

**SEBRA**  
**SOUTH EAST BAYSWATER**  
**RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION**

**44th Annual General Meeting – 26 November 2014**

**Minutes**

The 2014 Annual General Meeting of SEBRA was held in the Porchester Hall. Some 120+ members of SEBRA attended; there were also approximately 50 guests. John Zamit, Chairman of SEBRA, opened the meeting at 7.10pm.

**1 Welcome and Arrangements**

The Chairman welcomed all and thanked everyone for attending, apologising for the queue to register. He expressed thanks to GLL, operators of the Porchester Hall, for once again providing the Hall for the meeting, and especially to Gillan Kelly, the Porchester Centre's General Manager, and to Hall Manager Ben McEntergat and Duty Event Manager Josh Cooper. He also thanked all the sponsors for their generous support. The Chairman read a list of a number of Committee Members and invited Guests who apologised for non-attendance.

The Chairman pointed out that displays of pictures of Crossrail progress and of proposals for Paddington Central/Sheldon Square were at the rear of the Hall.

He went on to explain the format for the meeting. There would also be a free sponsored raffle draw with eight excellent prizes provided by sponsors, followed by a reception.

**2 Introduction of Guests**

The Chairman introduced his fellow occupants of the Top Table:

- Councillor Philippa Roe, Leader of the Council
- Nigel Hardy, Head of Sponsorship Transport for London,
- Niki Walker-Tassell, Act. Chief Inspector, Metropolitan Police
- Councillor Melvyn Caplan, Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate & Customer Service
- John Walton, President of SEBRA
- Karen Buck, MP for Westminster North (due to arrive later)
- Councillor Ed Argar, Cabinet Member for City Management, Transport & Infrastructure (due to arrive later).

The Chairman congratulated Councillor Richard Holloway on being elected as a Councillor for Bayswater Ward, replacing Michael Brahams, and Karen Scarborough as a Councillor for Marylebone High Street Ward. The Chairman said that he regretted that neither Charlie Parker, the Chief Executive of Westminster City Council nor Ben Denton, its Executive Director for Growth, Planning and Housing had responded to SEBRA's invitation even after reminders.

He also pointed out that SEBRA's big yellow plastic duck was back by popular demand to ensure none of our guests 'ducked' any questions from the floor!

Introductions were made of various invited guests, especially Martin Low, the Council's Commissioner of Transportation; John Walker, Operational Director of Development Planning; and a number of Planning Officers at Westminster City Council including Mike Chatten and Amanda Coulson of the North Planning Team, and Roald Piper and Martin Sone of the Planning Enforcement Team.

The Chairman also pointed out the Editor of SEBRA *NEWS*, Christopher Tanous, who was taking photographs; he was thanked and congratulated for the latest

edition of the magazine.

### **3 Election of the Committee**

The Chairman introduced the election by welcoming three recently co-opted Committee members and giving a brief background of each. They were Jack Gordon, John King and Catherine Watters (Hon Secretary). He thanked all Committee members for their time and assistance over the past year.

The Chairman also thanked Barbara Suckle, who was retiring from the Committee, for her many years of service to SEBRA.

Turning to the formal election of Committee members, the Chairman confirmed that nominations for the Committee had been set out in the Notice of the Meeting and repeated in the Agenda, of which a copy has been placed on every chair. He said that no other nominations had been received.

Tony Shaw proposed the re-election of all those named (below), and Lynda King-Taylor seconded. On a show of hands, all nominees were elected nem con.

#### **Committee elected**

David Brewin: 14 Westbourne Grove Terrace

Jeannie Dixon: 162 Gloucester Terrace

Jack Gordon: 54 Keynham House, Westbourne Park Road

Angus Hudson: 21 Cleveland Square

John King: 4 Heron Court, 63 Lancaster Gate

Penny Linnett: 32 Westbourne Park Road

Tom Meinhard, 34 Lancaster Gate

Michael Nicholson: 17 Craven Hill Mews

Catherine Watters: 165 Gloucester Terrace

John Zamit, 2 Claremont Court, Queensway

### **4 Adoption of the Accounts**

The Chairman introduced the accounts to 31 March 2014 (*at Annex A to these Minutes*), which had been provided to all attending. He said that the year's activities showed a deficit of some £508, but that, thanks to our generous sponsors, the Summer Party had made a surplus, and funds remained well over £80,000. He wished to thank Veolia Environmental Services and General Demolition for sponsoring this evening's reception.

