

# SEBRA

**SOUTH EAST BAYSWATER  
RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

## **42nd Annual General Meeting – 19 November 2012**

### **Minutes**

The 2012 Annual General Meeting was held in the Porchester Hall. Some 150 members of SEBRA attended; there were also more than 50 guests. The event was a special one in recognition of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee year, and the hall was decked with a number of patriotic banners, and the life size images of the Queen and Prince Philip first seen at this year's Summer Garden Party. John Zamit, Chairman of SEBRA, opened the meeting at 7.15 pm.

#### **1 Welcome and Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed everyone, saying that it was especially pleasing that quite so many SEBRA members were present. He started with thanks to GLL, operators of the Porchester Hall, for once again providing it for the meeting. He then pointed out the displays at the rear of the hall, including one by Crossrail, and another about the proposed change of use from offices to residential of the large block at Nos 14/16 Westbourne Grove.

The Chairman thanked so many people for attending, naming a number of them, including:

- i) Local Ward Councillors: Susie Burbridge, Brian Connell, Andrew Smith; he then gave a special welcome to a new Councillor, Antonia Cox. She was the only local Councillor, he said, actually to live in the Ward she represents. Other Councillors present included Ed Argar, Cabinet Member for City Management and Melvyn Caplan, Cabinet Member for Finance and Customer Services.
- ii) Representatives of the local Police; Colin Buttery, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Parks, The Royal Parks; Many officers and staff from Westminster City Council and representatives of many Service Providers/Contractors to the Council;
- iii) Representatives of Crossrail and of the Paddington Libraries team, led by Elizabeth Williams;
- iv) Representatives of neighbouring Societies: Bayswater Residents' Association (BRA); The Hyde Park Estate Association (HPEA); and representatives from business, including Bayswater BID (now called 'Bayswater Village') and Paddington BID/Waterside Partnership.

Apologies had been received from Mark Field MP, Councillors Michael Brahams and Jean-Paul Floru, Linda Lennon, CBE, Chief Executive of the Royal Parks, and from Paul Dimoldenberg, Leader of the Labour Party Councillors.

Karen Buck, our other local MP, and Heather Acton, Hyde Park Councillor, had both apologised in advance for being unable to arrive on time, saying that they would come to the meeting later on. Mike Moore, CBE, Chief Executive Westminster City Council (WCC) and Rosemarie MacQueen, Strategic Director, Built Environment, WCC, had sent sincere apologies for being unable to attend this year.

The Chairman then explained that he was wearing both blue and red Jubilee rosettes to demonstrate that he was not espousing any particular political party, while apologising for not having a yellow Liberal Democrat rosette as well. He went on to thank SEBRA's President, John Walton, who was

sitting beside him, for his work on behalf of SEBRA, especially on Crossrail. He wished to give a very special welcome to the platform party, which comprised Councillor Philippa Roe, Leader of Westminster City Council, and her Deputy, Councillor Robert Davis; Andrew Wolstenholme, Chief Executive of Crossrail, and Chief Inspector Tracy Stephenson, Metropolitan Police, representing Detective Chief Superintendent Paul Rickett, who had been prevented from attending at the last moment.

The Chairman also pointed out three small Jubilee plastic ducks on the top table. They were there as a reminder of the large yellow duck which he had presented at last year's AGM (for 'ducking' a question) to Kit Malthouse (Deputy Mayor of London for Business and Enterprise, and a Member of the Greater London Assembly), who was an absentee from this year's platform party - and who, said the Chairman, 'should be sitting on his far right'.

## **2 Election of the Committee**

The Chairman introduced the next formal item by thanking an outgoing Committee member, Katie Black, who was not standing for re-election. He thanked her for her sterling work, and said that her departure was particularly regrettable because she was a younger member of the Committee. He asked anyone present who felt that they had something to offer to come forward and volunteer to join the Committee. It was too late to be elected now, but anyone could be co-opted and stand for election later. In the meantime, he thanked members who played a special part in the work of SEBRA, including especially Billy Kennedy, Bob Rogers and Tony Shaw. He also mentioned Margaux Dodds and Isabel Woodhead who had kindly prepared the many name badges for the evening, but who sadly could not be present. Finally, he made special reference to Christopher Tanous, Editor of SEBRA *NEWS* and thanked him for the excellent magazine.

