



ABOYNE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
Committee Meeting
16 September 2015

Present:	Christine McLauchlan
Mary Conneely (Chair)	Sue Noon
Brian Benson (Vice-Chair)	Luke Greysmith FVPPF
Julia Duschenes (Sec)	Alec Campbell, Councillor
Cynthia Ireson (Treasurer)	

1. Welcome

MC welcomed the committee and visitors.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies received from Fiona Couper and Barry Cropper

3. Report from Friends of Victoria Playing Field

Luke Greysmith gave an in-depth report of plans to date. FVPPF have a separate funding group for raising money for the refurbishment of play equipment in the park. They are looking to fund three ways: Grant (from the Council, £44K), Corporate Sponsorship and Crowd Funding. Approx £79K needed including for an adult fitness trail around the park. MC advised checking with the Council that there is no expiry date on the grant and to consider partial work so that monies are not lost. Further funding could always be raised later for further stages of improvement. It was agreed to add the Crowd Funding pitch to the next ARA Newsletter (October) so that as many local users of the park were encouraged to contribute as possible. LG to send draft document to MC and JD for circulation to committee. LG left the meeting at this point.

LG/FC

4. Planning Issues

Councillor Alex Campbell gave a summary of current planning issues, in particular The Ziggurat building just off London Road. Several issues arise from the fact that the Local Plan is out of date and there is new national planning policy (Permitted Development Scheme), whereby local council may only rubber-stamp change of use from office to residential and there can be no enforced commitment to affordable housing within the development. AC mentioned that whilst there was considerable local opposition to the development on grounds of inadequate roads, schools and sewage systems, there was also pressure from young people who require this accommodation. Council endorses the building of small homes for couples and small families and is not keen to promote the building of large luxury dwellings.

BB: What monetary figure is attached to "Affordable Housing"?

AC: Affordable = 2/3 the normal market rate to rent. However, market rate in St Albans is already so high that so-called affordable housing is quickly outside the reach of many. e.g. Eversheds site which is

40% affordable housing, sold to housing associations to run. Unfortunately, developers hike the prices of the full-price houses in order to pay for the “affordable” ones, so the spiral continues.

MC: None of the current/recent developments have any parking provision. Tensions are emerging about this. The area is becoming less desirable to live in due the problems. What can be done?

AC: is of the opinion that the Council will be challenged legally about the provisions. In fact, the Council does not currently know how many parking spaces it has and has over-sold the provision. AC suggested that the solution to the problem may be to involve local businesses and schools in sharing their spaces for residents to use in the evenings.

MC: Is the Council building any Council housing?

AC: Council has arrangements with housing associations (who build and rent for the council). There is a little building taking place on derelict garage spaces. (Gombards not considered to be under threat because not derelict.) It was noted that the Alban Museum site may soon have housing on it and also the block that once housed the Police Station on Victoria St. It is unlikely that either of these will have adequate parking provision.

MC: Is there any quality control over design?

AC: No. The problem is that the permitted development scheme takes control away from local government. [Also, no Local Plan]

MC: London Road is being heavily developed, but piecemeal, generating high density population and heavy traffic. Can the Council object to this?

AC: the Council never objects on the traffic details.

BB: Where is The Strategic Plan in the pipeline?

AC: to be completed third quarter 2016 [but Plan is already known to be at least 4 months behind schedule]

MC: asked about provision of school places for the developments taking place in the ARA area.

AC: suggested Francis Bacon [which is right across town, not walking distance for KS1 or 2]

AC: noted that developers change their plans whilst developing the sites (see King Harry Lane site where provisions for the elderly were originally in plan and have been lost). AC is keen to promote self-build properties and that council could release the land it owns for this end.

CM: noted that in the Council’s policy to build smaller units of housing, it is not taking into account that families grow and suggested that numbers should be acknowledged, not hypothetical units.

MC thanked Alec Campbell for attending the meeting and he left.

5. Minutes of the Last Meeting

Agreed.

6. Matters Arising

Any matters arising from the last meeting were already on the Agenda for this one.

7. St Claire's Development

BB reported that the planning application would be discussed 21 September 7pm. He will attend. Nigel Povoas will speak on behalf of local residents. ARA's objections were sent along with many others'. CM noted that the template letter was a very good format for helping people to lodge their protest.

8. Communications Reports and Street Reps

There will be a Street Reps' meeting on Wednesday 30 Sept for collections and updating membership lists. Next Newsletter will alert people to the collection. N.B. New Street Reps required.

JD
ALL!

9. Planning Report

Brickyard James Hanning is appealing to extend out-door hours (6 Dec, Magistrates Court). MC has heard rumours that the business is not thriving. Robert Pankhurst (Abbey Precincts RA) is seeking licensing review. He requested a letter of support from ARA. Agreed.

MC/BB

3 Russell Ave planning application has been delayed due to illness in the department. It will be made in the next month and refusal would seem to be the likely outcome.

5 Selby Ave had applied for PVC dormer windows and had permission refused. Appeal is being lodged.

10. Treasurer's Report

Monies out: £60 on website training. Monies in: £100 council grant. Current total: £537.70. MC formally thanked CI for all she has done as she resigns at this meeting. The role will now be shared until the next AGM: BB is the new treasurer with ANOther assisting (tbc). Historical invoices and spreadsheets to be emailed to BB. All AGM minutes and Newsletters to be archived by JD. MC, BB, JD to meet in December to assimilate all files for archive purposes.

CI
MC/BB/J
D

11. Look St Albans

Next meeting.

JD

12. AOB

Street Reps Meeting will take place on 30/09/15. JD to remind and tout for replacement reps as there are many gaps.

JD

Labour Newsletter brought to our attention the redistribution of monies to manage open spaces. More money to be requested for affected areas.

13. Dates of Next Meetings

Street Reps: Wednesday 30 September, 8pm, 11 Selby Ave, and again on 11 November
Full Committee Meetings: 13 January 2016

Meeting ended: 9.40pm