

2017 Annual General Meeting

Held on 22nd March 2017 in the Main Hall, Perse School, Hills Road, Cambridge
starting at 19:00

1. Admin

1.1 Attending:

37 (55 last year) affiliated Residents' Associations, represented by 90 (95 last year) RA members, other attendees numbering 31 including 3 mayoral candidate (numbers are approximate), Panel and Keynote Speaker 5 and FeCRA Committee 8. Non arrivals may be accounted for by bad traffic.

Total attendees: 155 (104 last year)

1.2 Apologies for absence: 21

21 apologies (28 last year) were received. The list is available on request.

2. Minutes of previous AGM held on 18th April 2017

The Minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on 18th April 2016 at The Perse School, were unanimously approved as issued to the Committee on 9th December 2016.

3. Treasurer's Report

The account was relatively simple with a net surplus of £258.59 for the period which added to brought forward reserves of £182.11 gave accumulated reserves of £440.70. The Hon. Treasurer, Clive Brown, reminded the members that FeCRA does not take subscriptions and is reliant on contributions at events. The figure did not reflect the fact that some members of the committee had waived charging expenses.

The Accounts were approved nem con.

4. Election of Officers

Tania Elliott (Secretary) who had been two years in office, Clive Brown (Hon. Treasurer), who had been several years in office, were standing down and were thanked for their work with FeCRA. Dara Morefield and John Latham were voted in unanimously to take their place respectively as Secretary and Treasurer.

The remaining members of the Committee had signalled their readiness to stay in office being Wendy Blythe (Chair), John Lawton (Membership Secretary), Nicky Morrison, Jean Glasberg, Lynn Hieatt and Barbara Taylor. Michael Bond has already stood down during the course of the year. The motion was carried unanimously for the remaining committee members to continue in office.

5. Chair's Report - Synopsis (full report available on website and film courtesy of Antony Carpen <http://tinyurl.com/Wendy-Blythe-Chair-s-Report>)

The Chairman, Wendy Blythe, welcomed the delegates and reminded them that FeCRA was a grass-roots civic voice dedicated to maintaining the quality of life in Cambridge and achieving balanced communities in the midst of growth. Cambridge Mayor Jeremy Benstead had remarked that the city was a wonderful place not only for its surroundings but also because of its residents.

Residents and their Associations were striving to achieve balanced communities. They were having a significant influence on the course planning decisions had taken, whether to do with housing, transport, the environment. Besides, RAs had led on other matters: local hustings, heritage, public realm, parking and congestion solutions.

Residents and their Associations have achieved notable successes:

- Affordable homes: They had focused public scrutiny of developers who 'game' the planning system putting family homes, even student accommodation, out of range of local pockets.
- Over-dense development: Pressure from residents in Romsey had ensured that an appeal to build an unacceptably dense development using back gardens was overturned by the Inspector.
- Neighbourhood Planning: South Newnham residents had embarked on a Neighbourhood Plan, now accepted by the City Council; this is an instrument which enables residents to shape any development in the area.
- Knowledge-sharing: The experience of residents in one area of Cambridge served to inform those in another part of Cambridge: Hills Road had suffered from a poorly designed cycleway which imperilled the very users of the cycleway and pedestrians. Histon and Milton Roads involved in the City Deal project had learned how to fight to have a say in the destiny of their main thoroughfare.
- Local Liaison Fora: The courageous defence of community integrity and streetscape by RAs in Histon Road and Milton Road areas who did not fear to engage with Greater Cambridge City Deal and ensured they became members in the Local Liaison Fora. Because of their more intimate knowledge of traffic movements, residents often came up with better solutions.
- Parking: RAs across the city have been collaborating over parking controls as a means to address congestion and improve air quality.
- Nine RAs saw off the County Council's plan to take a chunk of Two Bit Common to accommodate a floating bus- stop, as unnecessary; the physical segregation of the cycle lane will be assured nonetheless.
- Environment: Communities have fought to retain their tree lined avenues, hidden paths and green spaces. This has had its effect and planters have gone in on Hills Road, Lewis Herbert has promised to replace the cherry trees on Milton Road as part of the City Deal infrastructure proposals. Milton Road could become a new standard for city: a welcoming, tree-lined gateway which transforms people's choice of transport.