Turning to the election of Committee members, the Chairman said that nominations for the Committee were set out on the Notice of the Meeting and the Agenda, and that no other proposals had been received. Bob Rogers proposed the re-election of all those named (below), and Lynda King-Taylor seconded:

David Brewin, 14 Westbourne Grove Terrace;  
Joanna Buxton, MBE, 21A Porchester Terrace;  
Jeannie Dixon, 141 Gloucester Terrace;  
Angus Hudson, 21 Cleveland Square;  
Penny Linnett, 32 Westbourne Park Road;  
Tom Meinhard, 34 Lancaster Gate;  
Michael Nicholson, 17 Craven Hill Mews;  
Desmond Robinson, 141 Gloucester Terrace;  
Barbara Suckle, 20 Cleveland Square;  
John Zamit, 2 Claremont Court, Queensway.

On a show of hands, all nominees were elected nem con.

## **3 Adoption of the Accounts**

The Chairman introduced the accounts to 31 March 2012, which had been provided to all attending, by pointing out that the surplus for the last year was £958.28, down from £5,505.00 in 2011. He said that the difference was nothing to worry about, saying that SEBRA's activities had continued unchecked, even though income had been reduced – for example, The City Council had been unable

to make the normal £650 grant in these straitened times. Membership was up to over 1,000; he was often touched by the kind remarks written onto their renewal slips by members, who often added generous donations when renewing their subscriptions. Much of SEBRA's income came from business sponsors, including F M Conway, Kay & Co, Knight Frank, Murphy Group, GLL, Westminster TranServ, West One, Whiteleys and especially Veolia Environmental Services, who had generously paid for the food which would be served later. Even though SEBRA was forthright in its comments, the relationship with all businesses with local interests was beneficial to both parties.

The accounts were proposed by Chris Lankey and seconded by John Sankey. On a show of hands, the accounts were adopted nem con.

#### **4 New Constitution**

Introducing this item, The Chairman reminded members that the proposal to update the Constitution, which dated from 2000, had been announced in the Notice of the Meeting, in SEBRA *NEWS* and on the SEBRA Website. He asked the President to give a brief explanation.

John Walton said that the Committee had felt that some quite small changes were necessary after twelve years, primarily to make it crystal clear that SEBRA welcomed membership by businesses with any local involvement. This had always been the case, but it needed to be set out more clearly, especially now that the Localism Act 2011 had led to the creation of Neighbourhood Forums. SEBRA was not convinced that it need apply for this status, but was monitoring applications in neighbouring areas with care.

The President said that a few other changes to the Constitution were being proposed, and that SEBRA's Objects had been re-stated in it to underline that it was not just an opposing body, but that it positively encouraged beneficial development.

The Chairman then invited questions. A member asked why SEBRA's boundaries were so restricted, especially to the west of Queensway; surely, he said, SEBRA should extend west to the Borough boundary. The Chairman said that, whilst this might seem realistic, it was a fact that this area was represented by our neighbouring body the Bayswater Residents' Association (BRA), which was active in its area and with which we had co-existed in harmony for many years. He himself was a member of its Committee, and could vouch for its hard work on planning matters, for example. And who would do all the work, he asked, if SEBRA were to extend into a wider area? Dealing with planning applications was an onerous task; SEBRA and BRA were consulted jointly by the City Council on major cases near their common boundary, but each dealt individually with many cases in its area. SEBRA had many members in the BRA area, and in many other neighbouring ones too.

The SEBRA Committee was keeping a careful eye on the Council's reaction to applications to create Neighbourhood Forums in adjoining areas to SEBRA's, and elsewhere in the City.

Another member was prompted by this to ask why SEBRA did not merge with neighbouring bodies. The Chairman replied that this was easy to say and hard to achieve. Other bodies had their own identity and independence, which they valued. Also, it helped the planning process if two bodies objected to an unattractive development rather than one – two arrows were more effective than one!

A third member asked if the membership criteria should not include students; the Chairman said that no alteration to the current draft could be accepted then and there, but that this was a point to be borne in mind for any future revision. From the floor, it was however pointed out that studying in the SEBRA area might be regarded as 'working' there, which was covered by the draft.

