They also highlighted that while they had received some complaints about the work the overwhelming feeling from the comments they had received had been supportive.

Paul and Steve explained that the works which have been carried out so far are not yet finished. There are still further works to be done. The next stage will be the removal of a dangerous lightning damaged tree adjacent to Inglewood Avenue and Englesfield which requires a licence for road closure. This work should hopefully happen in the next few weeks. Other work will include further clearance of vegetation and removal of ivy and bamboo which have encroached on the area. Remaining branches and debris will be removed and the area will be flail mown twice a year to discourage the regrowth of what has been removed. Time will be allowed for the ground to settle and also to see what plants grow now there is more light in the area but ultimately the plan is to sow the area with a wildflower and grass mixture.

There were a number of questions about the way in which wildlife has been affected by the works. Several residents expressed concern that the wholesale destruction had been responsible for the death of hedgehogs and other animals and that it had removed an important area of habitat. The officers said they hadn't personally witnessed any animals in the area but acknowledged that the works were likely to have caused disruption to some wild creatures. They explained that they were working with Harper Asprey Wildlife Rescue and the Hedgehog Society to ensure areas were left for animals to use and also to try and minimise further disruption. They were asked whether any environmental studies had been carried out and confirmed that there had been reports made prior to the work. A request was made for

these to be made available to local residents and they agreed to see if this was possible.

There were several complaints from members of the audience about the present state of the path which runs down the middle of the avenue. At present it is a muddy, boggy mess which is not fit for use. Ultimately the plan is for the path to be bark chipped to make it far more accessible but the path falls under the responsibility of Surrey County Council rather than the borough council so there are some discussions ongoing. The point was made to Steve and Paul that the path wasn't in this state when the work began and that perhaps it wasn't unreasonable for us to expect the contractors to clear up the mess they had left behind! They agreed with this and said there was still more clearing up to do. In addition to this they were asked who was responsible for litter picking in the area and clarified that this was also the responsibility of the Glendale maintenance team.

A number of residents expressed a wish for more consultation with residents on projects like this. It was explained that there had been consultation with the ward councillors but that it was impractical to try and speak to all residents individually. Paul Innicki highlighted that he had been aware of the proposed project for some time and that he was happy to take forward any points that were raised to the borough council as necessary.

A couple of questions were asked about the safety of the trees in the avenue and whether there were any plans to limit the height of the Wellingtonia trees, also whether they might be subject to wind damage now due to the removal of the undergrowth. Paul explained that there was no certainty as to how high the trees would grow. However, all the trees are examined on a regular basis and the removal of extra vegetation around their bases should make this process far easier. One resident pointed out that there are a number of branches on a tree which he feels are dangerous and asked if these could be further inspected. The tree which is currently lying in the avenue is currently being left in situ as evidence of stag beetle activity had been reported. However ultimately the plan is to remove it. There were several pleas from members of the audience for it to be left as many children enjoy playing in this area.

The issue of tree preservation orders (TPO's) was briefly touched upon. The officers clarified that the only trees in the Wellingtonia Avenue area covered by a TPO were the Wellingtonias themselves so the removal of any other trees had been perfectly legal. The officers agreed that the TPO section on the Surrey Heath website is unclear and difficult to understand but that changes are planned which mean hopefully it should soon be easier to interrogate and understand the data presented on the maps. Paul kindly offered to come to another HWRA meeting in the future to explain and discuss TPO's in greater detail.

If anyone has an issue with the works being carried out or requires guidance on TPO's they can contact Paul and Steve by email at paul.watts@surreyheath.gov.uk and steve.harris@surreyheath.gov.uk We also have Phil Green our tree warden on Heatherside who can provide advice and who can be contacted at phil@stumpandgrind.co.uk

4) Youth Club Initiative

A local resident Amanda Hackett gave a presentation to the meeting about a youth club that she is hoping to set up on Heatherside. She had brought her son and some of his friends to help explain why they feel this facility is badly needed.

At the moment there is very little for teenagers to do in the area in the evenings. Smaller children, adults and the elderly all have dedicated activities and clubs but there is nothing for young people. It's particularly an issue in the winter as there is nowhere for them to really hang out. We have an excellent skate/scooter ramp in the park but there is no lighting here so it cannot be used once it is dark. The idea for a youth club has been partly prompted by complaints of teenagers hanging around the shopping area. Amanda explained that the vast majority were good kids who just wanted somewhere to go rather than troublemakers.

