



## **MINUTES OF THE OLD RATTON RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD 7pm ON 19<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022 AT ST MARY'S CHURCH HALL, CHURCH ROAD, WILLINGDON**

- 1. INTRODUCTION** The Chairman, Mrs Rose Kiley, welcomed everyone to the Annual General Meeting. She then went on to introduce the Committee who had been working on the Association's behalf this year: Angela Potter, Greg Evans, Gary Robinson, Julia Bachelor, Nigel Wesson, Christine Dunn, Janet Oliff and Jennifer Diack.

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Belsey and invited him to introduce himself to those attendees who may not know him which he did and thanked the Association for inviting him.

The Chairman then thanked Sandy Boyce-Sharpe, who is Chairman of the Ratton Area Neighbourhood Panel, who had offered to take the minutes of this meeting. She invited Sandy to acquaint the meeting with the work the Panel undertakes when it meets and how it had helped the residents.

*"I have been invited to remind you that the Ratton Area Neighbourhood Panel has worked for some years on behalf of the residents and can claim success re a number of issues throughout Ratton and Rodmill, working with help from Council Officers, our Councillors and the Police. We have achieved reduction of speed limit on Willingdon Road south of roundabout from 40 mph to 30mph and at Willingdon roundabout which had been 40mph as Willingdon Road north still is; pedestrian islands in Willingdon Road; designated 'safe route to schools' for Ratton School; Westlords' present status; reinstatement of footpath to Upper Wish Hill; regular clearing of bridle path; pavement repairs; broken manhole repairs; waste and dog bins; daffodil planting along A2270; the Christmas tree; repairs to the telephone box at the Post Office so that the phone worked and now it is a library. We fought Highways when they wanted to put a cycle path up Coopers Hill and down Wish Hill, and won. Many of you were at that meeting.*

*For the ORRA estate itself I, with the support of my panel, have achieved free monthly street sweeping of the main estate roads; repairs to manholes; repairs to old utility trenches; maintenance and repairs to bridle path sign and the renovation of the utility substation. A plan of the foul sewer runs on the estate was prepared and adopted by Southern Water who had no knowledge of same and considered perhaps we had cess pits. The owners of the garages at Ratton Gardens (an independent investment company) have been persuaded to contribute now and in the future their share of the*

*estate maintenance charge, with a lump sum donation for not having done so in the past. Ongoing there are negotiations with Highways different departments to endeavour to make the junction at Parkway and Walnut Tree Walk safer if they will agree. And there is even better news to come in the way I have worked to save the members of the ORRA expenditure. More about this later."*

- 2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** Apologies had been received from Graham Carn; Denise Dunning; Mr & Mrs Nay; Mr & Mrs Veitch; Mrs J Thomas; Mrs J Jones; Mr & Mrs Plowman; Mr & Mrs Ramsay; Mr & Mrs Nicol; Mr & Mrs Barnhoorn; Mrs C Fage; Mr & Mrs A Cockerham; Mr & Mrs Blunden; Ms D Steel; Ms M Smith; Ms M Boufassa; Mrs S Cudd; Mr & Mrs Oliff; Mr & Mrs O'Leary; Ms Kathy Saunders; Mrs Thornton.

**PROPERTIES REPRESENTED** Manor Way 1; The Grove 3; Linkway 2; The Close 4; Ratton Drive 4; Walnut Tree Walk 8; Ratton Garden 6; Upper Ratton Drive 3.

- 3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AGM HELD ON 5<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2021** Adoption of the Minutes of the last meeting as a true and accurate record.

Proposed by Barry Hempstead and seconded by Peter Dunn. Carried unanimously.

**4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman advised the meeting that she was changing the running order on the agenda and would like to call for the committee member reports now and complete her report later in the meeting.

