

TWRA AGM

8th April 2019

Chairman's report

As Chairman of your association, I extend a warm welcome to for the association's 2019 AGM. I thank you all for kindly giving up your time to attend.

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Nigel Robbins. I am a Chartered Transport Planner transport planning having worked on a number of large-scale projects around the world, including ports and highway schemes up to \$25 billion in capital value. I now run my own business where I use mapping technologies and geography to help inform decisions, principally working with large-scale housing provider. I have lived in the village for nearly 50 years, having moved here with my parents from Staines in 1970. I feel fortunate to have lived in the ward for all these years. As many of you may know, I took the Chairman role in 2017.

I would like to express my thanks for all the Committee and indeed members who have helped contribute to the association, now in its 81st year.

I would like to express considerable thanks to Pat. Many of you will know Pat and she has become our Associations' 'go to person' for many of you wishing to raise issues. Pat has worked tirelessly for the community. I have to report tonight that Pat has decided, for personal reasons, to step down from the Committee and in doing so we have lost an amazing Secretary. I and all the Committee would like to use this opportunity to pay thanks to Pat for all her hard work and all she has done for our community over the years. Pat is not attending tonight, but Carole has agreed to read her final Secretary's report. A card will be left on the table here at the front so at the end of the AGM formalities anybody who would like to sign the card and extend thanks to her can do so. She will be greatly missed, but we wish her and her family every best wish for the future.

Ian, our Treasurer, continues to do an amazing job looking after the financial affairs of the Committee. He is also your Committee member that assembles all the news items and sends these out via MailChimp. Sadly, the TWRA Gardening Club folded this year due to lack of support, but Ian still helps with keeping the war memorial looking so neat and tidy. The memorial now stands out. Whilst on the subject, I thank Cllr Gill for all her efforts last year to raise funds and ensure those from WWII are now rightly recognised. It was an honour, as your Chairman, to be involved in recognising the Centenary since so many from the ward gave their lives. Subscriptions raised from our membership subscription last year contributed to the memorial funds.

We also have a new recruit in our midst. Many will know Graham as he is the new landlord at the Red Lion. We welcome Graham and his family to the ward and thank Graham for taking time out to help us. I appreciate just how valuable your time is when running a business and thank him for standing up and offering to support the association.

I would also like to thank Carole (one of our Vice-Chairs) for her efforts on keeping a check on many of the planning applications with Bob (our Planning Secretary) and in particular for keeping a watch on the policy aspects of planning. Both Carole and Bob have my full support.

Lastly, my thanks must go to all the other Committee members who keep an eye out across the ward and for John for taking over from me on the website and growing the social media elements. Thank you John, and we look forward to hearing from him shortly. Also for Ken, as the other Vice-Chair, who has taken the chair at association meetings on occasion this year whilst I have been away on business.

I would like to thank the 'new boy on the block', Colin for all his support he has given me. Colin joined the Committee last year and has helped raise the membership in his own area and been an amazing support to me over the last year in challenging me, bring fresh ideas, concerns and some wise words my way. Thank you Colin.

Some of you may recall, it was my first AGM as Chairman last year and I still feel like I am finding my way. But I have committed to ensuring we have more formalised processes and procedures. One of these we have introduced since the last AGM was a new privacy policy for GDPR requirements. These are on our website for all to read. It also means that if you do not positively opt-in and agree to us contacting you with MailChimp and latest news, by law, we must remove you from the mailing list. If this is not your intent, please contact Ian and confirm to him you do wish to receive the news items in line with our privacy policy.

