



The Minutes of the AGM held on Friday Oct 30th 2009

Present Roger Brown (Chair), Marilyn Rossell (Treasurer), Mike Radcliffe, John Bradshaw, Pete Thomas and Graham Linecar and 52 residents

Guests Councillor Vincenzo Capozolli, Jerry Gillen (HRA) and Simon Hill (Common Sense)

Apologies: There were 16 apologies

Minutes of AGM 11th July 2008 agreed. There were no matters arising.

Chair's Report

Roger reported that the OTRA Committee had met 8 times since the last AGM. He thanked his fellow Committee members for their support and hard work during the year. He also thanked the OTRA Conservation Group for their vigilance and for the many hours of effort that had gone into the monitoring report on the CAMP.

Roger also thanked those who had organised fund raising social events during the year: Colin Bagust and Caroline Silk (the Quiz), Nicky Bradshaw and Pam Paull (Plant Sale) and Josie Brown (Book Sale). Special thanks went to Emily Shaw and her team for the extremely successful Street Party, which had also been supported by the City Council's Active Communities Department and the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Community Foundation's Grassroots Grants Scheme. Not only did these events raise much needed resources for OTRA, they were also valuable in helping the community to keep together. Finally, Roger thanked the local Police; the Neighbourhood Watch Coordinator, Michael Radcliffe; the Highfield Residents' Association; and the Northern Neighbourhood Forum, on which Steve Connolly has represented our interests. (Caroline Knight is the representative and Stephen has agreed to deputise)

Roger recalled that at the two previous AGMs he had commented critically on relations with the City Council, especially some officers. This year he was glad to be able to report that there had been a marked improvement in responsiveness and cooperation: whether this had anything to do with the new administration would be for others to determine. It had however made for a much more productive year.

A number of issues had arisen since the last AGM. Two of them, the CAMP and the Little Common, were elsewhere on the agenda. It had been a relatively quiet year for development, no doubt reflecting the recession. The most controversial issue had been parking, where OTRA had vigorously and successfully resisted proposals for restrictions in Brookvale Road that could have led to significant displacement of

parked cars into the Triangle; one disappointing aspect had been the lack of sensitivity shown by certain residents in Brookvale not only towards other residents in Highfield but also towards legitimate community users such as the Church. The Association would keep the position under close review. We would also talk further with SCC over the replacement of kerb stones.

Turning to OTRA, Roger said that the e-mail communication system operated by Michael Radcliffe appeared to be working well. In addition, and especially to keep in touch with people outside that system, there was now a set of Street Representatives who would also welcome newcomers to the Triangle [details given below]. In answer to a question, Roger and Pete Thomas confirmed that the website was operative and available for inputs from residents.

Finally, Roger said that, if re-elected, it was his firm intention to step down as OTRA Chair in 2010. He would then have served for 7 years and it was quite wrong for a body like OTRA to come to depend too heavily on one person in that role. It was therefore imperative that the Association, through the Committee, embarked on the search for a suitable successor without delay.

Treasurer's Report

The accounts were distributed and were up to March 2009. The plant sale had raised £285 and the Quiz £402. This year the plant sale had raised £361 and the book sale £275. We have £3000 in the bank. Andrew Jackman was thanked for inspecting the accounts.

Amendment to Constitution

As previously circulated: *5h: The Executive committee may constitute the Neighbourhood Watch Group*

Election of Officers

The existing committee members have agreed to stand again unless there were any volunteers to take places. As there were no volunteers the committee stands. Graham Linecar has been co-opted on to the committee and will take the place of Mike Arden-Jones who is standing down. Roger Brown will act as Chair for another year and John Bradshaw has agreed to act as Vice Chair for the next year.

Conservation Group and CAMP

John Bradshaw talked about the work of the Conservation Group and the production of the Character Appraisal and Management Plan. Copies of the Management plan are available and are given to all new residents. Malcolm Wagstaff was thanked for all the hard work that he had put in to produce the document, which had been adopted by the Council 18 months ago. The purpose was to offer guidance on change, development and conservation in the Triangle.