**5. REPORT ON TREES AND GREEN SPACES BY JULIA BACHELOR**

The appointed Arborist Consultant Nick Jones undertook the tree survey in April this year and has advised 10 trees out of 149 will need minor attention and one Ash will need to be felled. In comparison 48 trees needed significant work undertaken in 2020. Storm Eunice in February resulted in only a few twigs and small branches being dislodged which gives us confidence in our new tree management approach. Quotes have been sought for scheduled 2022 works and Simon Peel's quote has been accepted. December '21 two Walnut Trees planted outside 23 and 25 WTW replacing dead Almonds. Residents to water and monitor. Our Queen's Jubilee Tree, Red Sentinel Crab Apple, has been planted corner Ratton Drive and Linkway and a plaque has been ordered to commemorate this.

Sadly there have been a couple of significant incidents in Ratton Drive where criminal damage has been caused to two ORRA trees and wildlife nesting therein. A mature Holm Oak was severely pollarded by an unauthorised tree surgeon on the instructions of a resident. This was an ORRA tree. Its condition is doubtful. The householder concerned faces prosecution for criminal damage. The name of the tree surgeon has not been vouchsafed.

The second incident was worse as the Ash tree had been monitored for some years by our specialist and unfortunately removal was the recommendation. The nearest residents were advised and the tree was inspected for nesting wildlife prior to felling. An Owl nest was identified

part way up, accompanied by some Jackdaws as near neighbours. Woodpeckers nests identified towards the top. Therefore, the tree could not be felled until the autumn. The residents tried to persuade the tree surgeon to encourage the nesting birds to leave unsuccessfully. The residents were advised in writing that the tree would have to wait for felling till the autumn and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 was shared with them together with potential penalties. However, residents of the said property were witnessed lopping off branches within reach and poking in the cavity where nesting birds had been witnessed. When the nesting area was re-examined only abandoned nests were found. The matter has been reported to the Police and legal advice being sought.

Parking that damages grass verges and the extended roots of ORRA trees has been an issue this year and residents have been asked to desist. Apart from a few negative incidents I believe the majority of residents appreciate and value the qualities the estate trees bring to our surroundings. Nevertheless, the majority of our trees are very mature and, although they seem in good order, and with due care and maintenance many have more good years ahead, we are looking to continue planting young replacements and any suggestions re sites are welcome by the committee.

## **6. REPORT ON ROADS BY GREG EVANS**

To recap on the road condition survey from 2020 and the recommendations. There was a works schedule for a 3 year period. The 2021 works have been carried out for the first phase. 2022 specification has been drawn up for this year for Phase 2. The full specification will be finalised in the next few weeks and sent out to contractors for pricing.

The budget for this phase is circa £15k and addresses fourth speed hump for Ratton Drive, road signs, further speed humps to be considered, verge protection, particularly for trees. Upper Ratton Drive proposed speed humps, road lining. Linkway joints and bitumen filling. Grove 6 & 9 tarmac repair. Twittens repairs underfoot. Close and Manor Way foliage. WTW gullies to be cleaned and quotes obtained. Grove speed humps to be considered.

Works anticipated to take place in the autumn and gullies to be cleaned after fall of leaves. Quotes to be obtained over the coming months.

## **7. TREASURER'S REPORT**

A copy of the ORRA Accounts for 2021/22, certified by HBS Accounting Ltd. of Polegate, was delivered to all the residents on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2022 for 2021/22 year. The annual maintenance charge was not increased from 2020/21 and members' contributions due totalled £26,668. There are outstanding payments due from three residents who continue to default. If not paid beforehand these debts remain with the property to be paid at such time as the property is sold. A substantial amount of almost £40,000 was required to maintain the roads and there is further maintenance that is pending for this year.

Over £8,000 was spent on work to maintain our trees in order to keep the estate looking good for the benefit of everyone. The accounts show a healthy balance, but it is necessary to maintain a substantial balance for ongoing expenses and unforeseen expenditure in the future. At last year's AGM it was agreed to increase the maintenance charge by 10% for the current financial

year. Requests for payment were delivered in early April. I should like to thank the 120 residents who have paid to date and to request that the remaining residents pay without the need for reminders to be sent out.

Question for the Treasurer: Are we requesting fees outstanding from residents and solicitors and is the charge now £150 to solicitors for details? Answer: All solicitors have been billed.