FeCRA believes local residents are the ones who know their own areas best, and understand what is needed. Residents and their Associations have collaborated on these public projects to improve both safety and amenity in Cambridge so that it can remain a place to be enjoyed by future generations.

Wendy Blythe went on to describe FeCRA's current status. It has a voting membership of 97 Residents' Associations and community groups. Besides it has good channels of communication and fruitful collaboration with key Cambridge interest groups, such as Cambridge Past, Present and Future, Smarter Cambridge Transport, Cambridge Connect and CamCycle.

FeCRA has also arranged filming of the Local Plan Hearings and the City Deal Assembly/Board Meetings, making them available online to a wider public. It has organised Residents' Fora in conjunction with the City Council and Greater Cambridge City Deal.

Future plans also include informal FeCRA lunches at which people can meet and share ideas and get involved with one of the Working Groups, or may be contribute to an ad hoc project.

**Wendy Blythe,
Chair, FeCRA, 22nd March 2017**

6. Keynote Speaker, Kim Wilkie

(Full version courtesy of Antony Carpen <http://tinyurl.com/Kim-Wilkie-speech>):

Kim Wilkie said that the planning of cities is always fraught for planners, but people are at the heart of it. Spaces are crucial as places where people gather. Start with human relationships not just buildings. Ability to have solitude in the city essential. Tolerance towards gender, race and communication. Peabody estates in contrast with Air B&B do not model themselves on the mantra 'belong anywhere' but on the human need for a 'good home and a sense of purpose and belonging'. Contact with the wider environment, soil and greenery, is crucial to our sanity and ability to survive.

- Richmond Hill view down to the river was saved from development by local residents and by 1902 was protected by statute. The ability to gather together, 'as you are tonight', is an essential ingredient.
- A plan for 18 miles of Thames to west of Kew brought together (before a local election!) residents, local and national authorities to reach a plan accepted as supplementary guidance for landscape along the Thames for 100 years. Understanding the history of landscape and how people have viewed it, dealing with conflicting authorities, understanding the economy, the geology and agriculture.
- Oxford: he had to understand how the city evolved, the castle and the character of the Broad, so make the Broad part of an axial route and also a gathering space without cars, and the new Bodleian the 'heart' of the University. The Oxford planners and colleges and local people are keen to make it work. Getting the traffic flows right is complicated.
- London Museums: V&A garden is a fulcrum, pool is convertible to solid floor for performances. Need to make spaces flexible. National History Museum brought tube entrance into garden and historical geological walk. Vegetation absorbs most of the particulates on a very polluted corner – monitor will measure.
- Plato called his ideal city Magnesia with 5000 people. Allotments provide both food and green lung (Chelsea Barracks). Example, too, Swansea and Oxford.
- Desert city from scratch (with Allies & Morrison) in Oman, where the geology and vegetation and agricultural traditions are designed into the town. The natural ravine was key to the plan and runs through the centre of the city. Nitrates and phosphates in water from human occupation are syphoned into agriculture.
- Trees should be more accessible – they tend to be in people's back gardens.

The lesson is that once local residents can get their message across and developers/the authorities embrace the message it gives great results. 'Be indignant' and plan for 100 year hence.

Questions: The Chair thanked Kim Wilkie and invited questions from the floor.

Q1 Unidentified: All too often we seem to start with buildings and then fit in the green spaces, surely this is the wrong way round? Kim Wilkie agreed that the space is the starting point.

Q2 Kati Preston: Why don't we have a city plan around the Cam basin? City planning should start from here confirmed Kim.

Q3 Stephen Coates: Protection of a setting? KW Need to understand what the setting means, why it's significant and how much the character of the city; yet cities do evolve – the ideal is an open heart but a full understanding of what we are 'messing with' – the same results could be achieved by bearing this in mind.

