



BELMONT & SOUTH CHEAM RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
Minutes of 54th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held on
Wednesday 14th May 2025 held at St Andrew's Church, Northey Avenue, Cheam.

Present at the meeting were 70 attendees, including 8 members of the BSCRA Executive Committee and Councillors David Hicks and Tony Shields. Invited guest – Luke Taylor – MP for Sutton and Cheam and LBoS Councillor.

Introduction and welcome by the Chair – Mr. Peter Matthey (PM)

PM welcomed everyone to this the 54th AGM of the Association.

PM thanked the Head and Governors of the Avenue Academy for permitting us to use the premises.

PM explained that the AGM would follow a similar format to usual, first the AGM formalities and then guest speaker.

PM welcomed the guest speaker for the evening - Luke Taylor – MP for Sutton and Cheam and LBoS Councillor.

Annual Report by the Chair

This was PM's 19th Report as Chairman and he went on to say

"I am sure that most members will be aware of the wide range of activities the Association has been involved with over the last year from the information we circulate in our regular emailed e-bulletins and our periodic paper Newsletters. *All of the attendees confirmed that they received the e-Bulletins.*

Much of the information in these bulletins comes from other members although we do moderate and hopefully add value to some suggestions. We like to think that we are doing our bit to create a local community spirit.

We are represented on the Council's Local Committee and I chair the combined Cheam and Belmont Safer Neighbourhood Team's Ward Panels. We are regularly consulted by the Council for our views. I am also the Treasurer for the Belmont Branch of the Royal British Legion and am able to share local knowledge across both roles.

As you may be aware the Branch is celebrating its centenary this year and is organising a number of events to celebrate this milestone.

Originally the Residents Association was set up to monitor planning applications and this remains a significant workload; there are typically about 6 applications across our area each week. Increasingly we are involved with other matters such as traffic, parking, trees and the like.

During the COVID years we did not ask our Road Stewards to knock on doors to collect subscriptions as we felt this was not appropriate. But as a consequence, we are aware that we may not have made contact with the many new residents who have moved into our area. But now we are looking to actively get in touch with those new residents who may not know who we are and what we do.

With this in mind we have distributed nearly 5,000 of our Summer 2025 Newsletter to ALL houses and flats in our area to encourage residents who are new to our area to join up. This Newsletter introduces the Association and describes how existing members can renew their subscription and encourages residents who are not members to join up. Thanks to the work done by Treasurer Paul Arnold we now have the ability for members to pay their subscriptions online using a credit or debit card. Paul will say more later about how successful this has been. But all of you can help – please mention the Association to any new neighbours you may have and ask them to contact me or Paul to become members. From my personal experience of meeting new residents, there are many ways that we can and have helped them.

So what has BSCRA been up to during the year?

Planning Applications

As always the most time consuming activity for us is helping members with concerns they may have about planning applications that have been submitted. Our workload in this area has increased since last year when the Council stopped notifying residents of planning applications for nearby properties.

We now issue "Planning Watch" emails to members on our email distribution list to notify them of applications that might impact them. We don't do this for every application just those that we think might have a significant impact. Initially the Planning Watch emails are purely a notification and do not suggest that members object or support. Depending on the feedback we get, however, we may follow up with a further email suggesting suitable action. Most applications are modest relating to residential extensions. Some are for commercial premises (e.g. care homes).

London Cancer Hub

The most significant application we have received this year is the recently submitted planning application for the London Cancer Hub. This is a formidable application with 136 attached documents!

The application is a hybrid application. This means that it is a two part application covering Phase 1 and Phase 2 of development. Full details are provided for the proposed Phase 1, but only outline information is provided for Phase 2.

But if you do have time to check out this application I recommend that you focus on the Design and Access Statement (104 pages) and the Transport Assessment (454 pages). These are both large documents and are best downloaded from the LBS Planning website.

This application covers both the buildings proposed for the site as well as numerous changes to roads around the site.

I will say more about this application later this meeting.

Specialist Emergency Care Hospital in Belmont

The one application that we have NOT had to comment on is an application to build the new Specialist Emergency Care Hospital proposed by the Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust on the old Sutton Hospital site in Belmont adjacent to the London Cancer Hub.

I can recall a meeting in the very hall in 2020 when the then Chief Executive of the Trust, Daniel Elkeles, told us that plans were proceeding and that the hospital would be ready in 2025 AND the St Helier and Epsom hospitals would have been refurbished! Clearly not!!