Formal adoption of the revised Constitution was proposed by Christopher Tanous and seconded by Michael Nicholson; it was adopted nem con by a show of hands.

## **5 Review of The Jubilee Year**

The Chairman started his summary of the year by saying it had been a great one. The Queen's Diamond Jubilee and The Olympics had given London a major boost, and SEBRA had had its biggest ever Summer Party in June. More than 500 people had attended, and sponsors had been generous in their support, both to the event itself and by donating some excellent prizes for the raffle. The Real Ale tent, provide by the Cleveland Arms, had also been a welcome innovation.

On the working front, dealings with Westminster City Council had been 'interesting' in these harder times, but there had been numerous successes in getting things done; the threat of adverse publicity in SEBRA *NEWS* seemed to be effective.

The recent improvements to the paving and lamp columns in London Street, with great support financially and otherwise from Paddington BID, were perhaps the best project SEBRA had ever been involved with. The Chairman thanked Councillor Argar for having found an extra £47,000 to fund carriageway works, which had complete the transformation of the street. In another part of SEBRA's area, paving and other street works funded by the Lancasters Development were also transforming the area around Lancaster Gate and Leinster Terrace, and the City Council had promised to improve the lamp columns in Leinster Terrace by fitting attractive lanterns.

The Chairman congratulated the City Council's Planners on their excellent work under difficult budgetary conditions; Licensing had also been a big area of activity, with good work by Karen Scarborough, a SEBRA member and the Committee member for Licensing for HPEA, and also by Richard Brown of the Licensing Advice Project at Westminster Citizens' Advice (both of them regular contributors to SEBRA *NEWS*). He thanked the local residents who had taken the trouble to participate in numerous cases – including a recent one involving the Cherry Jam nightclub in Porchester Road, where there had been many objections to late night noise.

Concluding, the Chairman thanked all Councillors and Officers for their continuing efforts on behalf of the community, and mentioned some very welcome recent developments, including the new Westminster Car Club, the provision of two charging bays for electric cars – the first in SEBRA's area, and on the implementation of long-awaited parking improvement works in Cleveland Square. In summary, it had been an 'upbeat' year; he hoped that 2013 would be as successful.

## **6 Invited Speaker**

Before asking Councillor Philippa Roe, Leader of Westminster City Council, to speak, the Chairman invited the other top table guests to introduce themselves briefly, so that members would know better why they were present.

Chief Inspector Tracy Stephenson explained that she was responsible for the northern and central parts of London immediately outside the West End proper, so that Bayswater came within her area.

Andrew Wolstenholme, Chief Executive of Crossrail, explained briefly that he was a former regular Army officer who had then gone into engineering management; he had joined Crossrail 14 months ago. The scheme had now completed two kilometres of tunnelling, and was moving ahead at between 80 to 150 metres a week. He had come to the meeting that evening to listen carefully to any points made by members.

Turning to Robert Davis, the other top table guest, the Chairman said that he needed no introduction to members of SEBRA, but that he could not allow it to pass unmentioned that Robert had recently completed thirty years as a local Councillor. So saying, he produced a parcel which he encouraged

him to open then and there – it contained a travelling pencil case with a fine teddy bear in it, which Robert accepted with great good humour.

Next, Councillor Philippa Roe, who became Leader of Westminster City Council earlier this year, took a hand-held microphone and stood in front of the top table, where she gave a rapid fire talk on her current familiar topic: ‘Better City, Better Life’. Sadly she said nothing specific about issues of local interest to SEBRA, but she did say a great deal about how well things are going with the Tri-Borough approach, under which Westminster has formed a partnership with both Chelsea & Kensington and Hammersmith Councils. It had been found that services to the whole community were both better and cheaper as a result, she said, and that the Tri-Borough Approach was already bringing benefits to local people – for example, she said, ‘a Westminster Libraries ticket will work at any library in the three Boroughs’.

