

Minutes of the WPARA A.G.M. held at King Charles the Martyr Church Hall
on Monday, 20th May, 2024, at 7.30 p.m.

1. Chairman's Welcome and Report

Neil started the meeting by thanking those present for taking time out to attend the WPARA A.G.M. The theme for the evening would be how can we work together to continue to improve the fantastic place we live in. Neil advised that when Residents see anything wrong or something that needs action, we would like you to take that action and copy one of the Area Reps in so we can back you up to ensure that things happen. Neil then conveyed his thanks to all the Area Reps, particularly Orla who is stepping down after many years service. Justin (WPARA's Treasurer) has agreed to cover as Area Rep for Upper Cumberland Walk. Neil expressed his thanks to Justin for all the work he does as Treasurer on behalf of WPARA. Neil thanked Mel for the amazing work she does behind the scenes. Neil also conveyed WPARA's thanks to Gavin (who is not one of our residents but the father of one) for all the work he has put in to restoring the benches that are situated on Warwick Park. Gavin has done an excellent job and they look fantastic. Neil advised that Malcolm Dove (who does a brilliant job on Neighbourhood Watch) and Andy Hempleman were unfortunately unable to attend the meeting due to illness but the work both have undertaken on WPARA's behalf is very much appreciated. Neil advised that the Agenda had been kept short so we could hear your ideas and thoughts going forward under the heading of Any Other Business.

2. Treasurer's Report

Justin reported that the 2023 Accounts cover the period from 1st January, 2023, through to 31st December, 2023. WPARA started the year with fund of £693. Income for the year was £2,360, which is significantly higher than the 2022 income of £585. The Committee was delighted to see that 118 households paid the £20 Subscription in 2023, which is 1 more than the 117 that paid in 2022 when the Subscription was just £5. As ever, thanks go to the Area Reps for distributing the Subscription Forms and collecting the money. Costs for the year were £2,560. This is much more than the expenditure in 2022 for two main reasons. Firstly, WPARA re-started the New Year's Drinks & Nibbles Party for residents, which we sincerely hope everyone found enjoyable. Secondly, WPARA invested a substantial amount on the benches in the area. A brand new bench was purchased and installed at the bottom of Upper Cumberland Walk (this has been much admired by many). New slats were purchased for a bench at the top of Warwick Park. Some of the other benches in the area have been sanded and oiled (by Gavin as mentioned above by Neil). Gavin kindly volunteered his time and skills to do the restoration of the benches and WPARA paid for the materials used.

In 2023, about half of the subscription income went towards the costs of running WPARA (including the 2 events of the A.G.M. and the New Year's drinks party). The other half went towards investing in our area. Justin advised that this gave a deficit for the year of £200, leading to a year end fund balance of £493. Justin reported that he would like to say a few words regarding 2024 but, before he did, could the Accounts for 2023 be formally put forward for Adoption.

Keith Hamilton proposed and Sarah Garwood seconded the Accounts.

Looking ahead to 2024, Justin advised that WPARA has received about the same number of households paying the subscription as in 2023 but was hopeful WPARA will receive some new members in the coming months. Justin advised that Subscription Forms were at the back of the Hall if anyone new would like to sign up or for residents who might have neighbours who they thought might 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 residents involved in WPARA and the local community.

Justin advised that WPARA had also received very substantial donations of £3,600 in 2024 for the "Planter Project" on the bridge – Neil to speak on this further in his Chairman's Report. Justin also reported that a resident had not only paid their 2024 subscription but also had paid an additional £150 for prior missed years!! A big thank-you – you know who you are. The Committee will continue to look for ways that WPARA can invest in our area. Justin requested that if any residents had any ideas as to how income could be spent, could they please pass them on to their Area Reps. Justin concluded by reiterating his thanks and support from the Area Reps and Neil.

3. Chairman's Report

Neil advised that he wanted to include a number of visuals to remind us what we have achieved and the things we still want to achieve. All leaflets/cards mentioned below would be available at the end of the meeting for those residents who want to collect some.

1. Keeping our Environment Clean, Safe and Tidy - this was a theme during COVID and if any resident received one of these leaflets please accept sincere apologies. The vast majority of residents keep their hedges and borders clear and tidy the pavements in front of their property but Neil requested that if any residents needed help please do not hesitate to ask. The Area Rep would be the first point of contact who could raise the issue with the rest of the Committee. Neil reported that it is normally the same individuals who turn out to help with the Springclean (and a big Thank You to them) but also so many residents do when they have the time

2. Warwick Park used as a Car Park - Neil advised that this was a polite notice to individuals for No obstructing of driveways, parking on white/yellow lines and parking on pavements. These cars can be put on windscreens (currently Neil dishes out about 3 a day when walking Mad Minnie!). Eventually the vast majority of drivers do get the message over time.

3. Dogs on leads at the Nevill Cricket Ground - Neil showed the yellow warning cards that can be given to individuals if anyone ever felt the need to hand one out to those very few dog walkers who let their dogs run wild. Neil advised that there was a chance of losing access to the two cricket grounds for walking our dogs which would be tragic but the Council, for the time being, has put this on hold.