Subsequently in another meeting in this hall we were told that availability would be slipped to 2030.

However, as you have probably seen in the press, construction is now unlikely to start until 2032 and assuming a 5 year construction programme, the new hospital is unlikely to be available for occupation until 2037.

Debate about a new hospital for our area has been going on for the best part of 30 years, but even now there is discussion about where the hospital should be located. The Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust ran a comprehensive consultation in 2017 - 2019 as part of their "Building your Future Hospitals Programme" and the outcome, taking into account the views of the medical professional and feedback from residents, was that Belmont was the optimum location. However, politicians, particularly those from further north, are objecting the proposed location and say it should be closer to Merton as it would be easier for residents to access.

This is irrelevant – what is important that we get a new hospital and soon. These days, decisions about where a patient should be taken are made in the ambulance depending on the nature of the patient's ailment and that may not be to the nearest hospital. Surely the priority is that the patient gets the right care and not the geographical location. And to do this we should back the Epsom & St Helier NHS Trust's plans wholeheartedly.

In any case what is the point in building a new specialist hospital at St Helier which is only 4 miles from St George's?

Our Neighbourhood Plan

But enough about planning applications, what about our Neighbourhood Plan.

Our Neighbourhood Plan has been further revised during the year, but progress in putting the plan into action is proving difficult. The Plan document is over 100 pages long. Although we have updated the plan during the year we are having difficulty getting the Council to complete the process for us.

However, the Plan document also contains a list of community projects that contributors have told us they would like to see implemented given suitable funding. We are progressing with some of these using Council Community or Public Realm Funding; others we may fund ourselves.

Parking

We continue to contribute to the Council's long running programme of parking changes and we hope to see a number of new parking changes implemented in both Cheam and Belmont in the next few months.

Changes currently in discussion are the establishment of 11 am to noon parking restrictions in Hillside Road to reduce commuter parking, changes to parking restrictions around Avenue Academy school to make enforcement easier, safety based restrictions in the South Cheam end of Northdown Road and the reclaiming of 5 shoppers bays in California Close in Belmont Village.

Post Office in Belmont

We spent a long time back in 2017 making the case to the Post Office for a post office to be re-opened in Belmont. We succeeded and the outlet exceeded the Post Office's expectations. Sadly, that Post Office had to close for health reasons but then re-opened in 2021 at #29. Sadly, that also closed at the end of last year. We have been lobbying the Post Office for a new branch to be opened as well as encouraging local businesses to apply. It is

looking promising that a Post Office will be opening in what was The Crescent Grocers. This is now being run by the proprietor of Belmont Food & Wine.

You may also be interested to know that the planning application to redevelop the Belmont Garage site was granted on appeal in April. This application grants permission to build 5 flats over a retail unit on the ground floor - probably a Co-Op. We await the next moves from the developer.

Trees

You will have seen the tragic loss of so many mature Ash trees particularly throughout South Cheam. Over 30 large mature trees have been felled many of which are 100 years old.

Fortunately, the Council has obtained funding to replace most of these with new young trees which are of various species. But being young, these need your help. We are currently experiencing a very dry period and these young trees need to be watered. Please help if you can.

Community

The Association is very much focused on creating community spirit in our area through a range of activities and events.

Good communications are key to this, enabling people to know and keep in touch with their neighbours.

Last year I mentioned the numerous road based WhatsApp groups that are active in our area. Many of these we have sponsored and set up, others have been set up by local residents. We have set up several more during the past year. They are all very active and have proved to be very successful in keeping residents in touch with their neighbours. Popular topics are street parties, mis-delivered packages and lost cats! We have implemented a high level "supergroup" that links nominated contacts with all of these groups to give a cascade roll-out of important messages. You can see details of all of the linked groups on the BSCRA website. If you have a WhatsApp group in your road which is not in this list, please let me know. Alternatively, if you would like help setting up a group for your road, again please contact me."

PM thanked the Ward Councillors for their support during the year and without whom we could not make many things happen.

PM also thanked members, for their ongoing enthusiastic interest and support. If the committee has an issue to solve we know we can rely on members to support us, and hence their neighbours in getting a resolution. Finally, PM thanked his wife Helen for her patience and endurance of the time spent on Association business

PM invited members who had any questions on these or other topics to raise them in the Q&A session later.

PM's report was warmly received.

