

Westgate Residents' Association (WGRA)

2019 AGM - Minutes of meeting held on Saturday 23 November 2019 at 10:00 at St. Wilfrid's Community Hall, Sherborne Road.

Present:

WGRA Committee members:- Richard Brownfield (Chairman) Anthony Quail
Vince Waldron (Treasurer) Brian Raincock
Bebette Jones (Secretary) Sarah Quail

55 other residents were also present and there were four visitors:-

Richard Plowman, Mayor and City Councillor
Louise Goldsmith, West Sussex County Councillor
Clare Apel, Chichester District Councillor
Paul Wreyford from Parklands Residents Association

CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Richard Brownfield welcomed everyone and thanked them for their continued support. He also welcomed Mayor Richard Plowman who would later introduce the Neighbourhood Plan. Attendees were invited to study information displayed about the Plan and to give their suggestions so that the WGRA could make a response to the City Council on behalf of our community. Also welcomed were the visiting councillors and RA representative.

APOLOGIES

Apologies

Julia Smith	Gabrielle Abbott	Finan Letts
Brian Hopkins	Robin Kidd	John and Jane Davies
Penny Tomlinson	Sally and Vaughan Lowe	Sue Condor
Margaret Gibbons	Mike Evans	Sally Wraight

MINUTES OF LAST AGM - 17 November 2018

The minutes of the last AGM held on 17 November 2018 were unanimously approved.

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reported that WGRA goes from strength to strength and we now have 129 households on our list who receive the monthly bulletin of which over 70 have paid their annual subscription. We were very sad to hear about the death earlier this month of Brian Cope. Brian was a hardworking and valuable member of the Committee and our thoughts are with Lois.

Whitehouse Farm / Westgate Improvement

It had been another frustrating year with many meetings attended but little achieved as when we raise issues, we are told that the documents have been signed off and cannot be changed. We are particularly interested in the "Off Site Infrastructure" ie. the roads which theoretically are to be altered at the developer's expense to compensate the community for the extra traffic resulting from the new houses. However although we, along with other RA's and the support of our councillors, feel that even though the plans do not represent the best way to spend this money, they are to be imposed upon us.

The preparation and implementation of the s106 plans has now been taken over by a new company, Jubb. They have produced better versions of the plans and the three that affect us are:-

- **The Westgate/Sherborne Road Roundabout** which has some minor changes but will have to be completely rebuilt again when the Southern Access Road is completed.
- **The Westgate Improvement Scheme** - involves minor changes and does nothing to reduce speed or volume of traffic or to create a safe separate cycle route for the length of Westgate.

- **The Westgate/Orchard Street Roundabout** which is to be replaced by traffic lights to make the junction safer for cyclists but this introduces a number of problems to a junction which functions well at the moment and also does not solve the problem of cycle safety along Westgate.

The Whitehouse Farm development is now running 3 years behind schedule and Full Planning Permission was recently granted for the first two groups of houses with the attendant construction traffic. Timetable for work affecting Westgate is:-

Westgate improvements - April 2021

Sherborne Road Roundabout - June 2021

Westgate/Orchard Street Roundabout - April 2022

Speed Indicating Device (SID)

Jeremy Harvard has been working with the Highways Department to get a fixed SID on Westgate, but they have turned down our application as traffic recorded does not show an excessive average speed. We believe the results are skewed by the location of the fixed loop in the road at the entrance to Henty Gardens as well as a speed bump where cars slow down. We plan to use the portable SID to record speeds and show a problem does exist and we need a volunteer to coordinate this as well as residents to do the on line training required to operate the device.

Summer Street Party

This unfortunately had to be cancelled to due insufficient ticket sales by the cut-off date.

2019 Street Party

Will take place on Friday 8 May 2020 marking the 75th Anniversary of VE (Victory in Europe) day.

The Chairman thanked all that had supported the Association during the year including the Committee, John Davies, our traffic advisor, The Westgate Beaux-Belles, Sarah Quail, the Newsletter editor, Fin Letts, who keeps the website up to date, and Penny Tomlinson and her team who look after the planters.

FINANCIAL REPORT

The Treasurer reported that 73 households are now paying members of the association which represents more than 50% of households that have signed up for our Bulletins and hopes that this will percentage will increase in the future.

Expenditure was kept under control with the biggest item being £254 for public liability insurance. This insurance is required by WSCC with a liability limit of £10 million pounds which gives us permission from the Highways Department to hold street parties and to work on the highway to maintain the planters.

£72 was spent on a social event for the planters team - this money came from a grant that was obtained from Chichester City Council for the planters and some monies remain which will be spent on fertilisers.

Funds continued to increase and we now have a balance £1,920. As the Whitehouse Farm development continues, we may need the money to pay for legal advice to back our discussions with the local authorities and the developers themselves.

Residents were urged to continue to fund the Association by annual membership fees (which also carry voting rights at the AGM) and the Committee proposes that fees will continue to be £10 per household for the coming year. Further donations are also very welcome.

The Treasurer thanked everyone for their generosity and their financial commitment to the future of Westgate.

