

# Vartry Community Residents Association

## Public Meeting and Annual General Meeting - 15 May 2024

**Committee members present:** Beck Dabscheck (Chair), Carol Gibbons (Treasurer & Minutes), Pastor Charles Mugenyi, Chitra Karve, Claire Cammarata, David Bennie, Deborah Cawkwell, Monica Viola

**Apologies:** Mark Bartlett

**Councillors present:** Cllr Barbara Blake, Cllr Michelle Simmons-Safo

### Agenda

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the AGM, asked all the Committee members present to identify themselves, introduced the two Councillors present and gave Mark Bartlett's apology for absence
2. **Chair's report** on VCRA's activities and achievements during the previous year and future plans - report attached Appendix 1
3. **Finance Report** from the Treasurer:
  - a. in April 2023 our bank balance stood at £346 plus £100 petty cash, in March 2024 we received a £200 grant from Haringey which was spent in full during that month so we ended the 2023-24 financial year with a bank balance of £349 plus £100 petty cash.
  - b. VCRA banks with the Co-Op Bank and has an account designed for small community groups, businesses and charities; it charges no fees but pays no interest which given our small amount of reserves works well for us.
2. **Vote of thanks to VCRA's former Chair:** Deborah Cawkwell described the long service, hard work and many achievements of the former Chair, David Bennie, on behalf of VCRA and local residents. On behalf of the Committee, Chitra Karve presented a small gift and Thank You card. The meeting endorsed this vote of thanks which is accordingly recorded in these minutes.
3. **Committee members and elections:**
  - a. Current Committee members were asked if they wished to continue to serve – all present confirmed that they did so wish.
  - b. The two holders of formal offices, Chair and Treasurer, were asked if they wished to continue in office and confirmed their willingness to do so.

There are currently 9 Committee members and VCRA's Constitution requires a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 12, meaning there are 3 vacant places; the Chair explained that anyone wishing to join the Committee could put themselves forward at the meeting or subsequently by contacting a Committee member.
4. **Revised VCRA constitution presented to the meeting for endorsement:**
  - a. The current Constitution is in the main still suitable for VCRA. However, some updating is needed to ensure it accurately describes how we operate now.
  - b. The proposed new Constitution, drafted by Chitra Karve, updates how VCRA communicates, adding digital and electronic communication and removing giving notice of meetings by fax, reduces the set number of public meetings VCRA is obligated to hold in person to reflect increased activity on WhatsApp and other opportunities to meet Committee members eg at regular litter picks and ensures that

the section on inclusion better reflects current equalities legislation.

- c. Councillor Simmons-Safo suggested that the reduced obligation to meet in person be balanced by adding “virtual meetings eg on Zoom” to the section on how VCRA communicates. The Committee was happy to accept that suggestion and, on condition that amendment is made, the meeting voted to endorse the new Constitution which, once final, will be posted on VCRA’s website.

#### **5. Brief outline of VCRA’s future plans:**

- a. Carol Gibbons explained that following VCRA’s successful bid for a Haringey People Need Parks small grant to add refreshments and provision of local information to the regular litter picks to encourage attendance, VCRA had applied earlier this month for a larger grant.
- b. This grant would enable VCRA to host a summer event and a winter event, with activities in Paignton Park and the Triangle Centre, to continue the monthly Litter Picknics and to support a Halloween Trail.
- c. Please also see the Chair’s report for more details. VCRA has been asked to provide more supporting information which the Committee will do in the next few days.

Note: VCRA may not be awarded all – or any – of the funding requested, in which case we will continue to do our best to provide community activities within the constraints of our budget.

