

BACKWELL RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 25 February 2020 held in the Sixth Form Lecture Theatre at Backwell School at 7.00 pm

Present: The following Committee Members attended: Keith Riches (Chair), Gill Collinson, Barbara Harland, Margaret Kemp, Terry Merrett-Smith, Angela Ribbon-Miles, Mike Rose, Mike Veal, Sue Veal, Geoff Wells, Valerie Wells. A further 91 BRA members and non-members attended.

1. Apologies for Absence: Apologies were received from Committee members Kevin Crawford, Chris Elliott and Bruce Stewart and 5 other members.
2. Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 12 February 2019: No points were raised and the Minutes were unanimously agreed.
3. Chairman Keith Riches gave the following Report: -

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen

I hope that you enjoyed the panoramic views of our village, kindly provided by Peter Speight of Backwell Environment Trust. We are lucky the village still has a pleasant, rural environment well, apart from the busy roads! The views from the air have also been used in some of the slides you will see later. Thank you Peter. We are pleased to make a modest donation towards BET's continuing conservation activities.

I will start this report as usual with the objectives of the Association, as set out in our Constitution. "BRA will work to safeguard and promote the collective interests of Backwell Residents in matters concerning social, economic and community life and the character of the village. The Association will support or oppose development affecting Backwell having regard to residents' interests and the local environment."

The Officers and Committee of the Association have remained largely unchanged throughout the year, except that Richard Barclay, a long serving Committee member, stood down due to other commitments. We thank Richard for his past years of service. Bruce Stewart, the former Chairman and Secretary, was again co-opted for the benefit of his enormous experience in Backwell Planning matters and once again I wish to thank Sue Veal for her hard work as co-opted Minutes Secretary. We were delighted that Barbara Harland joined the Committee last August; she has thrown herself into acquiring a detailed knowledge of Bristol Airport's expansion proposals. Barbara will be speaking to you on this topic later.

The full Committee met monthly through the year and the smaller Executive Committee had many interim meetings. We continue to maintain a regular liaison with Backwell Parish Council to whom we lend our support whenever appropriate to our objectives. However, we do not always agree with the Parish Council, a case in point being our position on the expansion of Bristol

Airport. BPC was almost unique in not opposing expansion; unlike 27 other Parish and Town Councils in the area who have joined together in the Parish Council Airport Association. We consulted our membership on this big issue in December; 86% of respondents were against expansion and BRA therefore submitted a strong letter of objection to North Somerset Council.

A rota of BRA Committee Members ensures attendance as observers at all BPC Full Council Meetings and sometimes at Planning Meetings. We frequently make statements during Public Participation. Whilst on the subject of Backwell Parish Council we are aware that they have for some time been trying to recruit new Councillors as there are three vacancies. If any of you feel that you would like to serve the community in this way you should contact the Chairman, Peter Soothill, via the Parish Clerk, Jane Stone, at the office in Rodney Road.

We also try to be aware of relevant issues outside Backwell and Committee members have attended meetings of North Somerset Council, Nailsea Town Council, some other Parish Councils and other pressure groups.

We try to keep our members informed of topical issues, mainly by e-mailed bulletins, via our website and Facebook page but also by an annual hard copy newsletter which is distributed to every house in the village and beyond. For this we are grateful particularly to Geoff and Val Wells who are both active members of the Executive Committee. Geoff is the principal architect of our Bulletins and Newsletters and has also maintained regular contact with the local press. Val, ably assisted by Gill Collinson, has been responsible for membership recruitment and distribution of leaflets and bulletins throughout the year. Distributing over two thousand newsletters is a big task, which is not routinely done on a voluntary basis by any other village organisation - we thank our team of more than thirty willing volunteers.

Thanks are also due for the continuing hard work of our Secretary Mike Veal; Treasurer Kevin Crawford; Assistant Treasurer Terry Merrett-Smith; our Membership Secretary and Website Manager Margaret Kemp; our Social Media Manager Angela Ribbon-Miles and Chris Elliott who prepared a detailed response to a Bristol Airport Noise Consultation. Several of these Committee Members also have very busy jobs or in Angela's case a young family; we are especially indebted to all of them. I would also like to thank Richard Gaunt, who once again audited our Accounts and has kindly agreed to continue for the current year. And Richard Collinson who gave up many hours to help Geoff produce some of this evening's slides.

We congratulate Bridget Petty on being elected as our District Councillor. We welcome her to our AGM this evening and look forward to maintaining a close liaison with her in the future.

We have also corresponded with our MP Liam Fox on a couple of occasions.

One of the busiest members of the BRA Committee has again been our Planning Specialist, Mike Rose. On BRA's behalf, Mike is a member of the

Parish Council Working Party which co-ordinated the village's strong opposition to the West of England Joint Spatial Plan which, as you know, was rejected by the Government Inspectors following the Public Examination last summer. Mike will be speaking about this later, together with Lucy White the Planning Consultant engaged by the Working Party. During the year BRA contributed £6,000 towards Backwell Parish Council's costs of professional representation concerning the JSP. We will contribute further resources when necessary to resist planning applications on Grove Farm and land off Rodney Road. This might also be necessary with regard to the West of England Joint Local Transport Plan and North Somerset Council's new Local Plan.