4. Benches - Neil advised that Gavin Barrett (father of Sophie who lives on Warwick Park) had made a magnificent effort in refurbishing 4 benches and by Andy Hempleman and Mark Robson for installing the new one on the corner of Rodmell Road/Upper Cumberland Walk, and installing the two benches donated by TWCC. Neil reported that owing to permissions, bad weather and hospitalisation the bench by the upper cricket field is still to be fitted. Another example of residents working together.

5. Traffic Calming - Neil advised that residents would not believe the amount of time WPARA has spent not being listened to by our KCC Councillor. Neil reported that WPARA IS non-political but, on this occasion, thanks have to be conveyed to Pamela Wilkinson for her efforts which, so far have been in vain but we are not finished yet. Alan Thom a resident of Warwick Park reported that the Chicane (speed bumps) make no difference whatsoever to the speed of vehicles up and down Warwick Park. Vehicles speed between the bumps – if privately owned they slow down, if not it makes no difference to the speed. Linda Davies also made the point that the speed bumps made no difference to the speed of traffic between them. Alan Thom advised that if a pedestrian is hit at 35mph there is a 50% chance they will be killed or suffer significant injury, at 30 mph there is a 20% chance and at 20 mph there is only a 2.5% chance. Neil been in touch with Councillors – no reply. Tony made mention of differentiation between “A” Road and Warwick Park. Neil requested that those present at the meeting vote in favour of the 20mph speed limit. Majority in favour – 3 against.

6. Planters - Neil advised that this has been WPARA’s big project for 2024 which will need a massive effort and will need volunteers with the right skills. A massive thank you to

- * Planter Number 1 - “Delighted to support our Wonderful Community” - Maddisons Logo
- * Planter Number 2 - “The Warriners, Warwick Park for Three Generations since 1969”
- * Planter Number 3 - Mel Richards – wording outstanding
- * Planter Number 4 - Donated by Oliver and Lorna Wright/Daz and Jackie Meek
- * Planter Number 5 - Sponsored by West Kent Cardiology Partnership
- * Planter Number 6 - “Till liked walking here” - Donated by Graham and Chris Carter, supported by a number of residents.

Neil advised that WPARA would try and get a big enough plaque to get all the words in!

SUCSESSES

The website www.wpara.co.uk A big thank-you to Malcolm Dove (who is unfortunately not here tonight due to illness but very much missed) for keeping this up-to-date as well as Neighbourhood Watch and the weekly e-mails. Please use the website more.

Excessive Noise - Tybers. About 9 months ago there was a complaint from the resident who spoke at the A.G.M. Neil liaised with the resident and the overseer of the pub and, to date, no further complaints have been received. The pub is not meant to play loud music after 11.00 p.m. and they seem to be complying with that now. There is nothing WPARA can do about the bright yellow

Civic Awards - Neil advised that 3 in our area had received Awards:- South Riding, Upper Cumberland Walk; Number 38 Warwick Park and the 4 woodland on the corner of Richmond Place (for the record this is funded by the residents of Richmond Place and has received no money from WPARA).

New Year’s Drinks Party - another big thank you to Mel for all she does.

Communication - Neil expressed his thanks to all the Area Reps for all they do for WPARA. As explained at the beginning of the meeting, Orla is handing over her Area Rep’s Hat to Justin West and her “Flood Brief” to me. Neil advised that he felt sure Orla would continue to keep the Tennis Club in line!

Finance - Neil thanked Justin for bringing WPARA into the 21st Century. You never know we might have enough in the kitty for another party?!

Volunteers - WPARA needs more help on things like litter picking, Autumn Springcleans, the planters - both installation (strong people) and maintenance (a massive project) and for you to be the eyes and ears of WPARA raising issues whenever you can. Thank you.

4. Car Park and Garages Improvement (provided by Malcolm Dove but read in his absence)

A search of Deeds left us with 3 unidentified garage owners, probably at least one has been abandoned, making unified action to redecorate impossible. We can only hope that the shabby doors get graffitied with a coat of white paint! Meeting with Pantiles Chambers (who own the parking spaces on the Church side of the plot), One Warwick Park (who own or lease the remainder), Cohen and Osborne (the original developers and owners of a ransom strip at the entrance to the plot) and WPARA members Neil Williams, Max Lewis and me. We proposed to organise the repainting of garage doors that looked shabby and asked One Warwick Park (OWP) to fund repairs to the road surface. Despite stressing the potential liability risk OWP, at present, do not plan to do anything about it.

An “ad hoc” group of Cumberland Walk residents, organised by Keith Hamilton (a WPARA member), have organised a Working Party to clear the rubbish and weeds from the bank at the end of the car park.

Keith has also lobbied the Council to tidy up Cumberland Walk.

Max Lewis advised that a large number of vegetation had been dumped in the Car Park today (20th May). Mel advised that there was garden refurbishment taking place on one of the gardens that backed onto Cumberland Walk and they had, or would be, removing vegetation.

