

Manor Park and Hempstead Fields Residents' Association



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Notes of the Annual General Meeting 29th February 2024

1. Welcome and introductions and apologies

The Chairman, Paul Sparks opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

Apologies for absence were received from:

- Belinda Da Silva
- Gilly Brownsword
- Ian and Val Lavender
- Julia Brown
- Frank Phillips
- Penny Barnes
- Phil Brooks
- Phil Paton
- Sally Major
- Siri Scott

2. Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting on 10th November 2022 were agreed as a true and accurate record of the proceedings. (the secretary made a note to make available the past minutes prior to the AGM in the future). There were no matters arising.

3. Report from the Chairman of the Association

The Chairman, Paul Sparks, said:

“Just as we were emerging from the COVID pandemic, we were hit by the cost-of-living crisis which for many people resulted in their heating bills increasing rapidly.

To help our residents, particularly the elderly, during this crisis we quickly established a “Warm Space” in Uckfield at the Luxford Centre where our residents could meet both to keep warm and to socialise with others. This has been extremely successful, and I would like to thank all our wonderful volunteers for their help and support with this venture.

Our Surgery Car Service continues to be well used and greatly appreciated by local residents. This service relies on a group of volunteers to make the bookings over the telephone and our drivers. I would like to thank them all for their continuing dedication and with the knowledge that their service is greatly appreciated.

We have not been alone in complaining about the very poor state of our roads but as I write this report major road works are taking place in Southview Drive which should greatly improve the road surface in advance of the new social housing development.

We are fortunate to live in an attractive area and this is enhanced by our planters at the London Road/Browns Lane junction and outside Tesco's. We receive lovely comments from local residents and visitors, and I would, on your behalf, thank Dorothy for the work and planning to provide such colourful displays and to Uckfield Men's' Shed for the repairs to one of our planters.

Peter and I continue to help residents with individual enquiries particularly with regard to drainage and twitten problems. Please do contact us if you think we can help with any such problems.

Our major event of the year is "The Big Lunch" in June held on a Sunday at the Uckfield Rugby Club.

This was again a successful event although the high temperatures restricted some of our activities including the dog show. But again, it was very enjoyable and raised a good amount of money for charity.

Finally, I must pay huge thanks to Peter, our wonderful Secretary, Gabbi our excellent Treasurer and all our dedicated Committee members. We always welcome residents to join our committee and so I look forward to hearing from you."

4. Treasurers Report for April 2022 to March 2023 MPHFA AGM – 29th February 2024

Gabriella Paterson- Griggs reported that the audited accounts show that as at 31st March 2023 the Residents' Committee account had a balance of £977.36 (excluding allocated funds)

Grants Awarded 2022/23

Uckfield Town Council - £299 for Big Lunch in June 2022

- AiRS - £1565 for continuation of the Warm Space initiative into the Spring/Summer.
- Awards for All - £945 for Coronation Big Lunch in June 2023. This was the total amount applied for.

Allocated Funds as at 31 March 2023

- Wealden DC - £37.27 for Good Neighbour Scheme
- Various - £758.13 for Warm Space. These funds will be carried over into 2023/24 to be spent on the continuation of the Warm Space project.
- AiRS - £1565 for the continuing Warm Space project.
- Awards for All - £831 for Coronation Big Lunch 2023.

Income 2022-2023

Subscriptions continued to be the main source of income @£5 per household. Grant funding was achieved for the main projects.

Payments 2022-2023

The usual website hosting costs, insurance premium and phone charges for the surgery car service and good neighbour scheme were paid. Other admin costs remained low.

Monies were also used for repairing the planters and installing the Key Workers Covid memorial and for the Big Lunch in 2022 which was part funded by the Town Council grant.

Projects for 2023/24

- Warm Space – renamed Warm Welcome continued but all costs will be covered by grant funding
- Coronation Big Lunch on Sunday 11th June 2023 – all costs to be covered by grant funding.
- Commemorative Bench for the late Queen – 50% of cost covered by grant funding. MPHFA to find £250.00”.

Report from the Secretary

Peter Griggs, the Association’s secretary reported:

“Since our last AGM, in November 2022, we have accomplished much and made significant progress with the various initiatives we provide to support our community. I thought it might be useful to take a quick look at what the Association achieved over the past year or so. I will try not to duplicate anything that the Chairman or Treasurer have mentioned.

November 2022

We were able to get funding from a variety of sources to enable us to launch the Warm Space that Paul told you about. This included a donation From the Uckfield Lions Club, and grants from Action in Rural Sussex, and 3VA.

