

**DIVINITY ROAD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
19 SEPTEMBER 2005
THE ASIAN CULTURAL CENTRE**

MINUTES

1) Apologies

Cindy Carlson, Chris Cornforth, Isobel Gilham, Edward Walker, Cllr Sarewa

2) Minutes

? proposed and Catherine Walker seconded the motion that the Minutes of the AGM of 20 September 2004 be accepted as a true record. This was passed by the Meeting.

3) Matters Arising

None.

4) Chairman's Report

Mark introduced the committee: Cindy Carlson, Secretary; Alastair Gray, Treasurer and Membership Database; Peter Coggins, Traffic; Judith Fitzgerald, Events and Sinnet Court Liaison; Barbara Crossley, Oxford Brookes Liaison; Louis Tod; Elizabeth Mills and Lynne Trenery. Robert Currie resigned during the year. He thanked the committee for their work. He also thanked Sandy Ruxton and Jo Lyons for producing the Newsletter and Jane Welch and her team of distributors. He thanked Roger Clarke for his work on the website.

He said that a lot of DRARA's work was done through Action Groups. Although there has been a Planning Group in the past, the Committee has done this recently but help is being lined up in the person of Clare ? The Events Group needs more members – Judith Fitzgerald is the person to contact. Mark has represented DRARA on the Manzil Gardens / East Oxford Adventure Playground Association but said that it would be nice to get someone else involved. The meetings of the East Area Committee have not been covered as well as he would like – help is needed with this. He said that DRARA is the community's organisation but that it is dependent on members getting involved in running it; there is a help-sheet circulating and he urged people to put their names down.

The membership drive, organised by Edward Walker, takes place this month but members can sign up and pay tonight.

The Events group has had a busy year but he would leave Judith Fitzgerald to talk about this. Very little has happened with regard to traffic issues. On planning matters there has been a steady stream of applications, usually minor ones as there are so few development spaces left; current issues include expansion of Tesco's ring-road store and a proposed development of 5 flats at 87 Divinity Road. The Local Plan Review has removed sites at Oriel fields and Hill Top Road but Warneford Playing Fields and Warneford Meadows have been included as sites for development. In respect of the environment, trees have been replaced, deep-

cleaning of local streets has been scheduled for outside Oxford Brookes terms and extra bins have been requested between Sinnet Court and Cowley Road; thanks are due to Louise Tod for her work on these issues. At the Manzil Way playground the final phase of play equipment has been installed and security lighting is awaited, both funded by East Oxford Area Parliament.

Mark has written to Andrew Smith MP to invite him to speak at a public meeting to be arranged on the subject of the impact of 'informal' Houses in Multiple Occupation on the community.

He thanked DRARA members for their support, financially through their subscriptions, and also their responses to the various requests for comment from the community. He thanked them for showing their confidence in DRARA as an effective voice on local issues; DRARA is known as an articulate, sensible organisation and this only happens because we work together as a community. He also thanked members for supporting DRARA's activities, whether issue-led or at the many social events it organised.

He thanked ward councillors for their continued interest in local issues and for their support.

He thanked Oxfordshire County Council officers, in particular Shaun Hatton, for their efforts to improve the local streetscene.

He also gave thanks to Thames Valley Police for their effective policing and Anne Ashley of Brookes University for her efforts in maintaining good Brookes/community relations.

He reiterated his thanks to residents in general, for working to make this area into a real community through their participation and support, and to the committee, for making things happen despite living increasingly busy lives. He said that members are the eyes and ears of the community. They shouldn't be asking why isn't DRARA doing something about "it", because it may be that the committee doesn't know anything about the issue concerned; instead they should contact a committee member and get involved.

5) Treasurer's Report

The accounts had not been audited for 2 years but Ivon Asquith has now taken this on. For the year ending 16 September 2005 total income was £472.00 and total expenditure was £813.20. The total balance in hand at the end of the year was £2512.41. Members' subscriptions were not collected in 2005 because it took a long time to collect the 2004 subscriptions. The £200 donation is from Cherwell Housing Trust and comprises 200 students memberships at £1 per head. In answer to a question Alastair explained that the Planning Action Group expenditure of £296.06 in 2004 was in respect of legal advice on the Sinnet Court Development.

6) Election of Committee members

All the current members were re-elected.

7) Traffic

Peter Coggins said that there was little to report. He was asked if he could raise the issue of the road safety problem caused by cars being parked right up to junctions. He said that he had already written to the County Council about this. Their response was to say that they had abandoned the practice of installing yellow lines on an ad hoc basis because their experience was that it simply moved the problem elsewhere. Their policy now was to only introduce them in conjunction with the installation of a Controlled Parking Zone.

