

Chair's report 2021

RAPS cherishes and looks out for the Port Solent neighbourhood. Its actions preserve or enhance its quality of life.

During a year and a half of pandemic and lockdowns you might think RAPS business has been on pause since my last report. Not at all: Committee turnover alone has kept us moving: we lost four officers and gained one. Peter Lang joined us during the summer to take over some of the planning brief from Tony Hewitt who resigned to avoid a conflict of interests with his bid to become a local councillor; Fiona Janczur left after returning to full-time work; Helen Cronshaw rebuilt the RAPS website in 2020 but pressure of work and family demands meant she no longer had the time to run it; her husband, Malcolm, was diagnosed with cancer in January and retired from the Committee. I am pleased to report he is responding well to treatment: we sincerely hope that continues.

There were, of course, no quiz nights from March 2020 onwards and the one major social activity, the Cowes Week cruise from Southampton, was cancelled again after being postponed from last year.

The Committee, which continued to meet online or in person throughout this period, strongly believed RAPS could help support our community during the three spells of lockdown. We registered with the Hive in Portsmouth and made enquiries about how to assist vulnerable residents. In the event, our services were not formally required as it was clear that strong networks of supportive neighbours existed in the apartment blocks and in each road. Some of the Port Solent restaurants diversified into take-away or retail while India Quay distributed free hot meals to some senior residents. There were very few cases of Covid 19 reported in Port Solent but its hospitality businesses suffered badly and it's been sad to see some of them close down for good.

Even without pandemics, life in Port Solent is not always as quiet, uncomplicated and easy-going as we would like. Stuff happens and in order to keep that stuff in front of us the RAPS Committee compiled a register of current issues. Issues have attendant risks; risks, rather than the issues themselves, are what the Committee can strive to manage. And so RAPS's first risk register appeared on the website last summer. I must, at this point, acknowledge Malcolm Cronshaw's part in the creation of this useful tool. I won't summarise all the risks here, you can read them for yourself, but I will pick out some priorities.

The Association's most important relationship is with Portsmouth City Council (PCC), its planning department and local councillors. There were no meetings with them this year but they will resume later this year, the agenda dominated by the Lennox Point development (formerly Tipner West) and the Country Park. RAPS is aware that environmental concerns have been raised nationally about Lennox Point. Of less immediate concern is the opening of the Country Park, which is unlikely to open this decade.

Next in importance comes traffic in and around Port Solent. After resurfacing Port Way new reminders about the 30 mph speed limit were put in place and perhaps they have begun to make a difference.

Travellers encamped twice on the green field, in July 2020 and again in April 2021. RAPS channelled information about court orders for eviction, listened to complaints about bad behaviour and littering and encourages more effective deterrence without spoiling the view.

Another important issue is noise: from sound systems accompanying Lock View fishing, to

pervasive traffic noise from the motorway. The latter has, of course, been substantially reduced by the noise barrier that was completed in July last year. Not everyone agrees with that assessment, however, and the RAPS Chair did write to Highways England to express residents' disappointment as well as satisfaction. Reply awaited.

Also unanswered, a request for information to PCC from RAPS about the erection of a 5G mast along Port Way at the end of 2020. Nobody's objecting but what services does it support and are they useful for residents?

RAPS Membership has sagged since the 2019 AGM. Last year we suspended membership fees. At that stage we had more than fifty paid up households: now we are at forty-five. The larger the membership of RAPS, the stronger our voice will be in local matters and the broader its scope.

Which brings me finally, to that perennial question. What is the point of RAPS and why should people pay £10 a year for membership? No special discounts at the Boardwalk; not much of a social programme. But Port Solent is not a holiday camp and there is little risk of anyone getting bored with nothing to do here. So I suggest the answer to that question lies in that register of risks and in recollecting some of the successes of the Association in dealing with them since it was founded in 1988. Port Solent is a special place, a unique blend of residential, business, hospitality, and entertainment premises, with a waterfront, open spaces and historical surroundings. To repeat the headline - RAPS cherishes and looks out for the Port Solent neighbourhood. Its actions preserve or enhance its quality of life. You ARE getting good value for that £10.