

## **Copthorne Residents' Society**

### **Annual General Meeting Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2026 7.30 p.m. All Saints' Church Hall**

#### **Minutes (Draft)**

#### **1. Welcome and introductions**

- 1.1 The Chair (Joe Watts) welcomed all to the Annual General Meeting
- 1.2 Apologies were received from Andrew and Wendy Larkworthy #15 Copthorne Road. Judy Gilbert #42 Copthorne Road. Mark and Janet Pryor #58 Copthorne Road, Mike Collins #61 Copthorne Road. Caroline and Peter Monad #65 Copthorne Road, Mark and Jeanette Brock #3 Chess Vale Rise. Paul and Emma Littlechild #2 Chess Vale Rise
- 1.3 A warm welcome, as always, to the new residents of the community.

#### **2. Minutes of the 2025 Annual General Meeting**

- 2.1 The Annual General Meeting was held on 25th January 2025 and copies of the minutes were available to all at this evening's meeting, and on the website. Thanks to Hasmita Bheda for the e-mail circulation prior to the meeting. There being no alterations, the minutes were proposed for adoption by Linda Coles and seconded by Jas Basan and approved by all those present. These will be posted to website as final.
  - The agenda was to follow the format below and Joe Watts asked if there were any other matters of business to discuss that was not already covered in the agenda.
  - Executive committee report and matters arising from Chair Joe Watts
  - Financial report from our Treasurer Fred Cleary to include:
    - a. Road resurfacing, b. Covenants
  - Executive Committee Election – retirements (2) by rotation and (re) – elections and other nominations to join
  - Famous residents Quiz
- 2.2 Any Other Business: there were 2 items raised, the new fencing to the Masonic School Fields by Steven King #37 CR and a paper by Gordon Ross #21CR on the road.

#### **3. Executive Committee Report and matters arising from Joe Watts**

- 3.1 The Chair presented the highlights of committee report which had been made available to all houses with the notice of this evening's meeting by e-mail.
- 3.2 Joe introduced the current members of the Executive Committee the same as last year (EC) and their roles: Joe Watts (Chair); Fred Cleary (Treasurer); Sally Williams (Secretary); Linda Coles (website); Jim Forder (road maintenance); Gordon Ross (entertainment); Hasmita Bheda (IT and membership), Kirsti Eraneva Dibb (road maintenance), Mike Collins (subs collection), Jas Bassan (WhatsApp) and Angela Edwards (website). At the end of this year, and in accordance with the Rules of the Society, 3 members (Linda, Angela and Fred) will stand down. Only Fred will be standing for re-election. There will be at least two vacancies on the Committee for 2026 – more of that later in the agenda.

- 3.3 Grateful thanks were given to the two Trustees The society has two Trustees: Andrew Gallagher and Mark Clare. The committee is grateful for their continued support.
- 3.4 The society's constitution This was briefly discussed at the AGM in 2024 and the Executive Committee asked to investigate options. The Committee will continue to pursue alternative models – particularly as they may be required to establish the correct tax status for investments and savings the Society holds. – Fred will cover this in his finance section
- 3.5 The gullies and drains on Copthorne Road were cleared in March 2025.
- 3.6 The road continues to be in fair condition – but this will be discussed when we come to road resurfacing, later in the meeting.
- 3.7 Two bags of hardcore were supplied by the Society to Chess Vale Rise to infill potholes.
- 3.8 An ash tree owned by the Society collapsed and was made safe by a tree surgeon. With the heavy spring rains the water was not draining from Chess Vale rise causing a near permanent 'lake'. Groundwork investigations showed that the drain had permanently failed. As a matter of urgency, a new drain was installed and is now draining well.
- 3.9 On a few occasions during the year, we have opened the barrier at the junction of Copthorne Road and Scots Hill (grateful to Tom Turner for his great support on this) when access to and along the Green has been temporarily impeded.
- 3.10 The 'WhatsApp community' for the Society seems to work well with 94 members so far and has been particularly useful for road closures. Please email CRS for instructions on how to join.
- 3.11 Detailed cash flow for the Society for 2025 has been provided by Fred Cleary and will be covered in that item
- 3.12 For the Society's expenses (£10,664) to exceed the receipts (£8,881) within any year is exceptional. [and contrary to the Rules of Membership].
- 3.13 "The Executive Committee shall not take any decisions involving expenditure in excess of the current annual income of the Society, without the approval of a simple majority of the Society at an Annual or Special General meeting (SGM)." The Executive Committee, for the sake of expediency, unanimously decided, to the exceptional and urgent drainage work in Chess Vale Rise (£6,267) aware that this was contrary to rule 6. c).
- 3.14 Joe asked for any comments and there were no adverse comments on this course of action.
- 3.15 Agreement to this exceptional action was sought. Proposed by Andrew Gallagher and seconded by Gordon Ross. Passed unanimously.

