

Minutes HRA Committee Meeting

Held on 14 June 2021

Via Zoom 19:00h



Present : Prof. Roger Brown (Acting Chair), Martin Benning, Ken Burtenshaw, Nadine Johnson, Dave White, Adrian Vinson, Steven Ossont, Kate Fay (University), Pete Thomas (OTRA), Karen Edwards (PRG), 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, Nicolla, Martin and Barbara. Roger reported that the recently published, House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee Report, 'The future of the planning system in England' had closely reflected the HRA comments submitted by Roger.

The Reports is available here: [The future of the planning system in England](#)

Jerry suggested that the Outer Avenue Residents' Association (OARA) be invited to send a representative to HRA meetings as they were also a close partner organisation.

The next HRA Meeting was scheduled for **19* July** and there would be no meeting in August.

***19 July** is an amended date

- 2. Declarations of Interest:** None

- 3. Apologies :** Nicolla Martin, Steve Connolly, Pete Errington, Angela Seymour, Cllr Savage, Cllr Mitchell, Cllr Cooper

- 4. Minutes :** The Minutes from the 10 May 2021 meeting had been previously distributed to all Committee Members. No comments had been received.

5. Matters Arising :

- Transforming Cities – Roger had contacted the new Council Leader, Cllr Dan Fitzhenry, to arrange a meeting which had been organised for 25 June. Roger and Jerry would represent HRA. The main topic of the discussion was likely to be the new council's vision for Transforming Cities (Portswood) and possibly environmental concerns about the Common.
- E-scooters – Barbara reported that the HRA member who has asked for a docking rack (on the corner of Northlands Road and The Avenue) to be moved was now in direct contact with the Operations Manager of Voi and the City Council about the best place for this rack. Voi were listening to feedback and responding positively with residents who had concerns. (*Action:* BC to communicate this with Voi).
- High hedge problem – this had been taken up by Cllr Savage who was in contact with the HRA members, the Landlord and SCC tree team.
- Barbara had contacted Lindsay McCulloch regarding the management of invasive laurel on the Common and Little Common and why the daffodils had been cut down. She also asked when volunteering opportunities would begin again. She had received three replies. To summarise, LM did not know why laurel management was treated differently in the two parts of the Common. She was to ask Andy Welch to explain.

The daffodils were cut down because they were not native to the Common and could be grown in people's gardens. BC therefore asked LM to let HRA know who had planted the daffodils. She was to investigate.

As regards volunteering, LM said this would begin in the Autumn (after the birds had finished nesting and all the flowers and grasses had dropped their seeds). She did attach a photograph of the demonstration "urban garden" at the Hawthorns, which many HRA and SCF members had helped to clear before lockdown 2020. She described it as 'a real picture in the spring' but BC (SCF Volunteer) thought it underwhelming considering the volunteer efforts involved. Photo below.



The Hawthorn's Urban Garden Spring 2021
Note the punctured pond liner

6. Information from Councillors : Due to a Council Meeting the councillors had sent apologies.

7. University Liaison : (KF)

The university was preparing for students moving house and had arranged extra waste collections, including recycling advice and where to make charity donations for any unwanted items.

The university had moved up 13 places in the World University Rankings and had been runner up in an award for Outreach Support. It was expected that all students would be eligible for Covid vaccinations by 19 July.

Roger asked for details about the reduced car parking on campus due to building work over the summer and whether it would affect on-street parking in residential areas of Highfield. Kate agreed that HRA could have been included in the communication and that she would look into the details.

A question was asked as to whether the Covid Test Centre (Avenue Campus) would remain. Kate explained that the space had been given over to SCC and she would have to find out if it was continuing. Planning Applications had been made to SCC for the continuation of use of space for temporary buildings (until December) 2022. Pete T. (OTRA) agreed that this was reasonable, given the necessity for students to keep social distances, but hoped that this would not become permanent and asked if HRA could be told first. Kate agreed to check the status of these buildings.

Ken asked about the reason for the rise in rankings and Kate replied that she thought it was due to University Research programmes, especially in Covid related research.

Roger thanked Kate for her input.

8. Membership Casework : (BC)

- a. Barbara reported that she had had contact with an HRA member who had a pro-active idea to meet with an HMO Landlord (Student NO FEE) before students move houses to minimise anti-social behaviour in a cooperative approach.
- b. Another member had contacted councillors and HRA concerned about environmental issues (BBQs on the Common, tree planting, protection of species, littering) – this had taken up by Cllr Savage.

9. Reports :

- a. **Finance (MB)** : Martin reported that HRA was progressing with the application for on-line banking which would ease his work significantly. There had been very little change on the bank account balance. Membership numbers did reflect that HRA was not currently attracting new members and some were not renewing. Martin felt there was a need to recruit and retrieve members. Dave White commented that, if membership could be paid on-line, this would be an attractive alternative for many people currently paying by cash or by cheque.
- b. **Membership (BC for NM)** : Database = 472; Paid up members = 352; Rolling = 206.

