

Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet

Residents Association

www.bowersgifford.org.uk

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING WHICH TOOK PLACE

at the BENBOW CLUB on 22nd October 2014

The Chair opened the meeting at 7.30pm.

Attendees

Rose Griffin (RG) Chair; Tracy Calver (TC); Gary Lee (GL); Derek Twidell (DT); John Horwood (JH).

Apologies received from Tina Whitham (TW); George Smith (GS); Carole Turkson (CT).

DT acted as minutes secretary.

Approximately 40 members of the public attended the meeting, 5 committee members and 2 guests

1. Agreement of the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting

The minutes of the last AGM were agreed with no alterations.

2. Summary of the work of the Management Committee during the year

The work of the RA during the 2013/14 year was summarised:

Successfully fought Nottingham Council's Appeal to build on our green belt. The success had been a joint effort by all members of the committee.

Maintained membership of the Flood Risk Action Group set up by Rawreth residents. BG & NB were represented by RG and Sheelagh Pegg. SP provided an update of the work of the FRAG (paragraph 3 below).

Raised several issues with public sector bodies including concerns about the layout of Sadlers Farm.

The Table Top Sale had not only raised funds but also provided a good social event.

Other fundraising events had been carried out e.g. a stand at the U3A event showing residents how to access and put information on the forum

A tombola stand at the August fete had also raised funds. Ladies from the RA had run the cafe, at the fete, in 1940s style – profits from the cafe went to the parish council.

The Chair thanked residents for the many prizes and cakes they had provided for the fundraising events and especially the ladies who had worked in the kitchen and who had made many of the cakes themselves.

Following the request for donations of poppy seeds, 150 envelopes were packaged and given to children at the fete. Enough seeds had been left over to package another 200 envelopes which were distributed to St. Margaret's School children for the Poppy Walk which took place in September.

Requested a key from Basildon Council for Westlake Park for use by the Benbow, Residents Association and U3A. This had been agreed and the key will be left at the Benbow.

TW and Tony Fay have had to set up a new website as the old website had been taken offline by the host, necessitating a replacement hosting service with a new provider.

3. Update from the Flood Risk Action Group

Sheelagh Pegg took the floor and spoke about the flooding issues in the area and our interface with the Flood Risk Action Group (FRAG) with the assistance of the Flood Forum, a national charity. The FRAG was planning to meet with representatives of each of the local authorities and public bodies responsible for the areas in which flooding occurred. The FRAG wished to raise awareness in an effort to try to resolve the current flooding issues and prevent future problems.

4. Update from the Green Action Groups Meeting

In Carole Turkson's absence, RG explained about the local Green Action Groups (GAG) which were joining together. RG and CT had attended the meeting but advised the management committee not to join the GAG at the moment. RG felt that the GAG were fighting Basildon Council whereas BG&NB RA felt that Basildon Council was "the pig in the middle" having been told by the government to create a core strategy to build more houses than it wanted to do so. The RA had supported the council by writing to the MP to express concerns about the pressure the Council was under.

5. Land at Sadlers Farm – to be returned to the green belt

Several residents had raised concerns that the land at Sadlers Farm had not been returned to the green belt as agreed. The RA had recently been contacted because the land at Sadlers Farm had not been returned to the green belt as agreed. The council had asked an enforcement officer to attend and consider whether an enforcement order would be appropriate.

6. Treasurer's report and accounts

TC explained the entries in the accounts and the final balance in the bank. The accounts were unaudited and Tracy said that she would bring them back to the next meeting when the audit was complete. Some minor adjustments to wording were requested but otherwise the accounts were accepted.

7. Election of Officers

At this point, the current committee stood down and DT took control of the meeting to facilitate the election of the new committee. Having had no nominations for new committee members, and as the current committee are all prepared to stand for a further term, they were voted in en-bloc. Proposed Denis Livermore, seconded Elaine Horwood.

Laura Watts had stood down earlier on in the year, so there was a vacancy for a further member. Helen Sargeant and Elaine Horwood both volunteered. It was suggested that they both be taken on, but this necessitated a change in our constitution paragraph no. 5 to increase the maximum number of committee members from 8 to 9. A motion to amend paragraph no. 5 was put to the floor, proposed RG and seconded JH, and was accepted.

Helen Sargeant was then proposed RG, seconded GL, and accepted.

Elaine Horwood was proposed TC, seconded Jim Munson, and also accepted.

DT then handed the meeting back to RG, the Chair.

8. Update from Community Police Officer

PCSO Emma Spurr gave a run through of the current crime issues affecting the area, and answered questions from the floor. In particular, there were concerns about door to door canvassers looking for work who proved to be opportunists preying on elderly or vulnerable people.

9. Jotmans Farm Asset of Community Value

Martin Fowler, from South Benfleet, took to the floor to tell residents about the proposed building at Jotmans Farm. Mr. Fowler had been in contact with RG for almost 2 years. He had asked if

BG&NB, as a neighbouring community, would request that Castle Point Council make Jotmans into an Asset of Community Value on the basis that: "Jotmans Farm used to fall within Bowers Gifford" (prior to A130 being built). It is a main horse riding and stabling venue in the area and has long been established as grazing land. Visually the land provides open green space from the A130, Church Road, Bowers Gifford and the RSPB, Bowers Marshes. It helps to provide a wildlife corridor to the Bowers Gifford Marshes and Canvey Marshes. Via the public byway, it is a highly valued as an open space for various forms of recreation e.g. horse riding, dog walking, cycling and walking.

RG said that building on Jotmans would cause more traffic on Sadlers Farm because of using the A130 as an exit route. There were also some concerns about a knock on effect to flooding as the area in which building was proposed was also an area which flooded.

A motion was put to the floor that BG&NB RA would propose Jotmans Farm as an Asset of Community Value. The motion was carried with 2 abstentions (parish clerk and parish councillor Foster) and no objections.

10. Page Woods

Page Woods had recently been sold at auction. The estimated value was £20k. Local people had bid but the land had been sold to the Benson family from Basildon at a price of £32k. Basildon Council had ensured that the vendors solicitors were aware of a blanket tree protection order and that this was included in the legal pack. The RA had also written to the vendors solicitors and the auctioneers stating that it would strenuously resist any proposal to build or industrialise the area.

The Bensons were now selling the land again because they had found that they could not do what they wanted with it. RG had had two amicable telephone conversations with a member of the Benson family. She asked anyone interested in forming a consortium to buy back the land to speak to her after the meeting.

11. Any Other Business

Following concerns raised by residents about green belt land being cleared at the kennels in Lower Road to provide unauthorised accommodation we had contacted the council. An enforcement officer had attended and found 4 – 5 unauthorised dwellings and had issued an enforcement order. However, as the dwellings had been occupied for a number of years the owners could apply to legalise occupation.

The Bowers Gifford Local History Group had recently visited the Essex Fire Museum. RG had been given some fire safety leaflets which were available for distribution. Fire Safety Officers had asked RG to promote their free home safety visits where they carried out a smoke alarm test and following a quick look around offer other advice to prevent fire.

Santus Circus had donated a couple of family tickets for which offers were invited. Two silver rings, with semi precious stones had been donated. Offers were invited.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm

After the meeting, a short film on Bowers Gifford in the 1950s was shown.