

## **Sovereign Harbour Residents' Association**

### **Minutes of General Meeting 24 November 2005**

#### **1. Welcome to Members and Guests**

Rick Runalls welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Alan Everard the speaker for the evening, who is the judge of the photographic competition. He also welcomed Councillors Patrick Warner and Patrick Bowker.

#### **2. Introduction of the Committee and Apologies**

There was one apology for absence from the Treasurer, Barry Miles. The Committee then introduced themselves in turn.

Midge Killen is Events and Competition organiser. She lives in North Harbour.

Colin White. He is reviewing the site and its history from 1973 and will be asking serious questions of the Council in respect of the development of the site. He also lives on the North harbour.

Molly Burton is the Secretary and has lived on North Harbour for 5 years. She normally answers the telephone when Members call.

John O' Hara is the Vice-Chairman and lives on South Harbour. He is looking into the planning and architectural details of the harbour and is currently fact-finding to establish what has gone wrong and how it can be turned around.

Rick Runalls is the Chairman and is now living permanently on North Harbour.

Ian Weeks is responsible for Communications. He produces Waterlines and has developed the web site.

Carol Golder lives on South Harbour and loves living here. She wants to ensure that the rest of the harbour development ends up as a super place to live.

Jan Weeks and Marj Pratt were busy outside the hall and were unable to introduce themselves to the meeting.

#### **3. Structure for the Evening**

The Chairman introduced the Agenda for the meeting as on the printed sheet and then handed over to Alan Everard to give his presentation before judging the photographic competition.

### **3. Presentation on the Gardens and Wildlife of the Area**

Alan explained his interest in nature and the RSPB and showed a stunning selection of his own photographs of local flora and fauna. There were beautiful pictures of flowers, butterflies, birds, trees, sunrises and sunsets. He mentioned how lovely Abbots Wood was for bluebells. He then judged the SHRA Photographic Competition and announced the prize winners in reverse order as follows:

- 6<sup>th</sup> J Roff. Main Harbour
- 5<sup>th</sup> W M Prest. Lifeboat entering Harbour
- 4<sup>th</sup> Susan Hess. September Dawn – Turner at Sovereign Harbour
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Joan Baxter. Sunrise on the Harbour
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Elaine Smith. Misty Harbour
- 1<sup>st</sup> Mark Jarvis. Sleeping Swan

He presented Elaine with her prize as the other prize winners were unfortunately not present.

### **4. Chairman's Report**

Rick firstly mentioned that our Community Constables had also been invited and he hoped they would be able to attend although they were presently at another meeting. He also had the sad duty to announce that Brian Dennis, having been voted on to the Committee was resigning as he was leaving the harbour. Rick was sad to see him go.

He then advised the meeting that a great deal had happened since the Committee had been voted in back in May. He made it clear that the Committee had no business interests in the harbour and that their objective was to build a community and at the same time endeavour to represent residents' views in a transparent way. He hoped that Members found Waterlines useful as well as the website. He wanted the SHRA to become an effective mouth-piece for residents' views to all relevant bodies. He recognised that the Association could be criticised for focussing on certain issues, i.e. B&Q, but that the Committee was keen to work in concert with other groups such as No to B&Q. B&Q was a big issue but not the only one. He was aware that the site may end up with office development which could be good for the town but not necessarily for harbour residents.

The Association will continue to focus on the 5 development sites and others. There was a need to tackle everyone who was involved with these and it would be a long hard fight. The harbour has so many needs, a medical centre, community centre etc. Where were the facilities for mothers and babies, youth groups etc? Some members of the Committee were attending planning meetings resulting in officers of the Council getting used to seeing them. They were also trying to pick up on smaller issues such as noise, dogs, quad bikes etc. and will try to deal with these when possible. It was difficult to promote a real community without a community centre and there was a need to share activities such as Halloween and the photographic competition. All new ideas were welcome. Midge was

looking at a carol event and was seeking help with this. One objective of the Committee was the best use of funds. Producing the newsletter was expensive, especially when it comes out each month, so it was pleasing that some sponsorship had been achieved. There was however, a need to raise more funds. It would be good to have a greater inclusion of people around the harbour and perhaps we could affiliate with other small groups. He also wanted to give good value for Members' fees. For example, the Association was looking to develop contacts with local businesses to obtain discounts.

Finally Rick commented that B&Q were likely to appeal but had not done so as yet. The Association therefore needs to be prepared and will have to produce a report which will take a great deal of effort. He was very pleased with residents' feedback offering support and even money, one resident offering £50. He did say however, that there have been some complaints that the focus of the Association is wrong, but hopes that in time it will be possible to satisfy most people.

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

In the absence of the Treasurer, Rick reported that the year started with a balance of £1,318 and was now £3,248. There had been a lot of expenditure including £1,800 for printing, which was offset by £800 of advertising. Costs included stationery and equipment costs, PO Box, telephone, copies of plans and reports. There was also the cost of the hire of buses for the planning meeting and internet costs. There were currently funds in hand. Membership as of tonight stood at 450 whilst at the end of last year there were only 35-40 members.

## **8. Key Issues**

### **Harbour Development and Planning Issues**

John O'Hara informed the Members that the birth of the harbour was begun by an Act of Parliament. The land was originally owned by the Duke of Devonshire and was then sold to a consortium headed by the Tarmac group. The original concept was stunning, but the actual development has turned out to be 'something of a dog's dinner'! Much of the damage has been done, but the situation can be improved. What has failed is integration between the water areas and the living areas. He was very concerned about the other 5 sites, particularly North Harbour. There is a need to ensure they're not squandered and everyone has the right to have a say. He had a meeting recently with Carillion and asked what is going to happen to the boat park. There appears to be no thought to the practicalities of moving this elsewhere and in his opinion all the remaining sites need to be vigorously defended.