Gordon Jones was thanked for undertaking an independent examination of the accounts.

The Financial Report, Accounts and Independent Examiners Report were unanimously approved. The continued appointment of Gordon Jones as Independent Examiner was also unanimously approved.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

It was unanimously approved that the following officers continue in their posts for another year:-

Chairman - Richard Brownfield

Secretary - Bebette Jones

Treasurer - Vince Waldron

ELECTION OF COMMITTEE

Nominations had been received from:-

Brian Raincock

Julia Smith

Anthony Quail

Sarah Quail

Finan Letts

It was unanimously approved that they be elected to serve on the Committee for another year. Due to the vacancy left by the sad departure of Brian Cope, Gabrielle Abbott has been invited to join the committee. It was unanimously approved that Gabrielle Abbott be elected to serve on the Committee for a year.

CHRISTMAS CELEBRATIONS

Brian Raincock gave details of the Christmas Celebrations to take place at the newly refurbished Marriot House on Wednesday 11 December with mulled wine and snacks at 5.45 followed by carols and readings until 7.15. Once again Alan Thurlow will accompany us on the keyboard. There will be a bucket collection to pay for expenses such as wine, cups and hired chairs. A Christmas buffet dinner will be held at the Crate and Apple with advance reservations necessary.

VE STREET PARTY 2020

Brian Raincock also gave advance details of the Victory in Europe Street Party to be held on Friday 8 May 2020. The theme will be retro or wartime dress and there will be a sing-a-long medley of wartime songs and favourites and hopefully an opportunity to join in with 'lindy hopping'.

A.O.B.

Chichester Christmas Festivities

Colin Hicks distributed copies of the Chichester Christmas Festivities booklet and gave details of the many activities and shopping promotions and competitions organised by Chichester BID during December.

Tannery Close Update

Louise Goldsmith was asked to give an update on the current state of the Tannery Close redevelopment. She apologised for the lengthy delay and gave a short history of the issue so far:- since the site was no longer used by WSCC, it had been deemed as having no value and was considered either for sale or development. With the high demand for homes in this area, the attraction for Tannery Close to be developed sympathetically within the Westgate community was a very compelling case and WSCC preferred the residential option but had to comply with CDC wishes to advertise it for business use. No interest was received but CDC wanted it then re-advertised resulting in further delays. Plans are now well advanced for residential units which will be a joint development between WSCC and a development partner. The site has some challenges but she hopes that when planning permission is received, it will be an asset to this attractive area.

Rita Hope asked when the plans could be seen and at what stage were they at now. Louise replied that the usual planning process will be followed with standard notices for planning applications given online and in the press and information given to neighbouring properties. She will let the Chairman know when the application is advertised so the information can be passed on via the Bulletin to WGRA members.

Claire Apel raised the problem of contamination on the site. Louise replied there has always been an issue since it was a tannery with certain chemicals used and stored underneath the site. Complete assessments have been made of how the issue will be managed and dealt with.

Westgate Improvements

Paula Street thanked the Committee for all the work that they had done relating to WhiteHouse Farm and the frustrations involved in trying to make improvements to Westgate on behalf of the residents. She was concerned over a proposal in the latest Newsletter for a closure of a part of Westgate to vehicles from some point between Parklands Road and Henty Gardens through the narrows to the Orchard Street Roundabout. This would make a better environment for those living in the narrows but has further implications for the rest of Westgate and Parklands residents. The worst traffic queues appear after 4pm at the western end of Westgate with commuters leaving the city. She queried whether closing the narrows was the right way forward or perhaps there was a case for one way traffic there instead? She also commented on the problem of idling traffic causing pollution. She proposed a discussion on how the community would like to see the traffic managed in Westgate to help the committee in their meetings with local authorities and developers.

The Chairman responded that the problem is that there are so many unknowns and there are so many groups of people with different needs and demands. The Southern Access Road to Whitehouse Farm has not been finalised but will affect all the other traffic in the area depending on where it goes and how it joins into the rest of the traffic system so any plans made now may have to be altered in the future. Westgate is part of the South Coast Cycle Route and should provide a safe cycle route from Centurion Way through into Chichester but this is not in place and any changes that improve it for cyclists may not suit the motorists leading to a difficulty in getting any agreement. The Chairman proposed that the Committee will try to produce a questionnaire to go out with the Bulletin so residents can have a say on how this problem may be dealt with. We would hope to collect as much information as possible to present to the Highways Department.

A27

Louise Goldsmith said that WSCC are very anxious to get funding for A27 and mentioned that views of local politicians are so much stronger when they have the support of the community behind them.

Air Quality

Louise also mentioned that the local area has some of the worst readings for air quality and suggests that the Committee should consider putting up a sign requesting motorists to switch off engines while queuing in traffic to try to reduce pollution until further solutions are found.

Jill Years questioned whether construction traffic from Whitehouse Farm is still being re routed away from Westgate by using Avenue de Chartres, Orchard Street and St. Paul's Road. The Chairman confirmed that this was still the policy and Highways have said they will enforce this.

