**BACKWELL RESIDENTS’ ASSOCIATION**

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 18 April 2023 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, Chris Elliott, Barbara Harland, Angela Ribbon-Miles, Mike Rose, Mike Veal, Sue Veal, Geoff Wells, Valerie Wells. A further 116 BRA members and non-members attended.

Chairman Keith Riches opened the Meeting and welcomed all attendees.

1. Apologies for Absence:

Apologies were received from Committee members Karen Barclay, Kevin Crawford, Margaret Kemp, Bruce Stewart and six other members.

1. Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on Tuesday 5 April 2022:

Approval of the Minutes was proposed by Valerie Wells, seconded by Gill Collinson and unanimously agreed.

1. Chairman Keith Riches gave the following Report: -

“Good evening Ladies and Gentleman. Thank you all for coming. I would first like to quote from our Constitution which says “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. Furthermore, BRA will support or oppose development affecting Backwell having regard to residents’ interests and the local environment.”

The Officers and Committee have remained unchanged since our last AGM and I thank them all for their hard work towards our stated objectives. I would also like to pay tribute to our army of volunteers who once again delivered our newsletter to every household in Backwell including Downside.

Unfortunately, after many different planning applications, huge local opposition, refusals and appeals over several decades, Persimmon was finally given outline consent by an Appeal Inspector to build up to 125 houses on one of the Farleigh Fields. Then Taylor Wimpey was given outline consent by North Somerset Council to build up to 65 houses in the field off Rodney Road, again despite huge local opposition. Both these consents happened because North Somerset Council was not able to demonstrate a satisfactory “five-year land supply”. For the time being this requirement and the targets set by Central Government remain in place and we have concerns that developers could take advantage of this situation. More on this from Lucy White shortly.

Of particular concern is the proposal by Gleeson Land to build 400 new homes on a 94 acre site, mainly within Nailsea’s boundary, but with part of the site in Backwell Parish. We have serious concerns about traffic, flooding and potential impact on wildlife. This development would also encroach on the so-called Strategic Gap, and we think Backwell should retain its separate identity and character. More on this from Mike Rose shortly.

We have also recently become aware that Persimmon has purchased a property in Dark Lane with the obvious intention of creating a potential access into a further development on Farleigh Fields.

Both of these possibly imminent Planning Applications will be monitored very closely by BRA and we will enlist whatever professional advice we deem necessary.

We will also be paying very close attention to the draft North Somerset Local Plan when it re-emerges later in the year and we hope that the number of new houses proposed for Backwell will be considerably reduced from the 1100 in the draft issued last Spring.

Ladies and Gentlemen, BRA is a pressure group which seeks to achieve what we believe is in the best interests of Backwell as a whole and we will spare no effort in maintaining close liaison with Backwell Parish Council and North Somerset Council and will continue to employ outside Consultants as necessary to assist us in our objectives. Your subscriptions and donations remain vital to our ability to hire good professional advice - we thank you, our members.

Finally – a plea for volunteers. Many, varied organisations help keep Backwell strong and vibrant - lots of volunteers are needed. Sadly our British Legion branch has folded, whilst on a brighter note the WI had a close shave but has been re-invigorated. There are new organisations doing new things. But, the Parish Council needs new Councillors. Your BRA Committee would benefit from a reduced average age. Ecology expertise and someone with planning expertise to assist Mike Rose would be especially beneficial.

Enough from me for now, next up is Geoff Wells.”

1. Membership Report:

Geoff Wells exhibited a bar chart recording paid up membership levels over the seven year period to 31 December 2022 and reported as follows:-

“As you see from the chart, the number of households who joined BRA has been surprisingly constant over the last 5 years, at the 430/440 level. One always likes graphs to go upwards, but these numbers are almost a quarter of households in Backwell, which is quite an achievement. It is hard to think of another village organisation that has anything like this representation.

Your **membership is fundamental to the success of BRA**. Our committee has a range of skills, but we supplement this by using your money to buy in expertise to improve the BRA case. Many thanks to those who have already paid – it is a big help to have subscriptions early in the year. BRA is well regarded at North Somerset and by national inspectors as we not only talk sense, but we represent a large section of our community. This would not be possible without your support.

**We encourage a two-way dialogue with members**. Our main route of information is via our annual hardcopy newsletter distributed by volunteers to all the village, and our regular email bulletins to members. Many of the committee contribute to these. If you are not receiving bulletins every 3 or 4 weeks, please check that we have your correct email address. We pride ourselves on having up to date information on the membership database, as it only takes a single character to be wrong and out of place for an email to fail.

I do remember one email very well, which shows that even with great care we are not perfect.

Dear BRA – thank you for the bulletin

Please remove us from your database.

We live in Chicago !!”

1. Honorary Treasurer’s Report and Audited Accounts for the year ended 31 December 2022:

On behalf of the Treasurer, Kevin Crawford, the Secretary Mike Veal exhibited a summary of the audited Accounts for the twelve months to 31 December 2022. These are available only to BRA members who may apply to the Secretary if they require further information. He also highlighted some major items of expenditure on large projects in the three-year period 2020-2022 as follows: -

Rodney Road Planning Application: £3,514, Even Keel, Moor Lane Planning Application: £3,150, Farleigh Fields Application and Planning Appeal: £2,229, Draft NSC Local Plan: £1,900, Bristol Airport Expansion: £1,000, Land east of Backwell – Flood Risk Assessment: £939.00

Approval of the audited Accounts was proposed by Barbara Harland, seconded by Mike Rose and unanimously agreed.

1. 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 Mike Rose, seconded by Mike Veal and was unanimously elected.

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

Committee Member – Gill Collinson was proposed by Valerie Wells, seconded by Keith Riches and was unanimously elected.

Committee Member – Chris Elliott was proposed by Jo Watson, seconded by Terry Merrett-Smith and was unanimously elected.

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

1. Appointment of Auditor:

Richard Gaunt was thanked and kindly agreed to continue in 2023. His re-appointment was proposed by Mike Rose, seconded by Valerie Wells and unanimously agreed.

1. Any Other Formal Business: There was none.

The formal proceedings of the Meeting were concluded at 7.25 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 Question and Answer session attached as Appendices 1-5 do not form part of the formal Minutes of the Annual General Meeting.