

**STRUTT'S PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**  
**Annual General Meeting**  
**held on 12 April 2011 at S. Mary's Parish Hall, Darley Lane**

**1 & 2. Welcome and Apologies**

Apologies for absence were received from the following members, Penny d'Abreu, Alun and Doreen Evans, Richard and Beryl Hughes, Lynne Halford, Richard Butler, Pat Greatorex and Police Sergeant Shinfield and Cllr Martin Repton.

Derek Limer was in the chair, and welcomed 42 members of the Association, recently appointed Beat Officer, PC Dalbir Janagal (known as 'DJ'), Cllr Finbar Richards, Martin Kawinski (of the River Street Community Group) and Tony Briggs and Brian Salt of the Derby City Empty Homes team.

**3. Empty Homes**

Messrs Briggs and Salt having to get to their homes, this item was taken before the Association business items. They gave an update on three empty houses in the area, which they knew to be of concern to SPRA members.

Tony Briggs began by saying that he and his colleagues had had some recent success in making progress with empty homes in some parts of Derby, citing the Leopold Street scheme in particular, but he recognised that the negotiations leading to these successes were very slow, and might lead the public to think little was happening.

40, West Avenue (at the Five Lamps junction) has not been their department's concern as the building is already owned by the City Council, with a view to possible demolition in connection with a highway scheme. They had enquired of the City Engineer's Department and had been told that, as the future life of the building was uncertain, and there would need to be considerable restoration work to make it habitable again, it was thought to be uneconomic to bring it back into use by tenants for what might well be a very short time. In the discussion that followed members of SPRA challenged this view of the situation, pointing out that the City Council's request for permission to demolish the house had already been rejected following the public enquiry for the whole *Connecting Derby* scheme and so it was not clear why the City Council were not now trying to sell the house so that it could be brought back again into use. In any case, some SPRA members questioned the figures the Council had used to justify their argument for not renovating the property and letting it out on a temporary basis. Tony Briggs undertook to seek an update on the situation with the relevant City Council departments in the light of the comments made.

The situation concerning 10 Chevin Place has moved recently. Discussions with the owner shew signs of bearing fruit and it is hoped that this house will be brought back into residential use over the coming months.

The circumstances surrounding the case of 98 Belper Road are much more vexed. Although the City Council had agreed to proceed with Compulsory Purchase procedures, these had been hampered by bankruptcy proceedings against the owner, initiated by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs. Although these moves have now been resolved, Brian Salt reported that it was continuing to prove difficult to engage the owner in meaningful discussions. It was urged from the floor at the meeting that it was wrong that the owner, a sick man, should be harassed in this way, by the Council and by local residents, but Brian Salt insisted that the City Council's approach was gentle and aimed at securing a mutually beneficial outcome. If any member of the meeting had personal knowledge of the owner and could encourage him to talk to the City Council, that would be very helpful.

Brian Salt concluded by saying that he and his colleagues would welcome information about any other cases of empty houses that they could pursue.

Derek Limer thanked Messrs Briggs and Salt for their attendance; it was good to know that the City Council's officers were pursuing these matters, and achieving desirable outcomes.

**4. Minutes of the 13 April 2010 AGM**

These minutes were noted and approved.

**5. Matters arising from the Minutes**

It was noted that the inappropriate windows at 102 Arthur Street had now been replaced by windows to a suitable design.

## 6. Chairman's Report

Derek Limer reported that the committee had met six times during the course of the year and had discussed a wide range of topics of relevance to residents in the area, including empty homes (as discussed again already this evening) and replacement of windows and doors without planning permission. In this latter context, both SPRA and our neighbours in the Little Chester Residents' Association (LCRA) have become very concerned at the reduction in staffing levels in the City Council Conservation Team, and the effect this will have on enforcement of the Conservation Area rules. He drew the meeting's attention to the booklet the Council had produced, with help from LCRA and SPRA, giving guidance to residents of Conservation Areas, and urged anyone who had not received a copy to take one away with them. He stressed that most residents were prepared to follow the Conservation Area guidelines, but a few were not.

He went on to comment on the situation at the fire-ravaged Britannia Mills in Bath Street. The depressed housing market has caused the developer to put their redevelopment plans on hold. The same applied to the Britannia Court redevelopment and S. Helen's House, but, in the latter case he had heard very recently that a firm of solicitors was very close to concluding a deal with the developer that would see the house brought into use as their prestige head offices. This, if successful, would represent a considerable advance on the current situation.

Referring to points raised at last year's AGM, Derek Limer was pleased to report that SPRA intervention had resulted in the City Council and the Community Payback team carrying out significant clearance of vegetation on the footpath going across the Handyside Bridge, and restoring the lighting, making this a much safer walkway. The local section of the *Connecting Derby* road scheme, with the new Quaker Way, had opened during the course of the year. The City Council, at SPRA's request, had mounted a brief Origin & Destination Study that had shown a notable amount of through traffic in Strutt's Park. It is intended that there should be a more detailed study with a view to determining whether other measures need to be taken to calm traffic and re-direct flows onto less congested roads.

