

WIDCOMBE ASSOCIATION
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting
held on April 23rd 2015 at Widcombe Junior School

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was attended by almost 100 members of the Association and visitors. Paddy outlined the format of the evening and prefaced his report by explaining that this was supplementary to information in the Spring Newsletter.

2. Chairman's Report

i) Improving Widcombe

Amid the on-going problems with Rossiter Road, the Association has been looking to the future of which a big part is the Improving Widcombe project. Mike Wrigley has done a lot of work on putting some shape to how the project will work and will talk about it later in the meeting. So, as we move into the post Rossiter Road era, the Widcombe Association should become more open with broader appeal, more involvement at grass roots and play a major part in bringing about the vibrant and cohesive community we wish to see.

ii) Events

Sian Lewis' taking over of Widcombe Events has gone smoothly and we have an exciting programme of events lined up for the summer, including the Art Trail in May, the Opera in June and the Street Party on June 7th on which Chris Rogers will give a brief up-date shortly.

iii) Beechen Cliff School

Members will have seen the picture of a transformed Beechen Cliff school in the Newsletter, as revealed at an exhibition on 19th March. The WA response to this has been positive, with the provisos that the amenity of residents must be protected, green spaces safeguarded, and the impact of buildings and lighting in a visually sensitive area of the World Heritage Site be minimised. We are hopeful that the School's wishes for the site might cause them to look again at the poor design and management of the existing lighting on the all-weather pitches, and we continue to press the planners to ensure that the conditions attached to the lights' use are properly observed. Meanwhile we have recently been made aware of intrusive lighting at Prior Park School's new Sports centre. The Macauley-Prospect Residents have been addressing this issue for some time now, and we are prepared to assist them when and if necessary.

iv) Halfpenny Bridge Lighting

The council has approved the design and costings for lighting on the Halfpenny Bridge and the money is available to do the job in this year's budget. The lighting will be a series of 19 strings of dimmable LEDs installed in a vandal-proof polycarbonate strip under the parapet on the upstream side of the bridge. We have already made a successful pre-application for listed building consent, and Lighting officer Stephen Burrell is currently talking to the listed building officer and the ecology officer while we are standing by to assist in any way we can to expedite matters. Paddy thanked lighting designer and WA member Paul Ruffles for his invaluable help with this project.

v) Eva Lewis

Paddy paid tribute to past Chairman of the Widcombe Association, Eva Lewis, who, sadly, has recently died. Eva was Chairman of the Association from 1989 - 93 and a doughty fighter on Widcombe's behalf. She had many accomplishments, and was recognised for her outstanding contributions to the City of Bath with the Mayor of Bath Citizens' award in 2007. She was a wonderful character and will be greatly missed.

vi) The Future

Paddy reminded the meeting that this was his last appearance as Chairman of the WA – a post that he has held for the last 4 years. He was happy to be handing over to Jeremy and very confident that the Association will be in excellent hands. He will no longer be a member of the committee, although he will continue to manage the website and the Newsletter for the time being. Richard Wales will stand down from the main Committee and will hand over the Chair of the RR sub-committee to Mike Wrigley. Paddy thanked Richard not only for volunteering to remain on the sub-committee until such time as its work is done, but for the outstanding work he has done on the RR scheme over the past seven years. The Committee will now number nine people, so if you feel you would like to join, please talk to any committee member at the end of the evening. Paddy thanked the committee for their work and support and issued a general thanks to the many other people who have contributed to enhancing and preserving Widcombe.

3. Widcombe Street Party

Chris explained that the purpose of the Street Party, to be held on Sunday June 7th, is to bring the community together to celebrate Widcombe as it is now and as it will become. It will also show our support for the local traders. £3000 has already been raised in sponsorship. Schools, churches and other community groups will be coming together. There will be food and drink as well as entertainment from the Natural Theatre Company, local bands, local schools and some top bands. Our own Lady Margaret will be in attendance.