She continued on general themes, which included learning the lesson from history that support should be given to the small- to medium-sized companies, which are the lifeblood of the economy. This would be helped by creating the ‘Westminster Hub’, a place where visitors to the City could work and hold meetings, to facilitate their business while in London. The recent national census had been disappointing, in that it showed that the number of people living in Westminster had dwindled; also, Government policy on Business Rates was not good for the City; the Council was lobbying hard to show what a special place Westminster is. All this was part of building on the legacy of the Olympics, which was not just about sporting excellence.

At this stage Karen Buck MP arrived, and was invited to join the Top Table party, just in time to answer any questions directed to her.

## **7 Questions from the floor**

The Chairman said that there was now time for some questions from the floor, although he was concerned that there was not time for all that many, which was a pity with over 200 people present.

Q Sir David Roche, of Lancaster Mews, said that it gave him pleasure to stand up and be nice about the Council, which had managed to keep Council Tax at the same level for two or three years. For his ‘small cottage’ the monthly payment was £99; but he now heard that the Government proposed to add a ‘mansion tax’ of some £1,000 per month. What was the Council going to do for retired people like him?

A Councillor Roe said that the Council could not stop any tax levied by the Government, but that if this particular proposal were to happen, it would do whatever it could to help. She added that she was against a ‘mansion tax’.

Q Michael Nicholson of Craven Hill Mews asked about cycling in the Parks. He said that things had improved, but that new Police powers had been only partly successful. He was very worried that people would be badly hurt by reckless cyclists, and asked that more should be done. The Chairman said that SEBRA could appreciate that cyclists do have needs, and that an east/west route between Marble Arch and Kensington Gardens was considered desirable by some members.

A Metropolitan Police Inspector Mark Kelly came forward to reply, saying that he did so on behalf of the Royal Parks Police. He said that Chief Inspector Simon Davis, who is responsible for Hyde Park and Kensington Gardens, was unable to attend as his wife had unfortunately suffered an accident that afternoon. His own area covered St James’s and Green Parks; however, the problems there were much the same. He said it was necessary to recognise that cyclists’ opinions should also

be heard, and that they were indeed lobbying hard for more facilities in the Royal Parks. The new Police powers to issue fixed penalty fines of £50 to £100, introduced in July, were already having an impact; once spoken to most cyclists did not re-offend. He stressed that prosecutions were being made, and that this would continue. But he did forecast that another six to nine months were needed before full improvement in the situation would be seen.

Summarising, the Chairman welcomed the new powers, but said that greater police enforcement presence was needed, and that more signage to highlight the prohibition on cycling was also required.

Q Peter Prendergast of Westbourne Terrace said that it was not only in the Parks that cyclists were causing problems. They also caused danger on pavements all round the Borough (this brought many murmurs of agreement from all around the hall).

A Chief Inspector Stephenson stressed that such offenders would be dealt with if police saw them – the Chairman closed the subject by remarking again that more police were clearly needed.

Q Pat Burn, a former Chair of the Westbourne Neighbourhood Association, asked about basement extensions, which were ‘causing misery to residents, who were affected by noise and disturbance for many months’. This comment drew significant applause from the audience.

A The Chairman and Councillor Robert Davis between them explained the realities of planning regulations. Unfortunately many such developments do not need planning permission; also the Council could only control them on the basis of their end result – for instance, whether the appearance of the house or its garden would be affected. The effects of construction were not relevant to the application.

The Chairman said that residents could help themselves, by ensuring that the Council’s Highways Department was alerted to the start of such works, say in a mews. The condition of the highway could then be recorded, helping to establish the adverse effects of heavy site traffic, which had certainly damaged many cobbled areas in more than one mews, causing significant ponding problems in wet weather. But rectifying this later would have to be at Council expense unless a condition survey referred to above was conducted in time, when the developer could be held liable for any damage shown to have been caused by the works. Robert Davis added that Thames Water had assured him that the often-heard concern that the water table would be interfered with was unfounded.

In conclusion, Robert Davis said the Council does have some ability to regulate the traffic and noise generated by such works. But he said that part of the problem was that Whitehall tends to take a national approach to such matters; ‘Shropshire is not much like Westminster’ he said, ‘and we are trying to get Government to see the difference.’

