

Minutes HRA Committee Meeting
Held on 10 May 2021
Via Zoom 19:00h



Present : Prof. Roger Brown (Acting Chair), Martin Benning, Ken Burtenshaw, Nadine Johnson, Dave White, Adrian Vinson, Steven Ossont, Cllr John Savage, Jon Walsh (University), Pete Thomas (OTRA), Karen Edwards (PRG), Pete Errington (Uplands Estate), Barbara Claridge.

- 1. Welcome :** Roger opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to Zoom especially partnership organisations. Thanks were expressed to officers for their continued hard work especially Nadine and Barbara. He outlined the changed agenda as Roberto Sordilo (E-scooters) was unable to attend.
- 2. Declarations of Interest:** None
- 3. Apologies :** Nicolla Martin, Jerry Gillen, Steve Connolly
- 4. Minutes :** The Minutes from the 12 April 2021 meeting had been previously distributed to all Committee Members. No comments had been received.
- 5. Matters Arising :**
 - a. Transforming Cities - Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) Pete Thomas – also see item 7. A reply had been received from Emma Baker (SCC) who confirmed that an Equalities Impact Assessment had been undertaken as part of the development of the transport strategy in 2019. In addition, a detailed EQIA on the specific measures that are being developed for Portswood Road and High Road is to be undertaken as part of the detailed design stage and before the next round of engagement.
 - b. E-scooters – Barbara reported that a resident from OARA had been in touch regarding the location of an E-scooters docking rack near Waitrose on Portswood Road as it was too close to an area around a lamppost that OARA looked after (litter and weeds). BC had communicated with the Operations Manager of Voi Technologies, Roberto Sordilo, and he had indicated that it could easily be moved along to accommodate more space around the post. His response had been very quick and positive in terms of engagement with community groups. Subsequently a second request to move a docking rack (on the corner of Northlands Road and The Avenue) had been received. Residents of Avenue Court had written to SCC and had asked HRA for their support in this matter which the committee agreed was appropriate.
Action : BC will communicate this to relevant parties.
- 6. Information from Councillors :** Roger congratulated Cllr John Savage on his recent re-election. John described this as bitter-sweet as he was now in opposition. John reaffirmed his intention to work on behalf of local residents in dealing current issues.
- 7. Transforming Cities Update:** Emma Baker (SCC) had sent an update for the meeting outlining that detailed designs were now being considered based on feedback received from residents and businesses through the perceptions survey in October 2020 and subsequent online engagement events in December and January. The designs would be available for comment as part of the next round of engagement activities. These will run in parallel to the formal consultation period and are expected to commence in September. Future engagement activities on the project will consist of meetings, online surveys, and face-to-face events (in accordance with any restrictions that remain in place), including workshops with

residents living close to Portswood Road. Existing concerns about traffic flows and speeding were discussed at the FEB HRA Meeting.

Roger commented that it would be important to remain engaged in this process, especially the Workshops with Residents. Cllr Savage was asked whether the change in the council leadership might affect the scheme. He observed that this was a national Government programme and there is specific focus on what the funding could be spent on. *Action:* BC to write to Emma Baker emphasising that HRA wishes to be fully engaged in future workshops etc and to ask if there might be any changes to the scheme of the timetable due to the change in the council following the election.

- 8. University Liaison :** (JW) Students can return to campus from 17 May but it is unclear if all students will choose to return with so little of the undergraduate teaching year left. A range of Summer Activities (4 / 18 June) has been organised on campus with the aim of keeping students on campus wherever possible once regulations are relaxed.

University sports facilities (pool, gym and outdoor) had reopened. A successful Varsity event with Portsmouth University had recently been held with strict rules: social distancing, no spectators, full Health and Safety measures (probably the only one in the country).

The relocation of the Highfield Health GP surgery to the old Mulberry House site on Highfield Road was planned for 10 July. All patients would be contacted.

Demolition of the old building near the corner of Burgess Road and Broadlands Road was imminent. Roger asked a question about the progress and proposed timescales of the Civic University Agreement which had been announced in December 2020. Jon confirmed, that in accordance with the December 2020 initial information, the University was committed to the partnership and would be producing this before the end of the calendar year. He also confirmed that HRA would be included as one of the Civic Partners.

Roger thanked Jon for his input.

9. Membership Casework (BC)

- a. High Hedges. Two HRA members had contacted the Secretary for support over a high hedge problem. They were ready to apply to SCC under an official High Hedge Complaint. This would cost £500 and would not be considered if mediation with the hedge owner has not been achieved. The HRA members wanted to know if they could bring the complaint jointly i.e. share the cost and whether the fee was returnable if their complaint was upheld. Cllr Savage had visited the members on-site and will attempt mediation with the hedge owner and also make contact with the Tree Team. BC had contacted the Tree Team three times in the past three weeks but had not received a reply. Post Meeting Note : Cllr Savage confirmed he had spoken to the tree officer on 13 May and to the landowner on 14 May. The landowner committed to sending his tree team round to look at the issue. Cllr Savage is to follow up with the HRA residents affected by this high hedge problem.
- a. Japanese knotweed. Recently an HRA member had contacted the secretary to report Japanese knotweed in a local garden. The knotweed is an invasive species and if the plant remains in that garden nothing has to be done by law to eradicate it. However, if the weed spreads onto any other garden, the public highway or the wild, then the property owner is responsible and would bear costs for its removal.