As your Chairman, I feel we need to be accountable, that we are transparent to you our members, you know what you can expect of us, and likewise, we know what to expect from you as the membership. This to me, being in business my whole working life, seems just good practice. The Association did have some policies and roles defined. But when we adopted the Handbook as part of the AGM last year and wrote this into the constitution, we used this as an opportunity to setup a sub-working group. This remains in draft and still requires work, but we hope you see that we are trying to strengthen the mission of the association, its processes and be transparent in how the association works. The Handbook will also help our members realise the work the Committee do, and for any members contemplating becoming a Committee member, it will hopefully help provide a framework and understanding of the association as opposed to being 'thrown in the deep end'. I have left a hardcopy of the draft on the front table here and any members are welcome to inspect it later this evening. Our website will contain the Handbook for download from Friday of this week and we propose it remain in draft format and we welcome any comments from the membership on its contents up until end of April, thereafter it is our intent that this will be a 'living' document that your Committee can amend and keep current, including developing a 5-year plan. One such project the association has initiated is the improvement of our cemetery in Ten Acre Lane.

Both Colin (who joined the Committee last year) and Ian have helped me as part of the governance working group to assemble the Handbook. Colin has been particularly active in keeping me on track. On behalf of the association, I would like to thank them both.

No doubt others will speak about the current issues confronting our community. The next few years will be critical. We face several issues, and by way of update to you all, just want to mention some of the main ones. As some may have seen, I try every quarter to keep the ward informed of developments by way of a news update in Thorpe Together. I hope it is useful.

The **River Thames Scheme** continues to remain under-funded without a committed date to start works. I have been informed that the final design has been frozen and a narrow channel option is now preferred by the Hay Meadow so as to limit its impact. We await to see any landscape drawings from the EA or indeed any drawings of any substance relating to the frozen design. I remind you all that the Scheme is not a panacea to solve flooding. We will still flood in extreme cases, but the EA expect it will limit these instances when the combined capacity of the relief channel and main route are not exceeded. I hope your Committee is proved wrong, and the RTS will be a success.

The **Southern Heathrow Railways project** has still not been clarified. It remains one of several contenders. From recent planning applications at Thorpe Lea and Coltscroft, the project's Chief Exec has confirmed one of the two route options (....these involve linking at either Chertsey or Virginia Water stations) appear to now favour passing underground at a depth of about 30m.

The **Local Plan** had its main hearing sessions and is in recess whilst further work is done on the ability of the plan to accommodate the traffic the housing provision will create, with particular emphasis on the A320. From my own professional experience, I question the robustness of the modelling approach adopted. I attended on my own,

with the support of Carole James a far in New Zealand, to make representation on behalf of the Association on the cumulative impact of all the minor development that has taken place in the functional flood plain. RBC are supposed to only accept planning applications that demonstrate building in the flood plain when it does not have a cumulative impact. This is of major concern, as one of our key policies is to safe guard our community through robust planning policy decisions. I was told the hearing, on the day, would be a quiet one. Turned out I had 5 QC's present and several other associations all well versed in public speaking. I have to say I do not like speaking in public (as you will have guessed from tonight) but it was essential we spoke up for the community. Following our verbal presentation, RBC publicly recognised they do not take account of the cumulative impact of development in the flood plain and had already, as part of their rebuttal, agreed to revisit the whole issue of planning permissions in the flood plain. At the Local Plan hearing it was agreed that RBC, Surrey (the flood agent for the EA) and the association will work together to come to a resolution of how better safe guard our community on this critical issue. Your association will not let this matter rest and will continue to push for change. I thank Carole for all the work she has done on this matter, quietly (and not always so), gathering the evidence and sticking to the facts.

In the summer of last year, I worked with Mercer to prepare a note that went to the EA on flooding at the western end of the Village. It looks like the efforts are slowing paying off and the EA have revisited the flooding impact from the River Bourne and this indicates what Mercer has argued all along and that the level of flooding in Zone 3 (ie. the functional flood plain) is not as extensive as has previously been indicated by the EA in the past.

