

ERA – AGM 2025 - MEETING REPORT

Welcome – Pierre

I would like to welcome our 10 members and thank those attending our Nineteenth AGM. A bit of housekeeping. The toilets are left for ladies and right for gents. Should the fire alarm sound it won't be a practice please make your way outside to Corfield Green.

Apologies for absence Pierre

Pat Wilson
Geoff Marsden
Mary Walker
Ann and Martin Battersby
Liz Gallagher

I would like to have our last report of the AGM held on May 2024 which is on our Web site approved **Pierre.**

Can I please have a seconder. Can all ERA members present please vote to accept the report. This AGM report will be presented by the committee on the areas they cover. At the end of the report we will then be happy to take any questions or comments. Can we please start with Planning presented by Bob Millen.

Planning – Bob.

This year things are rather quiet on the planning front so there is not much to say.

Local Plan Update

Around this time last year we reported that the Council was in the process of checking that their Local Plan Update 2023-2040 conformed to the Government's latest requirements.

This time we can report that the Council are happy with the Update and have submitted it to the Secretary of State on the 28th February this year for examination by the independent Planning Inspector/s.

The Inspectors task will be to consider the soundness and legal compliance of the submitted Plan, based on the criteria set out in National Planning Policy Framework December 2023 and associated regulations.

Rebuild of Toutley Depot

Last year we reported that things were progressing with the new visitors' car park laid and the two new buildings approaching completion. However, apart from making the new buildings weather proof little else has been achieved this year. The existing buildings on the eastern part of the site which were earmarked for demolition are still there and in use by the resident organisations.

Old Forest Meadows information board

Last year we were told that a new sign board was planned for erection within the year.

Unfortunately it never arrived and with the Council's cuts to expenditure it is likely that it never will.

Fields behind Toutley Hall.

Email from a local resident advised the ERA that a developer had send out a request for comment with regard to his proposed development of the fields behind Toutley Hall. This was picked up by CM who replied to the developer. Planning permission has not been put in yet but it was thought good practice to reply in advance of planning application. Main concern is the proposed site access from Old Forest Rd.

Schools liaison – Chris Mallett

In Emmbrook we are very fortunate to have four schools operating within the heart of our community. Three long established schools, spanning infant to 6th Form education, and our newer primary school (St Cecilia's). These are all a key part of the Emmbrook community, bringing important benefits for many of our residents, and likewise having an obvious impact on residents as well.

Given this we are keen to foster close relationships with the schools. This past year, like the previous one, has seen limited liaison, although we are hoping to increase that in the coming year. In particular the secondary school head has confirmed they are interested in get an art-related project off the ground.

We have previously worked with both the Infant and Junior school on the planting project in Corfield Green. Hopefully you will have noticed the now well-established bulbs blooming this spring. We have also just completed a tidy up and some new planting in the beds for this summer; which was again assisted by a generous donation of compost from Wokingham Borough Council.

Over the past few months there has been concerns raised by local residents about the progress with improvement to 6th Form facilities at the school. The matter has been raised at WBC executive meetings, and we have pressed our councillors hard for an explanation of why the development has been so delayed. The explanation has simply been that it has all been agreed with the trust which operates the school. The Circle Trust, which operates the secondary school and also operates both Emmbrook Infant and Junior schools, St Crispin's secondary school and a number of other local primary schools, has been however unfortunately been rather tight-lipped on the situation. We will continue to press for further information and commitments.

Local issues – Pierre

Ongoing from last year is a request to investigate the poor condition of the Emm Brook Meadows foot paths. We raised a Public Right of Way damage report. The reply was "... it is expected that they will be subject to poor conditions during the winter period.." Disappointing reply.

We then tried the Cleaner and Greener Team who are responsible for the maintenance of this area. They replied saying, we have inspected the reported defect and we have determined that in accordance with our Highway Maintenance Manual it does not require attention at the present time.

Also continuing from last year is the refitting of the notice board called "Go with the flow" in the Emmbrook three fields. The repair was managed by Friends of the Emm Brook and repaired by Wokingham Mens Shed. I have yet to be able to contact Friends of the Emm Brook to ask them why it has not been refitted.