Adoption of the accounts was proposed by Teresa Stokes and seconded by another member.

On a show of hands, the accounts were adopted nem con.

### **5 Minor changes to the SEBRA Constitution**

The Chairman briefly discussed the possibility of SEBRA becoming a Neighbourhood Forum in the future and outlined the benefits of doing so. To qualify, should we wish to apply for this change of status, minor changes would have to be made to the Constitution; these were therefore being dealt with now. The first was to Article 5, to state clearly that local Councillors were eligible to become members. Secondly, a minor addition to the SEBRA area (of a small parcel of land in its north-eastern corner, between Brewers Court and the railway behind) had been made by the Council. This required small changes to the map which is included in the SEBRA Constitution.

These proposed changes had been notified in the Notice of the AGM which had been sent to all members in September, and had also been included on the Agenda. A resolution to change the Constitution accordingly was proposed and seconded by members. On a show of hands the resolution was agreed nem con.

The Chairman said that the new Committee would look into the pros and cons of SEBRA becoming a Neighbourhood Forum.

## **6 Invited Speaker, Councillor Philippa Roe**

The Chairman then invited Councillor Philippa Roe, Leader of Westminster City Council, to speak. Her address was entitled: *'Growth . . . is the new buzzword at the Council'*.

Councillor Roe started by saying that growth was an enormous subject in the mind of Central Government and is a fundamental policy for getting out of the recession, and it is working. How does this relate to a local authority she asked? This would be possible through Growth Deals, and devolution to local authorities to re-balance the economy.

The focus for Westminster regarding devolution was:

- to support our most vulnerable residents with disabilities, mental health issues, and to help the long-term unemployed to overcome barriers and move towards employment;
- to plan for the considerable stimulus that Crossrail and associated developments will have on our local economy.

With regard to the latter, Crossrail would bring an additional 165 million people into Westminster annually. This is a fantastic opportunity for businesses, but it needs to be managed effectively to protect our residents. The trick would be to balance and manage the busy areas and not allow them to overflow into the quiet leafy residential neighbourhoods. WCC has created a new 'West End Partnership' to manage the West End. Its aim was to bring everyone together to ensure all were 'singing from the same hymn sheet', to protect residents and our iconic historic sites alike. Councillor Roe went on to say that Westminster contributes a significant proportion of the Council Tax on Commercial Properties to Central Government, the largest in the country.

Local authorities have taken huge cuts and Westminster had already had a 20 per cent cut, and things might get worse. However, efficiency savings would be achieved through partnerships with adjacent Boroughs to encourage businesses to invest in Westminster. The Council needed to save £100 million over the next three years. Councillor Roe concluded by thanking SEBRA for inviting her to speak.

The Chairman responded by saying he felt Queensway needed rejuvenation and that its buildings should be protected, as it was in a designated 'Stress Area'.

Councillor Roe agreed and says she too wanted to preserve the heritage of our areas, which should not look like other modern cities, where buildings were added too insensitively. She feels better planning is essential and gave the example of recent works in Regent Street; she ended by saying 'it's not about going up!'

A quick-witted member quipped that it was about 'going down instead!'

Councillor Roe responded by saying that this no doubt referred to underground excavations. She said that a new Basement Policy had just 'gone out to consultation', with the objective of minimising the effects of such developments. She said that it was, however, extremely difficult to control basement extensions under current planning law.

The Chairman introduced Mike Clarke, Director of Tri-borough Libraries and Archives, and congratulated him on his first year in the role. He also thanked Roald Piper and his Planning Enforcement team for reacting quickly to complaints, and gave an example of the team's recent work. It had taken successful enforcement action in Devonshire Terrace where internal alterations had been made to a small hotel - a listed building - without obtaining the necessary consents.

## **7 Question Time**

The Chairman invited questions from the floor.

