

Bownham Park Rodborough Residents' Association Limited

Minutes of 37th Annual General Meeting held at the Bear of Rodborough on Thursday 21st June 2012, commencing at 8pm

Mr. Hopkins was in the chair and opened the meeting by welcoming Members representing 44 households. The Secretary confirmed that there was a quorum for the meeting.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from 1 Member and 13 proxies had been received.

2. Minutes of the 36th Annual General Meeting held on 21st June 2011

The Chairman stated that the minutes from the previous AGM had been circulated together with the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31st March 2012. On the proposition and seconding of Mr. Arnison and Mrs Kelsey respectively the minutes were unanimously accepted and signed by the Chairman.

3. Matters arising from the previous Annual General Meeting

No matters were raised regarding the previous meeting.

4. Secretary's Report

The Secretary stated that his report had been circulated with the notice of the AGM prior to the meeting. The only addition was further developments of Bownham Park School would be covered in Any Other Business. There were no comments from the meeting and his report was accepted with thanks.

5. Treasurer's Report

The audited accounts for the year 2011/12 had been circulated with the notice of the meeting. There were no comments from the meeting for the Treasurer and on the proposition of Mr. Richards and seconding by Mr. Hanks the accounts were accepted.

6. Annual Maintenance Fee

The Chairman gave an explanation of how the reduced Maintenance Fee had been calculated. As there was no need to have a contingency for the main sewers these having been taken over by Severn Trent, he and the Treasurer had looked at expenditure over the previous 20 years and recalculated the income and expenditure for the next 10 years. These showed that we should be able to keep the Maintenance Fee at £200 for the next 5 years and then increased to £220 in five

years time, we should have a reserve of over £100,000 by 2022. This should allow for any major work such as road resurfacing if required. Messrs Morris and McEwan thought that the Maintenance Fee should be higher to give a larger reserve and questioned details of preventative maintenance. The Secretary stated that the roads were frequently surveyed as well as other areas of responsibility such as the haunchings. Our difficulty was to find a company to do small repair jobs. The Chairman explained that the proposed budget included funds for annual preventive maintenance which for this year, as an example, would cover the repairs to the top cattle grid and other works. Mr. Hinch enquired if there were any other costs such as dealing with overhanging trees and road sweeping that could be incurred or other work required than that planned. Mr. Eyles said the Association were still responsible for the surface water drains. The Chairman stated that an annual escalation of 4% had been applied to all our costs as well as an additional contingency amount every second year. The Secretary also stated that we had to vote on the Maintenance Fee every year under our Constitution. The Chairman confirmed that the ten year target budget figures for the increase in reserves should be achievable but if it was found that a shortfall was developing then an increase in the Maintenance Fee could be implemented.

On the proposition by Mr. Whitaker and seconding by Mr. Fincher, the Annual Maintenance Fee of £200 for the ensuing year was approved.

7. Appointment of Auditor for 2012/13

The Treasurer said that she was happy with the current Auditors and on the proposition by Mrs. Lloyd and seconding by Mrs. Chapman, Messrs Kingscott-Dix were reappointed as Auditors for the ensuing year.

8. Election of Council for 2012/13

The Secretary stated that he had received nominations as follows:

Secretary – Mr. Clements (59)

Treasurer – Mr. Pegg (36)

Council Members – Mr. Hopkins (85), Mr Eyles (23), Mr. Richards (83), Mrs. Kelsey (57), Mr. Smith (1)

On the proposal by Mrs Lane and seconding by Mrs. Crossley, the nominations were approved unanimously.

As Mr & Mrs Lloyd were both stepping down from the council the Chairman, on behalf of the residents, thanked them for their dedication and hard work over the past few years and presented them with a gift of wine to express appreciation for their efforts.

The Chairman commented that although Mr. Lloyd was stepping down from the Council, he would be continuing as Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator and this was very much appreciated.

9. Neighbourhood Watch

Mr. Lloyd stated that there had not been any incidents in the past 12 months on the Park to report. There were reports of noise from vehicles on the common and increased crime in Stroud. There was a new contact number 101 for the police to report any incidents. Although Mr. Lloyd was stepping down from the Council, he would be continuing as Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator.

