

**Minutes of the WPARA A.G.M. held at the Nevill Cricket Pavilion
on Tuesday, 23rd May.2023, at 7.30 p.m.**

1. Chairman's Opening Remarks

Apologies were received from Allan Thom, Orla Finn, Jackie Meek and Andy Evans although apologies are not normally recorded as the A.G.M. is open to all residents.

Neil opened the A.G.M. by asking if anyone owned a Patek Philippe watch? (Yes – not just one but two!!). The slogan used is “You never actually own one you merely look after it for the next generation”. Neil advised that that was what Tony Pawson had achieved on behalf of WPARA with the Conservation Area a few years ago – looking to safeguard the area for the next generation. Neil thanked all those present for taking the time out to attend the A.G.M. Membership currently stands at half the households in the area but WPARA would obviously like more residents to subscribe to the £20 subscription to try and build a real community and keep improving the fantastic place we live in. Neil thanked, in advance, all the speakers attending the meeting, Mel who does an amazing amount of work behind the scenes and, of course, all the Area Reps. Neil advised that Justin West, our Treasurer, has made some important changes to make it easier for households to pay their subscriptions. Justin to highlight these changes in his report.

This time last year, WPARA was about to launch the website. Neil asked that residents put their hand in the air if they have used the website and to keep their hands up if the website was looked at on a regular basis. Neil advised that, as with all the items that are raised at the meeting, it is a joint operation and individual help is required to keep improving things. Neil reported that, in future, residents will only receive an Autumn Newsletter and Malcolm Dove's Neighbourhood Watch e-mails. All future information will come via the website and, of course, the Area Reps. Neil requested that if residents have any news that should be shared to let Malcolm know. The WPARA website needs to be kept live and fresh. Neil advised that the four main activities of WPARA as described on the website are:-

Preserving - Tony Pawson took at least 5 years and a massive amount of work to make most of WPARA a Conservation Area. We want to continue Tony's good work. Neil requested that residents look at the WPARA website to see what can and cannot be done with trees for example or speak to Tony who is always very helpful.

Improving - Since COVID, WPARA has, with residents help, improved our roads by cutting back vegetation and clearing the pavements as if they were their own property. It is very easy to spot the residents who don't and

occasionally blow their leaves into the street which causes the drains to be blocked. Neil advised that if any residents needed assistance to help clear pathways/vegetation WPARA are more than happy to provide assistance. Neil thanked all residents who supported the Spring Clean – particularly Nick Clark who has all the equipment under the sun

Supporting - WPARA would like residents to act first by using the website, so complaints are recorded whether it is the Council or other ancillary areas. Neil reported that this worked well last year with No. 86 Warwick Park and Mike Warriner's drive and more recently with the replacement light on Nevill Gate. We have worked together on trying to slow the traffic down coming in and out of the Nevill. This is working in tandem.

Lobbying - Neil advised that there were Councillors present at the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. Whether it be KCC or TWBC there is a definite shortage of money to get anything done. Everyone is crying out we have no money. We need to work together to get things done which entails an enormous amount of perseverance. Neil advised that it was for this reason the WPARA subscription was increased to £20 so WPARA could cover costs but also be more proactive. The excellent wine purchased by Mel, printing costs and the cost of running the website all need to be paid for. Neil thanked Deborah Richards and Maddison Residential for funding the website last year and supporting WPARA with a planter for the bridge this year. Neil advised that more planters were required (at a cost of between £600/£800 each) so if anyone knew of other companies that would be able to help WPARA fund one or more planters to let him or Andy Hempleman know. The bulbs planted probably 5 years ago need replenishing. Neil reported that two benches on Warwick Park had been refurbished by one of the fathers of one of our residents. WPARA had paid for the materials but the time given to do the job was free –big thank you to Gavin. Neil advised that the bench on the corner of Rodmell Road and Upper Cumberland Walk is beyond repair and this needs to be replaced. One resident, after seeing one of the refurbished benches, mentioned sponsorship so if there is anybody keen to help please let one of the Area Reps know. We are saving the WPARA for the next generation! So what can residents do for WPARA. Come up with ideas and suggestions for improvements. News for the website, articles suggestions. Use the website, complain and let us know. Volunteer any of your special skills or equipment (for example bolt cutter for the bench at the top of Warwick Park). Graffiti removal on the bridge – does anyone know an Alex Baker!