The Local Plan (which has been consulted upon and which your association has made representation) will bring significant change. The most noticeable, is likely to be the extra housing the council is required to deliver. The ward is expected to deliver housing need through three key areas – two sites at Thorpe Lea and an undetermined allocation of housing for the Thorpe Neighbourhood Forum designated area (basically the Thorpe Village extents). If you have been reading the MailChimp's, the association have kept you fully informed over the last few years of the key issues. Some 350 houses in total are expected from these over the next 12 years, including redevelopment of the Kerry Foods site. As part of the Local Plan, a review of the Green Belt was undertaken, and RBC are proposing several areas are removed from the Green Belt. As part of this process, Thorpe Village will also be released from the Green Belt, which has protected it to some extent. As Chairman, I will do all I can to make sure we do not give away additional Green Belt than is absolutely needed and ensure developments are proportionate to need and that cannot be fulfilled through the current proposed release of Green Belt.

Our local politics will be going through change. As you know, we fought to keep our ward in Runnymede and Weybridge Constituency, but the decision was made that Thorpe Ward should be part of Spelthorne Constituency and we will be transferring to Spelthorne at the next general election (in theory). I fear we do not align well with the wider interests of Spelthorne. For the local councillors, we confusingly remain unchanged in Runnymede Borough Council and local services will still be supplied via RBC. However, the ward boundary of Thorpe IS changing and we will be losing areas to the north around Egham Hythe and Vicarage Road, but gaining areas from Chertsey St Ann's ward, most noticeably Penton Park. With the changes in the ward boundaries, we have the unusual situation where this year we will be voting for three local councillors not just one. Please remember you therefore can cast three votes! Please do not waste them.

Your Commiittee have been proactive with regard this change and have been in discussions with the Penton Park RA. To this end, I will shortly warmly welcome and introduce you to Penton Park RA, who we have invited to speak to you at our AGM. Penton Park RA will become an important new area of the ward and your Committee have been liaising with their Committee such that we work together closely and support one another. I will kindly ask Penton Park RA to speak shortly.

I hate to raise the thorny subject of money! With all that has been on-going, one constant has been our membership subscription!! I think I had just left university when the current membership subscription was set. Ian

spends a large amount of time chasing outstanding renewals, but on a positive, many of you already kindly donate a 'top-up' to the subscription and I thank you. I would like you all to know, without those additional donations, we would technically be 'bust' so that tells you how fine the financial line is for the association. I also know many of us put their hands in our in pockets rather than claim back genuine expenses. Your Committee has discussed the situation, and we believe it right and appropriate to review the subscriptions henceforth and put the association on a firmer financial footing. For the majority who kindly donate as a atop up to your subscription, most will not notice our proposed change, as your elected Treasurer, has reviewed the current membership subscriptions of other nearby associations and recommended to Committee (which was approved) that we bring before the AGM a change in the subscription fees. Your Treasurer will discuss these changes today and we seek your kind support to the changes proposed.

You can start to see the issues we are confronting. Another key issue close to our heart is the future of our association. We need help to survive. It is only through people volunteering and helping, can our association survive. The associations' Committee needs to have succession planning in situ and we need wider community engagement. We need a critical mass to be sustainable with those with the skills to help in our modern age. PLEASE please, think about how you can help, or reach out to others to get them involved. Any help is appreciated, and it does not mean you have to sit on the Committee to help. For example, we need to get more members and local neighbourhood supporters who can help sustain and the grow the membership, help in fund raising and of course anybody with admin skills would be truly appreciated as a new Association Secretary. We need the younger age group to engage and this is now a primary objective. As your Chairman, I am saying things need to change to help protect our community and ensure we have a bright future for the association. The more hands we have the lighter the load on all of us.

I would also like to thank our ward councillors for their support of the association. I have yet again to chair an association meeting where at least one of your ward councillors have not been present. Thanks also goes to Cllr Few, one of the Surrey councillors who cover our ward. Cllr Few helps us enormously by pushing issues on our behalf at the County level.

Before closing, I would like to express my sincere thanks again to the Committee for their support and hard work, but also to the membership. I am sorry for such a long Chairman's report.

Please know, as your neighbour, my door is always open.