

Manor Park and Hempstead Fields Residents' Association



Notes of the Annual General Meeting

Manor Primary School 3rd July 2014

1. Welcome and introductions

The Chairman, Paul Sparks opened the meeting and welcomed everyone (29 people were present).

2. Apologies

Apologies for absence from:

- Mark Maloney
- Jean Pool
- Julia Brown
- Sally Scott
- Miss Jaber
- Esteban Amirante
- Dorothy Sparks
- Emma Luck
- Norman Mayer
- Glenda Derby

3. Report from the Chairman of the Association

Paul said:

“I am pleased to be able to report another very successful year for your Residents' Association. We celebrated obtaining our 100th member last July and we now have over 140 households which must represent over 400 people.

The highlight of the year was the launch of the Surgery Car Service and we were pleased to receive a grant of £200 from Uckfield Town Council to support this service. It was established to help patients at The Meads Surgery but following feedback from our residents, it was extended to Bird in Eye and very recently Buxted surgeries. I must thank all the volunteers, both admin and drivers, for all their help and support.

We hosted a well-attended Question Time in January during which a wide range of questions were raised. Some actions resulted from this event including the “speed signs” along Browns Lane.

Another major success for this year has been the launch of the “Shopping Discount Scheme” enabling members to enjoy discounts from a wide range of retailers and service providers. This is also helping to support our local businesses. The Ringles Cross pub is part of this scheme and several of us met there to celebrate St. George's Day.

Our most recent event was the Big Lunch on Sunday 1st June, the second year we have arranged this and it was again very enjoyable with a wide range of family activities. As well as particular events and services, we have supported our residents throughout the year on issues ranging from dangerous trees to lost dogs. We have also been able to share a great deal of information and warnings of scams etc. by the very active suite of social media sites that the Association runs.

We have been working on the difficult issue of the footpaths around Manor Park and we have now developed a "Tool Kit" which we will launch later this evening. Finally, I must thank all of your Committee Members for their hard work and enthusiasm throughout the past year but must make special mention of our excellent Secretary Peter Griggs and Treasurer Sally Major."

4. Report from the Treasurer

Sally said:

'It has been an encouraging year financially and our bank account is showing a healthy balance of £592.

Total income for the year was £1,450 consisting of £1,165 in subscriptions and £285 in advertising revenue from companies and individuals advertising in our newsletter. It should be noted that the reason why the figure for subscriptions is considerably higher than membership fee x number of members reflects the fact that regardless of when members joined, the annual renewal date is 1st January – this should settle down as the years go on and more of our membership renew on that date.

Expenses total £809 and represent expenditure on Insurance, Newsletter production, Venue Hire, Web Hosting and costs involved in setting up the Surgery Car Service.

We have now received a grant from Uckfield Town Council of £200.00 towards set up costs of the car service but as this came in May this year it will show in the accounts for 2015.'

5. Report from the Secretary

Peter said:

I would just like to add a few interesting facts and figures relating to the items reported by our Chairman and Treasurer.

Membership

First of all our membership, as Paul has reported we now have 140 paid up members with 54 of these paying by standing order, the remainder choosing to pay by cheque or cash. We do encourage all members to pay by standing order if they can, it saves us a great deal of time sending out reminders each year and it saves you the bother of having to write a cheque and posting your renewal to us each January. Please let Sally know at the end of the meeting if you want to change to a standing order arrangement.

From the data we gathered during our first year, we know that the vast majority of paid up members are aged 45 or over. Interestingly, the intelligence we can gather about our popular Facebook page tells us that a large number of these users fall into the 25 to 44 age group, and most of these are women. I think, although I can't

be sure, many on Facebook are not paid up members but nevertheless they still take an active interest in what's going on in Manor Park and Hempstead Fields. We will continue to target these younger residents and try to get them all to become full members of the Association.

Surgery Car Service

The feedback we get from users of the Surgery Car Service tells us that it really is highly valued by those that use it. However, not that many people are using it. This could be that we have only a low number of residents that are in need of it but experience elsewhere suggests this is probably not the case.

We do know that there are many misconceptions about the service including for example that the fare is £3.50 each way – it isn't that's the return fare; that we need two days' notice – we don't just call us the day before - we might even be able to fit you in on the same day; or that you have to be a member of the Association to use it – you don't it is open to anyone living on Manor Park and Hempstead Fields.

Clearly we need to do even more to get the true message out and we will be including another article on the service in the Autumn Newsletter.

Discount Shopping Scheme

I am pleased to report that we now have 20 local businesses offering our members discounts of between 5 and 20%. If you don't use email and want the up to date list just let me know after the meeting. There are a wide range of shops and firms in the scheme covering many things you might need, from a discounted meal at the at the Ringles Pub, savings at Private Eye Opticians to a discount on wine purchased from Nobles Wines and much more. This week we recruited Dawson Hart Solicitors to the scheme. If you know of a business that might be interested in joining then please let me know.