Ian Weeks mentioned 'Site 6' in North Harbour. People had always been told this was to be for ablutions and a car park for berth holders. In 1998 a planning application had been made to move the pumping station prior to building a car park for 55 cars with work to start within 5 years. The pumping station was moved but the car park was not built. Now the suggestion is that the site can be used for building. When Carillion was asked

about the car park they advised that they had no intention of building the car park even though this plan had been submitted. Serious questions therefore need to be asked. The conditions for development said every development would have open space for amenities such as play areas. Any application for residential development on any of these sites should be fought, as effectively the land has been stolen from us.

Colin White said we needed to separate fact from fiction. Over time he thinks there has been a misunderstanding by the Council as to what their responsibilities were. In 1978 the land was barren shingle. Eastbourne Council thought it could be developed into a prestigious development. The original proposal was for a 'village' of 502 houses. There are now 3,500 homes. We exceed Prescott's density guidelines by a large margin. Carillion were the first company to take an interest but instead of the Council insisting on detailed planning, outline consents were granted on a large scale, which meant that the developers could then dictate the size and scale of building. Colin said he did not think the Council intended the area to be over-developed and are now giving a lot of help and support to residents. He would like to see the sites either used for the community or left as open land as they are the only open spaces left. He finally made the comment that the residents of Sovereign Harbour had given Eastbourne millions of pounds in council tax, local spending etc., and will fight every step of the way to stop the harbour being spoilt further.

Rick Runnalls said he felt both frustration and satisfaction but we should look at the future. What had gone on in the past was a disgrace. What was at issue was very little opportunity to offset the balance. As the development of the harbour had been initiated by an Act of Parliament, it may be able to force a review although it would be hard to establish how the process has been managed. He has written to Nigel Waterson our MP to ask him to apply for a Judicial Review and he should have first crack at this. We need assurance that residents' views will be taken into account. If he is not prepared to do it, any MP or peer can do it. It is one way focus can be made on the whole issue of the development.

### **Sovereign Harbour Trust**

There was also the issue of the Sovereign Harbour Trust which is responsible for overseeing the use of the funds received by all harbour residents. This is clearly of interest to us as we all pay. There are 6 seats on the Board of Trustees, 3 from Carillion and 3 from the Environment Agency. Rick has applied to the Board for a seat to have an ear. He had written to the secretary and had received a letter back after a couple of months. He will write back asking formally for a seat as the Board can form another one. He has also contacted the Environment Agency as they have not taken up any of their seats.

## **Completion and hand-over of paths and roads**

Carol Golder talked about paths and roads. In South Harbour sub-contractors have left roads unfinished and there is now infighting as to where the responsibility lies to rectify this. There are also problems near the lock gates as the developers have left the site with work not finished. When all works are finished the freeholders sell the freeholds to management companies and once roads have been adopted it is easier to fight any abuse by the management companies on their charges. She has talked to various people who have had problems with managing agents. It is also hoped that we could get more landscaping to improve the look of the harbour. Most North Harbour developments have now been completed but Carillion won't agree to complete the road until the Council adopts it. Residents are looking forward to adoption by the Council but there were real problems with a catch 22 situation arising as the Council won't adopt the roads until work is completed. A speaker from the floor advised that a letter had been received from Westbury announcing repairs to Santa Cruz Drive prior to adoption by the Council.

## **Antisocial behaviour**

A speaker from the floor raised the issue of restrictive covenants on his property which including no nuisance or trading. As a car dealer was clearly trading from 2 doors away he had sought advice from Eastbourne Borough Council and was advised that there was nothing they could do. It is only the freeholder who can enforce covenants and if they are not inclined to do so there is nothing neighbouring residents can do. A letter had been sent to the dealer who temporarily ceased trading but has now recommenced. Patrick Warner, a Sovereign Harbour conservative ward councillor has said the Council will take another look at the situation. Trading Standards have also been contacted. The conclusion was that restrictive covenants are not there for our benefit and that developers will only enforce them when it is in their interests to do so. Rick said he was pleased to hear that Patrick was now involved.

He then introduced Martin Hylands and Emma Southall our Community Support Officers. Martin explained that they were civilian members of the public. They were employed by the Police and had 80% of their powers but no power of arrest. There are currently 14 in Eastbourne split into 2 shifts. Martin and Emma cover Sovereign Harbour and St Anthony's. They can be reached via email through the police web site or on 0845 60 70 999.

## **Work on the sea wall and outer harbour**

A lot of work will be carried out on sea defences on the inside of the outer harbour during the winter. There has been some degradation on the back of the breakwater. The wall of the outer harbour is not as deep as it should be and some stone blocks will be delivered to improve the defences.

## **Open Session**

It was kept short as time was pressing, but one question from the floor was 'if the roads in the harbour are not adopted how come we are paying such high council tax?!'

## **AOB**

Rick said that anything residents could do to help the Association would be most welcome. The constitution dictates that the Association requires an auditor who should ideally be an accountant. A Mr L Pegley volunteered from the floor.

Finally there was a vote of thanks to everyone who has helped the Association and tonight's meeting.

The meeting was closed at 10.10pm.