At this point Karen Buck MP and Councillor Ed Argar arrived; they were invited to join the top table in time to answer any questions directed to them.

**Q Paul Faulk (Bayswater Road)** was perturbed about the number of cyclists disregarding red lights and breaking the law, which he felt must lead to a very serious accident. He suggested that cyclists should be licenced and have third party insurance, and asked what the Police were doing about it?

**A Chief Inspector Niki Walker-Tassell** agreed that this was a problem, and said that the Metropolitan Police were addressing it. They were issuing on the spot fines to cyclists breaking the law, and were working with London Councils to work toward a solution, within the legislation available.

**Nigel Hardy (TfL)** added that the number of people who actually break the law is actually a very small proportion of all cyclists. The audience disagreed very strongly with this comment and showed considerable disapproval.

Mr Hardy went on to say that cycling was continuing to grow at a rate of 10 per cent per annum, with 6,000 cycling trips made in London each day. 'Operation Safeway' had been introduced in late October 2013 in response to the high number of cyclists being killed on the roads. Police were highly visible in cycling 'hot-spots' and were issuing tickets to cyclists and other road users alike. This had continued during the past twelve months with good results. TfL was taking steps to ensure that cyclists have appropriate facilities so they were not tempted to break the law and risk their lives.

**Q David Butter (Westbourne Park Road)** stated the proposed East-West Cycle Super Highway was a good idea. There are too many cars in London and there is a shortage of Barclays Bikes in the area

**Q A member** suggested the main mis-users of bicycles in London were tourists who had no interest in obeying the law. She felt that enough had been done to accommodate tourists but not enough was being done for residents.

**The Chairman** closed the questions on cycling by saying SEBRA supports the concept of the East-West Cycling Superhighway in principle, but wanted to ensure there would be a benefit for all from it – cyclists, bus passengers, pedestrians and other road users.

At this point Councillor Roe had to leave. The Chairman presented gifts of a Paddington Bear (in a blue coat) and a book on Westbourne Grove to her. He then gave similar presents to Chief Inspector Walker-Tassel and Karen Buck MP (whose Paddington Bear was dressed in red), as thanks for their attendance. He said that the Paddingtons had been especially commissioned and flown in from Peru, properly dressed in the correct political colours!

*This was well received by the guests, and by the members with loud applause.*

**Q Catherine Fernandez (Star Street)** said that shisha cafés in her area were disturbing the peace. Residents are affected by the strong smell from them. She had contacted the Council and complained on numerous occasions, but nothing had been done about it. What else could she do?

**A Councillor Melvyn Caplan** explained that smoking shisha is not an offence. If the questioner was suffering a nuisance the Council would look in to it and ensure that the café operates in an appropriate way.

**John Walker (Westminster City Council)** added that the Council was trying to tackle the problem of shisha smoking, and had conducted a strict check on such establishments last year, to ensure that they were conforming to their planning permission. The counter-argument was that smoking shisha outdoors is the same as smoking a cigarette and planning permission is not normally required for the

purpose. Warning notices about the creation of a nuisance had been issued, but planning enforcement did take a long time. The success rate when enforcement cases go to appeal was mixed; some appeals are successful - others are not.

**Q Sue Semlani (Hereford Mews)** asked what was being done to protect small businesses in the area? And was anything being done about turning offices into flats, particularly on Westbourne Grove.

**A The Chairman** said that central Government had been 'railroading' the conversion of offices into flats by changing planning law to allow this to be done without planning consent, except in the West End. This is having a detrimental affect on small local businesses which exist to service the needs of workers in the offices.

**Councillor Caplan** said the Council was concerned about offices being converted to flats and wanted to see a balance. £1.8 billion a year in business rates is collected and handed to central Government. The Council is now preparing policies to support small businesses.

**The Chairman** said that SEBRA has voiced its concerns for many years regarding this and has put forward suggestions. He went on to say that the good news for Westbourne Grove is that it will have new paving from Queensway to Garway Road.

**Q A member** asked when Queensway would get rid of its tacky shops and be upgraded?

**A The Chairman** agreed that Queensway did need an upgrade and hoped it would happen once the future of Whiteleys was decided. The matter had been given full coverage in recent issues of SEBRA NEWS.

