

WARLEY COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION AGM 2013 - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to welcome you to this the 5th AGM of The Warley Community Association.

Overall we have had another good year tempered only by one or two disappointments. Our year did not start well with the news that the council had reneged on their promise to address speeding throughout the area. From being told initially that we were high priority for action, we quickly moved to low priority. Of course we recognise that the council have great expertise which must form the basis for informed decision making, but in common with neighbouring communities we see little evidence that in respect of roads and safety the council have recognised the value of real and meaningful engagement with local communities. We have proven that we will put in the leg work to make 'community engagement' a reality by researching and prioritising those areas which the community see as important but it takes two to tango and for the moment our partner is more Tony Jacklin than Sophie Ellis Bextor!

Now onto more positive things!

As for our events we have enjoyed a very active year with the Warley Victorian Christmas, two social evenings, Warley Footsteps, Rushbearing in Warley and our new flagship event, the Warley Country Show. The Gods blessed us with the first sunny and warm day of the year and the Show was exceptionally well supported and enjoyed by the whole community. The year concluded with an open air Remembrance Day service which was jointly organised with St John's church. This was a first for the village and was well received so will most likely be repeated in 2014 being the centenary of the start of the first world war. Although we have a very strong and keen events team, we will still need more volunteers in the coming year if we are to maintain this level of success and realise the undoubted benefits that this area of our activities brings to the community.

Our History Group enjoyed a series of well attended group meetings over the winter and our In Bloom Group continued its work to ensure our adopted areas of planting were kept spick and span. Compared to recent years, In Bloom has had a relatively relaxed year, but has now recharged its batteries and embarked on a plan to adopt another area of public planting and other initiatives with the support of a grant from the Community Development Fund. Both our activity groups would benefit from more members getting involved but I would issue a particular plea for more green fingered villagers to help maintain and improve our extensive portfolio of public planting which by my reckoning must now cover an acre in total.

Moving on to our projects. The 2012 Green Trail project was completed early in the year with the installation of a birdbath and has proved a popular addition to our network of local walks and planted spaces. We also installed a memorial bench to Angela Mason in the village playground and secured grants from the Community Development Fund and Warley Trust to restore the massive pillar at the entrance to the cemetery on Winterburn Lane.

Two longer term projects, one to identify and record our architectural and environmental heritage and the second to convert the Cemetery records onto a searchable database were commissioned in 2013. Both have some way left to run, but will prove invaluable in our efforts to maintain our heritage for the future and provide an on-line repository for people researching their ancestry in Warley.

Following our 'toe in the water' approach to producing a 2013 village calendar where we sold all 100 copies produced, we decided to be more ambitious for our 2014 effort and a team came together in early summer to develop a bigger and more comprehensive edition. We believe we achieved our objective and as such were confident enough to commission the printing of 300 copies most of which were sold in the first few weeks. Our success in selling the calendar was greatly assisted by working in partnership with Ravenscliffe School who will receive 50% of the profit we make.

We expended a lot of effort in 2013 to formalise and communicate the way we organise and run the Association itself and plan and deliver our activities and projects. In doing so we also identified the need for a longer term plan and have thus commissioned a project to develop this over the winter months.

Finally, as far as projects in 2013 are concerned, we redeveloped and relaunched our website. Along with a new database of members and the associated use of emails, we have fully embraced the latest technology and added a new dimension to the way in which we communicate. Whilst the Lantern remains the primary vehicle for regularly connecting with the community, we have received a very positive reaction to these new developments and are averaging over 1,000 'hits' per month which is very encouraging for the future.

In most respects, therefore, we have had a good year. Our events and activities continue to prove very popular with greater participation than ever before and a doubling of our income from events when compared to 2012. We have had lots of positive feedback and support for all our efforts and we now feel that we have done all that can be reasonably expected so that the community has a clear picture of what the Association is all about.

Despite these efforts and a relentless advertising campaign to attract more people to take on leading roles in the Association, we have not yet seen much in the way of a positive response and this will be further evidenced when we come to this evening's elections and by the fact that we are about to enter our fourth consecutive year without our full complement of elected Officers. As time goes on, we have seen people serve their time and take more of a backseat and this is only natural, fair and perfectly understandable. Nonetheless, without new people stepping forward, logic tells us that we cannot continue to run and develop the Association in its current form indefinitely and certainly cannot expand its activities to take advantage of all the opportunities that have opened up to us as a result of the Localism Act. One way or another I believe that 2014 will prove to be a watershed for our Association.

Twelve months ago I was privileged to be elected to chair this Association and it has been a great pleasure to work with people in and around our community whose commitment and enthusiasm has been very inspirational. First and foremost my thanks go to my fellow Officers, Committee Members and all the volunteers who have helped out with events and projects for all their hard work and support throughout the year.

Despite our disappointments in respect of road infrastructure and road safety, engagement with, and support from the council in general has been very positive, especially with Warley Ward Forum and Parks & Open Spaces and I thank them, particularly Liz Broadley and Mark Brazil for their ongoing support. We must also thank the Police, the Fire Services and our elected representatives for their continuing support in making Warley a safer and better place to live. Special thanks also to John and Janet Hardy, who as Mayor and Mayoress supported all our major events in their year of office. John will be dressing up once again and appearing incognito at our Christmas Fayre next week!

I would also like us to recognise the efforts of all our local organisations and businesses whose successes continue to mirror our own. Whether it is St John's church, our sports clubs, the allotment society, the graveyard trust, our village school, our two pubs, the craft circle or Warley House & Edgeholme open gardens, their unstinting support of the Association (and hopefully our support for them) has truly strengthened our collective desire to make and keep Warley special. A special thank you must be reserved for the Maypole who have ensured we have had a warm (and free) home base to hold our meetings and the Vandals who have provided their clubhouse and ground free of charge for many of our events.

But it's not just the people directly involved who deserve our thanks, there are also those that supports us through grants and private donations to whom we are so grateful. I thank Warley Trust and the Community Development Fund for continually supporting our grant applications and also all our personal donors for their extraordinary generosity. In this regard it is very unfair to single anyone out, but it would be remiss not to thank Christopher Bailey for his exceptional generosity this year. It is an opportune time to reflect on his support for the Association over many years and to congratulate him on his recent promotion to the position of CEO at Burberry, an appointment which, for a number of reasons, I found particularly inspiring in the current climate. I am sure you will want to join me in thanking him for his long term support and wishing the 'local lad done good' all the best in his new role.

You will shortly be presented with the audited accounts and treasurer's report for the past 12 months. Suffice to say that we move into 2013 financially viable with a sizeable surplus over and above our declared operating capital. This is deliberate as your Committee decided in September to retain any surplus until our planning process is complete and thus be in a position to allocate it to a prioritised plan of improvement projects.

This concludes my Chairman's report for 2013. Thank you for your forbearance and as a suitable reward I would like to invite everyone to join me for a drink at the bar at the conclusion of tonight's proceedings. I now invite questions from the floor.

Andrew E Berry
Chairman
Warley Community Association
25th November 2013