

Minutes of the Warwick Park Area Residents Association 2025

Monday 18th May 2026 7:35pm

1. The Chairman 's opening remarks

Neil Williams opened the meeting by greeting the members and explained that the outgoing secretary Mel had broken her leg in three places consequently her place was being taken by Malcolm Dove in the interim. The meeting wished Mel a speedy recovery.

2. Treasurers Report

Justin West said : These are the 2025 accounts and cover the cover the period 1st Jan - 31st Dec. I'll be rounding the numbers to the nearest £100, but the full detailed accounts will be posted on the WPARA website.

We started the year with funds of £2,900.

Income for the year was £2,400, which consisted of 111 resident subscriptions and £200 of donations. As ever, thanks to the Area Reps for distributing the subscription forms and collecting the money. Thank you to all residents who pay the annual subscription, and thanks to all the additional donors.

Total costs for the year were £4,000, though this includes £1,600 to finish the bridge planter project, using the remaining funds from the 2024 planter donations. So, excluding the planter spend, costs for the year were £2,400, which is almost exactly the same as the year's income. As well as the usual annual expenses (such as the NY party, this AGM, printing and the website), we spent over £1,000 on the local area, including buying plants and bulbs, and commissioning the wall art project.

We ended the year with a bank balance of £1,400.

I'd like to say a few words about 2026, but before I do that, can I please formally put forward the 2025 accounts for adoption. Looking ahead to what is happening so far in 2026, we have had 108 households pay the subscription so far, which is slightly ahead of where we were this time last year. I estimate 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. Forms at the back if any of you have neighbours that you think would like to join WPARA, or if any of you here have not paid your subscription for the year!

Once costs for 2026 are taken into account, I estimate we'll have about £2,200 in the bank. The committee will continue to look for ways that WPARA can invest in our area. If any resident has any ideas, please pass them to your area reps.

Justin proposed the adoption of the accounts; it was seconded by Orla Finn and passed *nem con*.

3. Chairman's Report

Neil said: I must start off by thanking Mel for her 30 years of being both social and minutes secretary, a task which we are now splitting into two roles the social secretary will be Caroline Hutt and we are still looking for a minutes secretary. What a fantastic job and support you have been Mel, thank you so much. Any volunteers for this role?

The next big thank you is to all of the Area Reps (please stand up and say what area you cover) and in particular Malcolm who was an Area Rep but has from 2020 helped build and maintains our website www.wpara.co.uk and of course the regular Neighbour Watch emails many of you receive. Malcolm has also been heavily involved with "Around Warwick Park" which you will hear about later.

The Area Reps are meant to be your eyes and ears letting the committee know if there are any problems, opportunities and ideas for your immediate area.

Tony the previous Chairman for 10 years, who still helps us significantly, even though he lives elsewhere achieved the majority of WPARA being a conservation area and obtained some leeway with TWBC on parking on which we continue to press on. This is also the case with the 20-mph limit. Unfortunately, the two Councils (or Councillors) need further persuasion. Hopefully the new Chair and Town Council which Tony will be talking to us about shortly will achieve better results than me.

We have however had plenty of other wins

- Street benches all the way up Warwick Park to help residents and older people climb all of the way up the hill.
- Thanks to the generosity of some residents and local businesses the planters on the bridge make it look significantly better. Planter to come in Rodmell
- Drain clearance after many reminders has improved drainage significantly as long as we keep the drains clear outside our homes and report any future blockages
- Andy Hempleman and I dug these huge holes to cater for the growth of the pink camelias which are now near the bench at the top of Nevill Gate Andy Hempleman and Mark from Richmond Place did all of the heavy lifting as well as acute planning to make these things happen. A huge thank you to both Andy and Mark as they now focus on the Richmond Place woodland area which is totally funded by Richmond Place residents.

Other minor achievements

- A bin outside Tybers (no longer in existence) after trying to get one for 5 years
- More spring bulbs planted along Warwick Park by Jenny Chambers after John Hill's idea to be continued this Autumn– thanks to both of them
- Removal of graffiti which is a continuous problem
- Led by Upper Cumberland Walk residents after 5 years of graffiti we converted the old railway bridge wall to wall art depicting all for the sports in our immediate area. I personally took a lot of stick for this and had the gun removed very quickly which of course was meant to be depict the Shooters Club. I believe a lot of youngsters have

enjoyed the wall art and may help motivate them to take up some of the available sports. So far, the graffiti vandals have respected the wall art.

- RTW Spring cleaning weekend. I don't know how many residents got involved with this as I was in Bournemouth. I had however cleaned the pavement area by the Richmond Place woodland and along by the cricket. I also asked the Shooter's Club to do the same which they did. The very commercial gates at the Shooters Club have now been painted green after prompting by us. The bad news is TWBC are still looking to relocate the Shooters Club so they can build houses there. This won't go away I am afraid.
- Litter picking which is a monthly chore for which can actually be fun as one gets better at manoeuvring the litter pickers (not easy whilst walking the dog!)
- Significantly less cars parked on red tiled pavements which is a daily chore for me, leaving notices on windscreen with the majority of car owners complying.
- We can still walk our dogs on the Nevill as long as on a lead
- The K1 telephone kiosk which was originally installed in 1925 after much cajoling BT refurbished and TWBC has taken over control of it and hopefully it might become the smallest museum in the UK – watch this space.
- Finally, the tree which was lost just by the bridge has been replaced with a new tree just down the road from number 52

On the bright side, we have preserved our area as an attractive pleasant area to live in. No big development, WPARA's input was critical in the rejection by the Council of multi-occupancy development at the car park and in a range of areas ensuring that the green ambience is preserved.

