

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Watford Fields Residents' Association

Monday 22nd October 2018 at 7pm

The Living Room, Wellsprings Church, Watford

Welcome

Jags welcomed everybody to the meeting. Jags reminded everybody that this is the AGM and that there are some areas of business and updates. Stephen Giles Medhurst and Vicky Costello were welcomed.

Minutes

The minutes from the AGM meeting on 13th December 2017 agreed and proposed by Anne Rattiu and seconded by Robert Parkin.

Chair's Report

The boundary and total residents in Watford Fields was confirmed as Lower High Street to the railway line and everything in between.

We have had 8 committee meetings and 1 residents meeting when Sarah Priestly from the Museum came and ran through the proposals for the Museum.

Events: Spring Clean in April where we collected 22 bags of litter. There will be a new one soon. Wellspring 'Fun on the Fields' where we had a stall at the fair where we raised much needed funds.

We have had 2 social events: Sinatra and Swing in St Albans and Jon Culshaw in Radlett

Most recently we have had our new Watford Fields Noticeboard arrive, funded by Cllr Rabi Martins and installed by Veolia and a big thank you to them for supporting us. – It is to be used for WFRA events and members can post community events and it will be kept as non businesses at the moment.

Barrier painted, missing railing has been replaced and cyclist dismount signs added.

New trees were planted last spring and as they are young trees they have had guards installed. Network Rail land cleared by Lammas bridge.

We have been reporting regularly to HCC Highways any faults such as street lights. Fly tipping/graffiti/tree branches to be reported to Veolia

Forums Contributed to: Oxhey Park Project Forum, Watford Parks Forum, Watford Museum HLF consultation, Watford Fields Heritage sign meeting which we are hoping to get a sign made incorporating some of the local history.

Watford wide consultations: Watford local plan which you can still comment on, South West Herts Growth and Transport Plan and the closure of Watford High Street Station Ticket Office for which the consultations are now closed. We put the links up on Facebook as we hear of these consultations so that residents can get involved.

Upcoming event: Litter pick on Saturday 10th November, Remembrance Day service on Sunday 11th November and Rabi Martins will be attending, and Christmas Social on Tuesday 11th December at Watford Museum

Next Social night out: A Soulful night to remember at Watford Colosseum - sign up sheet at the back

Upcoming projects: Painting of playground railings, Watford Fields Heritage sign, Welcome to Watford Fields signs and approval has been gained with one by the memorial and one by Crossfield Court so that when cars drive in they see the Welcome signs. 20 MPH speed signs to be added with Watford Fields also included in the wording.

Members who had signed up for 2019 were thanked and encouraged to spread the work to neighbourhoods. 2019 Membership is still £1 - membership forms at the back.

WFRA postcard to take as a reminder of our contact details/give to your neighbours

Keep up to date and contact us via our website, Facebook, or via email.

Stephen Giles Medhurst updates

The committee members do keep the local councillors very busy.

New street lights to be added at the edge of the park by the post box and the other one on the footpath by the old church / memorial.

Within the scope of WFRA is Local Board Road and aware of the alley way between the Pump House of the industrial units. 4 new street lights will be installed via central funding.

Street lights converted to LED lighting. The timings will be changed by HCC and while they are dimmed by 9pm no difference noticed. The lights will now stay on until 1am. Staying on at 2am has been rejected by HCC.

Wiggenhall Road footpath. Planning permission for redevelopment of the petrol station has been granted. Part of the frontage is going to be used to reinstall the footpath we have no idea when that might happen so we can slightly narrow the road to create a narrow path, Start in April 2019 and there is written commitment from HCC that this will start,

Lower High Street, Dalton way: Dropped kerb taken out. Council officers have been encouraged to put in interim measures to include reinstating the dropped kerb. Signage to be changed slightly but it hasn't been done as it needs a traffic order to close the road at night. It will be this financial year so before April.

Parking consultation: Survey results are in. Watford Fields apart from 2 roads want no change.

Q: Problems with parking in the pay and display bays outside Dyson Court. A: SGM will investigate if these can be extended. There will be changes in other zones in Watford and those residents will be written to.

Q: The opening hours of the new Intu centre were not made public before the consultation. A: Once the Intu centre is in full operation then there will be a second consultation.

