

MINUTES OF THE 93RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF
SPRING PARK RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION (SPRA)
HELD ON TUESDAY 2 JUNE 2026
AT WEST WICKHAM & SHIRLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

Present:

SPRA Executive Committee: Trevor Ashby, Julian Roberts, Mandy Hopkins, Bob Archibald, Lawrie Rendle, Martin Shute, Graham Wharton, Andy Bebington and Bev Tanner

Standing for Election: Suzy Stoyel and Vince Vas

Natasha Irons MP, Neil Garratt AM, Deputy Mayor Jason Cummings, Deputy Civic Mayor Scott Roche, Councillor Sue Bennett, Councillor Richard Chaterjee and Councillor Mark Johnson

Rev. Jon Hills, WW&SBC, Sony Nair, Monks Orchard RA; Ngaire Sharples, Monks Orchard RA; Ian Leonard, Longheath Gardens RA; Dawn Brook, Shirley Hills RA; Karen Phillips, Shirley Oaks Village RA; Emily Davies, Shirley Neighbourhood Care; Eric and Jean Molkenthin, Friends of Millers Pond; Chris Hennis, Play Place; Jonathan Baxter, SPRA Auditor; Steve Murray, SPRA Auditor; Sergeant Nathan Saville; PC Fatungase; Viqas Sheikh, Chair, Shirley Muslim Association; Zeeshan Zaidi, Shirley Muslim Association

Total attendance: 71 made up of 56 SPRA Members including Committee Members and Trustees, 14 invited guests and 1 non-member.

Apologies

Mayor Jason Perry; Kirti Thakrar; Beverly Warner, Shrublands RA; Derek Ritson, Monks Orchard RA; Alan Burn, Shrublands Christian Fellowship; Father Ashley Beck, St. Mark's Catholic Church; Rev. Richard Lawson, Shirley Methodist Church; Ros Wade, Friends of Shirley Library; Hugh Atkinson, Friends of Shirley Library; Shirley and Colin Poole; Jennie and Chris Rutter; Linda Hudson; Becky Murray, Play Place; Rev. Jenny Walpole, St. George The Martyr Church; Cliff and Christine Underhay

Welcome

Julian Roberts (JR - SPRA Chair) welcomed everyone to the 93rd AGM of Spring Park Residents' Association (SPRA). He thanked John Hills and West Wickham & Shirley Baptist Church for hosting the event. He gave a special welcome to all the neighbouring associations and voluntary organisations attending.

Apologies had been received from Mayor Jason Perry, but Deputy Mayor Jason Cummings would be covering Croydon matters. JR said that although SPRA is an apolitical organisation, he congratulated all those recently elected as our representatives.

JR outlined the agenda for the meeting.

Minutes of the 2025 AGM and matters arising

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28 May 2025 had previously been published on the Spring Park Residents' Association website www.springparkra.co.uk

Suzy Stoyel proposed that the minutes be accepted and Geoff Fluke seconded the proposal. The minutes were accepted and there were no matters arising.

Chair's Report

JR gave highlights from his annual report which had been printed in full in May SPAN. He gave thanks to the Executive Committee members, the auditors, the sub-committee members, the SPAN editorial team. As the week of the AGM coincided with National Volunteers Week, JR took the opportunity to thank all the volunteers who give their time for good causes in Shirley including Shirley Neighbourhood Care, Friends of Millers Pond and Shirley Windmill.

He then summarised his three aims

- **Confidence** – feeling safe to walk around the local area
- **Communication** – being listen to and informed
- **Community** – keeping Shirley a great place to live and bring up your family

In terms of communication, SPRA's Facebook posts now regularly receive around 80,000 views a month. JR mentioned the broadcast email service and said SPRA are looking at starting a Whatsapp group.

The Community has seen some notable achievements over the last year

Shirley Community Library – has grown from nothing to what has quickly become the heart and soul of Shirley: JR offered congratulations to Chris Hennis and Play Place.

Shirley Church Road playground and tennis courts – JR said that this has made such a difference and commented that it was really nice to see money spent on Shirley.

Millers Pond - so much work has been put in by FoMP to make it look the best it's ever been.