Q4 Penny Heath – Surely trees should not be used as mitigation to hide a poor development scheme? KW – Not the right use of trees; we want trees but not indiscriminately.

Q5 Wendy Blythe – Who is financing the Broad Street scheme? KW: Oxford residents and Oxford Preservation Trust (Debbie Dance) launched it and the Colleges/University and Council fell in behind although nervous – if you give good reasons when there is agreement, the money arrives.

7. Panel: Questions & Answers from the Floor

(Full version courtesy of Antony Carpen <http://tinyurl.com/Q-A-to-Kim-Wilkie>)

Theme: ‘Cambridge is growing fast but is it sustainable and will it ensure well-being?’

Stephen Kelly – Joint Director of Planning and Economic Development – sustainability is economic, environmental and social to ensure healthy communities and people in a healthy environment. Happy cities are for people. Contradictory views exist about assumptions on spatial growth strategies, but authorities are interested in promoting a sense of public life. Cited Francis Tibbalds – consider places before buildings, design on a human scale etc.

Emma Fletcher – Managing Director of the developer Smithson Hill. 20 year resident and a developer who wants to do it right. Landowners do want a return as does the developer. They do not always realise that working together with the community earlier can achieve better results, even if time consuming. But this should include both existing communities and those coming in.

Joel Carré – Head of Environmental Services, Cambridge City Council. Responsible for managing the public realm. Shared community vision, high quality public spaces, climate change, investing in community engagement. This also means supporting those who do not have the same opportunities in housing, health and education. Open spaces attractive, stimulating and well-maintained and fulfil social, economic and environmental purposes. Adapting to climate change also locally, help manage water, low-carbon buildings, tree planting, electric vehicles; food production local more sustainable. Community engagement – planning, delivery, management, volunteers – foster civic pride and people power. Looks forward to working with FeCRA and communities.

Terry Macalister – Freelance journalist and former Energy Editor, *The Guardian* & Panel Chair. Commended Joel, but actually it is Wendy Blythe and local residents who have insisted on public engagement. Cuts by government do not help Lewis Herbert and officers working into the night on City Deal. Climate Change cannot be ducked. Need a proper functioning public transport system. The CD should set up its own bus company with the £100mn. A congestion charge as the only real answer, even if not popular now, in tandem with an alternative transport system. Affordable housing – development companies keep on flouting the 40% commitment, pricing the next generation out of Cambridge. Bad communication has led to no consensus around CD. The long term goal is to maintain the quality of life in this city.

Question & Answer Session:

(Full version on You Tube courtesy of Antony Carpen <http://tinyurl.com/Happy-City-Q-A-session>)

Q Richard Taylor (Hills Road) *Why are we continuing to build commercial premises before we've got houses for people to live in?* Kelly: Imperative to reach a balance of growth, both in the local and in the national interest. Emma Fletcher: Advised communities to get in on the act at an early stage to ensure the 40% commitment is respected.

Q Duncan Sutton from Campaign for ??? *Cambridge feels inclusive but being priced out. Does the Local Plan address people's desire to live in Cambridge or are we being pushed out to satellite villages?* Kelly – building more houses does not necessarily make for more affordability, issue of

competition for space, must engage with financial pressures, LP allows for greater consolidation in the city than elsewhere, there needs to be diversity of housing.

Q Nicki Marrian – to Joel Carre *Can we have back our grass verges on Hills Road?* Q unidentified *Why do we bow down to ARU when we need affordable housing?*

Q. Peter Dawe (Indep Can. Mayor) Peterborough works in spite of fast growth. *Should we consider using 'New Town' legislation for a master plan for the whole city rather than piecemeal?* Kim Wilkie said yes need an overall plan to understand how people move in spaces. Joel Carre not familiar with Hills Road and he will take it up with the County – will have to look at the implications. Stephen Kelly – spaces and movement with funding from CD to work on a spaces and movements document. On ARU, balance has to be achieved and the academic community also has to be considered.

