

# Great Langborough Residents' Association

Defending our environment  [www.glra.org.uk](http://www.glra.org.uk)

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Salvation Army Hall, Sturges Road

9th September 2019 at 7:30 p.m.

### Attendees

A good turnout of 33 residents signed the register plus 8 GLRA Committee members, the CEO of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), one WBC officer and 2 Councillors. Residents who signed the attendance sheets, those who sent apologies and attending councillors will receive a copy of these minutes. A copy will appear on the Association's web site [www.glra.org.uk](http://www.glra.org.uk)

### Committee Members:

Robin Cops *Minutes*, Lesley Kendall, Philip Lawman *Treasurer*, Anita McPhilimey, David Nash *Secretary*, Andrew Pearce *Webmaster*, Philip Robinson, Pat Smith *Chair*

### Councillors:

Maria Gee, *Borough & Town*; Oliver Whittle, *Borough*

### Apologies

None recorded.

### Guest Speaker:

Susan Parsonage, Chief Executive Officer of Wokingham Borough Council

### Introduction:

The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed residents, councillors and guest speakers. She outlined the agenda for the evening. She asked that everyone signed in and included their email addresses, so that they could be included in Association's circulation list.

She reminded the audience that they could also follow progress on the GLRA web site. She welcomed and introduced WBC Councillors for Wescott Ward, Maria Gee and Oliver Whittle, and the new WBC Chief Executive Officer, Susan Parsonage, who was the guest speaker at the meeting.

## Annual General Meeting Business

### Opening

The Chair asked all residents present to sign the attendance sheets with their e-mail addresses. This would also act as their acceptance of the GLRA's GDPR published policy and allow documents to be sent to them.

She also directed the meeting to the GLRA web site [www.glra.org.uk](http://www.glra.org.uk) for the 2018 Chair's Newsletter, the 2018 AGM Minutes and the 2018 Treasurer's Report. Copies of the 2018 draft minutes with a summary of the 2018 Questions put to our 2018 AGM guest speakers and subsequent Answers, plus developments to date, had been distributed amongst the members present.

## Minutes of AGM meeting 2018.

The first item of business was to agree the 2018 AGM minutes. This was proposed by Sophie Scott, seconded by Lesley Kendall and passed unanimously.

### Chair's Report – Pat Smith

#### Town centre Regeneration Update

All residents had observed the progress of the regeneration so there was no need to go into details.

The **Market place** was finished although she believed that it still awaited the final surface clean.

It was great to see so many of the units in **Peach Place** being occupied. She expressed concern about the competition between the many coffee shops and hoped that they could all survive.

It was sad to know that the Wallis branch would be closing, as it had been such a stalwart of the precinct. We had to hope that a similar provider would move into the town.

**Elms Field** was also rapidly taking shape, with Aldi already open; the play area seemed to be very popular.

**Luckley Path** was now closed to vehicular traffic, other than cycles and mobility scooters.

The committee had contributed to the discussion about the closure. We had requested that WBC should provide evidence for the reasons for closure; particularly about whether there had been any accidents and any data on the air pollution issue.

With the assistance of councillor for Wescott, Julian McGhee Sumner, council officers did provide evidence from the Police about accidents. This was sufficiently convincing. GLRA then withdrew its objections.

#### Meetings

Committee members had set up and attended a number of meetings with WBC and Wokingham Town Council (WTC) representatives. Detailed reports on these were on the GLRA website.

We continue to meet with our WBC ward councillors before our committee meetings. This had been really useful, particularly in getting to know our new WBC councillor Maria Gee.

A group of committee members met with John Halsall, the current Leader of WBC. There were constructive discussions about traffic issues, climate emergency measures and public art. We understood there was to be a new Arts and Culture Strategy. A Wokingham Town Centre festival in 2022 would celebrate the completion of the town centre regeneration.

Robin Cops and Pat Smith had been pleased to show Susan Parsonage around the town, highlighting some issues of current concern.