In terms of events, JR noted the following:

- The Remembrance Poppies in November
- The Christmas Lights and Family Quiz Trail in December – with the lights paid for by SPRA not the Council
- The Launch of Shirley in Bloom in the Spring culminating in the reintroduction of SPRA's Front Garden competition at the end of this month with around 20 entries so far.

Planning – It has been a fairly quiet year, but SPRA continues to monitor new applications and raise objections where they are warranted.

Surgeries – JR said SPRA is holding monthly surgeries at SCL so residents can share any specific issues about our area.

JR said that, over the past few months, SPRA has started to build much closer links with Monks Orchard Road Residents' Association (MORA) and will shortly be launching a campaign to offer their residents Associate Membership of SPRA and, with that, access to SPAN.

Looking forward to the next 12 months: After elections of the new Executive Committee SPRA will be re-examining priorities for the coming year. JR asked for residents' input as SPRA listens and cares about what's important to residents.

Treasurer's Report

SPRA's Treasurer, Kirti Thakrar was unable to attend the AGM, so Trustee, Andy Bebington presented the Accounts to the audience.

The full accounts for the year had been published on the SPRA website and were available for consideration prior to the meeting.

Andy Bebington said that it had been a good financial year for SPRA, thanks to Kirti and the support she received from our two auditors, Jonathan Baxter and Steve Murray.

AB reported that there had been a surplus of £1500 last year which was slightly more than the previous year; however, there had been no grants made to local good causes this year. AB said that subscriptions were down 5.5% year on year and this was a pattern of decline each year. He asked those in the audience to encourage Shirley friends and neighbours to join SPRA if they were not already members. AB noted that SPAN's deficit was approximately £900 and that this was manageable whilst we retained a good relationship with the printers, CDS, but he pointed out that these costs could increase and that there was a general decline in print advertising revenue with the increase in digital opportunities for advertisers.

Andy Bebington proposed that the accounts be accepted and Martin Shute seconded the proposal. The meeting accepted the accounts.

Reports from Local Representatives

Representatives reported on their recent news and incorporated answers to pre-submitted questions into their reports.

NATASHA IRONS MP

Natasha Irons (NI) thanked SPRA for the invitation to speak. NI said she had visited WW&SBC before and had been impressed to see the wide range of activities for Shirley residents.

NI said she was pleased that funding had been secured for Croydon under the Government's Pride In Place scheme. The Pride in Place Programme will invest £20 million in New Addington and an additional £1.5 million across the borough which will include projects at Millers' Pond and Shirley Community Library.

Natasha had also campaigned for modernisation of the tram system in Croydon, and the Government have provided funds enabling TfL to move forward and replace the 20 year old trams.

NI said she had been looking at the Bridle Road junction and speeding on Wickham Road with Assembly Member, Neil Garratt and that Neil would report later.

Extra funding has been secured for Orchard Way Primary School to improve their building – particularly wiring, ceilings and outside lighting. Harris Benson have also been granted money to pay for solar panels.

NI said that Shirley GPs have been encouraged to use the New Addington Diagnostic Centre which can provide services such as X-rays, CT scans and ultrasounds. It is hoped it may be able to do blood tests soon. This centre will help to relieve the pressure on Croydon University Hospital.

Shoplifting has been a national issue, and the Co-op had experienced losses. After Police focus on the problem, this has improved.

NI has worked with the Council to identify some problems on Shrublands with overflow pipes and mould, and these issues have now been resolved. The Playground has also been upgraded with new equipment.

Natasha has been holding regular coffee mornings in the area which gives her a chance to talk direct to residents. If SPRA members would like to attend one of Natasha's regular coffee mornings to speak with her in person, they can sign up at:

www.natashairons.co.uk/coffee-mornings/

There have been bigger national issues such as the next steps with policies for social media. NI said there have been sessions with schoolchildren as they need to have a say in the future of social media. Mental health and bullying are symptoms of social media.

The SEND system was designed ten years ago and the system needs transforming to meet every child's needs.

