

DRAFT MINUTES OF A GENERAL MEETING OF THE ASHTEAD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION HELD ON THURSDAY 14TH NOVEMBER 2024 IN THE ASHTEAD PEACE MEMORIAL HALL.

Personnel

LU Larry Unthank, President of the ARA
RB Roger Bennett, Planning member ARA
MC Martin Cox, Treasurer ARA
PW Pat Wiltshire, Ashtead Independent Councillor
GS Gerry Sevenoaks, Ashtead Independent Councillor
CH Chris Hunt, Ashtead Independent Councillor
SL Simon Ling, former president ARA
TR Tim Robertson, former ARA committee member

A list of the nominees for the ARA can be found at the end of these minutes.

Item 1 - Opening the Meeting & Introductions

Vice-President Larry Unthank (LU) welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance.

LU explained that the meeting was called to replenish the ARA standing committee, of which there were currently just 2 members; Martin Cox (MC) and Roger Bennett (RB).

Before Item 2 could be discussed Tim Robertson (TR) asked a question, he started with a statement 'Democracy matters' then went on to refer back to the AGM where LU, at the time, insisted that everyone attending the AGM should have their ARA membership checked before entering the hall, this was after everyone signed to the effect that they were full ARA members. Today LU allowed the meeting to open with no qualms; TR then asked LU to explain, adding that was it a case of LU has his own way and this precipitated the collapse of the standing committee. There has been no monthly ARA meeting since before the April AGM. Then went onto say the democratic vote of the membership had been ignored – finally asking the question, 'have you lost your moral compass. Or is it your way or the highway'?

LU thanked TR for the question then responded that following the AGM just 2 standing committee members remained. Having waited until September to see what happened and with no progress he (LU) decided to act on this situation. There are now 15 new people who have put their names forward for membership to the committee and would like to now replenish the ARA – several of the members present vocalised their agreement to this.

TR then asked, again, why has LU opened the meeting and invited him to answer his original question. Chris Hunt (CH) asked if we would be doing any voting today, having accepted that everyone present was an ARA member. LU said we will be voting on everyone that has been nominated. He then asked if anyone present was not an ARA member? Three people stood to make known they were not members and confirmed they would not be voting that evening.

One couple said they are Ashtead residents and because they had no road steward they had not been able to connect with the ARA – they wanted to listen to the debates of the meeting.

Another person – an ARA member this time – asked LU who he was, LU explained his 40-year background with ARA.

Item 2 - Apologies

Chris Kerton, Sue Stansfield, Andy Smith, Rosemary Stark

Item 3 - Status of the ARA Committee

At the April AGM and over the days following, several committee members resigned, leaving just 3. The effect of these resignations being that the ARA was not quorate and could not function. Then more recently one further committee member resigned, leaving MC and RB, the latter has been responsible for planning matters for many years. LU then said that the elections that are to shortly follow, will hopefully rebuild the ARA to be once more, fully functioning.

Item 4 - Seeking the views of ARA members

LU invited members to make their views known. Chris Townsend (CT) spoke, praised the good work in recruiting new members and wants all parties to move forward for the common good of Ashted as an independent body.

CH said Ashted has been absent from meetings involving Mole Valley councillors and other residents associations in the district. CH expressed his gratitude to those who have volunteered for committee membership so that Ashted can be present at future meetings. Finally, stating he hopes the voting proves successful.

Gerry Sevenoaks (GS), said we have had a difficult few months which we should now put aside and move forward. Give a new committee a chance to get to work and report back at the AGM in 2025.

Steve Kershaw (SK), echoed the views of the previous speakers.

Simon Ling (SL), made reference to the constitutional changes that has lead the ARA to its current impasse. He urged that the constitution be side lined and allow a new committee to get to work on more pressing matters. Give the new team 18 months or so, to get established, re-connect with Ashted's residents.

TR seconded SL's views on the constitution and leaving it to one side, possibly revisiting the matter at some future date.

LU reiterated the work ahead of the new committee, in particular with so many developments proposed, RB will be very busy looking into and challenging these schemes.