This is The Environment Agency advice:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-japanese-knotweed-from-spreading>

10. Reports

- a. **Finance (MB)** : Martin reported that HRA contacts are now agreed with the bank and he is recognised by Nat West Bank as the HRA Treasurer. He is therefore now in a position with the bank to apply for internet banking. This will not include membership subscriptions at this time. The Committee will need to nominate an officer to authorise on-line transactions. Barbara Claridge (Hon Secretary) agreed to carry out this responsibility and this was approved unanimously by the Committee.
- b. **Membership (BC for NM)** : The membership database has 472 members; Paid-up members 345; Rolling members (Jan-April) 173. The renewal letters for May and June are being delivered.

11. Planning Report (AS) : The latest Planning Report was considered. Adrian Vinson highlighted the need to check on two applications for a Lawful Development Certificate. *Action* : BC will check the Public HMO register and then contact Adrian.

Roger expressed thanks to Angela for preparing the report.

- a. Updates on Blockbusters site from the Historic and Environment Officer. BC had received an email from Jon Willetts in which he confirmed that in his role he could only comment on Planning Matters not Licensing Applications. He had found out that SCC Building Control has been made aware of proposed internal changes to the building for the Gorillas' operation. He commented that, in his opinion, there was some heritage interest in the exterior of the building and that he would assess accordingly any permissions (in a future Planning Application) that might be sought to make any external changes to the building.

Pete T. stated that he was pleased with the reply and that JW was open to engagement with local Conservation Area reps. He raised the question that the Blockbusters building should be listed.

Action : BC to reply to JW thanking him and expressing HRA's interest in having a listing on the building. Also to report that a Planning Application might be forthcoming for the building should the Licence Application be successful.

- b. Roger reported that he had attended two recent (Zoom) meetings with Jon Willetts (with HRA and OTRA) and felt that JW was genuine in wishing to connect with local residents associations who held conservation matters to be important. It was apparent that JW held very wide responsibilities with limited resources. The role of Heritage and Environment Officer was not currently in the City of Culture bid loop, which was felt to be a missed opportunity, as there were many buildings in Southampton of historical interest and cultural merit. This was considered to be disappointing. JW had helped to clarify the 'what and why' reasons for any input into Planning processes. Karen informed the meeting that JW has agreed to attend a walkabout PRG meeting on 7 July at 7pm which HRA would be welcome to join. Karen will confirm nearer the date.
- c. PRG / OTRA : No Planning matters were raised by PRG. OTRA - Pete T. reported that two Planning Applications/Amendments in the OA Conservation Area (5, Blenheim and 9, Leigh Road) had been discussed and there were no OTRA objections.

12. Crime information sharing WhatsApp group for Highfield (NJ) :

Nadine reported that there had been 12 crime and anti-social incidents reported between the WhatsApp group since the last meeting, the details of which could be found on the HRA website:

<http://www.highfieldresidents.org.uk/crime-info-whatsapp-group/>

13. Social Media (NJ)

Website : nothing new to report

Facebook: now has 654 followers which is an increase of 14 since the April Meeting.

The Committee received these reports with thanks.

14. City of Culture (KB)

The latest CoC Newsletter will be posted on the website and can be read here:

<https://www.southampton2025.co.uk/news>

It is not certain if there will be a change of focus with the change of council leadership. Cllr Savage confirmed that the City of Culture bid had been a cross-party decision.

Roger thanked Ken for his input.

15. Little Common update (SO) Although an outline forward plan had been drawn up by Simon Hill (of Common Sense), there had been no progress or recent communication. However, as restrictions were expected to be eased soon, there is a need to ensure the relevant insurance is in place before the start of volunteer working parties. Steven is to liaise with Martin and Barbara about this. Steven reported that Ian Kingswell and his team had kept the Little Common in excellent shape.

Action : BC to write thanks to Ian.

However, a question was then raised regarding the recent cutting down of laurel on the Little Common as stumps cut by the ecology team were already regrowing and there seemed to be a difference in approach required if volunteers removed any laurel (i.e. the stumps had to be ground out the same day and all vegetation removed as it could be poisonous to dogs due to the leaves, branches and fruits containing cyanide). Secondly daffodil areas had been cut before flowering in an area of managed long grass for the second year running.

Action : BC to contact Lindsay McCullough (SCC Environmental Officer) about these issues.

16. A.O.B. Barbara alerted the committee to the opportunities offered by wildlife organisations even in cities:

<https://the-city-nature-challenge-More-than-just-weeds>

However, although this city challenge was now finished, and Southampton was not a participating city, there was no reason that it couldn't be in future years.

The next similar activity, to be run by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, was **30 Days Wild 2021** - for your Health, Wellbeing, Wildlife and the Planet! The event takes place during the month of June and is free! Details of how to sign up and join in can be found by following this link:

<https://www.hiwwt.org.uk/30-days-wild>

The meeting ended at 20:20h.

The date of the next meeting is Monday 14 June at 19:00h on Zoom

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