Our next Quiz night is on 18th October 2025

Other Residents committees – Chris Mallett

You are probably aware that the official catchment for the ERA only covers a part of the area many of us would refer to as Emmbrook, in fact about 1/3 of it. A map of the area is on our website, but in loose terms our catchment is bounded by Reading Road, Emmbrook Road, Toutley Road and Old Forest Road.

The other areas, Joel Park and the new Emmbrook Place development, each make up about another 1/3 of properties in the Emmbrook area. Joel Park had previously been served by JPRA Residents Association, but that disbanded last year, largely due to lack of volunteers to run it. Emmbrook Place Residents Group is not a formal residents association, but does have an active WhatsApp group, led by a resident Joanne Parker.

At the last AGM we mentioned that Emmbrook Place Residents Group in particular, but JPRA as well (given their current unclear status at the time) had raised the question combining efforts as a joint organisation. There has been little progress on this over the last year, although we are seeking to discuss the matter further. Obviously, the Joel Park area are now without any resident's association representation.

We will continue to liaise with Emmbrook Place Residents Group, and had a couple of meetings with Joanne last year to discuss shared matters.

Key of those was the future of the new **Emmbrook Place Community Centre**. You will probably recall from the last AGM that this facility has sat idle for over 4 years now, waiting for the council to agree an operator; but that they were close to agreeing for the Keys Academy Trust, who operates the attached St Cecilia's school, to take it on. Unfortunately, that went nowhere as the trust pulled out. WBC then proceeded to put it out to tender, some would say 4 years too late, and we now seem to finally have an organisation who is going to operate the community centre, we hope! Back in January WBC announced that Reading Rep Theatre would be taking it on. So far information on what that means, and timescales, are rather unclear; other than an indication that it is principally an outreach opportunity for the theatre, seeking to broaden their membership rather than an additional premises to be used by existing members, and an impression that it would possibly be operating by the summer. We are watching progress closely.

Another key topic is **monitoring and control of speeding in the village**, particularly on the new NWDR. You may recall that following surveys completed last year, WBC acknowledged that speeding was a key issue on the section of NWDR near the junction with Old Forest Road, and they agreed to install 30mph roundels on the road. When the promised re-surveying, to establish the impact and whether any further actions are required, was not completed last year we pushed WBC for an explanation. We are pleased to say, despite some initial resistance, WBC have confirmed they will now be carrying out the surveys shortly. WBC have also re-confirmed their intention to consult on implementing 20mph restrictions outside the new school during school times, and we will be monitoring progress with this.

A real hot topic amongst residents has been the **parking situation outside the coop**, where cars park on the road close to the pedestrian crossing, even though parking is provided close-by. The school had already raised with the council several near misses with children using the pedestrian crossing, but to no avail. The ERA has also been pushing this matter hard with councillors, as it seems it is only a matter of time before there is a serious incident. Councillors have been seeking to raise the profile of this issue on social media, and increasing parking enforcement controls, but this has clearly not been working. We consider clearer signage, and yellow lines, are needed to make it clear that parking anywhere on that road is prohibited under the highway code and ideally enforced by cameras. Unfortunately, the council appears to be hiding behind the fact the road has not yet been adopted by them and insisting there is nothing they can do. We do not agree and will continue to push the matter.

The history of Emmbrook – Peter Shilham

My annual attendance at Wokingham Heritage Day resulted in a healthy number of sales of copies of

“Unfinished History” books, this year, and unlike the previous year, none were stolen. A few people stopped for a chat about Emmbrook. I shall be attending again this year as your agent.

Joining the website “Bygone Emmbrook” offered little new information, it being largely made up of tittle tattle

along the lines of “my mum went to each of the schools in Emmbrook” and “has anybody seen Sylvia?” No letters

from Mrs Trellis appeared. My submissions of the 1911 Census for Emmbrook excited interest and thanks from the

Oberfuhrer of the site and the 1929 house numbering by the Council only prompted an enquiry about a road that

was not included by the Council.

The first Women’s Institute was at Singleton in Sussex in 1915 although the movement was started in Canada. “The first English president of a village WI was Mrs LEVESON-GORE; President of Singleton WI. She lived at Bill Hill so she had travelled to attend the meeting in Sussex. This was just one of those inconsequential pieces of information I discovered while reading.