2. Treasurer's Report

Justin advised that the Accounts being presented are for 2022 and cover the period 1st January, 2022, through to 31st December, 2022. At the start of the year there was £1,052 in the bank. Income for the year was £590, which consisted of subscriptions totalling £585 and a £5 donation. This represents 117

households paying the £5 subscription. This was lower than the previous year when there was membership of 132 households. Justin thanked the Area Reps for distributing the subscriptions forms and collecting the money. Justin advised that costs for the year were £950. This is more than the expenditure in 2021 and for 3 main reasons:- restarting the A.G.M. after COVID; the WPARA website hosting cost; higher printing costs (inflation and extra initiatives like flyers for bad parking, dogs on leads, hedges over pavements). This gives a deficit for the year of £360, leading to a year-end fund balance of £693. Justin requested that the Accounts be formally put forward for adoption. Mel proposed the Account and Malcolm seconded them. Justin advised that, to date in 2023, WPARA has received subscriptions from 108 households which is 9 households fewer than in 2022 but hopefully we will receive more in the coming months¹. Justin advised that there were subscription forms available at the back of the room for those that had not renewed their subscription or for any neighbours residents felt would like to join WPARA. Justin reported that he estimated there are 250 houses and flats in the area so there is plenty of potential to get more people involved in WPARA and the local community. Justin advised that 2023 is the first year when WPARA has offered an additional way to pay – cash, cheque and now bank transfer. This was a request for different method of payment at last year's A.G.M.. About 60% of households are paying by bank transfer, with most of the rest paying by cash and a handful of cheques. Justin reported that income is much higher at £2,160 because of the higher subscription amount. The Committee decided to increase the annual subscription to £20 following discussion and debate at the A.G.M.in 2022. It is worth remembering that the subscription had been £5 for at least the last 15 years. Taking into account costs for the year such as the A.G.M., New Year drinks party, printing, website maintenance, Justin predicted WPARA would have £1,000 to spend to make our area even better than it is now for the benefit of all residents. This is something that would have been impossible with a £5 subscription. Justin estimated that from the £20 subscription about half of it goes towards the costs of running WPARA and the other half would go to investing in our area. Justin reported that he had a great example of this. Gavin had kindly volunteered his time and skills to restore some of the benches in the area. WPARA has paid for the materials that Gavin used. Justin requested that if any residents had any ideas as to what spare money can be spent on then to please pass them on to their Area Reps. Justin closed his report by again thanking all the volunteer Area Reps for their time and energy in assisting WPARA.

¹ Since the AGM the number of member households has risen to 117, the same number as 2022 (MD 12/7/23)

3. Chairman's Report

Neil enquired how many residents had looked at the WPARA website? Less than half raised their hands. Neil had covered the rest of this topic under Chairman's Opening Remarks.

4. Traffic Calming/Parking

Malcolm advised that when you look into the car park at the lower end of Warwick Park, the spaces on the left are owned by Pantiles House (in Nevill Street), some are now leased to One Warwick Park (who also own the spaces in the centre). The leaves the garages on the right-hand side which were built in the 1970's and given to the even-numbered houses to overcome a Covenant prohibiting building on the opposite side of the road (odd-numbered houses). As cars have got bigger, the garages are less useful and many have been sold off making it difficult to find the owners to make a combined decision. This topic then transgressed into Streetscape.

5. Streetscape

Andy used a Projector with photographs/diagrams to make his presentation. At some point, a resident requested that the lights in the room be turned off so that the images could be clearly seen.

Progress on Street Lighting - Andy began his presentation by explaining the difficulty of getting meetings with the relevant KCC representatives. Andy explained he was trying to resolve the issues around street signage, lighting and the general state of disrepair on the pavements as well as get funding for bench repairs and additional street trees. After much e-mailing and calling, Andy reported that he had managed to have a meeting with Sue Kinsella, Head of Lighting for KCC. The meeting resolved some issues such as the taped lamp-post inspection covers in Richmond Place which have now been replaced with proper locking screws. It remains to be seen if the leaning lamp-post near 90 Warwick Park will be straightened. The Engineer who met with Andy also said he could not move the lamp-post placed on the tarmac crossover to a house which is also at the pavement's edge opposite Roedean Road. Andy also raised the issue of electric vehicle charging points in the area (at present there are 13 electric charging points available to the public in the whole of Tunbridge Wells). The Engineer was not supportive of electric car chargers in Warwick Park. Andy advised that this was disappointing as several residents in Warwick Park have electric cars but do not have driveways and there is a considerable sports hub in Warwick Park. Andy reported that the Liberal Democrats have promised to double the number of public charging points in Tunbridge Wells. This does not seem that difficult a challenge considering there are more than 350 in Brighton which seems to be far more proactive. Generally speaking,

Andy found Sue very helpful and positive but the local Engineer seemed to find reasons why nothing could be done. Andy advised that WPARA would continue to push on some of these issues

Richmond Place - Andy explained some of the background to the land surrounding the houses in Richmond Place and how it was owned and maintained by the residents. The land was bought for £1, residents of Richmond Place pay £400 into a limited company that is managed by agents who then deal with the expenditure for maintaining communal garden areas. No funding is received from WPARA. New fencing has been installed and some new trees have been planted (including one for the Queen's Green Canopy initiative as a celebration of the Platinum Jubilee – this can be viewed on the initiative's website where all trees are registered). A lot of time has been spent on rejuvenating the frontage area to the left of the entrance to Richmond Place and many compliments have been received regarding the improvement. Andy also talked about the relationship with KCC and the restoration of some of the pavers after clearing a lot of trees along the front.

