**Pipers Area Residents Association 39th AGM 17th May 2014**

1. **Apologies for absence**

Cllr Bluh, Steve Rosier, PC Tim North

1. **Minutes of the last AGM**

Proposed by Colin Doubleday, seconded by Kareen Boyd

1. **Matters arising**

Three new committee members put themselves forward: Jane Milner-Barry, Neil Hopkins and Chris Hawkins, Colin proposed we accept them onto the committee, this was seconded by Carole Bent.

Malathy Sitaram had to stand down from the committee this year due to work commitments, we thanked her for her work while on the committee.

Tracy Scott from the localities team was thanked for her help and support.

1. **Chair’s Report**
2. **Treasurer’s Report**
3. **News and Q & A**

**The Croft School**

Candida Hutchinson headteacher of the school, and Karen Poole chair of local board of governors, also a parent governor, talked about the Croft School.

Ms Hutchinson explained the ethos behind the school, and is very enthusiastic about the prospects for the pupils attending the school.

Ms Poole explained she is part of the executive governing body, heading a local board of governors for the Croft and is keen to promote the inclusion of the school into the local community.

The school has 12 feeder nurseries and from 2016 children aged from 4-11 will be able to join the school.

Responding to a question about sport’s facilities, the school relies on the Croft Sport’s centre building, the astroturf area and the field to fulfil the statutory requirements for physical activity.

Several requests were made for parents to drive more slowly into the car park, and it was noted that there has been an increase in the amount of litter around the area.

Ms Hutchinson would like to be invited to the Autumn Clean up.

**Corn Exchange Update**

A letter from Steve Rosier was read out because he was unable to attend. In essence, he is hoping for work to begin in the summer of 2015 with completion in 2017. It was mentioned that there was a clock in the tower provided by Deacons in 1854.

**Councillors**

A question was asked about parking issues in Broome Manor Lane which is suffering from overspill parking from Intel and Nationwide.

Suny X is concerned about where the Mela is heading, it contributes half a million pounds to the economy, but can’t carry on as it is doing; the health and safety bills have gone up by £3-4k per annum. It was saved last year by Cllr Renard, but lost £20k because of short lead in time.

Suny made the point that an application was made to hold the Mela in the Old Town gardens in November 2013, but still no date had been agreed by the council for the event.

A discussion followed about the 99 year lease being offered on the Croft site to an alternative operator, Cllr Mattock said legal advice had been taken, and a 99 year lease was necessary to attract the necessary capital. He reminded us there is a covenant on the land which says the field has to be used for leisure, it was pointed out that there is another covenant that it can only be used for high quality building. Cllr Watts stated that she thought the field out to be taken out of the lease to enable it to remain in public use as a playing field.

Cllr Mattock talked about savings the council needs to make over the next few years which means the leisure facilities need to be run by private operators, not themselves.

Cll Mattock said he thought the unadopted section of Marlborough Lane should be adopted.

**Old Town Professional Business Association**

Chair of the group, Richard Deacon talked about promoting the Old Town business area as being the main function of this group. Although the niche market style in Old Town is attractive to many, the area is facing much competition in the form of Waitrose and the new development on the old college site.

The Corn Exchange development talked about for 30 years, needs to go ahead in his opinion to ensure continued patronage of Old Town, and improve the appearance of the area. He thanked PaRa for the clean up events.

Cctv is needed in Old Town because many nasty incidents are not on camera.

To maintain quality of life in Old Town, local green spaces need to be protected.

 The Old Town Christmas light need replacing this year, this is something PaRa used to make contributions towards, Richard suggested we could think of ways of raising money for the lights, and suggested golf for charity and a sausages and beer festival.

Richard ended by saying he wants to make Old Town the jewel of Swindon, and will continue to work to achieve that end.

**MP Robert Buckland**

Robert Buckland said that Swindon was more than a bland town with little to offer, that investment in the town had attracted more money into it. Rail fares were mentioned, he felt that now Reading station was fully open, and when electrification is completed in 2016/17, there will be greater capacity and fairs would hopefully be reduced. He agreed the situation over the Mayor’s resignation/ deposition where we had to wait from October until May for a decision was far too long.

Asked about the leasing of the leisure centres, he said he thought alternatives to the current leases should be considered. When asked about covenants and the ease with which they can be removed, he agreed to write to the council to emphasise the need for covenants that cannot be removed. The change of use clauses within leases on the playing fields must not be allowed to remain, otherwise Croft could face a change of use from playing fields to development land within 3 years.

The meeting ended at 12.10pm