

DIVINITY ROAD AREA RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
27TH SEPTEMBER 2006
MINUTES

Apologies: Chris Cornforth, Isobel Gillam, Peter Coggins, Tom Knowles

Attending: Forty six residents, plus invited guests

Traffic Presentation: Paul Cullen, an independent transport consultant, has been working with the DRARA Traffic Action group to help with the traffic survey and strategies for the future of traffic in the DRARA area. Paul started by saying his first impressions of the neighbourhood is that it is a great space. Suggested residents needed to consider what their priorities are – appearance? Personal safety? Unruly behaviour? Noise issues? For effective solutions, we'll need to demonstrate:

- Community participation in any consultation
- Consultation with authorities and police
- Then get help with solutions
- Be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) with objectives
- Be visible in campaigning for what we want
 - Produce reports
 - Get known to national organisations
 - Choose a celebrity champion
 - Write articles for local papers
 - Make 'Film in the Street' more of a campaign event

Participants at the meeting raised a number of issues, including the fact that we had already tried many strategies over the last 25 years, but still have the same situation. Suggestion that perhaps we need more direct action, perhaps as part of the proposed '20 is plenty' campaign.

James Styring informed the AGM that traffic surveys were being carried out in the area, the first one taking place in July and the second one at the end of October. These will be analysed to help inform discussions about DRARA should do next about traffic issues. Also, the DRARA committee is looking to hold '20 is Plenty' events starting in spring 2007.

Oxford Brookes Liaison: Becky Harty and _____ from Brookes Corporate Affairs attended the meeting. Becky only started as Brookes Community Liaison Officer in mid-September. She'd received five complaints about student behaviour in her first week in work. The liaison office is looking at various strategies to improve relations with the community, including sending letters out to students and residents, holding workshops for students at the end of their first year about moving out to accommodation in the community. What residents can do is to provide specific complaints (household, dates and times) so that Brookes can take action. The liaison office also needs to be copied in on complaints to environmental health.

BUSINESS MEETING

Minutes of 2005 AGM: Title needs revising, otherwise all else is fine and minutes accepted.

Matters Arising: Covered in other parts of the meeting agenda

Chair's Report: Committee members were introduced to the meeting. Many developments occurred over the last year including: new people working and producing an excellent newsletter, website is being re-developed, events group is having an impact both in the community and with others in Oxford, and held an HMO meeting with Andrew Smith attending. The DRARA committee still needs support for the Planning Action Group, which has been somewhat dormant, someone needs to attend the East Area Parliament regularly.

Gratitude expressed to the members of DRARA for their support. To Edward Walker for helping to organise the membership drive, to the ward councillors who have been supportive on DRARA related issues, to community police and Brookes community liaison office for their support as well. Mark Norman now stepping down as chairperson of DRARA and expressed thanks to the committee and to the community for their support. In turn, Mark was thanked for his dedicated work on behalf of residents.

Election of DRARA Committee: The current members of the committee were all re-elected, and welcomed Susan Lisk and Vicki Cullen as new committee members. The AGM was informed that Peter Coggins has volunteered to take on chairing the committee.

Treasurer's Report: The balance in DRARA's account is £2,578.01. £885 was raised during the 2005/6 membership drive, with £200 coming from Sinnet Court. Membership numbers have declined from a high of 286 a few years ago to only 220 last year. Altogether £1,108.78 was raised in the last year from the membership drive, plus donations raised during various events. The accounts have not yet been audited and the committee is looking for a volunteer to do the audit.

Planning Action Group: Currently, as chair, Mark Norman has been receiving copies of all planning applications that have some affect on the area, and, in consultation with the committee, takes necessary action. This is often in the form of informing residents about controversial applications and asking people to write letters, as well as sending an official DRARA letter. The latest controversial issues have been around developments of the Bingo Hall and of Warneford Meadows. Councillors reported that the new licencing act has no statutory requirement on consultation with local residents, and that people have to keep on top of this themselves.

Cindy Carlson reported on the meetings organised by the Oxfordshire Mental Health Trust to discuss developments in Warneford Meadows, including the confirmation that income raised from selling the land will stay with the OMHT, and that OMHT are requesting community members to help them develop criteria for who OMHT should sell the land to/what sort of development would be most necessary for the area.

Traffic Action Group No further discussion needed beyond what was presented at the beginning of the meeting.

Events Group: Had a good year in 2005/6. Five people were involved in the regular planning of events for the area, and the group always welcomes new members. A planning meeting for 2006/7 will be held in November. The Events Group also has an email list through which it keeps a wider group of interested individuals informed of what is being planned.

Website Developments: Roger Clarke was thanked for having done all the work in setting up the original website. Some committee members had worked on putting together a new specification for reviving the website, and contracted Lumpy Lemon, a local company, to help with the design. The idea is to make the website useful for campaigning and keeping people informed on planning, traffic and events issues. It will also serve as a repository of local history. The committee is looking for people who can help to keep the website updated, and is also looking for 'then' and 'now' photos of the DRARA area. The website address is www.drara.org.uk

Local Councillors Craig Simmonds, County councillor for the area, started by introducing Nuala Young, a new city councillor. The councillors expressed appreciation for DRARA's activism and for being so easy to work with, as well as for providing space to communicate with the community through the newsletter. Some new initiatives in the last year include the new Farmer's Market in the Asian Cultural Centre every Saturday and the strengthening of community policing in the area, with Cowley Rd now being part of the 'Safer Oxford' initiative. Suggestions for engaging with councillors included attending East Area Parliament meetings, and individuals sending letters to councillors on issues of particular concern to the area. The meeting was also informed that the East Area Parliament has a small budget of around £20,000 annually for community grants, with the average grant given being between £1000 and £2000.

AOB:

- Request was made to add the number of people attending the meeting to the AGM minutes
- A vote of thanks was given to David Wood-Robinson for his daily efforts to keep the bottom half of Divinity Road litter free.