**Minutes of the OARA OGM 10th July 2023**

**“Talking Rubbish” - held at Avenue St Andrews Church**

There were 23 people in attendance, including OARA members and

Roger Brown from Highfield Residents’ Association

Liz Harris, Head of Sustainability at Southampton University Students’ Union

Rev Sarah Hall from Ave St Andrews

Cllr Leggett as Cabinet Member for Finance and Change

Ian Collins, Director for Environment at Southampton City Council (SCC)

Cllrs Kataria, Denness and Rayment as ward councillors

Apologies from Ann Woolnough of OARA Committee and Beccy Gange from Ave St Andrews

1. **Welcome from Chair John Hayward**

John welcomed those present and introduced our speakers for the evening. He summarised the reason for the meeting, ongoing concerns re rubbish, but was very pleased to report good news concerning the recent student end-of-year clearout.

* This year was best student clearout ever.
* Didn't happen by accident, SU sent great messages to students and messaged about useful items drop off.
* OARA members helped students with end-of-year clearout and the university paid for an extra bin collection.
* Credit to Hilary for persistence in this over time.

1. **“Talking Rubbish” Presentation**

Hilary presented a slide show which highlighted some of the shared bugbears we have about rubbish, waste and bins but also picked out some of the constructive work going on to tackle the issues. Points raised included:

* Highlights - Street Party in May, coupled with previous lobbying to local reps and including John’s Taking Rubbish paper, resulted in OGM focusing on rubbish.
* Thanks to local council officer and councillors who have walked the patch.
* Joined up thinking in action resulted in Cedar Road and surrounding roads being pretty clear by 1st July, normally the worst day for overflowing rubbish
* Managed to get contaminated blue bins and sidewaste cleared off the sidewalk
* How to make it more systemically joined up so this happens all the time?
* 'Billy the Bin' example of a contaminated bin which doesn't get moved or claimed as a responsibility by anyone - how can we get ownership recognised of these problem bins?
* Landlord issue - provide bad information, lack of bins, uncaring of dumping - end up giving a bad name to responsible landlords
* Flytipping issue - have another wave of flytipping after the clearout, which is a city wide issue the city council is trying to tackle
* But we know partnership works!
* Uni paid for a blue recycling bag for students to use, and more signups to the bin day textreminder - around 40 houses signed up now.
* Why can't we recycle more? Understand the systemic reasons why we have limited recycling offers, but again asking for the council to work more on solving this.
* Why is there no scheduled SCC street cleaning in the area? Is there a way to work together that helps with on the ground intel that results in more effective street cleaning and value for money?
* If street and leaf cleaning taking place systemically that results in non blocked drains - can we think about solutions?
* SCC Street Sparkles work- can we have more at key times?

1. **Presentation from Invited Speakers**

Cllr Leggett responded, thanked us for the invitation and outlined some current Council initiatives**.**

* He is very familiar with the area - Polygon part of his ward which also got extra paid cleaning. Highly aware of issues and learnt lessons from last experience.
* Request to pass on Hilary's presentation to bring to Polygon
* Proposed to hold a renters’ forum in Polygon - calling agencies to a meeting in the council in October, and asking OARA if they want to be part of this.
* Recycling - building a new MURF facility in Eastleigh to be able to recycle more, including wider range of plastic and cartons. Construction in Jan 2024, in operation by 2025.
* Driven by the Govt's new environment act which provides for waste management and standardisation of the waste collection across local authorities
* Going to start food waste recycling as well.
* However the government hasn't allocated funding for this yet
* Moving from twinstream waste collection to split out card and paper collection as it gets contaminated by metal fragments
* Extended Producer Responsibility - more responsibility put to the manufacturer to create better recycling packaging
* Automatic deposit sites are proposed as well

Ian Collins, SCC Director for the Environment, provided extra information about the Waste Operations in Southampton and responded to questions from the floor.

* He also lives nearby and sees the dumping issues.
* We're above the national average in the amount of waste we produce
* How much of our 150 odd kilos of waste produced by the average Southampton household goes to recycling? We are at 27.4 percent of recycling/composting, so significantly below the 45 percent UK average
* Current waste operations - 140 officers in SCC waste crews
* Half a million collections a year - SCC miss 0.3 collections per year but recognise that uncollected waste is very inconvenient for residents
* £10mil cost to dispose of waste. Less contamination and more recycling reduces the costs.
* Current waste disposal contract with Veolia for recycling and Marchwood for incineration, contracts were set in the 90s and are fixed until 2030. At the time was quite forward looking but now is behind times.
* Experience in Wales of standardised recycling demonstrates an increased rate of recycling as people don't have to learn new and different rules when they move around
* Indicating that revenue streams from the 'polluter pays' principle will be earmarked for local authorities, but this revenue stream will diminish as manufacturers change their packaging
* Need to review collection vehicles and worry that inflation will put up the costs.
* On average 35 percent of recycling bins in the Outer Ave area are contaminated.
* Some failures in the process of not collecting contaminated bins - putting tags on immediately to explain to resident what they can't chuck in the bin, and trialling a collection process with a forgiveness collection with a first strike, and the crew educates the resident about what shouldn't go in the bin
* Trying to improve intelligence picture in the area about where the greatest problem areas are and log contamination events in real time
* Enforcement - enforcement powers nationally have changed to make it harder to enforce domestic waste infringements
* SCC now has to jump through numerous hoops to give notice periods and to identify the individual (not the landlord) who is infringing
* Hoping to use the new info and intelligence to target particular problem areas
* Flytipping powers are much stronger and have brought a number of people to court
* Reporting flytipping - there are a few hundred reports a month
* Also getting reports from officers and street cleansing teams so try to be proactive
* Can the Council use lever of HMO licensing to insist on information to tenants and responsible waste management? Where the council is issuing HMO licences, they can take into consideration what is a responsible letting agency/landlord and is talking to the licencing department to improve this. However, for already issued licences it has to fall back on education and awareness raising
* What about amnesty or quota for bulky waste? Looking into different options for free bulky waste collection, but need to do the cost benefit analysis in order to justify the cost - not sure that any free system wouldn't be exploited or people trying to find workarounds
* What about additional capacity for HMOs? - need to trade off the larger bins which will possibly encourage more waste production, but need to look at resident areas with a big increase of people in the flats/houses
* What happened to the bin audit? SCC has done some work to identify problem residences. Looked at a company for doing this mapping, but they wanted half a million for this mapping. OARA willing to assist and with bin numbering, as we had done in the past
* Can we have common literature/poster for HMOs with clear info about bins, recycling etc?
* SCC did a door knocking exercise to see if giving info increased the rates of recycling - contamination reduction went down by 8 percent but it was a 90 hour exercise. Not a great return but could be worth it in the long run that also gave them intel about matching up bin sizes correctly.
* Can some more residents be issued with glass boxes? New glass boxes can be requested on the website, not keen on increasing number of bins and capacity for residential waste

1. **Conclusion**

John thanked our speakers and the members who had come along.

OARA will collect ideas generated tonight and circulate out to people as well as following up with the Council.

**AOB**

* Portswood Consultation, OARA has been asked to host a consultation meeting, to be held possibly on 13th September
* Tabletop sale outside Waitrose, 15th July *(postponed to Sun 16th due to bad weather warning on 15th)*