



## **Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association**

[www.fbwra.org](http://www.fbwra.org) email:fbwra@btinternet.com

### **Chairman's Report – 2022**

2022 was a busy year for the Association's officers and Committee. We continued a process of modernisation in how we work and have largely been able to get back to business as usual after the disruption of the pandemic.

#### **Membership**

Last year I reported that the trend of decline in the Association's membership seemed to have halted. This remains so, which is good news. Although sadly and inevitably we have lost some members, others have joined to replace them. We spent a considerable time during the year creating a new membership recruitment leaflet and in a format which we hope will last for several years. We see this as an essential tool to help us recruit new members – and our experience is that when we go out and contact residents some do join us. We intend to continue with these efforts.

In the autumn we carried out a survey of our members. We had a great response rate and the results were reported in the Newsletter.

#### **Communication with members**

The Newsletter remains our primary means of communicating with members. Its production is a team effort, but I must thank Maria who now does most of the task of assembling the basic draft which is then finalised by our printers under her watchful eyes.

Most of the content for the Newsletter is generated by members of the Committee. Every edition seems to be a struggle until the last minute when suddenly articles almost miraculously appear. It has long been our ambition to bring others on board to help and I am very pleased to report that David Gutmann has volunteered to write for us. His first article appeared in the Winter 2022 edition – thank you, David.

We also communicate with members via Mailchimp (a bulk email system), our Facebook page and our website. Currently we don't have the expertise to use their full functionality or branch out into other social media channels such as Next Door or Twitter. We are hoping to recruit a Communications Manager to develop our social media presence and would be pleased to hear from any member who has those skills and would be interested in working with us.

## **Association activities**

- **Chaville Court**

In my 2021 report I referred to our longest running issue; the sewerage problems that afflict Chaville Court in Friern Barnet, and which had then been running for nearly 15 years. I must report that it is still running. However, it is fair to say that over the past year Thames Water have been busy trying to identify the problem and to find a solution. The trouble is that as they tackle one aspect they find another. It seems endless. If I tell you that over the course of calendar year 2022 we had no fewer than 28 update emails from Thames Water you will appreciate my viewpoint on this.

The Association's other activities have continued to focus on three principal areas-

- **Planning**

Our main planning work during the year related to the planning appeal by the developer of Barnet House. We submitted detailed written representations to the planning inspector arguing that the appeal should be refused but did not appear at the hearing; we have neither the technical expertise nor the personnel to do so. The main burden of opposing the appeal fell to Barnet Council. As I expect you all know, the planning inspector decided in favour of the developer and recently (February 2023) we have seen the first applications for approvals under the conditions imposed by the inspector –so presumably the development will be going ahead.

In addition to the Barnet House appeal we made submissions in the appeals of two refusals for approvals for telephone masts near St John's Church. Sadly the inspector on these cases also allowed the appeals.

During the year we made representations to the Council on about 8 other planning applications, but we reviewed a considerably greater number. There seems to have been a substantial fall in the number of applications for larger schemes – perhaps this is due to the economic situation or maybe it is just that the most obvious sites have now been redeveloped. However, the number of applications by householders – for loft conversions, extensions and the like seems to be holding up and we are also seeing an increase in the number of applications for permission to install heat pumps.

- **Highways**

At the AGM last year I said we intended to give greater focus to highways issues. This we have done. Over the course of the year we have worked on things such as traffic issues in Friern Barnet Lane, explored issues on the design and location of zebra crossings, the specification for paints for road markings, Council policies for dealing with potholes and attempted to investigate Council proposals affecting Ashurst and Buxted Roads (which at the time of writing is ongoing). In December we told the Council of the dangerous state of the markings at the Ashurst/Buxted junction roundabout. Within twenty minutes we had a response from the Council's Director of Highways and Transportation that the matter would be actioned and I am pleased to report that it has been.

Some our work on highways is long term or has been part of a process of gaining an understanding of how the Council works, so more has been going on than you have seen in the Newsletter.

- **Freedom of Information Act**

We to make considerable use of the Act to get information from the Council but we continue to see a general reluctance on the part of Officers to provide meaningful responses to enquiries . Disappointingly the change in the political control of the Council has seen no improvement in this respect.

- **Ukraine refugee donation**

At last year's AGM Members approved a £1000 donation to go to an appropriate group providing support to Ukrainian refugees, especially children, settling in Barnet. Sadly, I must report that despite great efforts, particularly on the part of Yvonne (thank you, Yvonne), who was in contact with Council, schools, Ukrainian groups and others, we were unable to find appropriate recipients for the money either locally or elsewhere within London. Government support for the refugees appears to be commendably comprehensive rendering our efforts superfluous, so we have abandoned the proposal.

- **Summer Splash**

The Summer Splash, our summer garden party for members, returned in June, having been put on ice by the pandemic. Held at the Bowling pavilion in Friary Park, we were entertained with live music provided by Carolyn and musician friends – thank you Carolyn. Originally the Summer Splash was held in late August, but subsequently moved to earlier dates, before the school holidays, in the hope this would increase attendances. In fact numbers fell, so this year we are planning to move back to a late August timing.

### **The Committee**

At the conclusion of last year's AGM we had seven officers and Committee members including Carolyn who came on board at the AGM. We also had an objective, to strengthen the Committee. I am delighted to be able to report that we have made good progress in achieving that objective, having been joined by Sachin and Graham and with Kate having re-joined.

I must thank all the other officers and members of the FBWRA Committee for their support and advice and for their efforts on behalf of the Association. Tim, Maria, Harry, Yvonne, Richard, Kate, Carolyn, Sachin and Graham – my thanks to all of you.

Seven has grown to ten and we continue to look for others to join us. We have gaps in our skills that we need to plug, in particular communication and social media as detailed above. Our website and Facebook page need enhancing and we would like to expand into other social media channels to help us improve our public profile. To some people such tech is daunting, but there are other areas where we would like more members to be actively involved. That involvement can be just occasional if that suits and it needn't require sitting in meetings. If you would like to be more involved in our work please get in touch. **Your Association needs you!**

David Thompson, Chairman

13<sup>th</sup> March 2023