Proposal that the accounts be adopted by Penny Burge and seconded by Rhylva Holder. Carried

## **8. ELECTION OF AUDITOR**

The Treasurer advised we use Howard Smith of HBS Limited Polegate again for the coming year.

Proposed by Mark Thornton and seconded by Peter Dunn. Agreed without dissention.

## **9. CHRISTINE DUNN RE REAR GARDENS**

Mrs Dunn was scheduled to present the case for removing the necessity of ORRA committee reviewing the installation of fences in rear gardens. Her actual presentation related to neighbour disputes rather than the proposed removal of fences from the Residents Charter.

The Chairman asked her to stop and stand down as the item she wanted to propose was not legitimate for the meeting. She refused and continued along the lines of neighbour disputes.

The Chairman, again, asked Mrs Dunn to stand down and proceeded to advise the meeting that fences in rear gardens were included in the Charter/Memorandum of Understanding and the committee members were proposing removal of this responsibility. The Residents' Charter was devised in 2019 by the Chairman Mark Thornton and his Committee to update the language and make the guidelines more relevant to the 21st century.

Mrs Dunn insisted on presenting her case, refusing to acknowledge the Chairman's requests for her to desist. She confirmed the original covenants relate to roads, buildings and trees and stipulations on the hedges being kept between 4 to 6 feet. Mrs Dunn stated she had worked as Secretary under 4 Chairman in the past and there had never been any involvement relating to hedges or fences.

Phil Tong, the Webmaster proposed that the committee consider this over the coming year and put forward a proper proposal as it was not clear what amendment was being suggested to the Memorandum. He went on to say he was really concerned that as an organisation we change the whole policy because of one incident. Mrs Sandy Boyce Sharpe said, as a resident, we need to know in detail what is being proposed.

After considerable open discussion it was decided, by a show of hands, whether to vote at the meeting or defer until the next AGM. It was carried to vote at the meeting.

John Cudd requested confirmation that we have a quorum present which was confirmed.

All those present decided, by a show of hands, that fences are removed from The Charter/Memorandum of Understanding. The motion was carried.

Phil Tong asked for a rewording of the memorandum as the website would have to be updated.

Mark Thornton requested that the changes to the Memorandum be communicated to the 149 properties on the estate.

## **10. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

The Chairman reminded the meeting that she had been on the committee for more years than she cared to remember. She had learnt about trees, drains, the composition of roads and felt qualified to apply for a post with Docwra Clancy. She had become Chairman because no one else wanted to take on the role and agreed a 6 month tenure. That was 3 years ago but now it really is time to go and hit the open road in Van Diesel with Eddie and Dots.

### **Catchpit**

There is a catchpit at the top of Linkway, built in the '60s. Its purpose is to collect debris that runs down the bridle path from the Downs. I've got to know its contents quite well the dirt, branches, twigs and even poo bags. I spent many hours trying to establish ownership but at every turn hit a brick wall. I asked Sandy for help. She kindly agreed to take this up on our behalf and I now invite her to update the meeting on her progress.

*"Sandy advised she was delighted to be able to confirm that with the help of your Chairman, (who assisted me greatly by delving into the archives of correspondence and committee minutes going back decades) plus a large number of progressively persuasive emails and meetings, we have succeeded where previous Chairmen and Committees have failed.*

*I have, this week, had confirmation from Eastbourne Borough Council that they accept as fact that they built, own, are and always have been responsible for the maintenance and cleaning of the catch pit at the top of Linkway which takes the debris that runs down the bridle way off the Downs. This will, hopefully, relieve the pressure from the gullies in Linkway and down Ratton Drive.*

*I am happy that this year we can save everyone on the estate of the cost of cleaning out the catch pit for now and the future. The bill for one emptying last year amounted to nearly £2,000 which I am confident I shall get recompensed. I shall also endeavour to obtain some recompense for the previous years."*

The Chairman commended to the meeting this news, achieved through hard work and sheer determination to right a wrong. It would be difficult to explain the amount of effort it has taken to convince Eastbourne Borough Council of their responsibility, strenuously denied right up to this week. The financial savings to this Association in years to come is incalculable so I would commend all our thanks to Sandy Boyce-Sharpe.

