

Downshire Hill Residents Association

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 20 October 2021

At the Freemasons Arms

There was a good turnout, 31 residents attended. Andrew Neale, DHRA chairman, introduced the agenda items, which had been circulated to residents ahead of the meeting.

Many people had been saddened to hear of the sudden death of Pamela Lindsay-Taylor, a kind, active and popular resident who lived on the street for some 40 years. Christabel Dennis spoke about Pamela's life and Stephen Grosz endorsed her tribute.

1. Security issues

Policing: a new neighbourhood officer has been appointed, Sergeant Nicola O'Hara. Keeping a dialogue going is important. Local officers have met with one committee member, who reported that their view is that residents need to take responsibility for their own security. Securing entry points, installing security lights and using timers for some internal lighting, are important deterrent measures.

Car crime is prolific. Entry to houses is sometimes made in order to obtain car keys. An intruder was recently apprehended through residents' speedy recourse to posting on the DHRA WhatsApp. Extra police patrols have been requested.

2. Flooding

Flash floods had been a problem in several houses due to torrential rain episodes. The problem is partly due to the absence of normal maintenance of street drains due to the pandemic. Extra drainage has been put in at Keats Grove, which was particularly badly affected.

Residents are reminded of the importance of keeping gullies and gutters clear. DHRA will raise concerns with the Council.

3. The former Police Station

The chairman reported that contracts had been exchanged. The purchaser is Reddington Capital. The plan appears to be that ancillary buildings will be sold off (police house and stable block). The main building will become an up-market restaurant with commercial letting above. DHRA will continue to monitor developments.

A vote of thanks for the chairman was moved, in recognition of his unflagging exertions during the long process of defeating the Abacus school proposal, now happily behind us.

4. Other planning matters

O2Centre. Residents should be aware of the development plans for the O2 Centre, Finchley Road. Camden Council supports the plan to create 1,950 housing units. As first proposed, the plan was for 950 dwellings. Buildings of 10-15 storeys high are now proposed. Such major density intensification will have a wide impact on the neighbourhood.

DHRA will write expressing opposition to Land Security's plan, and also write to MP Tulip Siddiq.

Alcohol licenses South End Green. A license has been granted to the Biggiebest winebar. Hampstead Hill Gardens. The chairman had written to object to an inappropriate design, planning was refused, and there will be a hearing.

Basements. A resident drew attention to major basement developments continuing to be proposed locally, and the generally inadequate Council response. It was agreed that this is a matter of concern: the chairman will look into it as this is an issue of principle.

Traffic

The working party on traffic set up earlier this year reported. Seven residents are on the committee, from the length of the street. 43 households had responded to a questionnaire circulated to all households during the summer. 95% of these responses commented on the overall adverse effect of traffic. It was agreed that the committee has a mandate to explore options for possible improvements to the traffic situation. The committee will meet the local councillor, and generally research options. It will report back with recommendations.

Communications with residents

Website: Ian Thomson was thanked for having revived the DH website. He is happy to receive ideas for making it more informative. Questions as to whether non-residents should be able to access the website, or whether residents should have to log in, will be discussed at a future meeting.

DHRA WhatsApp group: It was agreed that the DHRA WhatsApp has been very successful, creating more cohesion and bringing people together. Sally was warmly thanked for enabling the WhatsApp group. Residents are encouraged to join, by contacting Sally.

Treasurer's report

The Treasurer pointed out that everyone living on the street (as owners or renting) should be encouraged to join the DHRA and be engaged with the work of the Association. It is important for the DHRA to speak for all the residents when dealing with the Council or other associations.

Residents are from time to time asked to pay a modest subscription although this has only happened on a handful of occasions over the last 20 years or so. The current subscription is £10 per household. The DHRA account stands at £205 (before paying expenses incurred at the AGM) and so it will be necessary to call for subscriptions in around May 2022.

The Treasurer thanked Margaret Rodgers for her great contribution to DHRA in past years for hosting the annual Garden Party.

Membership secretary needed. Hand-delivering information, agendas etc. to all residents is time-consuming. It would be a very great help if all residents would give their email addresses to the Treasurer. A volunteer is sought to be Membership Secretary: anyone willing to help in this way should contact Mark or any committee member, which can conveniently be done on WhatsApp.

Report on the Abacus appeal. Just under £36,000 was spent on the Abacus appeal. The sum was met by generous donations made by residents in Downshire Hill, Keats Grove, Rosslyn Hill and other

neighbouring streets. The process of gathering in such sums highlighted the value of neighbouring Residents' Associations working together in a common cause.

Thanks to the Freemasons Arms. The manager was thanked for her cooperation in ensuring that the pub's customers are responsible and quiet. Mark and Julian continue to be liaison points for residents who have issues that they wish to raise in relation to the pub.

Warm thanks were given to the management for again giving free use of the room for the AGM.

Other matters raised

Daytime activities held at St John's sometimes cause problems when parked cars block the street. This will need to be raised with the church and the Keats Grove Residents Association.

DHRA will persevere with the Council regarding the unacceptable refuse outside 4A contributed in part by Airbnb tenants. A permanent facility will be sought as well as continued pressure kept on the authority.

There should be rubbish bins on Rosslyn Hill. The street needs to be cleaned more often, twice a week. This point needs to be raised with the Council.

Dog excrement on the pavements has become a still more prevalent problem since the pandemic, due to many more dogs and negligent owners.

The meeting ended.