10. Planning Report (AS) : There was no Planning Report available for the meeting but it would be circulated once received. At the last meeting Adrian had recommended that two Planning Applications for retrospective approval for Change to C4 use (HMO) be investigated. Unfortunately both had closed to comments before any could be submitted.

- a. BC had attended the virtual SCC Licence Application hearing for Gorillas. The meeting had been fair and very well run. The arrangements and safeguarding regarding the selling of alcohol had been agreed with the police before the hearing. The hours of opening were in line with other licensed premises in Portswood and the licence was granted. It became clear that some of the concerns discussed at the last HRA meeting and that were subsequently submitted to the SCC Licensing Department, were in fact Planning matters not Licensing considerations. This was helpful for future cases.

Committee members were overall pleased with how Gorillas had begun trading and how pleasing it was that the building had been smartened up without losing any of its art-deco features.

Roger reported that Cllr Mitchell had been approached to support the HRA idea of a local listing for the building. Cllr Mitchell had sent a note of concern to HRA, stating that she would be objecting to any Planning Application subsequently made by Gorillas for alterations to the building. She confirmed that a Planning Application had been made by Gorillas to SCC but that this had been rejected as incomplete and had to be resubmitted with greater detail.

Pete T commented that the local listing would be worth pursuing, for example by taking photographs now when the building was in a better condition and comparing it to its original as a garage.

Karen said that she would mention the idea of listing to Jon Willetts and show him the building when he did the walkabout with PRG on 7 July.

- b. Pete T reported there had been no new planning activity in the OTRA area since the last meeting. He said that it was pleasing when residents discussed their plans with OTRA first (e.g. in Westbourne Crescent).

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

Nadine reported that there had been 10 criminal 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-incidents/>

There had been two serious incidents. Firstly, anti-social behaviour, continuing for hours into the early morning in Omdurman Road, led to the Rep reporting this to the police on 999. The police had refused to take the call and an official complaint had now been made to the police. Nadine said there had been drug related incidents in this locality on previous occasions.

Secondly thefts and garage/shed break-ins involving youngsters on motor bikes were taking place in the city now also including the Highfield area.

12. Social Media (NJ)

Website : Nadine thanked Ken for his interesting local photographs and for being the HRA History guru as he is regularly contributing historical references and details from the Southampton area. There is now a 'Hot Topics' section, suggested by Barbara, on the About Us page. It currently includes information on works along The Avenue, due to start on 21 June.

Facebook: now has 662 followers which is an increase of 8 since the May Meeting.

The Committee received these reports with thanks.

13. 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>

The City Art Gallery is now open with a fantastic new exhibition which is a collaboration between the National Gallery and Southampton City Art Gallery. Ken commented that such exhibitions will raise the profile of the bid for City of Culture.

Roger thanked Ken for his input.

14. A.O.B.

- a. AGM. Roger declared that the committee had done well to keep the HRA ship afloat during the Covid crisis but that when we get to be 'free' there would be a need to relaunch a drive for membership. He suggested that a Newsletter on the theme of HRA Membership, before a social AGM, would be appropriate timing. We would need to prepare thoroughly for the AGM, including deciding what to do about the membership fee so that the Committee was recommending any change and not responding to suggestions from attendees. Early to mid- autumn was the likely timescale.
- b. Karen announced a PRG Social event was pencilled in for July and that HRA would be welcome to join. However with so many uncertainties this was not a firm suggestion as yet.
- c. Pete T. announced an OTRA Social Event for 25 June. This was a general informal invitation to join in. It would take place on the Little Common and would coincide with the Big Lunch. There was a scones theme. OTRA had also held a very successful Annual Plant Sale, which this year had been combined with an Arts and Crafts Trail. He reported that neighbours were so happy to be outside meeting each other again after the Covid-Year. There was a need for more get-togethers!
- d. Dave W. demonstrated on his mobile phone how easy it was to join Gorillas via a QR code on their publicity. He suggested a QR code on the Newsletter, which initially linked to the HRA membership form, would be a great way to get more HRA members and in due course there might be membership via QR code and on-line payment.
- e. Nadine reported that she was expecting some drop-out from the HRA Discount scheme and that she would be contacting all businesses involved in the HRA scheme so that the list on the website was up to date.
- f. Roadworks were starting on the Avenue on 21 June for 10 weeks to make a new Toucan crossing near Winn Road. There would be road closures, one-way traffic on the Avenue with traffic light controls and traffic would be re-routed along Westwood Road for part of the period of works.

The meeting ended at 20:05h.

The date of the next meeting is **Monday 19 July** at 19:00h on Zoom

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