

# DRAFT - Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Watford Fields Residents' Association

Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 7pm

The Living Room, Wellsprings Church, Watford

## Welcome

Jags welcomed everybody to the meeting. This is our annual AGM and Jags reminded everybody that this is the AGM and that there are some areas of business and updates. Welcomed new residents and guest speakers Simon Harris from Veolia and Rebecca Palmer from New Hope. We have been a residents' association since 2015 and Jags has been the Chair for the last 4 years as I am going to step down from the committee today.

## Minutes

The minutes from the AGM meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2018 agreed and proposed by Chris Hamill and seconded by Mark Smith.

## Chair's Report

Since the last AGM we have had two remembrance services and we had 44 attendees last weekend. John Parsons from Elfrida Road laid one of the wreaths. His father fought in Passchendaele and Clr Dychton laid a wreath on behalf of WBC.

We had two litter pick days with the last one in October. We collected 21 bags of rubbish. Veolia do an excellent job but these small bits get under the bushes. Watford Museum hosted us for a lovely cup of tea.

May was the last General Meeting with speaker Mayor Peter Taylor and our new local PC Sarah Thomas.

We had a lovely Christmas Party at Watford Museum. We even had a surprise visit from Santa. We hope to have a party again this year and we will let you know as soon as the date is confirmed.

Wiggenhall Road Footpath campaign was very successful and the path has now been reinstated.

Two new light columns have been installed. Hedges by Watford Field Junior school have been trimmed and hopefully will continue to be on the rota. Planters cleaned by Watford High Street station. Committee members have attended many local forums including Oxhey Park, which will now be finished in August 2020. Groundworks are working with WBC about the River Colne and how to improve this facility.

In the pipeline we have a Heritage Sign which will replace the current park sign. It has a much better map and some history of Watford Fields. We have also secured some funding, for two Welcome to Watford Fields signs, from the Mayors small grants fund. The signs are being designed and approved and will hopefully be installed very soon. They will be installed by the two gateways into Watford Fields.

We have had an illegal billboard which was reported to WBC in March and is now being dealt with by their legal team. In the summer some travellers were spotted and committee members check the perimeter fences and gates and found some weak spots. Veolia came out on the same day and repaired them immediately. WBC also employed some security guards for a couple of nights just to keep the area safe.

Simon Harris added that what happens is that one van turns up and creates a weak point and then tells all the others where to go.

We have a very good relationship with Veolia who removed the sofa that arrived on the fields.

Very recently we were made aware of the Watford Local Plan. There are a few pockets of land which have been highlighted for potential residential development. One of those is the garages behind Elfrida Road. We have raised an objection and will keep an eye on any progress.

We have a new website this year. The new website has an online payment system for the £1 membership.

We have also requested more litter bins from WBC. One to be close to Pumphouse Crescent and the other to replace the broken bin.

Our membership will remain at £1 per household per year. Please encourage your neighbours to join so that we can continue to grow and be successful.

## Treasurer's Report

We are a voluntary organisation and the £1 membership fee is a minimum contribution. The money raised is used for the benefit of the residents.

Year end: £46 raised from membership. £113 from the Christmas Raffle Total £159. Welcome sign grant £3,000. Any money left from the grant after the cost of the signs will have to be paid back.

£226 cost this year so we have a balance £2932.

## Election of Officers

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

The Elected Officers were confirmed for the next year as were the Elected Members.

Simon Harris from Veolia

New outreach officer for Veolia and I have been in my post for about 18 months.

The hard standing for the new bin by Pumphouse Crescent was put in today so the bin will be installed in a day or two. I will check about the other bin.

We did the bulb planting with Watford Field Infant School along the side of the Field near Pumphouse Crescent.

We are trying to keep on top of the litter and the fly tipping. There is a new reporting system where you need to contact the same number but go to 1 for streets where it will be reported via WBC. We will then be notified and will attend.

We have 3 hours to clear litter. We have a town centre crew who cover the Watford Fields area and they work until about 6pm.

Veolia has two funding grants one is FIGS (Friends in Green Spaces) £1500 grant and a recycling grant is also available from Veolia.

Watford has a 44.5% recycle rate and we are currently 154 out of 345 boroughs. The best are three Rivers who are 4<sup>th</sup> with 64% who we would like to catch up with. Food waste is still at 30% going into the black bin instead of the green bin. General waste goes into energy not landfill.

Veolia also run the allotments.