SPRA is very actively represented on the Darley Ward Neighbourhood Board by Jude King, and by this means SPRA became aware of the progress of the *Lighting Derby* scheme into our area. Although SPRA had been making representations to both the City Council and Balfour Beatty (the lighting contractor) over many months, and had repeatedly been told there would be public consultation on the new type of lighting to be installed, in the event there was no such consultation, and the new installation work was now underway. This lack of consultation was of serious concern to both SPRA and LCRA. SPRA had, however, managed to get hold of a copy of the plans for our area and Derek Limer was pleased to report that, whilst the standard arrangements would apply to most roads, the City Council had managed to find additional funds to provide heritage style lanterns on heritage style posts in North Parade and heritage style lanterns on standard posts in Arthur, Otter, Kingston and Margaret Streets. Whilst this was less than had been hoped for, it did at least make an acknowledgement of the presence of the Conservation Area.

At last year's AGM concern had been expressed that the SPRA committee's work was not visible to the membership, apart from at the AGM and in the occasional newsletter. The minutes of committee meetings are, once approved, now circulated to all SPRA members who have furnished the committee with their E-mail addresses, and are posted on the SPRA website. Once again, a newsletter was sent to all members during the course of the year.

Derek Limer went on to comment on the efforts of the River Street Community Group (RSCG) to gain official 'village green' status (to prevent development of the site) for the former S. Alkmund's burial ground (later the S. Mary's School playground). The area is now known as S. Alkmund's Green and, as a result of community effort organised by RSCG, is now in a very tidy state. RSCG are now trying to identify the most appropriate future use of the Green.

Derek Limer also commented on the work of Friends of Darley Open Spaces (FoDOS) and their programme of events in Darley Park, drawing the meeting's attention to the handbills concerning the hydrangea collection and other matters.

Looking to the future, Derek Limer foresaw continuing SPRA involvement in local issues of traffic, graffiti, potholes, *etc* but went on to comment that 2012 would be a year of celebration, with the London Olympic Games and the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. He hoped that local residents would wish to be involved, and aired the idea of a 'street party', perhaps being held on S. Alkmund's Green. Any residents wishing to volunteer help were encouraged to speak to members of the SPRA or RSCG committees.

Derek Limer concluded by thanking the SPRA committee for their hard work over the year, and said that we would be particularly sorry to be losing Karen Carman, the Treasurer, who will be moving away from Derby later in the year. Clive Lemmon responded by thanking Derek Limer for all his efforts in the behalf of SPRA.

Derek Limer then asked for questions or comments on his report. The issue of public liability insurance in connection with organising street parties was raised. The RSCG holds such insurance and so their involvement would be very useful.

There was much discussion of the new street lighting plans. Many people deplored the lack of consultation. Cllr Finbar Richards had learnt that, at the start of the new re-lighting contract, there had been consultation concerning the Conservation Areas in Darley Abbey and Little Chester, but it was pointed out that this was of little comfort to residents of Strutt's Park, and, in any case, LCRA felt they had been all but ignored in the whole process. Some people had found the City Council to be most unresponsive to their representations and felt it to be disgraceful that the same Council that enforced stringent rules on residents of Conservation Areas, irrespective of cost, should use cost to justify ignoring the presence of Conservation Areas when it came to their own work. Others felt that some streets in the area were in desperate need of improved lighting

## **7. Treasurer's Report**

The Annual Accounts had been circulated and these were duly noted.

Karen Carman explained that rising printing costs had eaten into the funds of the Association, but that generous donations towards the hire of the meeting hall and refreshments this evening, coupled with finding cheaper ways to publish printed material had stabilised the financial position. She appealed to anyone with access to cheaper ways of producing printed matter to come forward, acknowledging that already received from Belinda Elliott for future newsletters.

She also said that, whilst she would have to stand down from her post as Treasurer, she would be on hand for a few more months to initiate any prospective member into the relatively slight duties of the post.

## **8. Election of Committee and Officers**

All the existing committee members, with the exception of Karen Carman, were prepared to stand for re-election and, as no further nominations had been received, it was agreed unanimously that the officers and committee be elected *en bloc*, as follows:

Clive Lemmon – Secretary

Vacant – Treasurer

Committee members – Jude King, Derek Limer, Belinda Elliott, Robert Knight, Ian Thom.

(The Chair is appointed by the committee from among its members.)

In view of the vacancies, Derek Limer invited anyone who might be interested in serving on the committee to come forward with a view to attending a future meeting to see if they would like to become involved.

## **9. Any Other Business**

Derek Limer then invited members to raise, informally, any further matters of concern whilst consuming the light refreshments. In this period there were some questions concerning the meaning of the status of S. Alkmund's Green and several attendees came forward to look at the plans for the re-lighting scheme. Two expressions of interest in committee membership were received. Some people asked for details of the archaeological dig on plot 71 Belper Road. Clive Lemmon explained the findings so far and said the committee would try to organise a public meeting with the Nottingham University archaeologists involved at which the full details of their findings would be explained.

The meeting closed at about 9.30 pm.