5. Andy Hempleman's Report (ready by Mel due to Andy's absence)

Benches

The replacement bench at the bottom of Upper Cumberland Walk was made by a local company, Jakk Country Furniture. Using a local company allowed us to specify exactly what we want and was very price competitive. Thanks to Mark Robson for helping fit the ground anchors. Also thanks to Pamela Wilkinson for getting a new bin liner. In due course we will repaint the bin. Farrow & Ball on the High Street has agreed to provide some free paint.

The quote "Life is what happens when you're busy making other plans" is from a song called "Beautiful Boy" by John Lennon. Written for his son, Sean, who was 5 years old at the time. It appeared on the album "Double Fantasy" which was released a few weeks before John Lennon was tragically murdered. Paul McCartney picked the song as one of his favourites when he appeared on Desert Island Discs many years later.

We also paid for new wooden slats for the concrete bench at the top of Warwick Park. We have yet to install these. It has a quote from the American Civil Rights campaigner, author and poet, Maya Angelou. The quote is "Be a rainbow in someone's cloud". Her autobiography "I know when the Caged Bird Sings" became a New York Times bestseller and she was the first woman to recite a poem at a Presidential Inauguration.

If you want to know more, BBC Four are running a series of programmes on famous poets and authors on Sunday evenings and Maya Angelou is part of the series.

We also installed an existing bench from the Cricket Club on the corner of Nevill Gate. Thanks again to Mark Robson. We have a fifth bench ready to be installed by the entrance to the Upper Cricket Ground.

Street Trees

Had a very positive meeting with George Morris, the Tree Inspector for KCC and James Smith, the Tree Officer for West Kent. They were super positive. They only have funding for 50 street trees in the whole of Tunbridge Wells per year. We walked the whole length of Warwick Park and requested a survey of both sides of the road by the Upper Cricket Ground. Unfortunately, when the site survey was completed several weeks later, it turned out there were power cables running up the centre of the pavement – so that is an unsuitable location. We are going back with some alternative locations. Unfortunately all of this takes a lot of work. Just getting the benches in we have to take photos and create drawings of the proposed locations to KCC. Once we get approval, we then have to complete a 12 page work order. It's the same procedure for the planters.

We don't have enough resources to get everything done and we need some residents to help us.

Support

We need help in the following areas:-

1. Pavements

Graham Carter has kindly agreed to make a list of all the pavers that need fixing from the Upper Cricket Ground to Rodmell Road. Our objective is to keep the good side of the street in tip top condition. Long term, we'll see if we can get grants to fix the other side.

2. Drains

There are still substantial numbers of blocked drains. We've reported some to KCC months ago and they have not responded. What we want to do is go back with a report for the whole of WPARA's streets and then it is one report to chase for the whole area. Can someone take this on?

3. Trees

Last year I pointed out a lot of the interesting trees on the street. The Horse Chestnut opposite this hall, I showed a picture of, has since been felled. Then next to it the property up the bank has 2 beautiful Corsican Pines and 4 Scot's Pines. The owner has applied to cut most of the tops off – 20% of the whole tree by weight. We have object but, the point is, these trees need protected status so it is more difficult to fell. The Tree Officer is over-worked and not that responsive.

Unfortunately we need to do their job for them and give them a list of species and locations so they all be protected.

Not a massive job but, once again, we need someone to take this on.

6. Car Parking

Looking at some of the parking issues. Warwick Park is a very wide road and people think they can drive down/up at speed Graham Thom – has lived on Warwick Park for 46 years and has raised issue of Resident's Parking on countless occasions. Dumping of cars. Road used by Camper Vans for overnight accommodation. Commercial Vehicles, Residents, Commuters. Lisa Jenner raised issue of non-residents using upper Warwick Park for parking. Nevill Gate smallest road/narrowest road but has high volume of traffic with cricket/tennis/hockey/harriers members using car park but no parking restrictions!!

Andy Evans has taken on the mantle of addressing parking issues for WPARA and made the following comments:-

- * Investigate relief at the bottom of Warwick Park, where a bunch of houses between 24 and Rodmell Road do not have off-road parking

- * Investigate parking restrictions to be added between Rodmell Road & Blatchington Road and beyond - consider residents only parking time period in the middle of the day to address commuters

- * Investigate lines either side of the bridge to control right of way

- * Consider some signage encouraging visitors to consider using all the space available when parking
- * Everybody was in agreement with all the options mentioned owing to various dangers including residents getting out of drives, young people walking and cycling past lines of cars and older people slowly crossing roads with difficulty in seeing. Keith Hamilton asked who owned trees in the car park at the bottom of Warwick Park as they needed to be cut down/reduced?

7. Any Other Business

Pot Holes – no news and KCC deal with them. Caroline Hutt advised that pot holes had to be 6cm deep to report and KCC needed to deal with promptly (photographic evidence is required).

Jean Philips-Martinsson advised that she is now 94 years old and very appreciative of the benches.

Max Lewis reported that the bin at bottom of Upper Cumberland Walk is currently overflowing of dog waste bags and rubbish. Why can't dog owners take their dogs waste home with them?

It was pointed out that the bins are used to dispose of takeaways/household waste which encourages foxes to ravage them. The Council is responsible for emptying the bins but this has obviously been overlooked in the last couple of days.

Neil thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for input shared and was open to any feedback or suggestions.