### **Lamppost**

The iconic leaning lamppost on the bank in Ratton Drive is no more. It has been replaced with the modern post. The area could not support the beautiful old cast iron post and, for health and safety reasons, we reluctantly had to accept the modern variety. The lamppost will be painted sometime in the summer.

### **Extensions/Outdoor Rooms/Gardens**

The owners have moved into 26 Ratton Drive after completely refurbishing the property.

44 Ratton Drive has applied to EBC for a single storey extension. Unfortunately, the Committee only gained knowledge of this by reading the planning notice on the lamp post nearby.

49 Upper Ratton Drive have installed solar panels but had not approached the Committee prior. There have been a number of Gazebos, sheds and garden rooms, built in rear gardens throughout the estate.

### **Unauthorised Parking**

This has been the bane of my life as I never thought I had the skill set to be a traffic warden. I've developed a deep sense of sympathy, admiration and understanding for anyone undertaking that role. We have a real problem on the estate with trade vehicles, vans and camper vans parking overnight. Some car and van owners think it is ok to park on grass verges and against No Parking signs. This is becoming a real issue as in the last 3 weeks alone I have moved on seven vehicles.

Residents must make contractors and visitors aware of parking restrictions without the necessity for the committee having to deal with it. We cannot have cars restricting access for emergency vehicles and parking on grass verges must cease. You pay for maintaining the roads and many of the grass verges and the committee look to you to help with these issues. We are not a convenient free car park.

Online delivery vehicles and HGV lorries are seriously wearing away the grass banks in Ratton Drive. Many residents have online deliveries and the drivers on a tight time scale appear to race around the estate, back into driveways, drive across verges and leave parcels on doorsteps. I commend to the new Committee that something will have to be done fast if we are to stop the area looking a total mess.

### **The Queen's Platinum Jubilee**

Regrettably we are unable to organise a street party, despite our best efforts, but I would commend the residents to arrange their own '50s style event. Walnut Tree Walk did just that to celebrate VE Day and, despite lockdown, a great community spirit was achieved. I hope we will be able to do the same for our wonderful Queen at a date to be decided, possibly in June.

### **Committee**

Once again we are in dire straits as far as recruiting volunteers. Not one person has stepped up to take on a post on the committee. Of the 7 that volunteered last year only 4 remain. Two left within a matter of weeks, another resigned 2 weeks ago. The 7 existing committee have agreed to be nominated for a further year, however, two work full time, two more may not be able to carry out a full term. That leaves just 3 active committee members. This is insufficient to operate the tasks undertaken on your behalf. The committees who have worked for you in the



past, voluntarily, have done an outstanding job, working miracles on your behalf. The properties in Old Ratton have a higher net worth than anywhere else in Eastbourne. Current and past teams who have volunteered have maintained the high standards we have come to expect. We have managed for the first time ever to have sufficient funds in the bank to carry out all the major works required. We employed professionally qualified experts for advice on roads and trees. It has proved a good investment. All that has been achieved on comparatively low annual maintenance contributions.

### **Estate Manager**

However, we cannot continue like this. We have decided that it has become a necessity to employ an Estate Manager who can work with the Committee on your behalf. We have carried out extensive research and propose a new working arrangement. The ORRA Committee will remain in place, and in control, making all the decisions but implementation will be the responsibility of the Manager. Like the others employed for their professional advice there will be a fee. We propose that there is a one-year trial with this arrangement. I am delighted to advise that this trial year fee can be covered by existing funds and future payments will be assessed, agreed and notified to residents with the usual maintenance fee request.

The cost of the Estate Management Company we are proposing is less than £5,000.00 per annum. This will equate to £30 p.a. per household, £2.80 per month, 9p per day. We propose a one year trial after which both sides will review the working practice. It will be a learning curve. It may be necessary to tweak things to ensure the system is operating efficiently for everyone. The company we propose is Lacon Property Management and the Estate Manager would be Liz Bedwell.