Treasurer's Report - Paul Arnold (PA)

Paul explained his report would cover the following areas.

- The 12 month financial period ending 31 December 2023.
- An update on the success of the online payments portal
- Thank colleagues for their support and ask for any willing volunteers to be road stewards

The 12 month financial period ending 31 December 2024.

In 2024 we continued to collect subs online and continued to ask our Road Stewards to collect subs door to door. For the 12 months to 31 December 2024 BSCRA revenues were £3,301. There was a surplus of £2,060. and the year ended with total net assets of just over £12,000.

Revenues of £3,301 consisted of subscriptions for 2024 £2,789 with £1,717 collected in advance and £1,072 collected in advance. Add in arrears of £290, and donations and interest of £222 and total revenue was £3,301.

Our membership numbers are based on the number of paid up members, but we have observed that with the societal changes accelerated by Covid it is increasingly difficult to return to pre Covid levels of membership. The count of paid up members of 1509 is substantially below the number of residents we have email addresses for. We are intending to close this gap by emailing the residents who have not paid and encouraging them to subscribe, ideally online.

Our online payments process using Square has been very successful and BSCRA is in a strong financial position. But as I remind the committee although our bank accounts are healthy we must recognise that a significant part of this is revenue for future years and will need to cover our operating costs in those future years.

However it is great to be in a position where we can potentially fund appropriate projects within the Neighbourhood Development Plan. There is a significant wish list of projects for the BSCRA area and these are summarised in Appendix 1 titled "Our Community Projects", alongside other projects for the wider geographical area covered by

that plan. We are not suggesting that BSCRA funds should be used to pay for all of these items, but your committee may decide that selected projects warrant funding where other funding sources are not available.

Such investments from BSCRA would not be possible without our Road Stewards, delivering newsletters, collecting subs, contact details and encouraging residents to pay online. So a big thanks to all of our road stewards.

Thanks to the efforts of our Road Stewards and where we have vacant patches to our committee members over 3000 newsletters have been confirmed as delivered in the past fortnight. And based on where I am seeing payments arrive from I suspect a lot more have also been delivered.

We do have a number of road steward vacancies and Peter has recently emailed residents in these roads seeking volunteers.

PA said he would like to say thanks to Peter Mattery for all his hard work during the year and to Helen Matthey for allowing Peter to put so much time and effort into his role as chairman. One of the many, but in this case new, tasks that Peter has undertaken during the year is to inform residents of significant planning applications in their neighbourhood. Peter has taken this on as the council has substantially reduced its communications with residents on planning applications. Thanks Peter.

I will now hand over to Peter for the Election of Officers and committee members.

Election of Officers

PM reported that the current holders of the positions of Chairman, General Secretary, and Treasurer, namely himself, Tony Butler and Paul Arnold had agreed to stand for the coming year. There are no other nominations. All had been proposed by the Committee for the ensuing year.

The nominations were seconded by David Osborne and approved unanimously on a show of hands.

Election of Executive Committee

The Executive Committee members were to be elected as a block. As reported above, all the committee have agreed to stand again for election. The members who are standing for election to the Committee for 2024-25 are: -

Lyonel Bell
Margaret Bentley
Catherine Clarke
Paul Lincoln
Helen Rees

Sesi Katakam
Rashid Khan
Christopher Noon
Paul Sarfaty
Arran Sutherland

As with the election of Officers, PM explained that all Committee Members had previously been proposed by the Committee. The nominations were seconded by Andrew McCoig and then approved unanimously by a show of hands.

Election of Accounts Examiner

PA confirmed that Mrs. Alison Griffiths is willing to continue in the role of Accounts Examiner and explained how much he appreciated her role and help. Thank you, Alison.

The appointment was proposed by PA, seconded by Arran Sutherland and carried unanimously electing Alison as Accounts Examiner for the coming year.

PM advised the meeting that the 2026 AGM would be held on Wednesday 13th May, 2026 at the Avenue Academy.

This brought the formal motions and procedures to a close.

Members' Forum

PM introduced the guest speaker - Luke Taylor – MP for Sutton and Cheam and LBoS Councillor.

Luke had been elected as MP for Sutton and Cheam at the last election in July 2024 representing the Liberal Democrat Party. Luke is willing to answer questions so please have them ready for after his introduction.

Luke Taylor

Luke congratulated BSCRA on its efforts on behalf of its members and the impact it had in the area. He shared a number of concerns around planning policies not least the ability of Government Inspectors to override local planning decisions.