Traffic counts: Considerable problems with the counts as the figures didn't make sense and suggested that the traffic numbers had dropped. A third was carried out in September and the traffic centres were not picking up vehicles that were pulling in to allow others to pass. The bottom line is that there hasn't been any increase in the amount of traffic using Watford Field Road instead there was a slight decline. So Thomas Sawyer Way has not displaced traffic through Watford Field Road.

Q: Increase in vehicles such as lorries down Lower High Street. A: Traffic count specific to Watford Field Road. Jags also said that this is a new issue as nobody has raised it before.

Treasurer's Report

Presented by Haresh: Accounts available to see at the back of the room. In summary we raised £1095.90 and £978 spent in the year.

Each year we have been lucky enough to have a surplus and cumulative the surplus is £625. Successful summer fair event contributed to the surplus.

Membership £58 for 2016, £50 for 2017 and £32 for 2018 which is disappointing. Please renew for 2019 as soon as possible and please encourage your neighbours to join as well.

Election of officers

The room was asked if anybody would like to stand for any of the position and nobody put their hand up.

The officers were read out and proposed by Dulan Roy and seconded by John Parsons.

Vicki Costello, General Manager, Intu Watford

Thank you for inviting me along today and I'm sure I have seen some of you in passing. I'm here to tell you a bit about what we have been doing and it's been a pleasure to be part of the project. We will be introducing a flat rate for evening parking to hopefully encourage people to use the carparks in the evening.

Creating a super regional in-town shopping centre and also bring in leisure which was the vision of Intu. To have more family run restaurants and family places to visit. Space was created for the new brands who wanted to come into Watford but there was a lack of space.

Debenhams is doing really well.

Watford has been in the top 40 destination for ages but moved to number 20 and we are now at number 4 as a retail destination. As a whole Watford is in the top 20 as a destination.

Graffiti goods lift doors have been preserved as have some of the columns which have graffiti on them. Some of the history of Charter place has been retained with the introduction of a canopy roof as it was never intended to be an enclosed centre.

Many new stores have opened and a couple have moved from the old centre into the new one. Lots of eateries are opening too. Cote Brasserie is also joining and using the listed front building.

Q: Any problems filling the empty units? A: It can be difficult but we will look at the units and maybe make them smaller it will be easier for them to be let. The old BHS has been let to Sports Direct which isn't part of Intu but is part of the building. There is a dedicated asset team working to encourage new retailers.

The cinema opens on the 14th December. Hollywood bowl will open a week later. This leads to a greater retail offer and the tenants will be asked to consider later opening hours. There is also the parking element (2,000 spaces in Intu) which we think we can manage with a flat rate after 5pm to park for the evening which then stops the pressure on the local streets.

Safety and Anti-social behaviour: The extension has a walk through which is a 24 hour thorough fare and we have 50 people as security and car park wardens so that the walk through will have a high vigilance.

Q: Are the busses going to be put back. A: Work being carried out by WBC and traffic will be controlled through the High Street via NPR system to lower the bollards.

Q: Bus route from Lower High Street to the Town Hall. A: SGM will respond directly.

Q: Health and safety during the construction was poor. A: The tragic accident was not part of the Intu development as they are WBC road works. The fatality was investigate by the Police.

The other thing that we have done as well as the £200 million project there has been a £12m in refurbishing the old harlequin including new loos and a changing place facility and £5 refurbishment of the car parks. There is still shop fitting taking place with the restaurants being some of the last.

I do hope that you all enjoy the new centre.

Q: I saw an art gallery when I looked up. A: Free space which is not permanent but we work with a lot of local artists and they are usually there for a couple of weeks.

Q: No signage for the gallery. A: there is one sign at the bottom of the escalator and we support by different ways such as social media and posters in the lifts.

Q: I think the old people in Watford are being left behind: A: What is it that you want.

Q: More toilets. A: Debenhams also has toilet facilities, the cinema will have as will the Hollywood Bowl, as do John Lewis and the restaurants.

Close

Jags thanked SGM, Vicki Costello, Wellspring Church and the Committee members and thanked Rita who has resigned. We do have space for another member so if you would like to join them please come and speak to me.

Meeting Closed at 20.14