Your Committee believe this a fair way of introducing the new method of working. It is the best option we have to maintain this beautiful area. We know it is unique, there is lots of history attached to Old Ratton and it is a wonderful place to live. I believe it deserves the nurturing and care that it has enjoyed for the last 54 years.

The Committee feel they would be failing in their duty to serve the estate if they do not take this measure to provide continuity and certainty and therefore put this proposal to the meeting.

There followed a question and answer session with residents present establishing facts and figures to be repeated; comments expressed re cost; comment: it will be preferable for a non resident to handle any disputes; comment: the ORRA will still need a committee to instruct the Manager; comment: with no volunteers there is no other option; question: should decision be made tonight or delayed?; tonight agreed; comment: it is preferable to employ professionals; comment: ensure ORRA remains financially independent. Meeting was advised that the holding company registered at Companies House as owner of the land of the estate required three Directors from within the Committee.

Existing committee willing to continue therefore proposal to the meeting that we vote for: Janet Oliff as Treasurer and Director, Gary Robinson as Company Secretary, and committee members Nigel Wesson, Julia Batchelor, Jennifer Diack, Christine Dunn and Greg Evans.

Vote carried unanimously.

The Committee had decided to employ Lacon Property Management and this was endorsed by a unanimous show of hands.

## **11.RESIGNING TREASURER'S REPORT RE MAINTENANCE FEES FOR 2022/2023**

Mrs Angela Potter addressed the meeting reminding them that she had been treasurer for 3 years and stated that she understood exactly how income and expenditure goes. You can see from the first page of accounts, it shows a minute figure of £26,967 and when I first saw it I thought oh '*my god what's happened?*'. That relates to our expenditure for last year. We spent £54k and we only actually took in £27k approx. So you can see it's taken us 2 yrs to gather up the money that we spent in the roads, it was a lot of money £40k and I know people were asking me all the time '*when are our road going to be done?*' but we had to save up for it and that's the reason.... But if you look at it on a yearly basis we are £26k in the red.

So, when I ask you about an increase in the money, I am going to say inflation is running at 9% and we all know it's going to get worse than that. If you are as old as me you can remember it was 15% at one point in the 80s.

This year, as Rose had said, we are going to take the money we will be paying Lacon out of the money we have in hand which at the end of the year was give or take £29k. We will take in nearly £28k which we will use for roads and trees. We are not asking you to pay this extra £4,500 we will cover the cost as we would if we had an emergency to pay for, for example the drains.

Lacon represents 17% increase in the fees we pay. I am going to suggest we put up the contributions by 10% again. That will just cover the increases we have got to take in for the coming year. If all goes to plan, and Lacon prove successful, I think we will have to have an increase to cover the cost.

We have to face reality, we have looked at what other people pay. On the harbour a flat faces a bill of £2k per annum. It has a lift but the rest is for window cleaning and public spaces. It doesn't cover a lot. East Dean pay a lot more. We pay a very small amount to cover our maintenance fees. Paul Rogers of WTW suggested 12.5% increase and Mike Walker of URD suggested 15% increase. I am proposing a 10% increase from April 2023.

The meeting unanimously agreed a 10% increase in fees from April 2023.

## **12.ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

1. Nigel reiterated we reserve the right to review the contingency plan and the £5k fee.
2. Phil Tong invited all members of the ORRA to visit the website and the Facebook page.
3. Paul Rogers enquired if it was within the covenants for people to work from home due to the clause re no business. It was agreed this applied to tradespeople rather than office based.



4. Paul Fitzpatrick raised the topic of feeding seagulls, which encouraged rats. Writing in the newsletter that it shouldn't happen doesn't work. Needs face to face approach. Agreed this could be passed to the Managing Agent.
5. Another question raised potentially for the Managing Agent was the trees in Ratton Garden causing damage to the flint wall.
6. Anyone with time and willing to help the committee were invited to offer their names

There being no other business the meeting prepared to close but the Chairman was presented with some flowers and a voucher with the grateful thanks of the committee and membership for all the years she had served the Association.

The meeting closed.

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Signed and agreed at the 2023 Annual General Meeting  
as a true and accurate record

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Chairman  
Dated                      /2023