We were reminded that tickets for the Opera at Widcombe Manor are going on open sale at the end of the month. Half the seats have already been sold.

4. Treasurer's Remarks.

The accounts were published in the Newsletter. Finances remain in good health. We are keeping some funds in reserve for possible expenditure on Rossiter Road and the Street Party.

Marilyn Phillips has reviewed and approved the accounts.

There were no questions from the floor.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Alan Langton and seconded by Denise Coughlan. The Accounts were adopted nem con.

5. Rossiter Road

Paddy emphasised that WA have been vociferous to the Council about the disruption caused by the delays to the scheme. Mike Wrigley up-dated us. Regular meetings have been held between the sub-committee and the Council over the past seven years. We have pushed for the highest quality of design and have tried to keep track of progress. The Steering Group was told the Parade would be completed by April 24th and that the work would be finished by the first week in May. Once the engineering is complete, the sub-committee will be monitoring for at least six months. Parking, servicing and pedestrian safety will be monitored as will the landscaping to follow. Among current concerns are the quality of finish and the plethora of poles at the east end. The sub-committee has asked to see a plan of all signs and signals. The traders have suffered grievously and will need our support for the months and years to come.

Jasper Becker asked about the cost for over-run. WA is not party to the contract so does not know this cost. Asked about the main cause of the current problems, Mike replied that these were primarily due to the financial problems of ERH. Janet Phillips asked why no members of the Council were present to answer questions and felt they should have been invited. Mike replied that this was not a meeting about Rossiter Road.

6. Improving Widcombe

Mike Wrigley explained that WA has been looking at how to refocus the work of the Association. There are three major areas-People, Purpose and Place - and he is working on the latter. Arising out of discussions at the December and January meetings, this breaks down into Entry to Widcombe, (signage; underpass; Halfpenny bridge), Environment and Planning, (natural environment; urban environment; sustainability; EEW), Transport, (roads, parking and footpaths; cycling; railway, especially electrification; use of river and canal) and Widcombe Parade for which the RR sub-committee will morph into a monitoring group. Working groups have been identified under each main heading to work on a particular aspect. Groups will be flexible, some may wither or merge into other groups, and others will arise according to need.

7. Re-election of Examiner of Accounts.

Marilyn Phillips, proposed by Liz Littlewood and seconded by Helen Peter, was unanimously re-elected as Examiner for Accounts.

Election of Committee Officers

Paddy explained that, in the absence of a successor, Jeremy is prepared to continue as Treasurer for the time being. This being the case, he will be elected as Vice-Chairman for the immediate future with the intention of taking the Chair when a new treasurer emerges.

Jeremy Boss, proposed by Paddy Doyle and seconded by David Maxwell was elected nem con as Vice-chairman.

Jeremy Boss, proposed by Ann Ashworth and seconded by Liz Littlewood, was re-elected nem con as Treasurer.

Social Club

Sir Peter Hendy, President of the Social Club Committee, gave an over-view of the development of the new club. The developer is building the club at his expense. Peter talked us through the design using slides of elevations and floor plans. The intention is for space to be very flexible to allow a broad range of activities to take place. The club will include a large area capable of seating two hundred. It is planned to open every day and evening and will be a club for the whole community. He welcomed ideas from those present as to what uses the building could be put to. The committee are currently working through the design of the interior, identifying what must be there for opening and what can be added later. They are keen to have a room designated for members. It was hoped the building would be open for September 4th but it seems more likely that this will be the second week in October. The Social Club AGM will be held on May 17th at 6.30pm.

AOB

No items of AOB were raised.

Farewell to Paddy

Chris Rogers paid tribute to Paddy's four years as Chairman, recognising his wise and measured leadership. He leaves a legacy of really listening to the Association's members. The committee has thrived and grown under his guidance. Jeremy presented Paddy with theatre vouchers in appreciation of his work for WA.

Hustings

Seven electoral candidates, representing Conservatives, Labour, Liberal Democrats and Independents, took part in a brief hustings. The evening concluded with drinks, nibbles and conversation.