**Q Ian Lieber (Craven Terrace)** said that he had been a local business owner for many years, in which there had been frequent changes in the character of local shops and businesses there. He asked the Council to look at and decide on which part(s) of this street should be residential and which ones commercial.

**A The Chairman** agreed with the questioner in general, but stated that businesses in the area were doing fairly well despite high business rates; there were not many vacant shops in our area

**Councillor Ed Argar** spoken on the general subject of the street environment, and asked members to give their suggestions on which streets need resurfacing, saying that Craven Terrace was on the list of possibles. His decision on which streets would be re-surfaced and/or re-paved will be published in February 2015.

**A Karen Buck MP** also replied to Mr Lieber, saying the High Street was changing due to the success of the Internet and of supermarkets. Local authorities should have more power to 'zone' areas for particular uses. With regard to the Government's current proposal to de-regulate short-term lettings', Westminster Council had made a strong case against this, to protect small businesses and the community as a whole. If the current draft legislation now in front of Parliament did go through it would make it very difficult to maintain a healthy residential community.

**Q Sven Haaje (Salem Road)** asked SEBRA to keep a watchful eye on the Post Office in Queensway so that it did not close.

**A The Chairman** said he had heard 'on the grapevine' that it would not close.

**Q Mary Moore-Mason (Hereford Road)** asked what was happening to the former Print Room at 34 Hereford Road. Why was it derelict? Also there were squatters living there.

**A The Chairman** said that the premises were a business property, and that he thought that the squatters had left. The owner was planning to develop it; his planning applications were complicated, and a recent one had been rejected. The property was in a poor state of repair.

**Q Ian Lieber (Craven Terrace)** asked what is happening with the empty property on the corner of Lancaster Gate?

**A The Chairman** believed that the property was due to become flats/serviced apartments. The owner of 10/11 Lancaster Gate had spent a lot of money making its façade safe. No further news was known as yet.

**Q André Barreau (Gloucester Mews)** asked what is happening with the old Post Office building in Praed Street. A lot of rough sleepers were using the covered area of pavement fronting onto Praed Street causing a nuisance.

**A John Walker (Westminster City Council)** said that the developers of the well-known 'Shard' office block at London Bridge have shown interest in both this building and the former Royal Mail Sorting Office building nearby (at 31 London Street). They had said they planned to convert both it and the Praed Street building to a mix of flats and offices. However, London Underground was also involved, as it was planning to convert the basement of the proposed new building at 31 London Street into a new ticket hall for the Bakerloo Line Underground station at Paddington with new escalators down to it. In the meantime, Crossrail was using both sites until 2018.

**Q Councillor Susie Burbridge** asked the Crossrail representative where would it be possible to drop off passengers from private cars at Paddington Station? She added that taxis were causing a lot of pollution and difficulty with an unofficial rank they had created in Praed Street. Without waiting for an answer she also announced that a free old-fashioned Music Hall and Afternoon Show for local residents over 65 was to be held at the Lancaster London Hotel on the 8 December. It had been organised by herself and local Ward Councillors, and sponsored by SEBRA, among others.

**Karen Buck MP** mentioned a London scheme to help those who are sleeping rough. She asked the general public to inform her and local Councillors where people were doing this, so they could receive the assistance they needed.

**Councillor Antonia Cox - Hyde Park Ward** said that rough sleepers in the area were frequently moved on, but did come back. The issue was hostelling; also, she would like the covered area outside the Old Post Office Building in Praed Street to be closed off until rebuilding starts in 2018.

**Q Rose Cleary (Hallfield Estate)** asked why there were so many out of date road diversion and suspended parking signs in the area.

**A Councillor Ed Argar** said that these signs should be taken down immediately that works had finished. The Council had high standards and people should please let him know if this was not being done.

## **8 Raffle draw and Social gathering**

It was now 8.40 pm. The draw for raffle prizes then took place.