Some committee members had attended the recent South Wokingham SDL Forum held at St Crispin's school. Current plans for the Southern Distributor road were displayed as well as the proposed residential developments. Hopefully some of the members present may have also attended.

#### Langborough Recreation Ground Wildlife Garden

Members may have noticed the developing wildlife garden on Langborough Rec.

This was the project of Susannah McClymont who had approached GLRA for support and also had help from the town council and Wokingham in Bloom team. The next work party was to be on 29<sup>th</sup> September at 11am. Anyone with spare plants could donate them. The wildlife garden details were available from [Susannah](#).

### Election of Committee and Officers

All current committee members had indicated their willingness to serve another year. It was proposed by Melanie Allen seconded by Susan Brenner that the Committee should be elected en bloc. This was approved unanimously.

## Treasurer's Report - Philip Lawman

Philip presented the details of the accounts in the GLRA financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019, plus provisions for expenditure in the current year to date. The bulk of the GLRA funds (£620) were deposited in the Association's bank accounts at National Westminster. The largest expenditures of the Association were associated with the AGM – hall hire and printing of publicity – plus expenses associated with the GLRA web site: a total of about £120. The only source of revenue was from voluntary contributions by members and guests at the AGM. Philip encouraged the attendees to give generously to support the continuing work of the Association. The statement of accounts to 31.03.19 would be available on [www.gbra.org.uk](http://www.gbra.org.uk)

Andrew Le Breuille asked what the reserves were to be used for. Philip answered that the funds were used for general admin including room hire and printing flyers. The current reserves were not enough for campaigning. If GLRA needed to fight a campaign, it would have to come to residents for a specific collection. The Association needed to be in a position to pay for professional services, should the need arise. David Nash cited a case in the past where specialist legal advice was needed about the protected status of Langborough Rec as a Town Green.

*Note: There was an exit collection which raised £171.10. Many thanks to those who contributed.*

## Any Other Business – Pat Smith

**Q:** Christine Roper, Purslane: How did residents get to know what was going on? They were not well informed by WBC on matters like Elms Field. Was there a case for targeted emails?

**A:** There were multiple sources of information.

*GLRA Note: There is a news centre on the WBC web site <http://news.wokingham.gov.uk/> and residents can receive updates by registering on <https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/contact-us/sign-up-manage-text-and-email-alerts/>*

*There is also the Regeneration web site at <https://www.regenerationcompany.co.uk/latest-news>  
The Wokingham Paper (published in print every Thursday) is also a good source.  
<https://www.wokinghampaper.co.uk>*

**Comment:** Chris O'Donnell, Howard Road: There were a number of incidents in which drivers in the town centre were driving very close to pedestrians who were crossing the roads. There was hostile and aggressive language by some drivers.

**Q:** Christine Field, Sturges Road: What was being done about providing a public toilet in the town centre? Some men had been observed using walls as a urinal.

**A:** David Allen (WBC) said that the new public toilet in Peach Place would open shortly (*Note: opened at the beginning of October*).

**Q:** (Name unrecorded): Trees on Langborough Rec are subject to die back. In high winds, large branches can be brought down. What is the council doing about it?

**A:** David Nash replied that the Town Council employed a tree surgeon every few years to prune branches that displayed morbidity.

**This was the conclusion of the AGM business session of the evening.**

## Presentation by Susan Parsonage (SP), CEO of Wokingham Borough Council “Ambitions For Wokingham”

SP had been appointed at the end of February 2019. She opened by explaining why she had been interested in applying for the post of CEO of Wokingham BC.

**Why Wokingham?** It was a local authority that was ambitious; it was investing in its places and infrastructure. There was strong partnering & community involvement. It was a beautiful location and was rated as a top ranking place to live. It had high performing schools and great connectivity.