Item 5 - Election of the Vice President (VP)

LU explained the role of a VP within the ARA and the importance of having that position filled. He introduced David Hawsworth (DH) to meeting, someone many present will be familiar with, LU gave a brief synopsis of DH's history with Ashted village. LU then asked for a show of hands for the appointment, which was unanimous with no objections. LU welcomed DH to the -Vice Presidency.

Item 6 - Election of Officers

At present there is one officer – Treasurer and there are 3 further posts to fill. One nomination has been received for the Chairman's post – Peter Westgarth CVO (PAW). LU then gave some

background to PAW's career, primarily as CEO of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme (the previous Duke, Philip). PAW was asked to stand up so the meeting could see him. LU then asked for a show of hands; the voting was unanimous in favour with no objections. LU welcomed PAW to the ARA Committee

The next post for election was that of Vice Chairman, LU explained a little of this role's importance. There is one nominee – Alan Bradley (AB). AB stood up for the meeting to see him, LU gave a brief of AB's career, then asked for a show of hands. The voting in favour was unanimous with no votes against. LU congratulated AB.

The final officer post to fill is that of Secretary – there is one nominee, Quentin Armitage (QA), someone well known to many residents, QA then stood up. A show of hands was called for, unanimous in favour and no votes against.

Item 7 – Election of the Committee

There is one current member – RB, so there are 11 vacancies for the committee. LU said he had received 11 nominations. The 11 nominations have been listed at the end of the minutes. LU introduced each one and asked them to stand up. LU asked for a show of hands but TR then asked if each one could give a bit of background about themselves prior to voting. Each candidate stood and gave a quick precis. LU asked the meeting if they were happy to vote en masse for all 11 candidates – this was agreed. There was a unanimous vote in favour of all 11 candidates with no votes against.

LU then confirmed there is now a full committee, and **Items 8 and 9** of the agenda were not now applicable.

Item 10 – Any Other Business

TR asked if minutes of the monthly committee meetings could be published on the website once approved, stating it would help connectivity with the wider membership. LU liked the idea but cannot ensure that happens, as it's not within the remit of the President's role. LU stated the importance of the internet in today's way of life and suggested to PAW, once the new committee is operational, that TR's suggestion is considered.

Gill Northcott (GN) asked if an Ashted Village News could be published before next spring – in the absence of the usual autumn edition. It would also help her to re-connect with other residents in her road. Maybe publish something on the ARA website?

TR referred to the Battery Storage System (BESS), consultation period ends this week. He felt with the change of Government that the views of local people will be over-looked. He asked for anyone concerned to post their comments on the scheme to the MV planning website. Peter Williams (PJW) responded, the committee hasn't been able to do anything for some months now, but for this particular application, suggested everyone puts their comments forward directly via the MV website. Adding there will not be time for the ARA to post any comments before the consultation closes.

TR commented further on his concerns for the way planning applications are going to be handled in the future.

A lady then spoke up, she is a resident from Leatherhead, firstly endorsing TR's comments. Then added there is a need for networking across the various RAs in Mole Valley, which then becomes a

very strong voice. She would like to connect with ARA and other associations in the north of the district.

Pat Wiltshire (PW) agreed with the previous speaker's comments. Then went on to speak of the BESS – that TR previously spoke of. She spoke of the negative aspects of the plan, on bio-diversity, wildlife, Ashted Common a site of special scientific interest etc. PW encouraged everyone – that hasn't already – to write in with their objections and mentioned that some excellent letters are already on the MV website for people to refer to. The proposed site belongs to Merton College who would like to sell the land; which raises the question, why sell this site for the BESS which is miles away from Chessington where the power will be networked from. Taking it a stage further, once work starts, the land will be a brownfield site and suitable for housing.

A member then asked about the football pitch on the recreation ground and the same member also said that the fields on Ermyn Way had been sold to developers for 350 homes – is that true? GS responded that the number for that site was 270 – and the Exxon site would see 140 homes on top of that. GS confirmed the land was sold and Wates would be the builders. GS stated objections to Ermyn Way would be made. CH then spoke of the football ground; the applicants have 3 years to start work on the project, it doesn't have to be completed – work only has to begin to keep the scheme live. There is a difference of opinion as to whether or not the scheme has been implemented and the outcome of that matter is unknown at the moment.