February 2023

At the last AGM the Association’s constitution was amended to allow the Association to *‘respond to activities, events, and proposals outside of the Association’s area but potentially affecting our community’*. This enabled the Association to comment on, or object to, significant planning applications.

In February 2023 one such proposal arose, and we objected to the application for a major residential development immediately adjacent to Lake Wood, which we knew to be valued by our community.

We considered that its ancient woodland and lake are particularly important as they provide homes for not only birds and mammals, but a wide range of plant species, invertebrates as well as providing enjoyment for every generation.

The application was refused, and the applicant subsequently lost on appeal.

June 2023

Paul mentioned our annual Big Lunch, this initiative aims to foster community spirit and engagement through the community picnic which includes free live entertainment and activities catering for all ages. This was funded by a grant from the National Lottery’s Awards for All scheme.

July 2023

In July 2023, we celebrated the installation of a Community Bench on the green space at the bottom end of Browns Lane. It commemorates the late Queen's long and successful reign.

October 2023

October saw us secure another grant from the National Lottery's Awards for All scheme. We were awarded £3,750 which enabled us to extend the Warm Space project for another 12 months, up until October next year.

This is now called the Warm Welcome to reflect the fact that it runs for the whole year not just during the winter.

November 2023

In November we joined the town in its observation of Remembrance Day with the Association represented in the parade and the wreath laying at the war memorial.

February 2024

Bringing us up to date, Paul referred to Southview Drive and I should just mention that the Association was actively involved in the efforts to see its proper repair.

We also regularly report dangerous potholes to ESCC although we encourage members to also report these which is very easy to do online.

Membership Update:

Our membership has grown steadily, reaching 154 at present compared to 146 last February. This demonstrates the increasing interest and involvement of our community members.

Social Media Engagement

Our social media presence has continued to expand, with currently a total of 985 followers. Notably, 73% of our followers are women, and the majority fall within the age range of 35 to 65+.

Volunteers

Remarkably we have nearly thirty volunteers who support our various community services - the Surgery Car service, our Good Neighbour scheme and the Warm Space project.

The committee would like to record that they recognize the invaluable contribution of these volunteers to the work of the Association and to thank them for their commitment and the time they devote to helping those who need a helping hand.

Looking Ahead

Pavement Parking – addressing the problems caused by pavement parking remains a priority for our community as evidenced by the feedback following our last newsletter. We will be exploring effective solutions to ensure pedestrian safety and accessibility and we will shortly be meeting with Sussex Police to look at particular hot spots where the pavement is frequently completely obstructed.

Dropped kerbs – the absence of sufficient dropped kerbs is another issue highlighted by the membership and we will engage with ESCC to see if more can be provided

Question Time – this is an event planned for later in the year when we will be inviting representatives from the Police, County Highways, the College, Manor Primary, local councillors etc to sit on a panel to answer your questions and to respond to your comments.

Big Lunch on Sunday June 23rd – this will be a similar format to 2023 and may include a D Day theme if we are successful in getting a fly-over by the Battle of Britain Flight.

Amendments to the Constitution

No amendments were made to the Constitution .

Election of Officers

The Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer were proposed, seconded and voted into office unanimously:

Chair	Paul Sparks
Treasurer	Gabriella Paterson-Griggs
Secretary	Peter Griggs

Election of the Committee

The following were proposed, seconded and voted into office unanimously:

Julia Brown
Belinda Da Silva
Sue Fenwick
Jerry Miller
Phil Paton
Jane Shepherd
Dorothy Sparks

(there are two vacancies)

Any other business

The following matters were raised by members:

- Attempted break-in – members expressed their concern about a recent incident that had occurred and mentioned past instances of break-ins, criminal damage etc. It was suggested that Manor Park and Hempstead Fields might benefit from a Neighbourhood Watch Group. However, a member advised that these initiatives demand a significant amount of time, resource, and commitment. He suggested that the Association's current networking arrangements could usefully fulfil this purpose without the need for formally establishing a Neighbourhood Watch Group. The meeting agreed that this would be the best way forward.
- Resolution of drainage problem (spring water) in Browns Lane – the members present expressed their thanks to all those who have encouraged ESCC Highways to undertake remedial works which are due to start soon.
- Attendance at the AGM – members were disappointed at the low attendance at the meeting. The committee advised that it anticipates improved attendance when the AGM is held in the Spring/Summer months and when an added attraction such as a speaker is included in the evening.
- Question and Answer event – the plans to hold this event later in the year, when representatives from the Police, County Highways, local councillors and the two schools, on Manor Park etc, were welcomed

- Thanks – members thanked the Association for the work it does and the initiatives it delivers.

The Chairman then thanked all those that had attended and closed the meeting at 7.45pm