Q Kati Preston – *How can we meaningfully engage to make this city to make it sustainable in 100 years' time?* Terry – reinterpreted to say that there is much talk of engagement but actually a feeling that engagement comes only when there is a lot of protest, there is an evasiveness. Kim W – Richmond the initiative came from the local communities, but the planners then welcomed it. But we mustn't always blame the planners, but we have elected the Council. Come forward with suggestions not complaints. Kati picked up on the theme and asked for a 100 year vision. Use the old railway line to be turned into walk/cycleways with planting to ensure a decent landscape for the next generations.

Q Rod Cantrill – *Neighbourhood Plan in S. Newnham. Intimacy of locality can play in a broader context of the Local Plan for the city. What is the panel's view in terms of the dislocation of the council's plan for transportation and some of the other good things that sit in the local plan regarding housing in the city?* Kim – Climate change is not just to do with reducing carbon emissions but it is deeper and we need to think about stewardship of land, air and water because we don't know what climate change will mean 'on this island'. On movement, driverless and electric cars will change how we move in cities. There is too much focus on outdated technology, whereas we should be thinking about what we want to preserve and how we want to live, and allow the technology to deliver that. Stephen Kelly – Councils are supporting 9 neighbourhood plans within Greater Cambridge. Did not recognise a dislocation between transport and LP, but strategy to ensure a modal change away from cars was a coherent strategy.

Q Chris Smith (Romsey Town/Friends of Coldhams Common) *Questioned process on Chisholm Trail bridge. What one thing can we do to scale back the confrontation between residents and the city?* Stephen Kelly – Need to have a realistic discussion about the issues. Residents have a clear interest in the future of the city, but Cambridge has a role to play in the country and beyond and these tensions do not always 'surface' in these debates but the Councils and area do need to engage with this. We need to be honest, possibly using statutory processes. Emma suggested Urban Parish Councils as a means of empowerment and obtaining finance.

Q Allan Brigham – *Addenbrooke's provides a brilliant and 'happy' service but is surrounded by a hideous surroundings where there had been gardens designed by the director of the Botanic Gardens. What are we going to do about improving Addenbrooke's landscape?* Stephen Kelly said Addenbrooke's and CBC are looking to improve the landscape.

Q Dara Morefield (Queen Edith's Way) – *Is having a regional mayor going to bring together the policies of the disparate authorities on planning/transport?* Emma Fletcher – mayor should be

empowered properly with powers to deliver, also with regard to the bigger infrastructure, and she is not sure this will be the case.

Q unidentified – *Who pays to set up and manage an urban parish council?* Emma Fletcher - All parish councils receive a precept as a portion local taxes of 60%. A UPC gets grants of 15% under the Community Infrastructure Levy from developers and NP 25%.

Q Martin Lucas-Smith Petersfield Action Trust (PACT) – *City not bold enough on requiring developers to produce designs that will really last 100 years, viability assessments should be made public as now in London, the City Council 'falls over itself' to allow obviously bad development to go ahead and gives up in the face of legal threat. What about this?* Kim W. – The vision seems to be on its way but it needs to have statutory protection.

Conclusions by Terry Macalister

The meeting had produced plenty of dialogue and a willingness to talk. Let us hope there will be a willingness to act on this.

Chair

The Chair thanked Terry Macalister and the panel for their contributions. She also thanked the delegates for their searching questions. She had attended many transport debates and had seen how creative so many participants had been; she hoped that some of this vision and their ideas would be taken account of. She also rebutted the frequent accusation that FeCRA's members were all 'grey haired', reminding the audience that they also represented young families who do not have the time to attend events. and looked forward to seeing the assembled company back for next year's AGM at roughly the same date.

The meeting adjourned at 20:55hrs

Signed: The Chair, Wendy Blythe

Date approved by Committee:

Date approved by AGM:

Drafted by T. Elliott (former Secretary FeCRA) Draft 1 22/04/2017