#### 4. **Financial Report from Fred Cleary including Finances for 2026**

- 4.1 The Treasurer (Fred Cleary) had prepared and presented the financial summary The subscription for 2025 was £100. Subscriptions: 85 households down from 87 last year from a total of 116 properties, this includes the closes which are not obliged to pay for upkeep but do. Most non-payers are in Copthorne Road itself. Total receipts from subscriptions are £8,811.
- 4.2 It is possible for the society to put charges on houses when sold.
- 4.3 There is a deficit of just under £1,961 on the year, due to exceptional work referred to in CVR. Comprising; £6,267 investigation and remedial work to drain, £984 for tree

surgery to trees owned by society, Biannual drain cleaning just under £1,700. Plus insurance. We received interest of £116 on the investment account.

- 4.4 It is proposed that £50,000 be moved to an interest-bearing account yielding 1% currently, retaining and hold a large balance (float) of £10,000 in the current account for expenditure. This was voted upon with Simon Reader proposing and Andrew Gallagher seconding and was passed unanimously.
- 4.5 The committee will continue to review suitable low risk investments.
- 4.6 Fred reported that for non-payers of subscriptions they will have to pay a larger one-off payment to cover the road maintenance, as outlined in their covenant.
- 4.7 Fred presented financial scenarios of future resurfacing costs, subscription, and investment yields. There was a discussion about looking at the structure of the society both to reduce the corporation tax of 25% on investments and avoid erosion of capital by inflation and to build up the fund to avoid large calls on residents at the next time of resurfacing
- 4.8 Subscriptions There was discussion about increasing subs from £100 to £120, as recommended by committee, however following wide ranging discussion on the road resurfacing (see below) the meeting was agreed to increase the subscription top £120.  
  
Proposed by Greg Hill, seconded by Paul Johnson, and carried 14 for and 8 against  
On that basis invoices will go out in March/April
- 4.9 Greg Hill suggested that any action should be clearly communicated in writing to non-payers in terms of what the committee would expect from them in terms of financial contribution, including cost of insurance.
- 4.10 Tax Status The proposal was to invest up to £50K in low-risk gilts with further investment policy to be proposed once tax status is clear which FC will investigate. Proposed by Claire Chesworth, seconded by Paul Johnson. This was agreed by the meeting unanimously.
- 4.11 The Treasurer noted that road resurfacing is not a capital expenditure
- 4.12 The Treasurer was thanked for his report.

## 5. **Road resurfacing**

- 5.1 A Road infrastructure - discussion paper was tabled by the committee with the request that the meeting decide the way forward in respect of the work that the committee should put in hand.
- 5.2 Gordon Ross presented his alternative discussion paper for 5 minutes, in which he had obtained a guideline quotation from a contractor who has a patented method of road resurfacing.  
He recommended it as giving a solution to resurfacing that would be both innovative and fair value for money.
- 5.3 It was noted that this had only been received and seen by the committee this morning and therefore no time was available to fully review or endorse this proposal by the committee. However, there was a discussion by the meeting and the consensus voiced

by Simon Reeder was that any work should have a professionally written specification and go out to a formal competitive tender process, this was supported by Tim Cole.