So, we have reached the stage where we need new blood to take WPARA a stage further. A Chair, male or female who doesn't need to do things in a similar way to Tony or me as we have done many things differently too. There is continuing great support from the Area Reps. A minutes secretary who can do it in whatever way works for them. Both Mel and I will still be here for any support required in the first year of the changes These are vital but not unduly onerous roles. We all really need WPARA, who is willing to give it a go. You will be really appreciated by all residents. I will be around clearing up after the AGM if anybody wants to chat about either role.

Andy Evans proposed a vote of thanks for Neil, which was loudly applauded.

4. Around Warwick Park

Andy Evans explained that the purpose of the newsletter was to raise awareness of forthcoming local events for residents. He thanked Sally Tibbs for putting the first issue together. The newsletter was sent to 153 residents of which over 70% opened and read it.

He hoped that this will be a regular event, ideally monthly. Sally asked residents for

local items which might otherwise be missed. You can contact the team on Sally Tibbs (editor) – sally@jta.sport or Andy Evans (coordinator) – ajcevans@gmail.com. Sally also asked for volunteers to join the team to help spread the load.

5. Projects/Ideas

Jenny Chambers proposed that WPARA hold an Open Gardens event in May 2027. Residents would open their gardens to visitors or other residents to see the variety of sizes and how they have been developed. On payment of a small sum a list of houses would be handed out, and proceeds would be given to charity. If a success it was suggested tea and cakes could be offered in future years.

Debbie Harris asked if there was space for planters anywhere in our area. Chris Barclay said that there was a planter being installed at the bottom of Upper Cumberland Walk, mostly funded by residents. Andy Hempleman said that planters in the road would only be possible if a 20MPH zone was approved. He said that Becky Bruneau had done nothing despite a petition being sent to KCC. Her replacement county councillor Martin Brice had also done nothing so far.

Andy asked for ideas on how to move the 1½ ton planter back in place on the railway bridge after it was hit by a vehicle.

6. Town Council

At Neil's invitation, Tony Pawson updated the meeting on the possible establishment of a Town Council for Tunbridge Wells, as follows:

LOCAL GOVERNMENT HAS THREE TIERS: These are County/Unitary Authority; under that Borough level, and then, of direct importance to residents, the third tier of Parish/Town Council, which exists everywhere else, such as Rusthall and Southborough, EXCEPT for Tunbridge Wells itself (6 wards of Pantiles, St John's, St James's, Culverden, Sherwood, Park) where there is no such representation.

This democratic deficit, including that eg Parish/Town Councils are consulted on matters affecting their areas while we are not, has been recognised but there's no commitment by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) to rectify this.

Equally importantly, there is a financial disadvantage to us as well. Each Parish/Town Council has an allocation of Council tax for their own local use, called "special expenses". On our Council tax notices there is an element for Tunbridge Wells special expenses. But is it all spent on Tunbridge Wells town, as it should be? NO!

The 2025/26 Special Expenses allocation to Tunbridge Wells was £2.8 million, but only £1.6 million was spent on us. Investigation by some members of the Town Forum had identified several areas where money had been used for other purposes. This situation is not new and Tunbridge Wells town will have been missing out for years.

TO SUMMARISE:

- a) We need a Town Council to look after our interests, like every other Town including Tonbridge, Sevenoaks, Southborough and Maidstone has, as does every Parish, in order to control the “Special Expenses” element of our Council Tax.
- b) As many people are unaware of this issue, we should all explain and discuss it with friends and families AND when consulted respond by supporting the establishment of a Town Council responsible for all Discretionary Expenditure (ie everything not compulsorily Government mandated).

CONCLUSION: After a discussion in which Tony answered several questions, there was general agreement that Tunbridge Wells itself should have a Town Council.

As this is important for all of us; members were encouraged to find out more by contacting town Forum members: David Scott or Stuart Anderson. Contact details: davidscott.TW@gmail.com or Mobile: 07740457030. David A. Scott, 107 The Potteries, Linden Park Road, Tunbridge Wells, TN2 5FS

7. Any Other business

Sally Holdstock asked if more of the area’s local history could be explored. Tony Pawson said the Heritage Department at TWBC may be able to help, although it had been shrunk recently. Neil mentioned the book The origins of Warwick Park, by John Cunningham.

It was asked if anything could be done to improve the traffic calming humps and mend the potholes. Neil said we should keep reporting them to KCC.

Leaf clearing is largely ineffective because parked cars block access to the council’s machine. Andy Hempleman pointed out that when coning roads for drain clearance, Wealden Council tow any illegally parked vehicles, whilst TWBC doesn’t

There being no further business the meeting was closed at 8:40pm