

Downe Residents' Association - Annual General Meeting

18 March 2022 – Minutes

Meeting opened at 7.30pm (village hall).

1. Apologies for absence

Nick Cutmore, Dave Evans, Zoe Knight

2. Adoption of 2021 minutes (the last AGM)

Vote to adopt 2021 minutes - Proposer Tony Dixon, seconder Julian Benington. Unanimously carried

3. Chair's Report – SB reported:

Committee members

Huge thanks to the committee for their hard work over the last two years (with responsibilities in brackets): Abigail Rutherford (Secretary, planning sub-committee), Tony Dixon (Treasurer, village hall, Lottery), Dave Evans (vice-chair, planning), Kwan Phung (minutes secretary), Jo Clark (Police matters – joined in 2021), Rev John Musson (St Mary's, Biggin Hill airport, primary school), Steve Barnes (chair, broadband, road safety, lottery, orchard, planning, village comms), Simon Farron, Declan Wells, John Isbell.

Village communications

Downe Mailing (443 subscribers) and the Downe website are funded and maintained by the DRA. The DRA funds these services and area grateful to the Downe Lottery for a donation to enable these to continue

- **394** Downe Mailings in the period 1 Jan 2021 to 31 Dec 2021 (highest "opens" are generally for crime e-mails (60 – 70%) followed by roads issues.
- **Facebook** – Downe Village now over 850 members
- **Downe website**

Planning (Jan 2021 to December 2021)

Introduction - The sub-committee review all planning applications for Downe Parish – as received and shared with us by Bromley Council on a weekly basis. Objections to applications are made on behalf of residents in accordance with the mandate given at the AGM each year .

Statistics for 2021

Jan 21 to Dec 21:

78 applications/decisions/appeals were 1studied (of which 29 applications reviewed in detail)

9 applications were objected to by the DRA (of which 6 were refused, none were permitted and 3 are currently not decided)

Method - The DRA sub-committee aims to be objective and impartial in making objections to applications. We only generally raise objections in so far as a proposal is contrary to Green Belt or Conservation Area regulations. We do not generally support planning applications - but see below. We seek to ensure the council upholds the regulations and have full relevant local information when deciding on applications. We provide support to residents where requested to do so by assisting to identify potential problems with their own applications, and assisting with questions on developments proposed or carried out by neighbours.

Enforcements - we request enforcement investigations where it is uncertain that a development has the required permissions or if it is not in adherence with permissions granted. This is frequently not something people feel able to do for themselves.

Our Green Belt and Conservation area is increasingly under threat and in some cases there is limited action the council can or will take to protect it. There have been changes in 2020 to the planning legislation which will further weaken the council's ability to stop inappropriate development in the Green Belt and widen what is included under Permitted Development. We believe that more detrimental changes from are likely in the way of changes to legislation and pressure on councils to build more housing

Christmas Tree Farm car park - we supported the planning application to continue use of the car park, as without it, parking in the village would have become intolerable

Queen's Head shop - we supported the planning application to continue use of the "Queen's Larder" as it is a valuable additional facility for residents and visitors, and any possible refusal by the Council was only on a "technicality"

Article 4 direction - The DRA committee lobbied Bromley Council about "HMOs (Houses of Multiple Occupancy) developments. The Council implemented an "Article 4" direction for Darwin Ward meaning HMO developments must first have planning permission.

"Ultrafast" Fibre broadband

The DRA committee approached Openreach and started a project in autumn 2020 to bring the next generation of full fibre broadband to Downe and Cudham (2approx 1000 properties). Unlike the previous broadband project in 2017, this entails end-to-end "Ultrafast" (ie capable of very fast speeds) fibre broadband being made available for installation in every home and business. Openreach started work in April, and in August, the first fibre services were available (in the Standard Rd/Stalisfield area). Work continues, and Openreach are behind the original target to complete work at end Feb 2022 now estimated to be May 2022. Residents are reminded that when the service is available, they must apply for service as per the conditions of the voucher scheme.

High Elms Road parking

During lockdown, problems had been experienced at the Shire Lane end due to cars parking in the road. The Council produced proposals for alleviating this, but after reviewing, the DRA Committee asked the Council to abandon the proposals for fear of making the situation worse. At the village end, the DRA Committee engaged with residents and the Council to come up with sensible restrictions to alleviate parking in the narrowest sections of the road, and to avoid any restrictions outside the primary school (this is ongoing).

Remembrance

The DRA set up remembrance "poppy" displays in the village centre – outside the church and around the lime tree, arranged for a "Tommy silhouette" soldier to be set up in the churchyard, and installed lamp post poppies around the village.

Downe Time magazine

Whilst not a DRA Committee issue, it has been discussed, and two members of the Committee formed the editorial board.

