



MINUTES OF THE 2024 OWGRA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Wednesday 29 May 2024, 19.00-21.15

at the Indian Gymkhana Club, Thornbury Avenue, Osterley, TW7 4NQ

Present: Lis Guest (Street Rep Coordinator), Colin Hume (Crime & ASB, Friends of Jersey Gardens, chaired the AGM), Edward Locke (Membership Secretary), Ian Speed (Treasurer), Barbara Stryjak (Campaign Coordinator), Leo Vermeulen (Webmaster), and 84 OWGRA members and guests.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cliff Assi, Qasim Beg, Robert Cook, Patrick Culleton, Kevin Grindrod, Bharat Jain, Rev Elis Matthews, David Pavett, Brenda Perry, Mike Perry, Lynwen Roe.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the last AGM held on 25 May 2023

The minutes of the 2023 AGM had been e-mailed to OWGRA members prior to the 2024 AGM. Andy Williams proposed, and Ian Todd seconded. The minutes were therefore approved.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman's report had been e-mailed to OWGRA members prior to the 2024 AGM.

In addition to the campaigns of 2023/24 (Osterley Park Hotel, Brentford Football Club Training Ground, Rothbury Gardens, Grasshoppers external events) the successful campaign to stop the demolition of Vine Lodge was noted (where 55 objections had been submitted to the Council). Basil Mann proposed, and Mo Beg seconded. The Chairman's report was therefore approved. Thanks were conveyed to our Ward Councillors for their continued support.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report had been e-mailed to OWGRA members prior to the 2024 AGM. The Treasurer summarised the accounts which had been audited and signed off. Income from membership fees is steady. OWGRA was pleased to secure a £500 grant from Hounslow Council towards running expenses. Costs are kept to a minimum eg West Thames College provides a meeting room for OWGRA Committee meetings at no charge. The Friends of Jersey Gardens had also secured a grant from Hounslow Council towards the purchase of two picnic benches for Jersey Gardens. There was a special vote of thanks to Barbara Shah for her work in keeping Jersey Gardens clear of litter for many years.

George Andraos proposed, and Andy Williams seconded. The Treasurer's report was therefore approved.

5. Election of the New Committee

Lis Guest was standing down from the Committee and was thanked for her hard work as Street Rep Coordinator. This leaves the Committee considerably depleted with only 6 members. There had been no new nominations for the committee. The election of the remaining Committee was then proposed, and agreed by all. Malik Dhala proposed and Salvinder Bains seconded.

6. AOB

- OWGRA was thanked for supporting the Wyke Gardens Estate in their legal dispute with Nishkam.
- Concern was expressed about traffic increases and speeding on Thornbury Road.
- Ward Councillors reported that traffic counting had been done on Jersey Road, and more recently on College Rd/Ridgeway Rd (results awaited).
- Some local roads affected by school traffic have been monitored by CCTV.
- There was some discussion about speed humps, where one is being requested for removal on Jersey Road but others were requested for other roads eg Wood Lane (north) zebra crossing, St Mary's Crescent.
- There is a group within OWGRA working on transport issues along the A4 in Osterley with our London Assembly Member, TfL, LBH Transport Officers and Ward Councillors. School Travel Plans are on the agenda for the future.
- Residents were reminded to report potholes on Fix My Street.
- A resident complained about the state of the pavements on Roxborough Ave (made worse by Council recycling vehicles) and dangerous speeding and poor quality of Northumberland Ave road surface.
- LTNs increase use, damage and pollution on other roads.
- Residents were encouraged to respond to CLEMP (Construction Logistics and Environment Management Plan) for the Homebase site.
- Feedback on Lime bike trial and parking bays. There will be a review.
- Speed cameras are needed on Syon Lane.
- Update on Tesco/Homebase development. Developer should be setting up a formally constituted Community Engagement Group for the duration of the building work.

The formal AGM was then closed at 19.50, when refreshments were provided by the Gymkhana and the meeting reconvened at 20.15.