**Early activities:** Getting to know the area and main interest groups. Enabling her to focus on key areas.

**Establishing what matters to residents:** Ability to move around the borough without congestion and constant road works; rate of housing growth; providing infrastructure to support growth; affordability in a high priced area. Residents expected excellence in fundamentals, great services for younger and older people, great environment, leisure and culture (e.g. local Libraries) and value for their council taxes.

**Messages for Wokingham BC officers:** remember that a council would not exist but for its residents & communities, innovate, push boundaries and address needs.

Ensure transparency of decision making, measure and monitor: know the starting position – benchmark - understand end goals.

Establish true partnership and collaboration: within and across organisations.

Recognise our own strengths; catalyse; enable; and get out of the way when someone else can do it better.

Be value driven & outcome focussed.

**Challenges & opportunities:** create and share vision and goals.

Move performance from good to great.

Know communities and places to make informed decision making.

Be more self-aware in dealing with customers - less officious, more caring;

Focus on problem solving and outcome; be accountable, own decisions;

Step up performance setting and monitoring; focus on pace and delivery;

Adopt commercial principles;

Be clear on who does what;

Join up in house and shared services; strengthen collaborative approach;

Work with voluntary and community sectors;

Celebrate your achievements.

**Current focus areas:**

Develop the places in the Borough, including arts and culture;

Provide high level and good value services for children and adults (70% of WBC expenditure);

Tackle congestion;

Safeguard green spaces and become carbon neutral.

## Susan Parsonage: Questions & Answers

**Q.** Chris O'Donnell: How will you measure performance?

**A.** SP: Establish Key Performance Indicators and measure against them.

**Q.** Christina Roper: How will you communicate to residents? What about a targeted E-Mail? WBC website a bit clunky.

**A.** SP: As answered earlier by Pat Smith. Communication is also a two way process.

**Q.** Mike Konig: Point to something you've done already.

**A.** SP: Prioritised Children Services. It needs turning around.

**Q.** Malcolm Smith: Is the regeneration of the Town centre successful, or are there gaps?

**A.** SP: Wokingham hasn't got empty shops like other places. It has a lovely feel and we need to retain its uniqueness.

**Q.** Martin Gibb: Are businesses opening by getting sweeteners like rental free periods? Is this part of a 3 year cycle for new shops?

**A.** SP: Businesses have to plan on long term sustainability.

**Q.** David Smith: As a "shareholder" how can I judge how you are doing?

SP: Strategy with targets is currently being written by the Corporate Leadership Team.

Examples are:-

- improving Children's Services, which is 25% of the budget
- Obtaining enough investment to grow.
- Becoming carbon neutral.
- There is enough scrutiny in the committee structure of WBC to monitor progress against targets.

**Q.** Martin Spooner: Is there enough car parking in the town centre?

**A.** General discussion focused by the closure of Euro car park. Robin Cops pointed out that there was no identifiable parking strategy for the town. SP commented that Cllr. Pauline Jorgenson was reviewing the provision.

**Q:** Andrew Le Breuille: Does the Council have a Data Strategy?

**A:** SP: Need to check and report back. *GLRA Note: A data strategy should be driven by the overall business strategy of an organisation. It is designed to deliver an organization's strategic priorities and answer its key business questions.*

**Q:** Phil Lawman: Can you share with us what are your top five breakthrough issues and how will you measure success in sorting them?

**A:** SP: Examples are the improvement of Children Services and the reduction in Traffic Congestion. SP added that she would like to meet with GLRA in three months and go through the top items in detail when the Council Plan had been published.

## Meeting Closure

Pat Smith closed the meeting by thanking Susan Parsonage for the presentation; a copy of the slides will be made available on the Association's web site at [www.glra.org.uk](http://www.glra.org.uk). She also thanked attending residents and guests for coming to take part.

Margaret Hendra thanked the committee for their hard work on behalf of residents.

*Members of the GLRA Committee will actively follow up the questions raised by our members at the AGM and provide information via email and our web site as it becomes available.*

**The meeting closed at about 9:00 p.m.**