10. Traffic on Bownham Park

This item had been placed on the AGM agenda at the request of Mr. Hinch at a meeting that several Council members had attended on a presentation of the private survey that Messrs Hinch and Mercer had conducted.

The Chairman opened by saying that he hoped that the result of the discussions would be a list of suggestions to improve road safety that could be considered by the Council for action. He also thanked the Secretary for his comprehensive report.

At the request of the then Council, the Secretary had investigated and circulated a report on the legal situation on "Traffic on Bownham Park" covering "Private Road" status, through traffic and speeding. The report had been approved by our solicitors and was based on the handbook by Private Roads Services (PRS) – The Legal Framework. (We are members of PRS). Mrs Phillips thanked the Secretary for his very clear and detailed report.

Mr. Hinch then took the floor and acknowledged that there had been criticism of the survey undertaken by Mr Mercer and himself and therefore would report on only two of the questions regarding 'near miss' incidents and a question on traffic reduction. His opinion was that the Council were not being pro-active enough in dealing with these items.

The Chairman responded that in the absence of any hard rather than perceived data, it was difficult for the Council to act. However, he agreed with the point about 'near miss' incidents and quoted a case where his daughter had to take emergency evasive action to avoid a collision with a vehicle was being driven too fast and dangerously. It was interesting to note, he added, that from the description he identified the car as being driven by a resident. He then reminded Mr Hinch and all of those attending that he was hoping for specific ideas and suggestions for improving the safety of the roads

Mr. Hinch replied by requesting that a formal survey be carried out. The Secretary stated that the Council were not road experts and that an independent body would have to carry out the work at a cost to the Association. Specific terms would therefore have to be drawn up as to what was to

be surveyed and Mr. Hinch was happy to liaise with the Council to draw these up so that a quotation could be requested from a Traffic Management Consultant to carry out the survey.

Speeding

There was then a general discussion on what could be done, many of which had already been covered in Jason Lloyd report in 2009 and had been rejected by a majority of the residents. Preventative measures could be applied such as road humps at a cost of £750 per hump plus installation. This suggestion drew a very adverse reaction from many of the residents and was discounted.

Active speed signs driven by solar power, were suggested at the top and around the Park but this was not liked by several of the residents and these could only be advisory as there was no legal speed limit on the Park.

Mrs. Whittaker said that residents should be more pro-active on seeing speeding vehicles especially with speeding residents who seemed to be the main culprits and this was endorsed by Mr. Lloyd. He added that it was the responsibility of residents to drive more slowly and he had on several occasions signalled to drivers to slow down.

Mrs. Whittaker requested that a regular reminder to residents in Newsletters about speeding might help and that she had noticed an improvement following the last survey.

The entrance at the top was seen as potentially dangerous due to incoming vehicles cutting across the road when entering the Park. Mr. Morris suggested that the road between the cattle grid and the main road be modified to create a drop down/ridge in the road together with the “slow down” signs that might be possible. Mr. Whittaker stated that it was unclear who actually owned it, The National Trust or BPRRA, and it was declared an “honourable draw” but we paid the National Trust £10 for the right of access and for the responsibility of the top surface maintenance. To enquire about it with the National Trust might open up a costly discussion. The road markings at the “T” junction at the top should be solid lines indicating “STOP”. The Secretary said that Mr. Eyles was in contact with the company that did the road marking earlier this year as the markings had deteriorated and needed redoing. The form of the marking would be addressed at that time.

Mr Whittaker said that previously where delivery vans had been speeding he had contacted their Head Offices regarding these incidents. He had also reported to the police a resident who was speeding and the police had then visited that resident.

The Secretary said that he had been advised that the word ‘children’ should be removed from the slow down sign as it could imply that children were playing in the road. It was suggested that the elderly also needed consideration. The Council will look at this.

Through Traffic.