Events

Paul mentioned the Big Lunch picnic held a few weeks ago. We estimate that over 150 people enjoyed themselves at the Big Lunch this year, which is an increase on last year, and in case you were wondering all the costs incurred were covered through grants, generous donations and by organisations and volunteers supporting the event without making any charge.

Communications

Finally, we try very hard to maintain good lines of communication with you all. We have mentioned the newsletter which goes to every home (about 1300) twice a year and our Facebook page which is 'Liked by 239 followers. Wendy also looks after our Twitter account (125 followers) and is always busy tweeting current news items and we have 127 people in our email group.

But we are very aware that not everybody uses the internet and so we now have use of the Community Noticeboard in Tesco's Express where we regularly post notices about events etc. Also, please do listen to your local radio station because Uckfield FM are very supportive and invariably broadcast the news items we send them. We are also grateful to Uckfield Matters, TN22 and the Holy Cross Church magazine which all carry our news releases.

6. Election of Officers

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

- Chair – Paul Sparks
- Treasurer – Sally Major
- Secretary – Peter Griggs

7. Election of the Committee

The following Committee members proposed, seconded and voted into office unanimously:

- Emma Luck
- Esteban Amirante
- Glenda Derby
- Jane Shepherd
- Ric Mears
- Wendy Tagg

8. The launch of the Manor Park and Hempstead Fields 'Twittens and Footpaths Toolkit'

Paul told the meeting that he was pleased to launch officially the Association's 'Twittens and Footpaths Toolkit'

Peter said that the poor repair of the footpaths and twittens on Manor Park is an issue that the Residents' Association had been trying hard to tackle since it was first formed in November 2012. Unfortunately there seems to be no easy answer to this problem and despite efforts to get a solution for the whole of Manor Park it seems that the best way forward will be for small groups of residents to get together to agree local solutions.

The Committee have put together a set of questions and answers which it hopes will serve as a useful 'tool kit' to help residents get started on tackling the problem.

He emphasised that the answers provided are for guidance and are based on local knowledge and the experience of those residents that have been successful in tackling these issues. 'However, we are not lawyers or surveyors and you should not consider the information provided as an authoritative interpretation of the law or your rights as a householder'. Consequently he recommended that residents should consider obtaining independent professional legal and technical advice before proceeding with any work.

Peter added that copies of the toolkit will be sent out by email with the minutes of the meeting and that there were hard copies available at the meeting for those present that are not on email.

9. Any other business.

A number of questions and other items of other business were raised:

- **Surgery Car Service** – *are the drivers properly insured?* Yes all the drivers have to provide proof of insurance which has been extended for voluntary use.
- **Twittens** – *some twittens are well kept are the schools contributing to their upkeep.* No not as far as we are aware.
- – *does Tesco's contribute, if not shouldn't they?* – not as far as we are away, they tend to not support local issues, focusing instead on national campaigns e.g. Food Banks.
- – *there are 83 properties on the Dene it would be very difficult to get them all to agree.* Yes we agree, it may be necessary to proceed with only those that will agree

- – *may be difficult to identify who else is responsible.* Could try looking at deeds to see if there is a map or some other indication of who shares the responsibility. .
- – *also many properties are let out so would have to track down the landlords.*
- – *if the twittens are repaired then could increase footfall with resulting disturbance.*
- - *how about the Town Council taking on the task and recovering their costs through a supplement to our council tax.* This has been explored in the past. The TC did not find this acceptable as this is a private issue.
- Chairman – this toolkit is not a solution but it is a step along the way. The Association will continue to explore other avenues as we all know the situation is only going to get worse.
- **Snow clearing** – *what is the law about clearing snow from outside your house, does it make you liable if someone has an accident after you have done it?* – advice from the Government’s website (courtesy of Wendy tag) is:

‘You can clear snow and ice from pavements yourself. It’s unlikely that you’ll be sued or held responsible if someone is injured on a path or pavement if you’ve cleared it carefully.

When you clear snow and ice:

- do it early in the day - it’s easier to move fresh, loose snow
- don’t use water - it might refreeze and turn to black ice
- use salt if possible - it will melt the ice or snow and stop it from refreezing overnight (but don’t use the salt from salting bins as this is used to keep roads clear)
- you can use ash and sand if you don’t have enough salt - it will provide grip underfoot
- pay extra attention when clearing steps and steep pathways - using more salt may help’
- **Grass Verges** – *the grass verges in Downsvie Crescent opposite the Primary School are being damaged by vehicles driving over them, can we get ESCC to reinstate them?* Suggestions from the floor for a solution included installing bollards, planting on the verges, tarmacking them over
ACTION The Association will raise this problem with ESCC Highways.
- **Footpaths and kerbstones** – there was some debate about how often ESCC maintain the footpaths they are responsible for and whether concrete kerbs would be better than granite sets.
- **Thanks** – a member expressed her gratitude for the organisation and everything it is doing. She suggested that everyone present should get at least one neighbour to join the Association as the more members we have the stronger our voice.

The Chairman thanked all for attending and the meeting closed at 7.45pm.