Replenishment of our funds from renewed membership subscriptions and additional donations is therefore vital and our thanks go to all our loyal members.

We have addressed many other issues during the last year, including Coles Quarry planning conditions, problems with access to the Recycling Centre and commuter parking on roads adjacent to the train station. We have attempted to ensure Taylor Wimpey's compliance with Planning Conditions in respect of the Moor Lane housing development. We have also commented on a number of smaller applications and we have participated in public consultations on the NSC Climate Emergency Declaration and Bristol City Council's proposals for Cumberland Basin. There will be more on some of these subjects later on from Mike Rose.

We have continued to lobby for access improvements at Nailsea and Backwell Station which have still not materialised. We have lent support to Lorraine Hopkinson-Parker's crusade against errant HGVs in Dark Lane at school in/out times. This issue seemed to be much improved, but there were two serious transgressions earlier this month.

Mike Veal has been part of the village representation on the Stancombe Quarry Liaison Committee & Community Fund from which several Backwell organisations have benefited, notably the Parish Hall, the WI Hall, Backwell School, Backwell Junior and Infant School, Backwell Playing Fields and Backwell Junior Football Club.

Before I close, just a short plug for the Playing Fields Charity who are working towards developing a strategy for the future. I quote: "The charity encourages you all to contribute thoughts and ideas, so that a comprehensive plan can be produced to meets the needs of Backwell's residents".

Ladies and gentlemen - the simple way to describe BRA is a pressure group which seeks to achieve what we believe is in the best interests of Backwell as a whole. There are lots of things we cannot fix, and we do not have expertise to cover all issues (for example traffic and transport) but we will keep trying to do our best for the village. The views of our members are always welcome and I hope that you will feel free to join in the Open Forum sessions later on.

Thank you.

4. Membership Report: Geoff Wells gave the following report: -

I love this chart!! (referring to a slide illustrating membership growth) We have grown our membership every year since we reactivated BRA a few years ago. We even managed a small increase in 2019 to take us up to 442. These are households and one quarter of Backwell households pay at least £10 a year to join BRA, which is quite an achievement for a voluntary organisation. Many thanks to those who have already paid for 2020 – early indications suggest that this high representation will continue. We are grateful to Phil Leach at Backwell Post Office for housing our post box.

You, the members are the stars of our show for 2 reasons. Firstly, BRA is well respected at North Somerset Council and elsewhere when we can point to speaking on behalf of 442 households.

Secondly, the money you provide allows us to employ top advisers, like Lucy, who will speak later, to make sure our statements are accurate and will have the best impact.

During 2019, we sent out 20 bulletins by email to our members for information. Please make sure we have an up to date email address for you. Many of you made comments on planning matters which are used as a measure of public interest by Inspectors.

With a Committee of 14, we normally are confident that we have a good idea of village opinion. A few months ago we were aware of changing attitudes towards the airport expansion and decided to carry out a one-word survey of opinion. We were delighted that half of those emailed responded, so we were able to comment based on hard evidence. We may repeat this exercise in the future, but we do not wish to overuse the hugely valuable ability to email 25% of the village at the press of a button!

I must reprimand Keith for not including himself in his list of “thank you’s”. Anyone who has served on a committee knows the importance of a good chairman. Keith has played the key role in creating an efficient hard-working team, which we all enjoy being a part of. Thank you, Keith.

5. Honorary Treasurer’s Report and Audited Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2019:

Terry Merrett-Smith exhibited a summary of the audited Accounts for the twelve months to 31 December 2019. These are available only to BRA Members who may apply to the Secretary if they require further information.

6. Election of Officers and Committee Members:

6.1: Hon Secretary - Mike Veal was proposed by Judy Thomas, seconded by Geoff Wells and was unanimously elected.

6.2: Hon Treasurer - Kevin Crawford was proposed by Sue Ivens, seconded by Keith Riches and was unanimously elected.

6.3: Committee Member – Barbara Harland was proposed by Mike Rose, seconded by Mike Veal and was unanimously elected.

6.4: The following Committee Members, having served three years retired and offered themselves for re-election: -

Committee Member – Gillian Collinson was proposed by Valerie Wells, seconded by Sue Veal and was unanimously elected.

Committee Member – Chris Elliott was proposed by Ted Smallbone, seconded by Bill Charnock and was unanimously elected.

7. Appointment of Auditor:

Richard Gaunt was thanked and kindly agreed to continue in 2020. His re-appointment was proposed by Keith Riches, seconded by Terry Merrett-Smith and unanimously agreed.

8. Any Other Formal Business:

There was none.

The formal proceedings of the Meeting were concluded at 7.30 pm and Presentations with slides were given and an Open Forum held to discuss a range of current issues.

The notes on these Presentations and on the Open Forum and Questions attached as Appendices 1-4 do not form part of the formal Minutes of the Annual General Meeting.