

MINUTES OF VPRA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, HELD AT VINTERS BOYS SECONDARY SCHOOL, HUNTSMAN LANE, ON THURSDAY, 24TH OCTOBER, 1974

The Chairman opened the Meeting at 8 p.m. and thanked those present for coming. Personnel on the platform were then introduced as follows:

Mrs. Pat Phipps	VPRA Secretary
Councillor Bill Betteridge	
Mr. Ray Fowler	VPRA Treasurer
Mr. Geoff Tucker	VPRA Chairman

There were 60 people present. The Agenda was then followed.

1. Chairman's Report

The Chairman reported that the membership for 1973/74 was about 60 per cent of people living on the estate, roughly the same as it had been since October, 1971 when the present Association was started. It was pleasing to see that the Association had a majority by 10 per cent but it would have been preferable to see an increase in the percentage.

In order to keep members informed as to what the Association was doing, three newsletters had been issued during the year. The Chairman regretted that more were not distributed but explained that there had been printing problems and that he had tried to avoid trivia.

The Committee had met seven times during the year as well as canvassing for membership and it was mentioned that at the end of the previous year of office, a Public Liability Insurance had been taken out to protect members to the tune of £100,000, to cover any unforeseen mishaps.

Also in the past year, a link had been set up with the Howard de Walden Youth Club who had invited one of the Association's Committee Members to sit on the Committee of the Club. However, due to the lack of information, the person concerned had not in fact attended any meetings of the club, although the Chairman had taken his place on one occasion. The Chairman had found it stimulating to go along and see the work the club was doing for the youth in the area and had felt it was a useful link which he hoped the new Committee would continue.

The Chairman listed a few points which were outstanding at the time of the Meeting as an example of the work the Committee had been doing for the Association:

Entrance to Snowdon Parade Car Park - This subject had been brought up in Committee as it was felt that it presented a hazard on the estate as it was not wide enough and vehicles entering and leaving were cutting across one another. The Borough had been requested to look into this and their reply, on 1st April, had been that they would review the situation later in the light of prevailing traffic usage.

Fences in Snowdon Parade - A letter had been sent on 23rd May to the Chancery Land Co., who own the parade, regarding the state of the fences and a letter had been received back on 6th July saying that the fences would be repaired as soon as their builder had looked at them and produced estimates. Nothing had yet been done and a further letter had been sent on 12th October to which a reply was awaited.

Letterbox and Post Box for Upper Part of Estate - Representation
had been made to the Post Office regarding the provision of a letterbox and post box for the upper part of the estate and a reply had been received saying that the matter was under consideration. It was pointed out that there were difficulties in view of the fact that the minor centre proposed for the upper part of the estate had not yet been developed and will not be developed until some time in 1976 or later.

Letters had also been written to the Borough on:

Removal of trees from parts of the estate

Areas in the estate where water lies after heavy rain and The hole in the grass area on the entrance to Basmere Close on which replies were awaited.

Planning Application for New Development on Vinters Park
It was learned that the access to the proposed development was to be through Northfleet Close and residents in that road were perturbed because it really was not wide enough. Representations were made on this and the Association was informed that with the changeover of administration on 1st April the matter had been passed to Maidstone Borough Council. Since then nothing had been heard.

Councillor Betteridge informed the Meeting that the Borough Council had in fact been asked for their observations on this application and these had been passed to the County ten days ago. They had said that in principle they saw no objections to the development as scheduled but that they had strong reservations about the proposed access through Northfleet Close.

Councillor Betteridge also mentioned that there was also an area near the crematorium which was scheduled for development for which the owner has submitted planning applications for low density housing. There would be a total of 10 houses on four acres. However, the Borough have said that before any further permission is given for building on Vinters Park they should acquire 30 acres of open space around the valley from the present owner. Provided an agreement is entered into to this effect the application for development may go forward.

The Chairman concluded his report by saying that he had been on the Committee of the Residents Association since 1971 when it was first formed. He thought that some people probably felt that a lot more could have been done; but in the past year, one big exercise the Committee did was the bus survey which took a lot of time. This subject would be covered later on. It would have been better if more people had become involved because the Chairman was particularly sensitive that the Committee did not appear to be a clique. He also expressed the hope that the residents of the Bovis houses would join the Association.

Finally, the Chairman thanked the Secretary, who had originally taken on the job of Assistant Secretary thinking she would only help out and had ended up taking over from the Secretary who had resigned, and also the Committee Members. He also thanked the members of the Association who had helped with distribution etc., and those who had supported the Committee in the past year. He wished the new Committee all the best for the coming year.

