

St Helens Residents Association
Minutes of Open Meeting held on 12th May 2011
St Helens Church Hall

In attendance: Clare Singleton (Chair)
Ruth Hillary (Treasurer)
SHRA committee members and 40 members of the public

1. Update from the Chair

Clare Singleton reported that the Association had been awarded Gold Standard status by RB Kensington & Chelsea, in recognition of its role as an active local association. Recent issues addressed by the Association included the future viability of shops St Helens Gardens, as well as other planning issues. The new Association noticeboard had now been erected (outside the bakery) and was available for notices. Following some recent resignations, there were also a small number of places on the association's committee, should anyone wish to join this body.

2. Treasurer's Report

Ruth Hillary reported that the Associations' assets now totalled £836, including a £500 grant from the council. Expenditure remained limited to hire of the hall for meetings, leaflets, and the annual Xmas party.

3. Proposed Crossrail station at Kensal

Mark Chetwynd from RBK&C explained the current position on the proposal being promoted by the council for an additional station near the current Sainsbury's site:

- This was a long-term project which would take until 2018 to materialise
- The current Crossrail Bill does not provide for a Kensal station, but the council was lobbying for this to be added. The council had now agreed to underwrite capital costs.
- Latest proposals were considered to meet the three 'tests' set down by the Mayor for London (no cost to Crossrail, no delay on construction of the line, no impact on train service performance).
- The Kensal station would be a 'turnback' station, allowing for five trains an hour into central and east London. (Travellers to Heathrow and the west would still need to travel into Paddington to make a connection).

In the Q&A session it was clarified that these plans did not affect the HS2 (High Speed 2 train) proposals for Old Oak Common. Crossrail would be administered by Transport for London, with a common ticketing system (Oyster etc).

On a show of hands, there was unanimous agreement from the meeting for supporting the Council's lobbying efforts, to achieve an additional Crossrail station at Kensal.

Neighbourhood Watch

Nick Fletcher (PCSO from the Safer Neighbourhood Team) explained plans to re-launch a neighbourhood watch scheme in the area covered by SHRA. This would need a volunteer co-ordinator. The Safer Neighbourhood Team would issue a monthly email with crime data and other information on the area, which would be available to any resident.

In discussion, it was confirmed that the Safer Neighbourhood Team would continue to be staffed with 1 sergeant, 2 police officers and 4 PCSOs, working a 4 week rota with a variable pattern of hours.

Tree Planting

James Burton from RBK&C explained how the council dealt with street trees, covering 6,500 street trees in the borough divided into 3 areas (north/central/south).

Pruning takes place normally on a 3 year cycle, or 2 year in areas with high risk of soil shrinkage and subsidence. The council's team was always open to suggestions of locations for planting new trees, but very often these proved unviable because of underground cabling or other obstructions.

Trees were protected through individual Tree Preservation Orders (for larger trees) or Conservation Area policies. It was however acknowledged that prosecutions were rare, because of difficulties in obtaining sufficient evidence. The council's team were happy to deal with any specific queries, as relayed through the Association.

St Helens Festival

Councillor Judith Blakeman outlined plans for the festival, to be held in St Helens Gardens on 25th June. Organisation was being done by ward councillors and St Helens church. Arrangements involved some local road closures. Further volunteers for activities would be very welcome. Current ideas include a dog show, children's fancy dress, stalls (not-for-profit), a choir and perhaps some stands on local history and campaigns. Notting Barns Initiative and the Wedge also involved.

A planning meeting was planned for 5.30 pm on 19th June at St Helens Food Store. One of the main aims of the festival was to encourage use of local shops. At the suggestion of the meeting it was agreed that the landlord of currently vacant shop units in St Helens Gardens should be invited and encouraged to attend.

Cllr Judith Blakeman explained that ward councillors were all too aware of the apparent mismatch between council policies to ensure the future of St Helens Gardens as a successful neighbourhood shopping centre, and the impact of individual planning approvals for change of use to residential. The association, as well as local councillors, would need to continue to monitor planning applications closely.

Localism Bill and neighbourhood planning

Jenny Harborne explained briefly the potential for local residents to become more involved in planning decisions for the neighbourhood, as a result of the changes in the Localism Bill (currently in Parliament).

The Association was already getting in touch with similar associations in adjoining areas, so to join forces on issues of common concern. Residents with interest or expertise in planning issues were invited to join a working group which Jenny would convene. Response to the next phase of the development of the Woodlands (former BBC Enterprise) site would be an early priority.

Any other Business

There was no other business and the meeting closed at 9.10pm.