Unemployment and young people who are not in education, employment or training is a major problem as highlighted in the recent Milburn Report and the Government is looking at ways of improving young people's soft skills to help them enter the workplace. NI is hosting a youth jobs and skill fair with Sarah Jones MP on 10 July. Places can be booked through

www.tinyurl.com/croydon-youth-jobs-fair

Natasha reported that she is working on a cross party basis to campaign and lobby to improve the East Croydon Station bottleneck. Expanding the station and replacing tracks is crucial for the future looking at connections between the South and Bedford – particularly with the new Universal Studios park in Bedford.

DEPUTY MAYOR JASON CUMMINGS

Jason Cummings (JC) said that he would cover questions raised for Mayor Jason Perry as well as his own questions.

First, JC thanked SPRA for the opportunity to speak and praised the organisation for its work in the area. He said there were many parts of Croydon that did not benefit from having a residents' association.

JC talked about the Croydon Project – the town centre masterplan. He said that Centrale would be re-fitted out and it was good to already see new businesses moving in and Lloyds Bank are opening a branch in the centre. The old Whitgift area will be demolished and re-built with a mix of shops on the ground level with residential space above the shops. There are guarantees about the need to meet deadlines as penalty payments by Westfield will be due if the dates aren't met.

In answer to a question from the floor about sufficient schools and GP surgeries to support the residential development, JC said that this has been considered and appropriate services will be available however, due to the declining birth rate, there is no need for more schools. Good transport links from the town centre will connect families with existing schools.

The 20mph limit which had been introduced across the borough had resulted in a split between those who supported the limit and those that don't. The future plan is to give each area the choice as to whether they wish to have the 20mph limit or not. A process is beginning to allow people to vote.

Jason Cummings then spoke about his own portfolio of Finance. He said the situation is still dire and we have the same level of debt - £1.6 billion. There is some hope on the horizon as the Government has reviewed how local authorities are funded and some of the unfair anomalies have been removed. Croydon has benefited from this fair funding review.

Looking at income which comes from Council Tax, Croydon will continue to use the 4.99% increase that almost all Councils are now applying. The largest expenditure is spent on social care for children and vulnerable adults and temporary accommodation. The council

will reduce use of expensive commercial properties and take this in house by acquiring housing units and there will be two new children's homes in the area.

Croydon is also focussing on only helping Croydon's residents and not providing help to people from other parts of the country that it does not owe a duty to.

In answer to a previously submitted question about the grants that Croydon used to provide for local voluntary organisations, JC said that the Council could no longer afford to provide those grants, but the Council was in a position to commission organisations to take on contracts for services that needed to be provided.

DEPUTY CIVIC MAYOR SCOTT ROCHE

Over the last year Scott Roche (SR) had held the cabinet post responsible for the Environment. He answered some pre-submitted questions:

Regarding the maintenance of trees and grass cutting, Scott said there were over 120 parks in Croydon and therefore a big undertaking for the Council. The Council manages the tree pits and there is an opportunity to sponsor empty tree pits through the Trees for Streets in Croydon campaign. Grass cutting is managed with suppliers, and Council officers have re-drawn the old map to make it easier to ensure grass cutting is carried out on a regular schedule. New equipment has meant it is easier to cut steep kerbs.

Outdoor gyms have been installed in parks with disabled accessible equipment including pathways and gym equipment. Gym equipment is also to help tackle anti-social behaviour.

Green flags are only given to parks which meet a minimum standard and there are four Green Flag parks in Croydon which is a huge achievement. The Council plan to add more in coming years.

The variety of Friends groups which help to maintain green spaces are very important as is working with residents to discover views. A recent survey attracted a considerable 1100 responses.

There had also been a pre-submitted question about the climate emergency and the Council's plan for action. There is concern about overflowing gulleys and action is taken to clear these as quickly as possible after they have been reported on the Love Clean Streets app. Leaves fall and they can cause problems very quickly with overflows. The Council has a flood risk management policy and works to identify likely problems and find solutions. Croydon is working towards reducing emissions through initiatives like increasing the number of electric charging points in parking bays. Friends groups have been particularly helpful in clearing rubbish from ponds, and this can be reported through the Love Clean Streets app ideally using What3Words to identify the precise location.

Martin Shute raised the issue of the tree pits on his road where replacements have been repeatedly requested. SR said he would investigate.

An audience member thanked Scott Roche for her tree that is now in Millers Pond.

