

RAPS Chair's Report 2023

It's been relatively quiet this year, the exclusive dealings of the Residents Association of Port Solent feeling like a refuge from national noises off-stage.

Business began immediately after the last AGM with a Special General Meeting to agree an amendment to the Rules of the Association in order to define membership more explicitly in terms of households rather than individuals. That agreed amendment has been duly added to the Rules of the Association.

You will have read in the Spring 2023 Newsletter that the various and familiar topics of discussion with Portsmouth City Council (PCC) are either under review, such as Tipner West (re-re-branded from Lennox Point) or proceed at a very slow rate, such as the roll out of the Country Park where signs of activity (the removal of guards around the saplings) may have improved the look of the site but have not had meaningful bearing on an opening date which could be as late as 2038 - or thereabouts. RAPS has good and reliable contacts within PCC, right up to their Leader, Cllr. Vernon-Jackson, who was happy to reassure me at my online meeting with him in September that the much-heralded, much-commented introduction of Freeport status to parts of our surrounding areas will have no impact on life at Port Solent. RAPS is grateful to Cllrs. George and Brian Madgwick for successfully negotiating to obtain digital speed restriction signs along Port Way: we look forward to their installation in due course.

RAPS is included in PCC's Planning Policy Consultee Database but that does not mean that we are consulted about everything connected with planning, so the Committee keeps a regular eye on that part of PCC's extensive website devoted to planning, in particular the Your City Your Say pages <<https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/services/council-and-democracy/your-say/>> In this way, RAPS assures that a basis for constructive dialogue between Port Solent residents and the City Council is sustained.

RAPS lost two of its long-time supporters during the summer: Malcolm Cronshaw and Dennis Brindley. Malcolm had been the genial host for four seasons of RAPS quiz nights at the Port House, bringing his Egghead pedigree to bear. Angela Britton and I attended his funeral last July. Dennis helped for many years with RAPS distribution at Oyster Quay. Our condolences to his widow, Sue.

After two postponements, the Solent Cruise to watch the Cowes Week Fireworks went ahead on August 5th. Three dozen RAPS members boarded the Princess Caroline for one of her last sailings from Southampton along with about seventy other trippers. On the day before sailing we learned that the fireworks had been cancelled due to lack of sponsorship but it was an enjoyable cruise nevertheless, trying to identify which bit of Solent coastline we were facing for the third time round after several glasses of wine. That trip involved a lot of extra work, all of which fell onto the shoulders of Angela, our Treasurer and me, your Chair. The Committee has therefore resolved that until somebody comes forward to serve RAPS as Social Secretary there will be no further outings of that kind.

The approach of longer nights heralded another season of quiz nights. We were fortunate to find a successor to Malcolm in Steve Paull from Waterlooville who had previously stood in for Malcolm, although he too signed on only for three quiz nights. The Port House wanted to introduce an hourly charge to use their premises and also declared they would be closed throughout January so we transferred the quiz nights to The Botanical, where we are likely to remain: the manager, Carlo and his staff were already thinking about starting a quiz night so were happy to inherit our read-made offering, to the extent that Carlo has taken over as quiz master since February and wishes to make it into a monthly event throughout the year, with or without direct organisation by RAPS. This season has been a great success: larger and younger numbers have attended this season and we will be considering, with your permission, the channelling of some of the quiz takings to charity.

The Committee loves it when others come up with ideas for RAPS. Brian Wilkie saw the Salvation Army Band play in Southsea just before Christmas 2021 and noticed that nobody was collecting money. He thought it would be a great idea to transfer the event, as a fundraiser, to Port Solent and quickly persuaded me, Chris Queen (Oyster Quay) and Lisa Fowler (The Boardwalk) to team up and organise something for Christmas 2022. Brian was a pupil at Portsmouth Grammar School and the original idea envisaged involvement by their school choir but school holidays obliged us to look elsewhere. Fortunately, your Chair had just joined the Portsmouth Baroque Choir and it was therefore they that led the carol singing together with a fully complemented Salvation Army brass band on the evening of Wednesday, 22nd December. More than a hundred residents turned out and over £800 was collected for the Salvation Army. Some of the Boardwalk outlets were keen to support the event but in the end only Sole Mio obliged with mulled wine at £3 a glass (hidden by the choir), supplemented by free mince pies courtesy of the local Tesco store. RAPS will support this as an annual fixture and will be meeting during the summer to make the 2023 event even more successful and enjoyable.

The outlook for this year looks favourable: membership has increased to well over 80 and we look forward to monthly gatherings at The Botanical for quiz nights, more carolling at Christmas and a better understanding of what will be in store for us a decade hence with Tipner West and the Country Park.

I will end by thanking my Committee for their dedication and for agreeing, myself included, to keep going for another year, at least.

Chris Clark (RAPS Chair). March 2023