- 5.4 Several topics about the road maintenance were discussed, Greg Hill suggested that the road maintenance and the society subscription should not be conflated and that there was more effort to engage with non-payers possibly by means of listing those for their neighbours to see.
- 5.5 It was suggested that all the deeds should be checked for the wording of the covenants about road maintenance payments.
- 5.6 Regarding the condition of the road itself Maureen Hill said she felt that it was largely in good order.
- 5.7 Andrew Gallagher being cautious (noting his retired status and therefore no longer a professional opinion) thought the road was in surprisingly good condition, especially when compared to Hertfordshire highways in the locality and could possibly run another 5 years.
- 5.8 Anup Misty of 14 CR and Dinesh Priya of 14a CR, newly arrived residents indicated that they were concerned that there was no street lighting. This was debated and Stephen King was opposed, Graham Dibb also said that there had been no street lighting and it was part of the special nature of the road for which people appreciated, many houses have their own lighting with motion detectors. It was agreed to include an investigation into street lighting in the instructions to any engineer's report.
- 5.9 Guy thought CVR needed urgent attention and Joe indicated that the course of action would be to regrade the existing profile of gravel rather than keep adding more, but this could not be undertaken immediately.
- 5.10 There was widespread support at the meeting for the idea that those households that pay their subscriptions and contribute to the road maintenance should be made public.
- 5.11 There were individual votes on what topics a professional report should cover including indicative costs, and this included options for:
  - resurfacing, including consideration of Gordon Ross's proposal- vote unanimous
  - works to Chess Vale Rise - vote 20 for and 2 against
  - footpaths - vote 18 for and 4 against
  - speed calming measures - vote 15 for and 7 against
  - street lighting - vote 15 for and 7 against.
- 5.12 The committee agreed to commission the professional survey and report to bring the results back to a formal meeting of the society as unanimously agreed

## 6. **Covenants**

- 6.1 During this year several planning applications had been reviewed by the committee, the upholding of the covenant regarding building line in Copthorne Road had been reported to the planning applicants in these cases the owners had modified their applications to comply with the line, without undue dispute.
- 6.2 Joe requested that there is a formal vote for the Committee continuing to uphold this position, which is stronger in many cases than planning guidance, since in the future

there may be potential legal costs to enforce. Proposed by Gordon Ross and seconded by Kirsty Eraniva-Dibb. This was unanimously approved by the meeting.

**7. Executive Committee**

- 7.1 At the end of this year, and in accordance with the Rules of the Society, 3 members (Linda Coles, Fred Cleary and Angela Edwards) will stand down only Fred is to stand for re-election. Simon Reeder proposed and Guy Ebdon-Hussey seconded the election of James Sylvester from CVR. This was agreed unanimously so they are duly elected.
- 7.2 Linda Coles was presented with a gift and thanked for her long service on the committee.

**8. Fundraising cycle for Cure Parkinsons**

- 8.1 Graham Dibb spoke about his proposed fundraising 1,000 km bike ride in May from Basle to Hook of Holland with Nigel Corps of Copthorne Close, a GP in New Road for 36 years who is living with the disease. People can help donate through Just Giving.

**9. Any Other Business**

- 9.1 Stephen King and Gordon Ross noted several houses on the lower part (odd numbers) of Copthorne Road have been impacted by the Masonic Trust erecting a fence which has blocked off access to the footpath in the field from many back gardens. The Committee should be kept informed of developments but at the moment this would appear to be a boundary dispute between the individual landowners. It was agreed that the committee to keep a watching brief on any future planning applications were made under the Loudwater Farm address. The Society members we requested to contact the Committee if they heard of new intelligence.
- 9.2 Joe Watts reported that the woodland from behind Little Gillions to the footpath into the field has been designated as Ancient Woodland by Natural England - giving greater protection for the woodland.
- 9.3 There being no other business, Joe Watts closed the meeting with thanks to the Trustees, the Committee and to all the members without whom there wouldn't be a society.
- 9.4 Date of next AGM to be agreed.