There was a commemoration held in France for the Second World War where a reference was made to

Alfred GROVER who was killed near the village of Santes.

Earlier work involving sensitive material can, perhaps, now be mentioned without risk of prosecution. Why?

How many using the Cantley car park (proposals by WBC for parking fees have been objected to and deferred: ERA

played its part?) are aware that in the 1970s an attempted murder occurred outside one of the houses? A man

discharged both barrels from his shotgun into the stomach of his younger brother. The newspaper report describes

his staggering into the roadway of Milton Road from whence he was taken first to Heatherwood Hospital (initial

treatment staved off impending death) and thence to Harewood Hospital for emergency operation, thus saving his

life. Being recent history, there is some delicacy about disclosing the names of locals connected with the event

although I have now found that the main participants in the case, which went to Oxford Crown Court, have in fact

deceased. Perhaps the 100 year rule should be used, even though the reporting is in the public domain.

More dated history of a salacious nature could be used in a future revelation akin to New of The World tittle

tattle: the wife of a venerable Emmbrooker ran off with the lodger, or the incidence of two married women

summoned for drunken, quarrelsome and disorderly behaviour in the Dog & Duck. A resident in Emmbrook Road complained about persistent disturbance by a neighbour.

A post-war councillor F J BARRETT cared more for the standard of housing in Emmbrook (decent sized

gardens) than present day developers and WBC. Would that the land behind Toutley Hall had been used as a Burial

Ground as hoped for by the Rural District Council in the 1960s

Policing – Richard Dairy

I think you all know that Wokingham is a low crime area and we are fortunate to live in Emmbrook which I think is considered to be a very low crime area. Thames Valley Police (TVP) regularly publish statistics relating to reported crimes for the entire area policed by them. By going onto the TVP website you can find monthly statistics for Emmbrook and compare them to other areas. It is only occasionally that the ERA has dealings with the Police.

The latest statistics available are for February 2025. I track the data for Emmbrook and record them in a simple chart. The charts for 2024 and 2025 are on the screen. I'm pleased to report that here hasn't been any need to submit reports to the Police since the last AGM. The ERA website features a policing page with sections on:

- Thames Valley Police
- Neighbourhood Policing
- Reported Crime Statistics
- Have Your Say
- Reporting Crime or Problems
- Neighbourhood Watch
- Crimestoppers
- Victim Support
- Recent Advice Topics
- General Advice Topics.

Every neighbourhood in the Thames Valley area has a dedicated neighbourhood policing team that works together with the local community and partners. Emmbrook is covered by the Winnersh neighbourhood policing team. More details are available on the TVP website. The TVP website includes ways to contact them, how to report crimes, suspicion behaviour or other matters.

Myself and Bob Millen had a useful meeting last summer with two members of the Wokingham South NHPT – PCSO Kerri Williams and PC Peter Szabo – and discussed how we could work together.

The ERA website also has a link to the TVP website (<https://emmbrook-residents.org/local-affairs/policing/>). This includes the StreetSafe service. StreetSafe is a police service which allows residents to report (anonymously if they wish) any place that makes them feel unsafe – for any reason.

We receive regular Neighbourhood Alerts from TVP and Action Fraud covering a range of topics – those we think contain information pertinent to Emmbrook are put on the website.

34 (as of 8.5.25) have been received since the last AGM, i.e. during 2024/25.

Subject matters included (but not limited to):

- vehicle security alerts and advice
- thefts of and from cars
- burglaries

E-scooters
frauds and scams
appeals for witnesses
door knock scams
county drug lines
keeping safe at Christmas
crime prevention

If you have a few spare minutes have look yourselves to see all that's on the ERA website relating to policing.
That concludes my report.

ERA presence online - Chris Mallett

We continue to operate our online presence through a combination of our website and Facebook. We feel they complement each other well. On the website we can store and communicate larger amounts of data and provide links to external information. Facebook is more about real-time communication, and we can signpost things on our website. We do recognise that not everyone uses Facebook, so we do endeavour to duplicate notices on the website, where appropriate.