2. Minutes of the 1973 A.G.M.

Copies of the Minutes of the last A.G.M. had been available for inspection from 7.30 p.m. onwards and were handed out before the Meeting started. The Chairman signed these as a correct record.

3. Matters Arising

Page 1, Section 1 - Litter

The Borough had carried out a work study in January of this year which showed that a lot of the rubbish in the area around the shops in Snowdon Parade emanated from the area at the rear of the shops. Nothing further had been heard on this and it should be pursued.

Page 2, Section 1 - Paths

A letter had been written to the Borough regarding the tarmacing of the grass area at the entrance to the car park on Snowdon Parade but nothing had been heard on this so a further letter had been sent.

Page 2, Section 1 - Noise

Representations had been made following complaints about noise from a freezer unit installed at Cartiers Store. It was revealed that they had not in fact got planning permission for this unit and Councillor Betteridge advised the Meeting that the Borough had now taken formal legal proceedings with the owner.

Page 3, Section 1 - School Children

The Chairman reported that a letter had been sent to the Headmaster of Vinters Boys School following the last A.G.M. concerning the riding of bicycles on the footpaths and a reply had been received immediately saying that he had directed the boys to take their cycles via Huntsman Lane. Residents at the Meeting generally agreed that there had been an improvement. However, due to the persistence of Mr. MacGregor that further action should be taken, the Meeting was asked to take a vote on the following motion: "that the Committee takes steps to inform residents on this estate of the dangers of children, generally, riding bicycles on paths and generally points out the dangers of unsafe bicycles". This was proposed by Mr. Freakes, seconded by Mr. Albert and carried by a majority vote. Mrs. P. Longhurst asked that it be placed on record that some feel the general behaviour of the boys at the school has considerably improved over the past year.

Page 4, Section 2 - Bus Survey

At the beginning of their year of office, the Committee had given thought to the way in which a bus survey could be carried out and it had been hoped that the results could have been ready when the new District Council took over on 1st April. They had been fortunate enough to be assisted in this task by Mr. & Mrs. Thompson who live on the estate and were proprietors of a survey firm and with their valuable advice, a questionnaire was prepared of which 700 had been distributed, 400 being returned completed, which was sufficient to produce a valid result.

The task of sorting out the information obtained had fallen on the Committee and as it had been such a long job the final results had not been compiled. However, some information had been passed on to the Traffic Officer for the Maidstone Borough at his request.

The Chairman gave a few figures which had been calculated as follows:

- a) The question - "Would you indicate how adequate or inadequate you consider the transport service in Maidstone generally to be".
It was interesting to note that 46 per cent felt this to be adequate or, very adequate and 43 per cent did not.
- b) The question - "How adequate do you consider the Vinters Park bus service".
70 per cent thought it was inadequate to some degree and 12 per cent thought it adequate to some degree, with 18 per cent of reports not stated.
- c) The question - "Would you be likely to use them if more buses were made available". 67 per cent said they would be prepared to use them if there were more buses as against 29 per cent who would not. It was interesting to note that the 67 per cent included people with cars.

Councillor Betteridge informed the Meeting that the Borough had applied to the Traffic Commissioners for an improved bus service to the estate and that this would give an extra bus in the morning going to the East Station and buses every hour from 9 a.m. Some people thought that there was room for further improvement for those going into town to work and for those going to the Station. It was suggested that the results of the bus survey could be particularly useful when the new times came up for review after the trial period.

Page 5, Section 4 - Community Facilities

The 1973/74 Committee had been charged at the A.G.M. with carrying out further investigations on this and to report back to a General Meeting. Community facilities were discussed at great length last year and they had been the subject of a newsletter. In order to get further information on this type of project, the Chairman had attempted to get in touch with the Kent Federation of Community Associations but for one reason or another had not been successful. The Committee had discussed the whole question and had come to the conclusion that this was too great a task for a committee of 11 to try to promote so it was felt that this was not a viable proposition at least for the moment and this was where the matter had rested.

Councillor Betteridge commented that the Borough have said that they will assist communities to provide their own centres providing that there is a committee to run it. In the past, such centres have eventually been taken over for bingo halls, etc., because of lack of support.

Page 6, Section 6 - Extension of the Association's Activities

Following the last A.G.M., this was the subject of a newsletter which asked for views of the sort of thing the Association could do but there was no reaction whatever so that matter had not been pursued in Committee.

Page 7, Section 7 - Proposed Amendments to Constitution

These had been introduced to open up the Committee to membership of over 12 because it was felt this would be required if the matter of a Community Association had been pursued.