Parking - Andy Evans (AE) has joined the Committee since the last meeting and has worked on trying to sort out some of the parking issues at the lower end of Warwick Park where he lives. Andy was unfortunately unable to attend the A.G.M., so Andy Hempleman (AH) presented his area of responsibility. AH reported that AE has carried out a survey amongst the residents and is investigating parking restrictions at the in part of the street where they were relaxed for the building of The Potteries at the Pantiles as the public car park was closed during the development. Now the car park is open again, these restrictions need to be returned to their previous free parking time consistent with the rest of the zone. It is very much work in progress and WPARA will carry out some more consultation throughout the year. In the meantime, AE has requested that residents/guests please park considerately in the bays and not leave large gaps at the ends and in-between cars as it reduces the space available.

The creation of a 20 mph zone was raised at the last A.G.M. and AH and AE have been doing some work to move things along. There has been no in-put from the local Liberal Democrats who promised this during their electioneering but the implementation falls to KCC and we need support from our politicians to make this happen. Both AH and AE had a meeting with a traffic planner who made some suggestions such as closing off part of the street. The more residential the street looks, the less likely cars are to speed. The traffic planner said it was more effective to make changes in incremental steps rather than a single 'big bang'. In particular, the bridge area was discussed where it might be possible to place some planters. Some discussions have been had within the Committee and several residents have offered donations (*at the end of the A.G.M. another resident offered to fund a planter for the bridge area.*)

Planters - Andy talked through the different types of planters that were available. They needed to be robust, low maintenance but look nice! Andy went through the pros and cons of four different materials:- cast iron, wood, concrete and Corten Steel. Andy advised that Corten Steel, a type of weathering steel, offered the best compromise and value for money. It was agreed the Committee will now look into the price and number of planters required and see what funds/donations could be acquired from local residents/businesses. (Since the A.G.M. AH and Neil have had a meeting with Julian Cook from KCC Highways Dept. and he has said he will pay for the required permissions out of his budget. AH and Neil are preparing a document with a plan of the number, type and location of the planters). AH suggested possibly planting grasses in the planters as these are relatively low maintenance and can withstand dry weather. Mel suggested evergreens with colour, bulbs and inexpensive plants that would not be stolen. The plan is to consult with some experts and see what they would recommend.

Trees - AH talked about the importance of trees to the area and, in particular, evergreen trees. Even though most of WPARA is in the Conservation Area, the evergreen trees are less protected and many firs have been felled in the past 2-3 years. On slides, AH showed some of the large specimens in the area. Unfortunately, many of the listing for Tree Protection Orders (TPO's) date back more than 30 years and some are inaccurate. WPARA feel it is time for an update but have not heard back from the new Tree Officer, Rhodri Jones, at TWBC despite an introduction. Andy enquired whether the 2 TWBC Councillors present (Wendy Fitzsimmons and Pamela Wilkinson) if they could arrange this. As part of his initial plan to contact KCC, AH was also hoping to see if WPARA can get some more trees in the area. Trees have many benefits such as reducing surface water, slowing traffic, reducing air temperatures and supporting people's well-being. AH explained that the tree planting up until now was serendipitous, with some nice trees but random. AH suggested block planting with one type of tree. Becki Bruneau, the KCC Councillor for Tunbridge Wells South, who was present at the meeting, said she would support getting some more trees and, before the A.G.M., AH had contacted KCC and Becki had also forwarded his proposal. (Since the meeting, AH has been contacted by the street tree team at KCC and is hoping to have a meeting sometime in late summer where he will walk the street with the representatives and see what is feasible in terms of tree types, location and budget). A resident pointed out that if more trees are planted in the area then street lighting needs to be improved as trees in full leaf make it a lot darker. At this point a resident complained about the length of Andy's presentation (at that point just over an hour) and residents had questions they wanted to ask. However, he had no questions to ask himself and AH received a round of applause.

Benches - AH finished his presentation by giving an up-date on the benches in the area. The state of repair was raised at the last A.G.M. and since then some progress has been made. AH advised that Neil had made contact with a resident whose father, although not living in the area, was happy to help restore the benches. Gavin, as well as restoring benches on the lower part of Warwick Park, has also painted the waste bin on the corner of Rodmell Road by the bench. A resident enquired as to how many benches there were and did people use them. Currently there are 4 benches:- 1 at the top of Warwick Park, 1 on the corner of Roedean Road, 1 on Upper Cumberland Walk and 1 on the lower end of Warwick Park. Another resident made the suggestion the benches could be made higher to make them more accommodating for the elderly. AH advised that he has a plan to get inspirational quotes carved on the benches to act as 'food for thought' for people as they sit down for a rest. (Since the A.G.M., WPARA has allocated £1,000 for bench repairs and replacements out of the subscription income and Gavin and AH are going to visit a local bench manufacturer in East Sussex to see what is possible).

6. www.wpara.co.uk

Residents were urged to look at and use the website. Give recommendations for good workmanship, restaurants etc.

7. Any Other Business

Graffiti – does anyone know who Alex Baker is?

A resident required a top up of wine!!

Neil closed the meeting by thanking all those present for taking the time out to attend the A.G.M. and their in-put to discussions.