We always welcome feedback on the content of our social media and website. What things you like or want more of? What additional topics you would like us to cover? And what aspects you feel are not needed or there could be less of? So please do let us know your thoughts, either at the end of this meeting or anytime afterwards using the email address on the website.

Treasurer's Report- Membership and subscriptions - Andy Goffin

Treasurers Report

ERA Accounts:

On screen is the ERA income and expenditure account for last year:

Income:

Subscription income was slightly down on last year at £681.

Most of the fundraising income was the result of the successful ERA quiz last Autumn, with the balance of £76 coming from sales of the Emmbrook history books.

Expenditure:

As the ERA is in a healthy financial position, the profit from the quiz (£456) was donated equally between the charity fund of the Wokingham Lions Club, (who supplied our quizmaster), and the 1st Emmbrook Scout group.

Apart from quiz night costs, main items of expenditure were for village hall hire and website costs.

Balance Sheet:

This shows that we have a balance in hand of £9,942 - an increase from last year of £479. The ERA remains in a healthy financial position.

Membership:

Our current membership stands at 106 households, a net decrease of 12 compared to last year, out of approximately 800 houses in our area.

Membership has been decreasing year by year. We are always looking for ways to increase our membership, and we propose to have a subscription payment moratorium for 2025 / 2026. Our secretary will present what we propose shortly and ask members present to vote to accept, reject or abstain from the proposal.

Thank you all for your support over the last year.

Auditor:

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to Sylvia Geeves, who once again has prepared and audited our accounts and has also kindly agreed to do it again next year.

Election of auditor

I'd now like to propose that Sylvia Geeves is elected to serve as the ERA auditor for next year.

Andy Goffin

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Andy Goffin
ERA Treasurer

Election of Officers and Committee for the 2025/2026 year – Pierre

Show papers with nominees, with proposed and seconded signatures.

Richard Dairy
Andy Goffin
Pierre Featherbe
Chris Mallett
Bob Millen

P Shilham has decided to resign from the ERA committee.

No other residents have requested to join the committee so these nominees are duly elected to stand as officers of the ERA for 2025 / 2026.

Members / Committee vote for a payment moratorium for 2025 / 2026 £5 payment. Pierre

Our Treasurer reported that we are losing members. In 2021/2 we had 140 members, This current year we have 106. We feel we must do something to help promote the ERA and hopefully increase membership. It was decided to do away with the £5 payment for the next payment year- 2025 / 2026. What does this mean? New members in our area will be able to join us by simply sending us their details. This will include name, address and Email. We will acknowledge acceptance and add them to our mailing list. All existing members will automatically be added to the mailing list.

It is estimated that this will have a small impact to our funds which will be increased following our quiz night. If additional funds are needed for what ever reason then an additional quiz night can be held.

If we accept this proposal, the details will be added to our Web site and we will Email all existing members immediately indicating that if they no longer need to pay £5 for membership. If they chose not to suspend their payment it will be gratefully received and added to our funds. An amendment to our constitution will be needed and acceptance of this proposal will allow for the change to be made.

We would like to take any questions which will be followed by a vote to accept, reject or abstain from the proposal.

1) Rod mentioned that he would like the funds to be spent locally for the benefit of the residents.

2) A question was asked why we had one objection to the proposal. The reply was, by having a small payment members will feel as they owe something to the ERA. Without this payment they may feel what's the point.

3) One member expressed his thanks to what the ERA are doing. He recommended that we should publicise that if you are in our area you can join the ERA free of charge to help us keeping a "Watching Eye".

Can I please have a seconder. Can all ERA members present please vote to accept a temporary suspension of membership payments. 9 out of 10 members.

Any rejections. One.

The vote has been approved, and our constitution will be amended accordingly. An email will be sent to all members to inform them of the change, and it will also be updated on our website.

Questions – Pierre

Peter Shilham was presented with a gift as thanks for his many years of contribution to the ERA.

On behalf of the committee I thank you all for listening and I am happy to open the meeting up for any any other business, questions or comments.

Close meeting – Pierre

This report will soon be made available on our web site.

On behalf of the ERA committee volunteers. We thank you.

I would like to formally close the meeting and invite you all to partake in some nibbles and drinks.