The Chairman then invited Karen Buck MP to comment, since she had inspired a debate in Parliament on this subject during the year. She said that the problem was worse in just a few London Boroughs than anywhere else in the country; apart from Westminster, she mentioned Camden, Kensington & Chelsea, and parts of Fulham. Applications to extend basements which had been given planning permission had doubled, while the number of applications refused had gone down. She said that Kensington & Chelsea Council had carried out a very good survey on the subject, and that she was now conducting another one – she urged the audience to look at her website and to participate. She concluded ‘we have to be heard fussing if anything is to be done about this problem’.

Q Valerie Brayden of Westbourne Gardens asked when would the Crossrail scheme be finished? At present access to St Mary's Hospital was 'terrible'.

A The Chairman asked Andrew Wolstenholme to respond, saying that he very much appreciated that the CEO of Crossrail himself had taken the trouble to attend, and that he hoped for good news about SEBRA's concerns which had been raised with Crossrail all year (and reported very fully in *SEBRA NEWS*) - he hoped indeed for good news before Christmas.

Mr Wolstenholme replied that the overall Crossrail scheme would open to passengers in 2018, but that the re-opening of Eastbourne Terrace was on track to occur in early 2014, with buses then being routed along it again.

He said that he had been fully briefed by his staff about the matters, which had so pre-occupied SEBRA, especially the re-siting of some traffic lights, which he referred to, rather oddly, as 'traffic poles' more than once. He said that many 'stakeholders' were involved in this matter, but that he hoped for a fast-track solution to it, adding that the Chairman may well get an early Christmas present!

Q A member asked about the licensing of betting shops; it seemed to be proliferating in our area, she said.

A The Chairman said his recent experience of this matter was that over 50 per cent of betting shops' turnover came from the gaming machines which they were permitted to install; maximising this income was behind their applications for late night opening. Licensing authorities may not refuse a licence on the grounds that there are too many establishments in an area, but if they were shown to be causing social problems – even causing people to become addicted to gaming machines – this could be grounds for refusal of a licence.

Q Jack Gordon of Burwood Place said that his might be a lone voice, but that his question was not about cycling. It was to ask whether there would still be 24-hour Police Stations in the Borough after the next round of changes. Chief Inspector Stephenson said that the proposals for changes were out for consultation at the moment, but that she was confident that there would still be two 24-hour Police Stations in Westminster after any changes had taken effect.

Q Sir Keith Bright, Westbourne Park Villas, asked rather pointedly whether SEBRA and the Council 'still supported residents on matters of concern'?

A The Chairman said he did not understand what gave rise to this question. SEBRA had a proud record, over 42 years, of supporting residents and others in dealing with a host of problems, and he saw no reason to suppose that this was about to change. He said that SEBRA had excellent connections with the authorities, and he thanked Councillor Argar and his colleagues for coming to listen to what concerned the people of Bayswater. He said that Sir Keith could rest assured that his and others' interests were always taken very much to heart.

The Chairman then permitted one more person to speak. Chris Lankey of Queen's Mews, said firmly that he did not intend to ask a question; resisting the Chairman's suggestion that he should therefore give up the microphone, Mr Lankey first asked for and received confirmation that Mr Zamit receives no payment for the 'incredible efforts which he makes on everyone's behalf', and then proposed that a vote of thanks should be given to the Committee, and especially The President and The Chairman, for the enormous amount that they do for everyone in the area. This popular intervention was greeted

with loud applause.

The draw then took place for six raffle prizes donated by sponsors, for which everyone attending had been given a free ticket. The prizes were:

La Suite West Hotel: dinner and room for a night plus breakfast, for two;  
Bayswater Village: Christmas hamper;  
The Caesar Hotel: Christmas lunch or New Year's Eve dinner, for two;  
The Hereford Road Restaurant: Lunch or dinner, for two;  
Island Grill Restaurant (at the Lancaster London Hotel): dinner for two;  
Winter Wonderland in Hyde Park: family ticket for two adults and two children.

The formal part of the meeting was drawn to a close at around 8.30 pm; many of those present moved to the back of the Hall, where they enjoyed drinks and an excellent finger buffet supplied by Anna's Kitchen, generously sponsored by Veolia Environmental Services.

The speakers, guests and SEBRA members mingled enthusiastically, and the social section of the AGM was enjoyed by all who took part in it, finishing at around 10.15 pm.