7. Guest Speaker: Councillor Shantanu Rajawat, Leader of Hounslow Council

The Leader was introduced and then mentioned how he had been a Councillor since 2010 in Heston West, and had become Leader in 2022.

- The Leader is trying to transform how the Council is working with residents.
- The relationship between Councillors and Officers in Hounslow is good.
- The model in Hounslow is that of a Strong Leader and Cabinet (10 members in total), vs a Committee model which had previously operated in LBH.
- There are 62 Councillors (52 Labour, 10 Conservative).
- The Leader explained why the financial situation for councils is getting more and more difficult, partly due to reduced grants from Central Government since 2010, and inflation, resulting in the Council Tax in Hounslow rising by the permitted maximum of 5%.
- Single year settlements from Central Government make it difficult to plan for the longer term.
- Migration has an impact on the local housing waiting list, which already numbers 7.5K people.
- The Home Office funds accommodation costs for immigrants.
- Hounslow was one of the first councils to declare a Climate Emergency (in 2019).
- Hounslow is a very diverse community and has an active voluntary sector.
- The Leader stressed that Hounslow is a 'listening council', that they 'enjoy hearing our views'.

- The Leader then presented a list of achievements (eg in education, adult social care, health care, environment), and challenges (eg bringing services closer to home through Community and Family Hubs, new Safer Communities Strategy, attracting investment, building homes) which were included in a slide pack sent after the AGM to OWGRA members.

There followed a Q&A session for the Leader of the Council:

- Q: What is the Council's policy on response times to residents questions, as there has been a deterioration in responses to questions from residents by LBH, with infrequent acknowledgement of receipt of emails and no response for weeks.
A: The policy is to respond within 10 working days. There has been an increase in workload and a reduction in staff numbers, but contact the Leader directly if delays continue.
- Q: What is LBH doing to control vermin in Osterley and Spring Grove ward before this becomes a serious public health issue? There has been an increase in sightings of rats especially in Wood Lane (north).
A: The LBH Animal & Pest Control team is small.
- Q: What was the purpose of reducing the speed limit on the Great West Road from 40mph to 30mph for the Heston stretch? Signage is lacking or unclear.
A: Decision taken by TfL or National Highways based on collision data. It is only a trial at this stage. Income from speeding goes to National Highways not LBH.
- Q: Does Hounslow accept residents from other boroughs for its social housing?
A: No, and applicants for social housing have to have resided in Hounslow for 5 years.
- Q: Hounslow High St is looking very run down (Feltham town centre looks better).
A: The Masterplan for Hounslow High St was completed in early 2024, but there are still questions about what will happen to the Treaty Centre, but it will continue to contain some retail.
- Q: What is happening about knife crime?
A: Police are very stretched, but a Community Safety Team is being set up by the Council and should be in place by end summer 2024.
- Q: Council Officers are not being held to account. Examples were given of on-going problems eg lack of planning enforcement.
A: Answers to be provided after the meeting to specific issues.
- Q: Lack of cultural provision in Hounslow, and closure of Watermans
A: Culture taken very seriously in Hounslow. It was the unsustainable utilities bill at Watermans that led to its closure. A new purpose built energy efficient Arts Centre is due to open in Brentford in 2026 at the earliest.
- Q: Relationship between Council and residents not ideal. Lack of results from the Council could mean that people are put off getting involved. Can the Council empower residents to help solve problems themselves?
A: Need to consider devolution to local communities, including small levels of funding. Ward Councillors have access to funds to spend in their wards (c £1K each), some of which comes from developers.
- Q: How will the success of Community Hubs be evaluated?
A: Feltham was the first one and will be evaluated on the number and types of queries coming in.

8. Close of Meeting

The Chairman of the meeting thanked the Leader of the Council for his contribution, also those attending, and the Indian Gymkhana for its hospitality.

The AGM closed at 21.15.