

**Minutes 43<sup>rd</sup> HRA Annual General Meeting**  
**11 April 2019**  
**At Highfield House Hotel 7.30pm**



Acting Chairman, Jerry Gillen welcomed all members of HRA to the meeting and provided safety information. He advised that Nadine Johnson would be taking photographs for the HRA Website. There were no objections to this. The Sheriff of Southampton, Councillor Peter Bailie, was introduced.

1. The Sheriff welcomed everyone to the meeting and began by saying how pleased he was to have been invited. He provided a short positive message about the forward plan of the City Council to place a greater emphasis on green issues, such as air quality, through a new Green City Charter with a People's Assembly. He announced that it was time for a mind-set change and that ambitious targets for the next 5-6 years had to be met. An example of this in the cruise industry, which is so important to the whole city, was a visit to Southampton in March 2019 of a new cruise ship, MSC Belissima, which had been fitted with clean engines and the whole ship was plastic free. Councillor Baillie then joined the assembled members for the remainder of the meeting.

Professor Roger Brown took the Chair for the formal business of the meeting.

2. Apologies for absence were accepted from: Thomas O'Connor, Brian Wakely, Peter Thomas, Cllr Beryl Harris, Jenifer Arnold, Cllr John Hannides, Simon Hill, Pamela Ashurst and Peter Loizou.
3. Minutes of the previous AGM held on 19 April 2018, which had been circulated in advance, were taken as read and accepted.
4. Acting Chair Jerry Gillen presented his Annual Report. His comments included special thanks to previous long-standing Committee members who were stepping down and others who had recently supported the work of HRA: Jill Baston (Hon Sec); Adrian Ford (Treasurer); Chris Klewe (Minuting Sec); Alison Farmer (HRA Facebook); Stephen Harrison (SCC Appeals Manager); Michael Rudd (Barrister); Nadine Johnson (Website and HRA Facebook), Steven Johnston (Newsletter and HRA Facebook); Nicolla Martin (organising Newsletter distribution); all distribution street reps and all new committee members who joined between AGMs and were active in strengthening the committee as a whole.

Jerry used his continued membership of the National Organisation of Residential Associations (NORA), to highlight the concern over two issues: the Planning Appeal process, whereby applicants can appeal at both planning and appeal rejection stages, and the spread of Short Term Lets creeping into city centres which, along with HMOs, could lead to the loss of residential housing stock in an area. Highfield needed to be vigilant, as at present there is no regulation on STLs, which take over a whole dwelling, rather than those that rent a room in someone's home. The issue of HRA finance was also raised in respect that the joining fee remains at £5 per household and that fighting inappropriate planning applications and appeals can be very costly. There would be a need to increase the amount in HRA's Contingency Fund. The meeting was reminded of the option to make

bequests to the continuing work of HRA in wills. SCC was thanked for a Community Chest grant. In closing, Jerry thanked Roger Brown for his continued support and wise counsel and made a further appeal for a volunteer to come forward as Chair of the Association.

Professor Roger Brown thanked Jerry for his report.

5. Adrian Ford presented the Financial Report which had been circulated at the meeting. Adrian commented that the SCC Community Chest Grant was not included in the income as it had been received after the HRA Financial Year.

Questions that arose from the floor included:

- clarification of an amount of £15000 spent on fighting a Planning Appeal when only £8000 was shown on the accounts (£15000 approximate total figure spent over two years).
- Was the £5 membership fee reflective of what residents could afford, in an area as affluent as Highfield? Jerry / Adrian replied that the fee was off-set against voluntary contributions that most members gave with their Annual Fee and additional contributions made when there was a need for a 'HRA fighting fund'. The main purpose was to attract the largest possible membership from our community. The Association needed to be in a position where necessary action could be taken confidently rather than nervously.
- A question was raised as to what the accounts referred to as, 'Restricted funds' related to. Adrian replied that this account is reserved for income that could only be spent on specific activities.
- A question was raised as to what the amounts referred to as, 'unknown banking' related to and how funds could be banked without knowing what they were. Adrian replied that this related to any bank credits that could not be allocated to a specific heading.

Jerry indicated that there was to be a new Treasurer and that the issue of Membership Fees and fund raising would be discussed by committee in due course.

The Accounts were accepted by the meeting.

6. The following officers were elected:

Acting Chair	Jerry Gillen
Treasurer	Martin Benning
Secretary and Minuting Secretary	Barbara Claridge

7. Existing Committee Members wishing to stand again were re-elected:

Mark Bachelor (HRA Accountant), Steven Johnston (HRA Newsletter Editor)

8. New committee members were ratified:

Ken Burtenshaw, James Burgess, David White, Angela Seymour (Planning)

9. Jerry Gillen took over the chair of the meeting at this point and introduced the guest speaker, Professor Roger Brown.

Professor Brown gave a short summary to the historical background of his association with Southampton Common, from the formation of Southampton Common Forum which arose out of a request from HRA and SCAPPS (Southampton Commons and Parks Protection Society) to form a voluntary group as the Common had become neglected and underinvested. The statement by the Sheriff regarding the re-focussing of SCC on green issues was a positive step-forward. Difficulties in the past relationship between SCC / HRA and SCF were acknowledged, especially regarding management and maintenance of the Common. The City Council holds the Common in trust for the people of Southampton and the current more positive working relationship between SCF and SCC is to be applauded. In 2017, SCF conducted a large-scale survey with users of the Common. The results had led to the drafting of a forward plan and the formation of three 'Hot Topic' groups. The full details on the workings of SCF can be found on the website:

<http://southamptoncommonforum.org/> and <https://www.facebook.com/SouthamptonCommonForum/>

Professor Brown then outlined the ambitious long-term plan (2030) covering resourcing (over and above Council funds); increased cooperation between SCC and other groups and the creation of a new organisation a Charitable Trust, The Southampton Common Foundation, which is currently open for Public Consultation (see link on the website and Facebook). A full Business Plan was being drawn up with the intention to attract further investment and grant funding. Professor Brown concluded that it was hoped to establish a wonderful resource in The Common for the next 500 years.

Acting Chair, Jerry Gillen warmly thanked Professor Brown for his contribution to the AGM and encouraged everyone to take part in the public consultation.

#### 10. AOB from the floor

- Concern over the speed of traffic on Highfield Lane. (Comment to be passed on the councillors at the next Committee Meeting)
- Regret over the announced closing of the Nationwide Building Society on Portswood High Street. Reply this decision probably commercial and driven by social changes. HRA has no influence.
- Catherine Barbour announced her e-petition to pedestrianise Portswood High street to attract footfall and improve the environment. Comments included interest; that 'rat-runs' for traffic would be created in parallel residential streets as a result; the whole area needed re-structuring.
- Concern over the state of the roads and increasing number of potholes.

The AGM closed at 8.40pm and everyone was invited to take a drink and socialise. Refreshments were provided by The Highfield House Hotel.