Graham Linecar had produced the annual appraisal and he was thanked for this work. The AGM adopted the report and agreed that it should be forwarded to the City Council. Finally, there had been 20 planning applications made to the Council in the past year and most were approved.

In answer to a question, Roger said that OTRA automatically received notification of applications in the Triangle. He normally sought advice from the Conservation Group and sent a response by Chair's action except where there were wider issues for the Committee. It was always helpful to have informal discussions before an application was lodged.

Common Sense

At the end of 2007, residents in Highfield Road came together to press the City Council to change the way it manages maintenance of our side of The Common. Residents had seen The Common becoming increasingly overgrown and the open grassy areas becoming smaller year by year. Residents of Highfield Road were particularly concerned that dense scrub along the roadside gave an oppressive feel, and left many feeling insecure. They wanted to see removal of much of the roadside saplings and bushes so the road would feel safer, and a change to the maintenance regime that would return to this part of The Common the more open character it had had some 15 years ago.

The group called themselves Common Sense. Like OTRA, it is part of HRA. It is an informal group that has built up a successful working relationship with managers of The Common. Managers now discuss with the group the maintenance programme and new projects for major changes and improvements. There have also been a number of volunteer working days when local residents, including residents from The Triangle, have set-to with The Common staff to do some of the work we wanted to see undertaken. It is satisfying to 'lend a hand' to achieve what we want to see happen, and also fun working together. And also informative, as you can learn a lot about The Common from the staff.

So far, Common Sense working groups have concentrated on the northern end of Highfield Road. Members may have noticed, and approved of, the work the volunteers did to remove some of the denser roadside growth of saplings and overgrown scrub and to clear scrub choking the remaining, struggling, hawthorns. During last winter, the City Council's contractors undertook removal of young trees from the ditches each side of the Victorian carriage drive so more sun and air would get to the grass ride and surface water could drain off into the cleaned-out ditches. For a time it looked a bit raw, but it seems to have worked. The ride is drier and now looks a lot better, and more inviting.

The next job will be removal of more roadside scrub. But first, steps must be taken to make sure vehicles and trailers cannot get onto The Common --- we do not want another invasion by travellers. This will probably take the form of strengthening the existing roadside banks, but in a way that gives gentle slopes allowing people to walk across onto The Common.

Common Sense also wants to see a start made opposite Avenue Campus, an area that used to be much more open and has been allowed to grow up, and, from the road, looks unkempt and forbidding. The Common management's new winter programme includes the intention to remove some young trees, especially those choking the remaining hawthorns, and to begin to create a new grassy glade for quiet enjoyment of The Common, like the nearby grassy area already there. Common Sense considers this to be only a beginning and will press for much more roadside clearance to open up and make less forbidding-looking the area opposite Avenue Campus.

The winter maintenance programme also includes some thinning of the tree canopy along Lovers' Walk to let in more light to encourage growth of a graded woodland edge, and reduce what it calls 'lurking areas'. It is hoped that some at least of this local work might be carried out with the help of volunteer working groups from OTRA because it is an opportunity for OTRA residents to engage with The Common management and talk about improvements and changes in maintenance.

The question was asked whether the work on the Common could not be done by those doing Community Service. The answer was given that such people needed supervision and much of the work was done by volunteers. Another question was asked about controlling the local rat population. The answer was given that the Environmental Health Team should be made aware but they were reluctant to use poison. People should complain more and desist from feeding them. Clearing the Common would help. There was applause for the Common Sense Team.

Any Other Business

There was a presentation of the History project, led by Pam Paull and Caroline Silk, on the walls.

Roger was thanked for continuing to be Chair.

Ray and Pam were thanked for organising the drinks.

The meeting closed at 20.34 and was followed by an American supper.