Liz Bebington stressed the importance of keeping mature trees as they make a real difference with climate change.

Dawn Gibbons asked Scott about the recycling of green garden waste in the borough. (Dawn had been attending the green forum meetings set up by the Council last year. Currently the council pays another borough in Essex to take our garden waste away who then recycle it and then sell it back to their own residents as compost. A number of years ago Croydon did process their own garden waste and used to sell Croypost at various recycling centres across the borough). SR offered to bring this subject up with the new cabinet member for the environment.

Congratulations were offered regarding the recent campaign against fly-tipping.

NEIL GARRATT AM

Neil Garratt (NG) took the opportunity to update residents on areas that fall under the responsibility of the London Assembly and the Mayor of London:

HOUSING: There is pressure from Mayor Khan for all London Boroughs to build more homes however, Croydon's record of house building is much higher than other London Boroughs. The London Mayor has now indicated that he is prepared to build on green belt land. Mayor Perry is resisting this as Croydon is able to build plenty without needing to do so.

Overall London does not have a problem with unoccupied property. Such properties are a very small percentage of the number of houses in the area. There are new powers which will make it difficult to leave property empty as Council tax can be tripled for empty properties.

POLICE AND CRIME: There is concern as numbers of Police Officers have reduced by 2,500. Comparisons with American cities have proven that London is a much safer city. Crime has increased and shoplifting is up by 130% since 2022. Mobile phone theft has increased but this is predominantly in Central London and tourist areas. However, Croydon compares favourably with other boroughs as crime in robberies, burglaries, vehicle theft and shoplifting has reduced much more in Croydon.

TRANSPORT: Questions had been submitted in advance:

An update on the A232 Sandilands to West Wickham Healthy Streets Scheme was requested – NG said the consultation had taken place and opinions were sought from residents in the area and the results of the consultation were awaited. There was concern from the audience that TfL had been more concerned gathering a diverse panel rather than focussing on people who actually used the route to commute to work. The aim of any improvements that might come from the consultation would be to increase the average speed of buses on the route and to improve pedestrian safety.

The Bridle Road junction continues to cause angst for local residents and Neil Garratt said the main problem was caused by traffic turning right from Monks Orchard Road onto Wickham Road whilst Bridle Road traffic was also trying to turn right. At the moment, TfL do not feel this junction is a priority as there are only likely minor accidents and no casualties.

There are plans to improve the slip road from Wickham Road to Monks Orchard Road where the SL5 and 356 buses stop which will improve safety for pedestrians. The work may not be completed until 2027.

Liz Bebington highlighted the need to improve the road outside the East Croydon bus station where traffic jams occur. Overall, Liz felt we had a very good bus service from TfL.

At the end of Neil Garrett's session, Julian Roberts took the opportunity to thank Nathan and our local Police team for their hard work on behalf of the community.

Shirley Community Library – Chris Hennis

Chris Hennis (CH) said that his not-for-profit organisation Play Place took over the library building in January this year and he had found it great to be part of such an amazing community. The library project has been all about the power of the community. CH said he had been able to work with the Friends of Shirley Library (FOSL) and SPRA and the plans are for the building to be a community library and more. An early survey attracted 150 responses, and it was clear that people wanted facilities for the elderly and the young as well as serving as a library and that it was important to meet the needs of the local community.

Chris talked about the help he had already received from the community including the exterior painting from Joseph Decorating. Additionally, donations in kind had come from other quarters and goods and all the books had been provided for free. 25 volunteers including experienced librarians support the running of the library and all have their areas of responsibility. Trinity pupils also volunteer once a week. A grant from Pride In Place means a new toilet and kitchen will be provided soon.

The library is open five mornings a week and will be open once a month on a Saturday morning. More volunteers are needed. The library has 309 members, 5,048 titles, 2,000 people visited in May. There are 25 open sessions and 20 monthly events. In addition to offering library services, they are offering a broad range of community lead groups and activities. Chris highlighted some of the forthcoming fundraising events already in the diary.

Priorities are fundraising, growing footfall and expanding activities.

