

CHAIRMAN'S SPEECH FOR THE 2018 AGM

2017 was a busy year for Earl's Court Square Residents' Association. We lobbied the Police and our local Ward Councillors about the increase in anti-social behaviour, drug dealing and rough sleepers in the Square. The end of 2017 saw a two-month major operation in Earl's Court to flush out ASB and drug-related crime, which resulted in arrests, vehicle seizures and closure of drug dens and brothels and an 80%- 90% drop in complaints about drug issues from residents.

Unfortunately, PC Andy Clough is unable to join us tonight but has asked me to report that "all dedicated ward PCSO's from the south of the borough are being used for smart water kit drops off in Holland Ward and another ward which are being hit for burglary offences. We're being told this will affect every shift for the PCSO's for a period of two months. However, this is likely to be a minimum period due to the number of households it is to be delivered to. Smart water is essentially a traceable liquid, which can be placed on valuables. If these are stolen, and if a suspect is arrested, the liquid can be traced back to origin and the suspect charged with the offence. In this sense the kit is very useful, however, we can ill afford to lose PCSO's for any period let alone on every shift and I think we would all question if this is a sensible use of police time.

Residents have been very concerned about the increase in criminality in Earl's Court Square. As a result of my discussions with Andy, he will be putting in another bid for four officers to patrol Earl's Court Square three nights a week and, if successful, this should continue for 2- 3 weeks.

Despite the efforts of all of our Ward Councillors, the RA has been frustrated by the lack of enforcement by RBKC in relation to refuse collection, planning and pest control. There seems to be no appetite to prosecute repeat offenders or to issue Community Protection Notices, which continues to frustrate our residents.

One of the worst "hotspots" for rubbish dumping is in the SE Arm, which is exacerbated by the increase in short-term lettings. As requested, RBKC installed a CCTV camera to identify/prosecute fly tippers. Great solution we thought until we were advised that current borough policy states that CCTV cannot be used to identify and prosecute rubbish dumping offenders. Despite photographic evidence of labels, stating names and addresses of offenders, supplied by members of the Committee, the Council have just confirmed to Heidi that during 2017 "no fines were issued, due to no offenders leaving evidence". We find this unacceptable.

The SE Arm also hosts an on-going cockroach infestation. To date, RBKC Pest Control seems unable to control this health hazard - despite Alex sending 100s of photos and having to point out that cockroaches were nocturnal and did not normally surface during office hours.

In November a closure of the NE Arm to traffic was due to RBKC's Planning and Building Control Departments not noticing that 1A's (formerly the 3 garages) sewage pipes could not discharge into those of Northgate House because 1A's were lower than Northgate House. 1A's contractors and Thames Water had to dig up the road to connect their pipes directly into the main sewer. As we are all aware, this necessitated a 20-day closure of the exit onto Earl's Court Road leaving us with one exit onto Warwick Road. We found it surprising that this was not addressed in the Traffic Management Plan on which the RA was consulted. The RA and most of the residents were therefore unprepared for an extremely inconvenient road closure with very little consultation or prior warning.

The RA shares these frustrations with our residents and wrote to the Leader of RBKC last September detailing the apparent lack of enforcement. Sadly, we have not received a satisfactory reply, addressing our residents' concerns, and we wrote again in November and December asking for these to be addressed. We await a response. In the meantime, the Executive Committee had a 3 hour meeting with the Centre for Public Scrutiny on the 23 January when we expressed our frustrations with the Council and were able to cite a range of examples of the lack of enforcement relating to planning, refuse

collection and pest control. The CfPS are tasked with reviewing the decision-making processes at RBKC and making sure the views of residents are heard and included as part of the review findings.

Whilst being critical of the Council's services, I would, however, like to take this opportunity to welcome and thank our three Ward Councillors, who are always supportive of the RA, and who work tirelessly on behalf of our residents. Could I ask Councillors Fenella Aouane, Malcolm Spalding and Linda Wade to stand up so we can express our thanks for all your hard work. Fenella is not standing in May, due to work and family commitments, so please join me in thanking her for the hard work she had put into the ward, especially in relation to air pollution and the environment.

The RA is particularly concerned about the levels of air pollution in our area and Maria, our Membership Secretary, has written a very interesting report for our Committee which is now on our website. Residents can keep a tab on levels of daily air pollution using apps such as Plume, ClearSpace and Airvisual. King's College also have a website www.londonair.org.uk with one of their "control" stations outside Couscous Darna on the Earl's Court Road.

ECSRA has been active during the past year organising four well-attended events to encourage residents to meet and to welcome new residents to the Square. Apart from the AGM, we hosted a BBQ/Disco in the summer, "The Lighting of the Christmas Tree" and, this year, our second Members Only event (A Taste of Italy) in the Garden. Our sincere thanks to the Garden Sub-Committee, for their continued help and support and the use of Earl's Court Square's delightful Gardens for most of our annual events, and also to members of the Executive Committee and other volunteers who give so much of their time freely to ensure the success of our events. We couldn't do it without you.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Executive Committee, who work really hard behind the scenes all year around monitoring rubbish and recycling, commenting on planning, licencing and transport issues, liaising with the Police, Council and Councillors, and organising social events.

Alex – our Honorary Treasurer (who not only looks after the finances but is also our planning, licencing and traffic guru); **Heidi** (who leads the Rubbish and Recycling Team); **Andrew; Sue; Christine; David; Mariaclara** (who has taken charge of the arrangements tonight); **Jennifer** and our new Membership Secretary – **Maria**.

Please also give an extra special thanks to our ex-Membership Secretary, Christine, who has passed the baton on to Maria after 10 years; to Sue, who does an amazing and time-consuming job editing our annual magazine – which I hope you have all received - as it is distributed to around 600 residents! And to Charlene Williams of John D Wood & Co for their continued support for our events and for printing our annual magazine.

We hope you will consider joining or renewing your Membership to the RA in 2018 to enable us to continue to represent residents' interests and make life better for all the residents of Earl's Court Square. Our website www.ecsra.co.uk details our many activities, has photographs of our events and lots of information, both past and present, about the Square with a dedicated section for Members. Please do use it!