Clare Apel also said this route was also a matter of huge concern as it passes 5 primary schools and 1 secondary school. Requests have been made for a proper traffic plan and the developers have said they will monitor it but questions remain over who will enforce it.

Louise Goldsmith endorsed Clare Apel's concern as there will be 140 movements per day of construction traffic along this designated route which will be monitored by GPS and a certain amount of goodwill. We all need to make sure that there is minimum impact on these communities and she requests residents to keep an eye out for any construction vehicles coming through during restricted hours or rat running outside the route so we can confront the developers with the evidence without which complaints will not be taken seriously.

Dog Fouling

Paula Street brought up the issue of dog fouling on Westgate pavements which appears to be increasing in the last year and whether anything can be done to raise awareness. Sue Brownfield added that the pavements had been cleaned recently by the council. This is an offence and if you are able to identify any offenders, please let the Council and dog warden know.

ADDRESS BY MAYOR RICHARD PLOWMAN

The Mayor began by commending the Committee and especially Richard Brownfield for all his hard work done to represent the voice of the residents. He mentioned the following issues:-

Climate Change

This is the big issue for us all over UK and the City Council has declared a climate emergency and a target of going carbon neutral by 2030. Unfortunately the big disappointment is that the design of the Phase 1 houses at Whitehouse Farm was all done to current specifications. After much debate, some token improvement has been made to these houses. However the Government recently sent through new building regulations for discussion and these specify that new houses will have to meet the carbon zero requirement and this will apply to the second phase at Whitehouse Farm.

Another worry about the second phase involves the southern access to the site and at the moment we have no detail on this at all and how it will connect to the A27. We have been promised a revised timetable - the one they promised us last time is now 3 years out of date and according to that, the first house should have been built yesterday!

Local Plan

The Local Plan will be out of date by July 2020 and the new plan is now struggling due to climate change considerations. There are big issues with Chichester Harbour and about the amount of nitrates going into it and that is going to mean some radical re-thinking of the local plan but they have a relatively short time to get that in and fit for purpose for the future as the Government has refused an extension in planning time.

Neighbourhood Plan

The Mayor introduced the Neighbourhood Plan which is being drawn up to ensure your wellbeing for the future, to make sure that Chichester is a place that you want to live, feel safe and where you can bring up your children and grandchildren in a good and safe environment.

He stressed that it is a people's plan put together with ideas from the community and the response so far has been excellent. It will take two years to put together and will need to be in line with National Planning Policy and the Local Plan but it does have its own teeth. The plan will have to be inspected and then voted on by you and will need 50% of the vote to be passed into Planning Law and will carry the same weight as the Local Plan so it will have to be considered for any planning applications.

Although it will not be tackling numbers of new houses, the plan will influence the quality of this housing to make sure that all adhere to the zero carbon policy etc. It can also look at the High Street and influence the percentage of shops, offices and restaurants located there as well as issues like roads, pathways, cycling, tree planting, community facilities and the environment.

Initial consultation finishes on 9 December 2019 but there will be another 6 months to put things forward through Residents' Associations. The final plan will be produced in 18 months and will be a very powerful document for what type of city we want Chichester to be in the future. It will be one of the biggest neighbourhood plans in the country, funding is available and we have a very enthusiastic planning advisor.

Homelessness

There has been a big increase in numbers of rough sleepers. This is a national phenomenon and in Chichester numbers increased from 15 last year to 35 this year. There are complex reasons behind it and there are several organisations in Chichester including Stone Pillow giving people help, advice and a place to live but the big increase in numbers has meant a problem providing accommodation for all those who need it. The District Council is helping to address this problem. Use of the Food Bank has also doubled reminding us that there are parts of Chichester where people, some with young families, are really struggling.

Changes in the High Street

A year ago it appeared the High Street was doing quite well in relation to other cities but recently there have been more difficulties, not helped by the closure of the House of Fraser. Happily in the last few weeks more shops have opened which is good news. Chichester will change and will never be the same in terms of the retail units offered and regretfully we have lost some excellent independent shops. The Mayor urged everyone to use and support the local independent shops especially as Christmas is such an important time for them.

Southern Gateway

This is going through the process of selecting a developer but the Mayor considers that there are two missed opportunities in the master plan. Firstly this is the last chance to do something about the 2 level crossings and it has been shown that a low level underpass is technically feasible and we should press for it. The Neighbourhood Plans submissions so far have shown an overwhelming support for this.

Secondly Chichester needs a large performance space for conferences and fairs which would bring in people from outside the city. We are hoping to get a resolution so we can make the most of these opportunities for the Southern Gateway.

City Council

The City Council is offering to take on more responsibility and to take charge of some of the things that were given away in the 1974 reorganisation. They are looking at perhaps bringing Priory Park and Bishops Palace Gardens back under the City Council umbrella. There was good news regarding pavements and an engineering study is taking place and the hope is that within a year's time we will have new pavements within the main city streets.

The Chairman thanked the Mayor and the meeting ended at 11.20pm

Bebette Jones, Minutes Secretary
November 2019