



FRIERN BARNET & WHETSTONE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT – 2019 and 2020

2019

The Association's activities in the early part of the year, prior to the 2018- 2019 AGM, held in early May, are summarised in the Minutes of that Meeting, so it is unnecessary to report on them here. At the AGM I was privileged to be elected as Chairman of the Association, following in the footsteps of Kate Salinger, whose experience continued to be available to us as, to my great relief, she remained on the Committee.

During the course of the summer the work we had been doing supporting residents in the Horsham Avenue area of Friern Barnet in objecting to aspects of the proposed Hornsey- North Finchley Cycleway intensified- we funded leaflets, formed a joint action group, made Freedom of Information Act requests, met with Council staff to discuss the proposals, lobbied Councillors and generally sought to stir up opposition. This would continue until the end of the year. Such activities are time consuming and it is clear that the Association does not have the resources to run more than one campaign at a time or to run campaigns continually.

Recognising that we need more active members, in the Autumn we made a start in dealing with this- we established a "Traffic and Highways" Sub-Committee AND found members willing to take part in it. Sadly a succession of unfortunate and unplanned occurrences has since transpired to frustrate our plans (see 2020 below).

The Association's usual activities continued – such as reviewing and, where we felt it appropriate, objecting to, planning applications (for example, we successfully objected to an application for a new and much larger mobile phone mast right next to the entrance to Friary Park in Friern Barnet Lane); using the Freedom of Information Act to get information from the Council; the Newsletter; our "Member Update" emails to members; our events- in early August we held our third "Summer Splash" (relocated to the tranquil setting of the bowling pavilion in Friary Park); in September we had a stall at an event in Friary Park, while in October our first ever Annual Dinner, held at The Haven in Whetstone, was deemed highly successful.

2020

The year started normally.

In mid- January the winter nights were enlivened by news that our campaign against aspects of the plans for the Hornsey- North Finchley Cycleway had succeeded- and more than we had dared to hope- the entire scheme had been withdrawn by the Council.

More good news followed- by the end of January about 2/3rds of members had renewed their subscription. Looking to spend money wisely, we purchased our own PA system – it was expected to pay for itself over about 2 years from savings in equipment hire charges.

The PA system was put to use almost immediately- at a Members' Meeting in February, when we had a talk by Nick Lynch and colleagues from Barnet Council on the subject of the proposed new Barnet Local Plan. The draft document was over 300 pages long, so an informed presentation was invaluable. Feedback from members about the meeting was positive. The audience were engaged and raised many issues.

Also in February the replica Whetstone Horse Trough, together with a historical plaque - a project for which Love Whetstone was responsible, but which FBWRA supported financially - was unveiled by the Mayor of Barnet in a ceremony attended by most of the Association Officers and Committee as well as by local Councillors and many local residents.

The Council started to charge householders for green bin collections. In response to pressure from FBWRA the procedures were changed, and we obtained a promise that a properly manned call centre for telephone assistance would be introduced.

Then Covid came and very soon we had the first lockdown. We had to cancel the 2020 AGM, scheduled for May, and although we held off from immediately cancelling other events in the hope that we would still be able to hold them, in the end we had to cancel these too- the Summer Splash, a planned Autumn Members' Meeting and a planned second Annual Dinner.

Wars and pandemics drive innovation, and FBWRA is no exception to this. The Committee innovated. Unable to meet physically, it moved to on-line meetings. Unable to ask our team of Newsletter deliverers to do their stuff, we moved to online distribution of the Newsletter where it was possible and the post where it was not (The only problem with online delivery is whether Members actually read what is sent to them!). Unable to hold events as such we marked the VE Day 75th Anniversary with two competitions – focussing on cakes and celebratory decorations - and all organised online.

In autumn a team of volunteers, led by our horticulturalist member Debbie Lane, replanted part of the FBWRA shrubbery in Friary Park, and many of our other activities continued normally, including monitoring and making representations to the Council in relation to planning applications and using Freedom of Information requests as a means to extract information from the Council for scrutiny.

When I sat down to write this Report I decided that it should not be more than two pages long. Although I have succeeded in meeting that goal, the consequence has been that this Report does not go into detail, particularly in relation to our interface with the Council. However, I still have space (just) for one very important task- I must thank all the other members of the FBWRA Committee for their support and advice and for their efforts on behalf of the Association – every single one of them, in their own way, is an absolute star- Tim, Maria, Harry, Yvonne, Richard and Kate – my thanks to all of you.

David Thompson

March 2021