Luke thanked PM for his introduction and thought it might be helpful to give an idea of his diary for the last week or so to indicate how his time is taken up by parliamentary duties viz

Meetings with the parliamentary Hong Kong group – Sutton has the largest group of settled former HK residents across the UK

Attendance at the Crime & Policing Committee examining the Crime and Policing Bill. This Committee also includes Neill Garrett MLA.

Constitution Reform Committee

Sustainable Aviation Technology Workshop – LT was an engineer with Arups prior to becoming an MP.

Received a briefing on the Police Facial Recognition systems

Met with the New Hospitals Minister to lobby for urgent repairs to St Helier pending the new build and seeking alternative areas of funding.

Discussed issues surrounding End of Life care and supporting St Raphael's Hospice

Met with Arups re the infrastructure needs of London

Met with Palestinian lobbyists

Joined the Commons football, cricket and hockey clubs!

Took part in the debate re Youth Services and the cuts to services that are counter productive

Joined the debate surrounding the Assisted Dying Bill

Attended Trinity Church for Christian Aid week.

LT said he was finding his role as an MP interesting, fulfilling and busy. He invited questions from members

Q. Considering LT's interest in aviation was there anything that could be done about the increasing helicopter traffic overhead, especially on Derby Day

A. LT acknowledged this was an issue but explained that the junction of the Brighton Road and A217 (Mad mile) was the specified path for helicopter traffic coming out of London once it had left the river. A fellow member of the audience confirmed this explaining that such traffic could not proceed further north.

Q. The council has a grant of £12m from the Future High Street Fund. It has used this towards lighting but that lighting is not good for fauna and flora.

A. The Council has reviewed the use of incandescent lighting but LT was not aware of possible impact on fauna and flora. The money is mainly being spent on the High Street to encourage buildings and businesses that will bring in increased footfall.

Q. Is LT intending to offer a Work Experience Programme?

A. LT is putting a programme together.

Q. What is happening about the paucity of transport links in and around Sutton compared with North London?

A. LT did not disagree with the sentiment. Sutton has good links into central London but not east to west or into Sutton from the south. With the advent of the London Cancer Hub (LCH) there is an argument that the tram extension should be examined again. An express bus from Sutton to the LCH would be a lower cost option than a tram. The Levelling Up Fund is being used to double (4 trains per hour) the number of trains into Belmont from London (via the slow route).

PM noted that Docklands has moved the centre of gravity of employment in London to the east and yet train services still favour Victoria as a destination. A better service to London Bridge or a link to the Overground would be highly desirable for travellers to Docklands.

PM asked LT to support the BSCRA request to extend the S2 service to Epsom Hospital.

Reinstatement of the A3 National Express service to Gatwick via Belmont is widely requested. Although the 420 service now extends to Gatwick, it is very slow.

Q. It seems that crime – thefts, burglaries etc are increasing but the Police seem to close cases speedily with little action.

A. LT promotes Community Policing but the Met Police are suffering major cuts in resources. School policing is being increased at the expenses of police being available elsewhere. For residents. Sutton has a very low level of crime compared with other areas but nevertheless crimes have a significant impact. Members are requested to report ALL crimes (minor ones through the online system – see BSCRA website) so that trends can be monitored and measured.

PM mentioned that he was seeking more data on outcomes which are most useful in seeing what the Police have achieved.

PM thanked LT for attending the AGM and the open way he addressed the meeting.

PM went on to update members on a selection of other topics:

London Cancer Hub

As mentioned earlier, the London Cancer Hub planning application has been submitted to the Council. This is a major application of significant size. It is available on the Council website. The Transport Plan alone runs to over 450 pages. PM gave a further introduction to the LCH with map.

Key points are

- Only 300 parking space being permitted despite an expected work force of 3,000

- The potential size of the buildings which may overshadow adjacent homes.

- The proposed road through the allotments

- Making Downs Road one-way only going north to Cotswold Road

- Changing the access to Belmont Village from the Brighton Road via the rear of the current bus stand

PM explained that the Association will be examining the application further and conclude its response to the Council. Members would be kept informed.

British Legion

PM acted as Poppy Appeal Secretary in 2024 but would welcome a volunteer to take over these important duties in 2025.

PM thanked members for attending and expressed the hope that the meeting was useful.

Minutes prepared by TB 28.05.2025