CH then spoke of the footpath a right of way and would need to be diverted if the scheme went ahead. If just one objection is made that cannot be resolved, the Secretary of State (SOS) gets involved. So far, it appears SOS has not been made aware of any objections. Which comes back to the question of whether the plan has been implemented, i.e. has any of the work actually begun? A very slow process. There is also a question of whether the drainage channels dug for the pitch is in the exact location as per plans, if the channels are in a different location the plan has not been implemented.

CT mentioned a Surrey CC scheme called 'Your Fund' which can be used for projects such as the football pitch and the drainage and would satisfy both sides. CT then went on to outline how Your Fund works and has already funded some projects in Ashted.

TR mentioned the CIL fund and spoke of its potential use, £35k allocated for works on the railway foot-crossing at Green Lane and Links Rd. TR requested the committee take steps to utilise our CIL money, what needs doing around the village?

A lady, Lyn Martin, spoke (not a current ARA member) –wants to become a member, get involved in local events & organisation. Also said the ARA committee is a great vehicle to help and support the village.

Steve Kershaw (SK) spoke in favour of many of the good things Ashted Football Club has done for youngsters in the village, unfortunately, the issue of the plastic pitch somewhat alienated the club. A return to a grass pitch would be great and SK asked if he could be the ARA liaison point re this matter in the future. The community should decide on grass vs plastic, the outcome determining which way ARA goes on the matter. Many residents are unaware of the matter and it should be brought to their attention.

Richard Ryan (RR) spoke re cycle lanes; if the proposed scheme goes ahead we will lose verges, trees etc. He asked whether support from Craddocks & Barnet Wood Lane residents enough or do we need the entire village? CT responded that both are needed, adding that he asked the question of

SCC, if the residents say no, what will happen? They conceded it probably would not go ahead in that case.

CT; traffic counters have been active recently and there will be a consultation – so it is up to the residents. ARA will have a say in the outcome.

Brian Greenwood, an active cyclist and ARA member, said leaving the cycle scheme to expert consultants would be a disaster and the present Craddocks set up is a 'dogs breakfast'. Brian reiterated many of his concerns, including cycling on the A24 and said there is a real danger of a great deal of money being spent, roads being wrecked and cycle lanes built that no one uses. CT mentioned that money spent on the A24 came from central government and not Surrey CC.

DH said the AI councillors all opposed the A24 cycle scheme, MV policy working group also rejected it but it was put forward again by the officer, without prior notification. There are plans for a cycle lane through the recreation ground as well. An example of another scheme that has not been thought through.

TR asked that where important matters concern the whole village, the residents are somehow involved in a consultation with ARA to gain a popular view of what people want. PW (Pat Wiltshire?) responded that closely liaising with residents is a good way to include everyone and for ARA to take the 'temperature' of the members. TR thought there would be a widespread pool of expertise to pull into any future discussions around important village matters.

LU then asked PAW to say a few words to the meeting. PAW gave a bit of his background and mentioned that those that had approached him thought that the skills gained through his career would be useful to galvanise the committee. He has no history in Ashted matters so starting with a clean sheet, he will be reliant on the long-standing residents for information. And, critically, he was not involved in any of the previous issues that has led to the situation the ARA found itself in. He is happy to talk to each and every person who has something to say. As people may have gathered from his accent – he is not a local as such. Concluding by saying what fantastic history there is in Ashted and the ARA should now look forward.

Pat Wiltshire said PAW had already done a lot of good work, e.g. liaising with Network Rail, and working with David Baker.

LU finished the meeting, the ARA is up and running once more.

The following is a summary of key participants at the Meeting:-

PAW	Peter Westgarth cvo	Nominee for the role of Chairman
DH	David Hawksworth	Nominee for the role of Vice President
AB	Alan Bradley	Nominee for Vice Chairman
QA	Quentin Armitage	Nominee for ARA Secretary

The following Residents are all nominees to join the Standing Committee

GB	Guy Bailey
CB	Craig Beresford
CC	Colin Cooper
SK	Steve Kershaw
SL	Steve Lee

CR	Chris Ranger
MR	Martin Riddle
RR	Richard Ryan
SS	Sue Stansfield
JW	Jenny Williams
PJW	Peter Williams