A resident pointed out that there are already yellow lines at the top of Southfield Road and at the Stone Street junction. It was agreed that Peter should reply to the Council expressing DRARA's unhappiness with this policy and to press for action to be taken. Mark asked the police representatives if they thought it a good idea for DRARA to put advisory letters on the windscreens of cars parked at junctions. The police pointed out that it is illegal to park within 15 feet of a junction at night and said that they could devise a letter themselves and target the local area. A resident asked if white lines could be painted at junctions. Cllr Simmons agreed to investigate the white line/yellow line issue.

8) Community Police

They reported that Chris Griffiths is stepping down from the role of Community Beat Officer after 17 years in the role. He was thanked for all the work that he has done. His replacement is Alan Muir. Community Beat Officers have been re-named Community and Race Relations Officers.

In the last year burglaries have shown a small fall, street crime a small increase and cycle theft a large increase. There is concern about the impact that the change in licensing hours will have. In answer to a question from a resident about cycle police Chris Griffiths said that cycle patrols had worked well but they were short of resources at present.

9) Events Group

Paul Wolf has stepped down and is now involved with the Cowley Road Carnival – Judith expressed her thanks for all the work that he has done for DRARA. There have been 4 occasions when the street has been re-claimed for events and there was the Film-in-the-Court at Sinnet Court. The new concept this year was Play-in-the Street which occurred in April and June. There was a Street Fair in Warneford/Bartlemas Roads which raised £450. The Street Meal in Divinity Road was blessed with good weather and there was music and the paddling pool (water supplied by the Fire Brigade) – thanks to Andy Roscoe for organising this. The film at Sinnet Court gave residents the opportunity to have a look at the development – next year it will return to Divinity Road. There will be a planning meeting in November and residents interested in attending should add their e-mail address to the list being circulated. Peter ? has suggested a local boules match.

10) Brookes Liaison

Mark introduced Amanda and Natasha Coleman, lettings negotiator. Mark thanked Amanda for her work in taking action against Sinnet students who had brought cars to Oxford. Amanda said that 75% of students are international. There is a new president of the Students' Union, John Lucas, who is aware that community-student relations have not been good in the past and wants to improve them. He was not able to come to the meeting but has invited residents to visit Brookes. He has lived in Divinity Road and Hill Top Road. Ann Ashley, Brookes Community Relations Officer was present. In response to residents' concerns about rubbish being left in the front gardens of student houses prior to the summer holidays she said that she would take action. Brookes are opposed to the proposed traffic restrictions in Cheney Lane and Warneford Lane. In respect of passing patron noise she has had no complaints recently and wonders if it is still a problem.

11) Councillors

There are now two county councillors for St Clements ward, Larry Sanders joining Craig Simmons. The city council won the planning appeal in respect of 91 Divinity Road despite going against the advice of their officers. The Cowley Road improvements are nearing completion and in response to a question about blank areas of pavement Craig said that cycle racks and trees would be added. Concern was expressed by a resident about parking on the pavement at the bottom of Divinity Road. The East Area Parliament has paid money to East Oxford Action for litter bins. At the EAP on Wednesday the question of street lighting for seasonal festivities is to be discussed; there have been complaints about street lighting being on all night. Free lights have been given to traders. In future there may be lights in trees. The firm that supplied the lighting has gone bust but the council is talking to the one that has taken over. Licensing has been a big headache; strictly speaking you have to live within 100 metres of the licensed premises to object but the council has been flexible and has agreed to consider complaints from people who live on a route to those premises. Rent increases for shops in Cowley Road are being phased-in. The alcohol-free zones are being reviewed; there is a problem at the edge of the zones, in particular outside the community centre. It has been decided to extend the areas so that they include residential areas. Craig has written to Post Watch about the closure of the post office at Londis; there is no planning application in respect of those premises yet. The other post office is facing a rent increase. The area committees are getting more funds and the East Area one has tripled the money it gives to community projects; there have been no applications from DRARA in recent years. Sietske Boeles asked Craig about the planning application to build on a substantial part of Warneford Meadow which she thought might be caused by the Health Authority's need to raise funds in the light of their financial deficit. Craig said that this land was allocated for development in the draft Local Plan and it was therefore difficult to oppose. It is likely to be developed for student housing.

In response to a question about the former bingo hall Craig said that the Pegasus Theatre had made an offer and that a Sikh OR Bangladeshi was also interested. Moving on to traffic issues Craig said that the first phase of alterations to The Plain roundabout to improve safety for cyclists by reducing the width of the carriageway would be made this autumn. He also said that he was trying to get the 20 mph speed limit which has been approved for part of Cowley Road, extended to The Plain.

In response to a question about the cleared site at the junction of Cowley Road with Leon Close, he said that the property had had to be demolished because a fault in the structure had been discovered.

12) Any Other Business

None.