**The prizes**, generously donated by the organisations concerned, were:

**Hereford Road Restaurant** A voucher for £60;

**Winter Wonderland, Hyde Park** A Family Ticket for 4 (2 adults and 2 children);

**The Commander Restaurant** Vouchers to the value of £100;

**P & O Cross Channel Ferries** A Dover/Calais ticket for car & 6 people;

**Alchemi Group** Gift vouchers for £100 from Spirited Wines;

**Lancaster London Hotel** Christmas High Tea for 4 people;

**Meyer Bergman and The Warrior Group** Marks & Spencer gift vouchers for £250;

**DCD Properties** A Harrods Christmas Hamper.

The meeting closed at 8.50 pm, and those present moved to the rear of the Hall, where beer, wines and soft drinks were provided. Staff from 'Anna's Kitchen' served a good selection of hot and cold canapés. The post-AGM social gathering went on until 10.45pm.

## **ANNEX 1**

### **Guest List (excluding those mentioned in the minutes)**

**Sally Beck:** General Manager, Lancaster London Hotel

**Richard Brown:** Licensing advisor, Citizens Advice Bureau

**Tom Burke:** North Team Planning, WCC

**Colin Buttery:** Deputy Chief Executive Royal Parks

**Kay Buxton:** Chief Executive, The Paddington Partnership

**Philip Byrne:** Centre Director, Whiteleys

**Richard Clifton:** Planning, WCC

**Councillor Brian Connell:** Bayswater Ward

**Scott Edgell:** General Manager, Veolia

**Lawrence Foe:** Paddington Library WCC

**Andrew Herrington:** TFL

**Graham King:** Head of Strategic Planning WCC

**PC Ram Kumar:** Bayswater Ward

**Martin Low:** Commissioner of Transport WCC

**Vinnie Masseri:** Senior Contract Manager, Veolia

**Don Murchie:** Senior Transport Manager, WCC

**Paul Rowden:** Community Relations Office, Crossrail

**Councillor Suhail Ruhaja:** Bayswater Ward

**Councillor Karen Scarborough:** Marylebone High Street Ward

**Keith Sibley:** Area Director West, Crossrail

**Sgt Ken Taylor:** Metropolitan Police (Hyde Park Ward SNT)

**Elizabeth Williams:** Manager, Paddington Libraries

### **Apologies**

**Councillor Heather Acton:** Cabinet Member, Sustainability & Parking

**Paul Akers:** Arboricultural Manager WCC

**Mark Banks:** Group Manager, Waste & Parks WCC

**Richard Barker:** Director of Sport, Leisure and Well-being WCC

**David Brewin:** SEBRA Committee

**Leon Daniels:** Managing Director, Surface Transport, TFL

**Councillor Robert Davis:** Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for the Built Environment

**Sheila Davis:** Hon. Secretary, Hyde Park Estate Association

**Councillor Paul Dimoldenberg:** Leader of Labour Opposition WCC

**Mark Field MP:** MP for the Cities of London & Westminster

**Councillor Jean-Paul Floru:** Hyde Park Ward  
**Andrew Garwood-Watkins:** Paddington Waterways & Maida Vale Society  
**Pascal Hauret:** Regional Director, Veolia Environmental Services  
**Andrew Jordon:** Chair, Westbourne Neighbourhood Association  
**Gillan Kelly:** General Manager, Porchester Centre  
**Daniel Le Grange:** GLL  
**Linda Lennon CBE:** Chief Executive, Royal Parks  
**Penny Linnett:** SEBRA Committee  
**Kit Malthouse:** Deputy Mayor, GLA  
**Leith Penny:** Strategic Director, City Management WCC  
**Sue Price:** Chairman, The Friends of Hyde Park & Kensington Gardens  
**Tony Rice:** Tri-Borough Libraries & Archives  
**Barry Smith:** Operational Director, City Planning WCC.  
**Michael Smith:** Assistant Centre Director, Whiteleys  
**Elizabeth Virgo:** Chair, Paddington Waterways & Maida Vale Society  
**Andrew Wolstenholme:** Chief Executive, Crossrail  
**Christopher Wright:** Hon Secretary Bayswater Residents Association

## **ANNEX 1**

### **SEBRA Annual Accounts to 31 March 2014**

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