4. Treasurer's Report

A Statement of the Accounts was made available at the Meeting and was as follows:

The Treasurer explained that although the Association's bank balance was good, because of inflation and costs of duplicating (which up to now had been minimal) he would propose that the subscription for 1974/75 would remain at 30p per household. This was seconded by Mr. Cawdron and carried by the Meeting.

5. Dangers to School Children in Snowdon Avenue

A petition had been handed into a Committee Meeting from some ladies on the estate who were concerned at the dangers to children crossing Snowdon Avenue from the footpath to Huntsman Lane. This had been considered in Committee and a letter had been sent to the Borough pointing out the dangers and also to the Education Department with a request that consideration be given to a school crossing patrol being employed for this point. Replies had not yet been received but it had been suggested that the Association could help with the recruitment of a school crossing patrol. The Committee had decided to bring this matter to the notice of the A.G.M. and ask for their views.

There were many views expressed as to dangers from vehicles going too fast down Snowdon Avenue, cars parked taking children to school, children running out into the road without looking but it was generally felt that a crossing patrol would be a help.

6. Proposed Acquisition of Dwellings by the Local Authorities

It had come to the attention of the Committee that the District Council were looking to buy newly built houses on the estate to house Council tenants. Up to April this year, they had been allowed to buy secondhand houses but from then Government restricted them to the purchase of new houses. Some houses on the estate had actually been purchased by the Council as negotiations had commenced before April. The Council had then approached Taylor Woodrow and Bovis concerning the purchase by them of new properties. They had at first agreed but had later decided against it, but there was no guarantee that a further change would not be made. Councillor Betteridge was asked to speak on this subject and did so trying to put over the problem of the long Council housing lists, many of them young people who were priced out of the home-owners market, and assuring that there was a good selection procedure which would ensure that the right type of tenant would be placed on a private estate. He said the Council had tried to buy secondhand houses because they were cheaper than building new houses. Now they had to buy new houses, they were limited because of a Government yardstick, to a price of £10,500 to £11,000 per house and they were intending to buy in pairs or in small groups. He confirmed that the developers were not prepared to sell at the present time.

A lot of people spoke out saying that they objected more to paying a high mortgage for a house and having someone living next to them paying a very low rent in the same property. To this Councillor Betteridge replied that for a long time the Council had not been permitted to put up rents and that they were having to subsidise them very heavily and could not review them for changed circumstances.

In view of the unease as to whether the Council would or would not purchase houses on the estate in the future, Mr. Storey proposed the following motion "that the Committee write to the estate developers of Vinters Park concurring with their recent decision not to sell property to the Local Authority and expressing the opinion that this policy should be maintained until the completion of the estate." This was seconded by Mr. Albert.

A further discussion continued both sides being presented by residents of the Association and a vote was finally taken which was carried by 30 in favour with 5 against.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS OF THE VINTERS PARK RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

YEAR ENDING 30TH SEPTEMBER 1974

Deposit account as at 30.9.73	82.74	Duplicating and photocopying	5.11
Bank current account as at 30.9.73	40.57	Insurance	10.00
Cash in hand as at 30.9.73	7.43	Stationery	23.02
		Charitable contribution re "Oil Peoples Fuel Fund"	5.00
362 Annual Subscriptions @ 30p	108.60	Honorarium to retiring Secetary	2.25
		Auditor	2.70
Interest on deposit account to 20.6.74	7.67	Miscellaneous	2.00
		Deposit account	160.41
		Bank current account	27.11
		Cash in hand	10.01
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	247.01		<hr/>
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			247.01

R.J. Fowler

Honorary Treasurer

30.9.74

Audited

J. Baron

6.10.74

7. Election of Officers and Committee for 1974/75

Chairman	Mr. D.F. Albert, 40 Alkham Road
Vice Chairman	Mr. T. Cawdron, 11 Cudham Close
Vice Chairman	Mr. R. Storey, 31 Northfleet Close
Secretary	Mrs. S. Storey, 31 Northfleet Close
Secretary	Mrs. M. Eden, 39 Northfleet Close
Treasurer	Mr. A. McDougall, 15 Northfleet Close

Committee Members	Mr. D. Moore, 25 Blendon Road
	Mr. D. Layman, 16 Blendon Road
	Mr. R. Freakes, 31 Birchington Close
	Mr. A.S. Newman, 7 Littlebourne Road
	Mr. J. Overy, 21 Commodore Road
	Mr. J. Mitchell, 13 Cowden Road
	Mr. S.R. Burke, 34 Littlebourne Road
	Mrs. C. Cawdron, 11 Cudham Close
	Mr. C. Harding, 10 Basmere Close

The Chairman closed the Meeting at 10.30 p.m. having thanked Councillor Betteridge and residents for attending.

Chairman

Date