Consequently, she is proposing to set up a youth club which will hopefully run in the community centre. The idea is that the teenagers will be involved in helping run it and able to suggest ideas for activities. Amanda is exploring the possibility of working with an organisation called Eikon who run similar clubs locally. She is looking for support and involvement from the local community to get the idea off the ground. There were a number of questions as to the target age group and the planned activities. Amanda explained that she was planning on aiming it at the 11-16 age group and that activities might include scooter workshops, beauty demo's, first aid, cookery, DIY skills, talks from the police, drug awareness talks, music plus the opportunity to relax and chat to friends in a warm environment.

The question of lights in the scooter park was raised. Apparently when the ramps were first installed there had been some lighting but this was vandalised and removed as a result. Various possibilities were put forward for replacement of these lights and Steve Harris said he might be able to do something to help if the council were approached.

The teenagers explained their passion for scootering but that at present they cannot scoot in the dark as there are broken bottles etc which present a hazard to them. They also asked if parents of younger children could please make sure they are safe if they are playing over on the ramps, especially if they are using it to slide down as this put them in danger from scooters. They said that if any younger children wanted to learn how to use the ramps they would be more than happy to try and help and teach them. They also said there are some areas of the ramps which are becoming dangerous and it was suggested that although the parks are all regularly inspected anything like this should be reported directly to SHBC.

Kirsty mentioned that until a year or so ago there had been a sign in the park which gave a number to ring to report any issues. However this sign had been removed. The councillors were asked if they could find out why this had gone as the possibility of a replacement. Jonathan agreed to try and find out. It was also suggested that perhaps a sign could be placed

on the skate ramp which stated no sliding.

If anyone would like to get in contact to suggest help, ideas or find out more you can contact Amanda at amandahackett@ymail.com

5) Councillor Updates

a) County Councillor

David Ivison spoke at length about the proposed 15% rise in Council Tax that Surrey County Council are intending to add to the bills from April. He explained that the need for the increase was a result of the increasing cost of children's services, learning disability funding and adult social care. Over the next 3 years there will be a shortfall of £31 million this year, £41 million next year and £73 million the following year. Surrey County Council have made savings of £459 million over the past 4 years, £90 million this year but the costs are outstripping the funds available. He explained that the proposed rise is the result of cuts in funding to SCC from central government and that increasing council tax 1% would raise £6.2 million but that this is a tiny amount relative to the £1.7 billion pound SCC total budget. SCC have reserves of £59.8 million allocated but this only leaves £21 million in reserve. He warned that if the increase doesn't go ahead non-vital services may have to be cut such as libraries and waste tips.

David explained that they are allowed to implement an increase of up to 5% (3% general plus 2% adult social care) but any more than this requires agreement from a majority of residents. There will be a referendum to decide this on the 4th May which is the same day at the county council elections. By combining the two votes it reduces costs rather than holding a separate vote. However, because government legislation requires a bill to be issued before the start of the new financial year the bills for next year will be sent out with the 15% increase included. If the referendum vote is no then the increase will be capped at 5% and bills will have to be reissued. He warned that a no vote could potentially see similar increases and referendums over the next few years.

He was asked whether the money raised would be definitely ringfenced for the services mentioned above where there was the greatest need however he was unable to guarantee this. Members of the audience also wanted to know why this has only just been announced and he explained that the budgets couldn't be finalised until the figures for the central government grants were announced. He explained that because Surrey is considered an affluent area we receive a far lower amount in central grants per head than many other areas of the country and as a result SCC have to raise far more money from the residents than other areas. This is why Surrey is having to propose such a large raise while other areas aren't.

b) Borough Councillors

Jonathan Lytle and the other councillors updated us on a number of issues.

PSPO's

The consultation on Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPO's) has now closed. However the councillors are still keen to hear views on the proposed areas. The full details can be seen here <http://www.surreyheath.gov.uk/council/consultations/public-spaces-protection-orders-consultation>

The point was made that the proposed location of the zone to implement controlled Alcohol and Psychoactive Substances (formerly known as legal highs) did not cover the area around the toilet block and the skate park which are both known areas for antisocial behaviour.

The councillors also asked whether residents would support the extension of the Proposed zone to implement enhanced Dog Control Powers to cover all highway areas in Heatherside. Audience members pointed out that these areas are already areas where you can be fined for not picking up after your dog. Larry and Caroline explained that as they understand it the idea of these zones is to enable on the spot fines which can be issued by a wider range of people than at present. Various residents highlighted the Wellingtonia Avenue as a hot spot for dog fouling and asked that the zone be increased to include this area in particular.

