

The Old Ratton Residents' Association
www.orra.online

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AUTUMN NEWSLETTER 2018

Dear Old Ratton Residents

Last time I was moaning about the long cold winter we had suffered only now to be tempted by superlatives for the amazing summer this year and now a very decent Autumn too. I guess we must all come to expect weather extremes these days and as ever, we have to take what comes but surely we will continue to moan as only we know how in this country!

Social events

I want to start with a highlight of the year, which saw on 14th July around 90 Old Ratton residents gather to celebrate ORRA's 50th Anniversary with an afternoon tea on Manor Way. An enormous amount of planning and organising went on behind the scenes, which was well rewarded by the obvious enjoyment had by all. The weather was glorious and many people commented how nice it was to meet up with neighbours, in some cases never met before. We are encouraged that there does seem to be an appetite for community here, at least from enough people to make this sort of effort worthwhile. We had many generous donations of equipment, which meant that the main cost was for catering but overall the event came in one third under budget. Due to popular demand, ORRA intends to co-ordinate a similar event in July 2019, although this will need to be substantially self-funding through greater involvement and contribution from residents themselves. You will be hearing more on 'your mission should you choose to accept it' in due course!

Residents Charter

For many years, ORRA has tackled covenant enforcement vigorously, which has positively contributed to maintaining the unique and beautiful surroundings that attracted us all to Old Ratton in the first place. However, I suspect that occasionally there have been unintended consequences, regrettable 'side effects' resulting in some residents feeling alienated by the experience. Of course, many have happily complied with ORRA's requirements and in these cases the approval processes in place really can be 'frictionless', but at times where disputes have arisen there have been some unfortunate and unsatisfactory situations.

However, the principles behind the original covenants remain entirely relevant as a framework designed to maintain the essence of Old Ratton for years to come but I see ORRA as the voluntary team that co-ordinates the work required to make things happen rather than a formidable enforcement unit.

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It is impractical and undesirable for ORRA Committee members to be expected to patrol the Estate looking for problems, such as unapproved developments or anti-social activity. Ultimately, the success or failure of maintaining the integrity of this unique environment relies on buy-in and co-operation from every ORRA member.

We are seeing more changes these days, with more properties changing hands and more development work as extensions and improvements increasingly become the norm to fulfil our modern day living requirements. Now seems the right time to refresh and recirculate the guidelines in place for living in Old Ratton, asking residents to agree once more to follow the covenants and agree to abide by the long established and mutually beneficial practices that have kept Old Ratton as one of the most beautiful and sought after addresses in Eastbourne. Accordingly, we are bringing together the covenants and common practices in a Residents Charter intended to apply to all residents, whether freeholders or tenants. This document will be shared with you all for feedback ahead of the next AGM, at which the final version will be tabled for adoption.

ORRA Succession planning

Currently we are fortunate to have an enthusiastic and committed committee but this cannot be taken for granted. It would be a very positive development to have a good flow of members taking a turn to help run things. Personal circumstances do change and indeed it's healthy to change things up from time to time, re-distributing tasks and responsibilities, bringing in new ideas and points of view. Indeed, I should say at this point that I will not be standing for re-election for a 'third term', for personal reasons.

Voluntary work can be extremely rewarding and I would ask you all to think carefully about what you might be able to offer to the special community in which you live. Although formal election of the ORRA committee takes place at the AGM each May, I would be very pleased to hear from any potential volunteers and let you know what's involved.

Construction work

I am pleased to report that at least 6 major construction works have either completed recently or are drawing to a close. I think we'd all agree that this is a relief from the somewhat relentless flow of heavy and sometimes huge delivery lorries, all of which are no doubt necessary but entirely unsuitable for our fragile and narrow private roads. I'm sure that the properties in question will have been transformed and we hope that those residents will stay in Old Ratton for many years to enjoy the fruits of their labour. At this time, there are only a small number of new planning applications in the pipeline, that we're aware of at least, which should bode well for a more peaceful period ahead.

Trees / Leaves / Verges

We are continuing our annual tree maintenance routine, which this year advised of two trees requiring significant attention. One of these, a Sycamore belonging to No.49 Upper Ratton Drive, will be reduced in size imminently by the owner as approved by Eastbourne Council, having declined the original application for felling. However, the Council does acknowledge that it will need a further care plan going forward. The other, an Indian Chestnut outside No.8 Walnut Tree Walk, which is diseased beyond repair, will be felled and replaced. Some other reduction, shaping and thinning work will also be carried out.

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We recently decided to introduce an extra leaf sweep into the calendar, as the tradition of waiting until all leaves are down, whilst logical, does leave quite a mess for a prolonged period. This was arranged at rather short notice and in future I would hope to provide some notice for everyone. Going forward, leaf clearance will take place around November and January each year, unless otherwise advised.

The grass verges have taken quite a hammering this year, both from the prolonged extreme heat through the summer and from vehicles / skips parking on them. The former cause is beyond our control but the latter can be managed or preferably avoided. I have accepted that some vehicles have needed to park on verges during construction work and the need for skips too, but this should be seen as entirely temporary. It is not necessary or acceptable to litter our green spaces with vehicles on a regular basis. Please take responsibility for repairing your grass verge where it has become damaged.

Drainage

We have recently engaged a local drainage contractor to carry out investigation work on the surface water drainage system in the bottom half of the estate in particular. Many of the gullies do not appear to be functioning effectively, although I would add that this is only causing significant problems just below the junction of Manor Way / Ratton Drive and at the bottom of Walnut Tree Walk. We need to understand the layout of the gullies and the intended / expected destination of surface water before we consider what remedial work may be needed. There are also a number of gully grates that need replacing – unsurprisingly these are non-standard 'imperial' in design and we are looking at replacement options at the moment.

Traffic

You will have seen the speed sign positioned first in Ratton Drive and currently at the top of Walnut Tree Walk, although hopefully most of you will not have seen it 'in action'! This gathers traffic data in terms of volume, date / time and speed and will help us understand better the traffic movements around the estate. It is too early to be drawing conclusions but I will say that the volume and instances of speeding down 'Lower' Ratton Drive were significantly fewer than previously perceived, however I sense an Old Ratton speed record may have been achieved – 44mph at 4am – hopefully a rare but reckless joy rider.

Maintenance Charge

Thank you to the vast majority who have paid the 2018/19 maintenance charge. There are some still outstanding and even a few who appear to have overlooked the previous year (2017/18). Please check your records and put this right at your earliest convenience. We'll follow up again with more specific reminders in the near future.

I do hope that 2018 has been a good year for Old Ratton residents and it just leaves me to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Kind regards

Mark Thornton, Chairman, ORRA