Downe Scout Camp

Working with the purchasing team and a member of Committee facilitating a donation to the camp

Other DRA Committee activities

- Chasing the Council on Landway, Luxted Farm issues, Downe Livery Stables, New Road Hill – use of agricultural land for dog care

- Lobbying the Council on Downe traffic speed lowering project – action to carry out another speed measurement. We still need to get 20mph/30mph limits in place as per residents vote
- Lobbying the Council on HGV signs – one needed at Church Hill, Cudham, and an inappropriate sign at Berrys Green
- Requesting the Council install an additional footpath section across Downe Rec
- Requesting Council support for tree planting
- Lobbying Council re Holwood Farm junction – re-alignment of Shire Lane/Downe Road junction (requested July 2021)
- Asking Council about Downe Street Lights – investigate local maintenance (by residents) of heritage street lights
- Lobbying the Council re Downe village wooden benches replacement/renovation

Chair’s report adoption vote - Proposer Julian Benington, seconder Tony Dixon. Unanimously carried

4. Treasurer’s Report

Tony Dixon presented the accounts. The bank balance at 31 December 2021 was £465.78. Main items of expenditure were on Downe communications (website, Downe Mailing software, e-mail hosting and domain names), The Ramblers, London Green Belt Council membership, and remembrance wreath.

A balance at end 2022 was estimated to be £362.23 – bolstered by profits from Downe tea towel sales and any monies collected at the AGM. Tony thanked **Kwan Phung** for all her excellent work in producing and then selling the tea towels, this providing vital income for the DRA.

Treasurer’s report adoption vote - Proposer Abigail Rutherford, seconder Kwan Phung. Unanimously carried

5. Election of the committee

The whole committee stepped down. The following were proposing to stand for 2022

Abigail Rutherford, Tony Dixon, Dave Evans, Kwan Phung, Jo Clark, Rev John Musson, Steve Barnes , Nick Cutmore, Simon Farron, Declan Wells, John Isbell.

En-bloc vote on election of committee for 2022 – Proposer Richard Harper, Seconder Chris Isbell. Unanimously carried

6. Motion to support Green Belt Policy

Motion – “to oppose development within the Metropolitan Green Belt which is contrary to Green Belt Policy and Bromley Council’s Local Plan, and to development within the Downe village conservation area which does not preserve or enhance it’s character”

Vote on Green Belt motion - unanimously carried

7 Motion on Biggin Hill airport (new motion proposed for 2022)

Motion – “The Downe Residents' Association will oppose any applications or development at the Airport which may have a detrimental impact on the lives and amenity of Downe residents, and will at all times seek to remind the council of their obligations to residents to protect them from breaches of the airport lease by BHAL”

Vote on Biggin Hill - unanimously carried apart from one abstention

8 Councillor Richard Scoates

Cllr Scoates re-iterated that he was standing down in May at the Council elections. He introduced Jonathan Andrews as the nomination for proposed Conservative councillor for Darwin Ward. Cllr Scoates stated that he had enjoyed his 12 years serving the residents. He stated that his number 1 priority had been to focus on the Green Belt. However, he is aware there is the potential for this to be eroded due to pressures to build more housing in Bromley. Whilst most housing is being built in the north of the Borough, there may be a pressure point as obvious sites for development would reduce.

Council tax set to increase by 2.7% in 2022. Cllr Scoates reported that increases in Mayor of London's charges have contributed to this.

The Council had implemented an "Article 4 Direction" for Darwin Ward to help prevent inappropriate development of HMOs

The Chair thanked Cllr Scoates for his years of service, and the meeting gave Cllr Scoates a round of applause.

9 Darwin Safer Neighbourhood report:

PC Tom Metcalfe presented (he has been covering the area for 8 months, dealing in Bromley before that)

- Crime in Downe is generally low, but is a different kind of crime. In the 3 months to Jan-22 there were:
 - 2 common assaults
 - 1 threat
 - 1 GBH
 - 2 x motor thefts
 - 1 case of child exploitation
 - 1 attempted burglary
- Notable motor vehicle crime, theft of catalytic converters, delivery drivers having their vehicles stolen (leaving keys in the cars) and discarded number plates.
- Attempts to control speeding can potentially be made, but is subject to safety of the police officers
- Looking at installing temporary CCTV in North End Lane to catch discarded number plates as well as speeding.

10 Any other business

Downe Pastoral Visitors - Chris Isbell reported that following on from the Lockdown activity in arranging road reps for the vulnerable and housebound (a real show of community spirit), further work was needed. Now that restrictions have ended, although caution is still advised, the churches are aware that there still are people feeling lonely and isolated who might appreciate a listening ear or a visit. There is now a team of "Downe Pastoral Visitors" who are trained and DBS checked, who are willing to do just that.

The meeting closed at 8.45pm, followed by cheese and wine for attendees.