There were several views on the amount of through traffic which occurred on the Park but no data other than that in Jason Lloyds report. Mr. McEwan said that in Mr. Lloyds report (it was in an earlier report by Mrs Bennett) that had identified over 7,000 vehicles a year (equivalent to 19 vehicles a day) using the Park as a cut through. Mr. Fincher who lives by the bottom entrance said that it was not his impression that there were that many vehicles using the lower entrance. Delivery vehicles tended to go right round the Park. Both he and Mr. Thackray would object if the bottom entrance was closed off.

Mr. Whittaker said that he had previously identified the owners of Gravel Hill House as being one such culprit and that he had written to him and threatened him with legal action if he persisted. The owner did not protest and admitted that he was guilty of using the Park as a cut through.

Mr. Whittaker had also contacted the authorities where police vehicles were using the Park as a cut through. The police stated that on those occasions they were on an emergency.

Mr. Whittaker also questioned the Secretary's statement that we could not stop through traffic under the 40 year exemption rule and that we should be more pro-active against offenders and take legal action where necessary. The Chairman thanked him for his contribution and requested that he prepare a brief account of those previous experiences and send it to the Secretary.

Mrs. Phillips said she did not think we had any right to stop vehicles by closing the bottom entrance and whilst it might reduce through traffic it would not solve the speeding problem which is the main cause of concern. The use of a pop-up bollard was suggested but the cost implications needed to be investigated also who would be liable if someone tailgated or was caught on the bollard.

A suggestion was made that we close the bottom entrance say on a bi-monthly basis to deter through traffic but this was argued against.

Mrs Kelsey commented that no one has mentioned anything about identifying the scale of the problem. We are all talking about it as a problem yet there isn't really the information. We needed to have facts not perceptions.

Mr. Jones gave his legal view on through traffic in that the roads were only available for residents and visitors to go to and from the Park and that through traffic was trespassing. He said that should an incident occur then it was the responsibility of the persons involved to resolve and that parents were responsible for their children not BPRRA.

Mr. Lloyd felt that where there is a will there is a way but that there was not much will.

Other dangers

The roads were planned for two vehicles passing but that there were several areas where overhanging branches and bushes narrowed the road so that vehicles had to cross the road into oncoming traffic thus causing a "near miss". The Secretary was asked to bring up the matter of overhanging items in the next Newsletter. The Council should also be more active in requesting residents to removing overhanging items.

Mrs. Phillips enquired whether the authorities had been informed about top entrance closure and the Secretary stated that he had informed both the emergency services (Fire, Police and Ambulance) plus Stroud District Council (refuse collection). She also thought that it should be the responsibility of each resident to maintain the area in front of their property such as weeding between the haunches.

The Chairman briefly summarized the discussion and specifically thanked all those present who had made useful and constructive ideas and proposals. He indicated that the topic of road safety would be discussed at the next Council meeting.

11. Any other business

Mrs Tyrer said that she had had problems with foxes and badgers tearing open the black rubbish bags and rubbish being strewn over the road and having to clear it up. The Secretary said that the refuse collectors generally cleared up any spilt rubbish. Mrs Phillips said that she had a solid wooden container for her bags and this had deterred animals. The Council would do a "Back Door Collection" from such container which meant that Mrs. Tyrer would not have to put the bag out at the roadside. This facility was available to anyone.

Mr. Allen had asked that more regular leaf sweeping (at a cost of £250 per sweep) be carried out. This was rejected by the meeting. He also asked if anything could anything be done about clearing the surface water drains around the Park as one of his local drains tended to flood.

The Secretary said that he and the Chairman were attending a meeting with the Gloucestershire Country Council regarding the redevelopment of Bownham Park School next week and would report back their findings afterwards.

Mrs. Phillips enquired if the Council knew anything about the redevelopment of Amberley Ridge School as it had now closed. Nothing was known but enquiries would be made at the meeting with the GCC representatives.

The question of non-residents permanently parking on our roads was brought up and it was suggested that they be charged or clamped if they persisted in the offence.

As a final item, the trees on the island at the bottom of the Park were overgrown and some were likely to fall over. As they were owned by the Association could something be done to thin out the trees. The Secretary said he would see what could be done.

The meeting closed at 9.37 with thanks to all that attended