#### **6. Issues raised with our Councillors Barbara and Michelle**

##### **Fly-tipping and rats**

Some streets are more blighted by this anti-social behaviour than others, which have better lighting and more footfall. Several factors drive fly-tipping: unwillingness or inability to pay for bulky item collection, difficulty taking larger items to Recycling Centres for people without access to a car, some residents leaving items outside for others to take if they want them, turnover of tenants in rented accommodation whose landlords don’t properly dispose of their belongings, HMOs (houses in multi-occupation) where the number of tenants is too high for the number of bins provided meaning rubbish, including food waste, spills over onto the pavement. Food, in particular bread, is often left on the street which encourages rats to come and scavenge for food on the pavement.

There is a particular problem with rats on the Frederick Messer Estate and the adjacent green spaces which Barbara has already reported to Environmental Health. Concern was expressed about the use of poison to reduce the rat population due to the risk this poses to domestic pets and wildlife.

Suggestions for action:

- Using the WhatsApp group to co-ordinate and jointly pay for bulky items collection
- Car owners planning a trip to the Recycling Centre offering to take items for neighbour if they have space.
- Formalising leaving items outside for others to take by VCRA organising and promoting a Jumble Trail 2 or 3 times a year and having a White Elephant stall at VCRA events.
- Making full use of Veolia’s free collection of large items before Passover.
- Reporting properties you suspect are being used as HMOs to Councillors Barbara or Michelle; while there is a natural reluctance to report our neighbours, all HMOs should be registered with the Council so that the number of people living there and the safety and living conditions of the property can be assessed and monitored to avoid the

exploitation of tenants by unscrupulous landlords. Contact details for our local Councillors and information about their surgeries at the triangle Centre are available on VCRA's website (vartry.org).

- VCRA agreed to send Barbara details of the streets most affected by fly-tipping.

### **Traffic levels on local roads**

Holmdale Terrace, in particular, which even though it is narrow, has designated parking spaces and only has a pavement on one side, and is also a cycle superhighway. Two-way traffic on such a narrow busy road increases the risk to both cyclists and pedestrians. Limiting access to traffic at both ends of the road and enabling drivers to turn from either side onto Amhurst Park and St Ann's Road might resolve the current bottle necks, road rage incidents and danger to cyclists.

Various options were discussed – a Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN), making some streets one way to halve the volume of traffic, banning traffic from turning into residential streets from Seven Sisters Road and the pros and cons of these options discussed, for example, that the St Ann's LTN has made Seven Sisters Road much busier – and surrounding streets more polluted – during rush hour.

Barbara explained that data is not yet available on the impact of the St Ann's LTN and the other two LTNs in the borough and agreed to initiate a conversation with relevant Council Officers about what an LTN for Seven Sisters would look like and what other traffic calming measures might be possible.

### **Plans for the future of the former Stamford Hill Primary School building**

The Councillors present had no information about future plans. There had been mention in the past of using it as a pupil referral unit. The meeting was unanimous in expressing concern – and disagreement – with any development of the building, for example into housing, which would remove it from public use. The meeting also noted that the longer that the building was left vacant, the more it fell into disrepair. It was agreed that VCRA should formally make its concerns known to the Council via its Councillors.

### **Poor condition of Paignton Park playground**

Deborah Cawkwell reported that relevant Council staff are aware of this issue following a Spotlight Visit where she represented VCRA but that vacancies and sickness leave in that department has slowed down action. Deborah also raised with the Council as a priority the need for repairs to the table tennis table in Paignton Park as this facility is well used and popular. If the Council funds the repair of the table tennis table, VCRA will explore making an application to Sport England for outdoor gym equipment for Paignton Park.

## **7. Any Other Business**

**Windrush Day** is on 22 June - would VCRA be able to mark this important occasion in some way? The Committee agreed to consider how best to do this.

Reminder of Litter Pick dates

Second Saturday of each month in Manchester Gardens at 10.00am.

Last Sunday of each month in Paignton Park at 10.00am where refreshments will also be provided.

**St Mungos** people have been gathering in the Church porch, on occasion leading to noise and other anti-social behaviour. To prevent this, gates have now been installed. Please report any concerns about St Mungo's residents to their office on 0208 809 6695.

THE MEETING WAS THEN DECLARED CLOSED