With the fly tipping we have an 18 month project in St Albans Road from Leavesden Road up to Longsprings and back down including side roads. In one section we have seen a 46% decrease in fly tipping. Environmental Health are checking everything and all bags are being checked for names and addresses.

Jags highlighted the domestic fly tipper that we had and that Environmental Health have dealt with the person concerned.

Fly tipping is a huge problem and we had a large area at the back of Croxley View. Veolia had to get an external contractor in to clear the area as it was huge. When hot spots become known then they will be monitored and looked into.

Question from the floor:

Unaware that this was your topic we thought it was sewage: SH explained we cover all Domestic waste, street cleaning, allotments, tend the parks, litter bins.

I don't think Watford Fields is cleaned at all. The amount of rubbish in the local roads stays there for ages. Very occasionally one of the things with the brushes goes up and down the road. SH - I will speak to the street manager and Watford Fields should be on a weekly basis. SGM was spoken to by the resident and he maintained that it was down to cost. SH - will speak to the street manager and the contracts manager for streets and parks.

## Rebecca Palmer from New Hope

Thank you for inviting me. I work in the fundraising and communications department at the New Hope.

I live in a very happy house with a lovely patient husband and two children, but just imagine if I didn't. What if something went wrong and we became homeless and I can go to the council and they have a statutory obligation to house me and my two children. If my husband went on his own or I went on my own the council does not have an obligation.

That's who we help. Homeless adults.

New Hope started 30 years ago via St Mary's Church's Tower Project. They provided a hot meal on a Thursday Night but had some problems so St Mary's decided to end the project. Janet and Sheila who founded the New Hope Trust wanted to continue to look after the homeless men and did so via Jane's home in Cassiobury. Again there were some problems and another venue was sought. Coaches were found in High Wycombe which were brought to Watford.

Next March we celebrate 30 years. There will be a large exhibition in the Museum,

Over the 30 years there are still a lot of rough sleepers. 9 years ago there were fewer than now. You can see evidence of rough sleepers as you walk up the town. There are many reasons for this including lack of benefits and affordable housing. There has also been a decrease in statutory support including mental health provision.

The Haven is where our rough sleeping prevention team work and they can be seen out and about in Watford. We have lost two people recently. Frank and a lady aged 43 called Jo.

We have a mission to remove homelessness from Watford. One of the things we are doing in the next couple of weeks is to run the winter shelter from 1<sup>st</sup> December to the end of March with funding from WBC. We have mattresses, duvets and pillows.

In Hemel they have the SWT funding system which means that they have to wait for 3 days of cold weather before the funding becomes available.

Last winter we had 105 people access the service.

We help about 600 people a year and can accommodate about 66 people a night. We have a lot of services that people can access. We also believe that life is more than the basics and that people need encouraging and supporting and we use the garden that we have in Rickmansworth Road to help build self-esteem and confidence.

Please don't give money as you may be feeding someone's habit or they may be forced to give it to somebody else. OK to give food or a drink but please ask first in case they don't like it. Just acknowledge the person as being homeless is dehumanising and humiliating for many. We are there to help people see that there are other solutions to help them deal with problems in their lives. We have a 24 hour emergency contact number but if it's a real emergency please dial 999.

How to help: fundraising, volunteering, donating to the shops and shopping at the New Hope shop.

## AOB

Jags was thanked by the committee for her contribution as Chair over the last 4 years.

## Close

Jags: I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved and I will continue to support WFRA with a passion. In the last 4 years we have achieved amazing things including new railings around the playground. We had a new noticeboard and bulbs in spring. Trees were planted and the street lights staying on until later. Really proud of the work we have done as a committee.

We had 3 Christmas parties and summer socials. 6 litter picks and numerous residents' meetings and 3 Remembrance days.

As speakers at our residents meetings we have had Sarah Priestly from Watford Museum, the Mayor, Red Watch, Vicky Costello, Marie Manion from Intu, Sarah Thomas our local PC, WFC and councillors from time to time who come and talk to us during our residents meetings.

A big thank you to all the committee members past and present.

Jags thanked Sarah Priestly for all her support and hopes that will continue. Sarah Thomas, Network Rail, Watford Fire Station, our local councillors who are elected by us and offer us a huge amount of support.

Jags thanked Simon Harris, Rebecca Palmer, Wellspring Church and the Committee members. We do have space for another member so if you would like to join them please come and speak to me.

Meeting Closed at 20.20