A recent film highlighted the views and experiences of some of the volunteers:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JhZ_owqDYb0&t=12s

Honorary Life Members

Trevor Ashby (TA), President of SPRA, announced two new Honorary Life Members who have given long-standing and exceptional service to SPRA:

Mandy Hopkins

Lawrie Rendle

These appointments were agreed by the meeting.

Amendments to the Rules and Constitution

Andy Bebington introduced amendments to the rules:

The first amendment is about associate membership - rule 2c reads:

Associate Membership shall be available to all who do not qualify for Full Membership, but who nonetheless wish to be members of the Association. Associate Members shall not be entitled to vote at General Meetings of the Association, nor shall they be elected or co-opted as a member of the Executive Committee or hold any office of the Association.

Rule 2c will be amended by adding the following to the last sentence, after "entitled" "...to support on planning matters outside the SPRA area or.." and replace the last seven words of that paragraph with "or as any Officer of the Association"

Camilla proposed that this amendment be accepted and David Latham seconded the proposal. The meeting agreed the change.

The second amendment relates to subscriptions:

The relevant sentence of Rule 3 reads:

The amount due may from time to time be decided at a General Meeting of the Association.

Amend Rule 3 in the first sentence by deleting "General Meeting of the Association" and replacing those words with:

"a meeting of the Executive Committee, with the restriction that any increase shall be limited to £1 per annum or such rise as is in line with the Retail Price Index change at 1 January, whichever shall be the larger. Such increases, if not applied annually, shall be limited to the higher of the two limits above"

Suzy Stoyel proposed that this amendment be accepted and Geoff Flook seconded the proposal. The meeting agreed the proposal.

The third amendment to the rules is also about subscription and is as follows:

The Subscription rate for 2027/28 shall be at £8 per household per annum and for 2028/29 £10 p.a.

Jonathan Baxter proposed that this amendment be accepted and Martin Shute seconded the proposal. The meeting agreed that the amendment be made.

AB Justified these amendments:

The need to specify that Associate Members will not receive the planning support available to Full and Life Members, arises from the possible large increase in numbers of Associate Members, the capacity SPRA has for covering planning matters, and the diverse nature of the housing and gardens outside the SPRA the area.

The subscription level has not changed for six years while costs (especially for printing and publishing) have increased, both in terms of "normal" price rises and also our increasing efforts to enhance our support for the community by way of (for example) more effective and attractive Christmas lights, greater community involvement and support for local bodies. A rise from £6 to £10 in one year was deemed too steep and it has therefore been proposed for implementation in two phases. The devolution of the setting of subscription level to the Executive Committee is aimed at making fuller use of the limited time available at Annual General Meetings; members will recall that supplementary questions have been restricted recently, and this is regretted. The imposition of limitations is aimed at ensuring the rate does not lead to the "steep" rise this year (avoided as above) while giving scope for implementing changes other than annually.

Resignation and Election of Officers, Trustees and Auditors

Trevor Ashby noted resignations of the following people:

Lawrie Rendle will be resigning from the Executive Committee but will retain responsibility for role as Membership Secretary.

Mandy Hopkins is resigning her role as Zone and Road Steward Secretary as well as her position on the Executive Committee.

Bob Archibald is resigning his position on the Executive Committee but will continue to provide IT support to the SPRA team.

Bev Tanner is resigning as Trustee although he is standing for a vacant post as Auditor.

Jonathan Baxter is resigning his position as Auditor after thirty continual years of volunteering with SPRA.

Trevor thanked all of the resigning Officers, Trustees, Auditors and Committee members for their work on behalf of SPRA.

Julian Roberts then identified that Trevor Ashby was standing again as President and as he was unopposed, he would be duly elected as President again.

Trevor Ashby then explained that the following were standing unopposed for election and that they would therefore be appointed in the respective posts:

Role	Nomination
Chair	Julian Roberts
Honorary Secretary	Suzy Stoyel
Honorary Treasurer	Kirti Thakrar FCPFA
Zone & Road Stewards' Secretary	Vince Vas
Trustee	Andy Bebington
Auditor	Steve Murray
Auditor	Bev Tanner

Trevor added that there were other members of the Executive Committee who were appointed for two years who were not due for election at this meeting.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 2130 hrs and was followed by a reception.