If you have any comments or suggestions to make please get in touch with one of the councillors.

Proposed Boundary Commission Changes

At the last meeting potential ward boundary changes had been discussed. The reasoning behind this was to potentially reduce the number of SHBC councillors from 40 to 34. To summarise, two proposals had been put forward to the Boundary Commission which would affect Heatherside.

The first was for some parts of Heatherside to transfer to Parkside ward which would result in a reduction in the number of Heatherside ward councillors from 3 to 2.

The second proposal was to increase Heatherside ward to include areas of Copped Hall (some of which had previously been part of Heatherside anyway). This would reduce the size of Parkside and increase Heatherside. Heatherside would therefore retain 3 councillors and Parkside would reduce to 2.

At the time of the meeting this was still being considered however, the following day the Boundary Commission published the results of their deliberations and are proposing to go with the latter of the two options. More details on this may be seen here.

<https://www.lgbce.org.uk/current-reviews/south-east/surrey/surrey-heath>

Deepcut Development Update

The next set of planning applications are likely to be received this spring. These would give an expected building start date of late 2017/early 2018. The delays have been a consequence of the original building contractor pulling out. The design code for the site will also be finalised over the coming months - this specifies the types of housing design and so on. Knotweed removal is continuing. The delay in the military moving out and the security fence being removed coupled with the delay in the start of construction means the proposed primary school will also be delayed. The number of houses that can be built is limited until this goes ahead. At the moment the project is something of a waiting game.

Playground Update

The annual independent play inspections have been completed and the report received. The report identifies not only current risks, future maintenance advice but also life expectancy of the equipment in each of the parks in the borough. The report is providing a basis for identification of works and priorities for which playgrounds should be considered. Specific details for each park are yet to be confirmed with consultation with the community being key to securing a proposal of works. Once this process is complete, and funding secured, works can be procured and undertaken. Cheylesmore is within the parks prioritised as requiring works.

Halloween Howler Update

This was well attended by the local community with no specific complaints or concerns raised about the event itself with the exception of one complaint from a resident who lives next to the park suggesting that they should receive a council tax reduction because of the event. The event operator has expressed an interest in holding a similar event next year, the dates for which are to be confirmed.

HWRA also received this complaint and as a result asked residents how they felt about the event. With the exception of this one complaint everyone was overwhelmingly supportive. This information along with positive supporting comments from the Police were fed back to the gentlemen who complained.

6) Community Safety Update

Unfortunately our PCSO's were unable to make it to the meeting. Larry gave an update on an incident where he had disturbed a man who was setting off loud fireworks on the recreation ground late at night. He said this was not a one off occurrence but that he hoped it would deter

him in future.

Leaflets were also distributed about Neighbourhood Watch schemes in the area. If you want to get involved with these then please contact <http://www.surreyheathnw.co.uk/>

If you need to contact the local PCSO's contact details for Vince and Sian can be found on our website <http://heathersidewra.weebly.com/contacts.html>

11) Date of the next meeting

The next meeting is planned for the 24th April. The agenda will be published in advance on Facebook, Streetlife, the HWRA website and by email to those on our contact list If you'd like to be added to this please contact us at heathersidewra@gmail.com. Please let us know if there's anything you'd like to see on the agenda.

12) AOB

School quiz night

The Friends of Heather Ridge School are holding a quiz night on Friday 17th March at 7.00. £5 a ticket, bring your own food and drink. You can pay on the night or tickets will be available from school office about two weeks before the event.

Savoy Singers

The Savoy Singers asked us to share details of their upcoming production of The Pirates of Penzance in March. More details at www.savoyingers.org.uk

Pop up Coffee shop

Larry Bain reminded everyone of the community pop up coffee shop that will be running one Saturday morning a month in the community centre with all proceeds going to charity. The most recent one raised £130 for the Fountain Centre. The next coffee morning is on the 18th February and the following one on the 25th March will be in partnership with PTA and Friends of Heather Ridge School. All are welcome and donations of cakes and other baked goods gratefully received.

Finally, we would always encourage residents to get in touch at heathersidewra@gmail.com if there is anything you'd like us to investigate or publicise. We would also like to hear from any community groups who would be interested in working with us or would like us to support them.

