**Andrew Miller, SHRA Chair, speech at AGM 1 May 2025 – Strawberry Hill Golf Club**

Welcome to the Strawberry Hill Residents’ Association AGM for 2025 – its 60th \_ Diamond Jubilee Year. It was February 1965 when residents packed into St James Memorial Hall to protest against the road scheme that threatened to tear through the heart of our area. It is sad to report that June Turner, our first Vice Chair and SHRA co-founder, died recently aged 99 before we could interview her for the Bulletin. Last year we tried a different format with an emphasis on the social side of this get together of residents and the SHRA Committee. I hope you enjoyed the finger buffet, drink and chat and will stay after the formal part of the evening is completed.

First of all, a few words of thanks – to you all for coming to support the Association, to my fellow members of the Committee and to other members of the audience – our Green Councillor, Richard Bennett; PC Greg Roberts from our local Safer Neighbourhood Team; Claire Leighton and Charlotte Savory from Strawberry Hill House. Thanks to those of you who have been supporting the work of SHRA through the annual subscriptions of £5-£10 or more in several cases, donations, or sponsorship of events – and from those of you who have supported our activities. Of course, we are always pleased to receive subscriptions which keeps the Association afloat.

This year I have only to thank one member of the Committee who is standing down at this AGM. Thanks to John Tjaardstra, our Business Liaison committee member, who has improved our links with local businesses, raised sponsorship money to cover the costs of our events and created a business directory. Thanks to all current members of the Committee for supporting the evening tonight and for your work in various roles.

Last year the AGM led to the recruitment of three new Committee members - Fiona, Dany and Jonathan - and this year we still have vacancies for people interested in taking on the Business role, Marketing & Communications, Events, Vice Chair and Bulletin editor. It is very important that we continue to renew the membership of the Committee each year – so if you have some time for volunteering then please consider finding out more – for example, by attending our next meeting on 14 May to see if might be for you. Please come and talk to one of us if you are interested.

I would like to highlight a few features in our year’s activities:

* The partnership with Strawberry Hill House – 15th anniversary and SHRA 60th anniversary - has resulted in a Strawberry Hill Community Picnic – there will be music from St Margaret’s Elastic Band and children’s entertainment from Jolly Julie. As at previous events there is an 18th century dressing up rail and there is now a fairy trail for children in the woodland walk. Please keep the date in your diaries for Sunday 29 June from 15.00-18.30pm. It should be fun for all the family in a gorgeous setting and will also support the House.
* The monthly litter picks continue to be very successful and Louisa Carradine – our environmental coordinator has done an excellent job in organising the regular SHRA litter pick group – thanks to all residents contributing to keeping SH clean and tidy. Louisa is also looking after our planter in Tower Road and the recycling centre. We have also been talking to Habitats & Heritage about our other green public spaces. Louisa was short listed for Richmond’s Community Heroes Awards in the Environment category.
* *Strawberry Hill: a history of the neighbourhood* has been reprinted and is now in its fifth edition. It remains an essential guide to the history of Strawberry Hill – on sale from Fiona over there. The three-times-a-year Bulletin continues to be well received from those people who have seen it, opened the link and read it. We are grateful for the work of Sam Kamleh on design, layout and distribution – Sam is acting as our photographer this evening.
* *Carols in the Village* when the Christmas tree is decorated by children and the community come together to sing traditional carols continues to be a feature of days leading up to Christmas. Last year was no exception with, again, over 110 residents turning up.

It has been a fairly quiet year in terms of issues for the Association to deal with.

* A major issue was the notices to quit handed out at short notice to several community groups using St James Memorial Hall (a building associated with SHRA’s birth). Despite our best efforts the building was handed over to St Catherine’s School to serve as auxiliary classrooms for music and textiles lessons while their new Music Block (planning permission recently granted) is being built. We attempted to engage in a dialogue on behalf of the groups affected but were effectively snubbed by the School and the Church.
* The other ongoing issue throughout the last year has been the attempt to let Radnor Gardens Café. This is the responsibility of Avison Young working on behalf of Richmond/Wandsworth Councils. The latest news was that the new contract had still not been signed following various legal queries being raised. We learned subsequently that Benedict’s will be opening *The Strawberry Patch* as a deck café in Radnor Gardens.

There are some new issues we will be addressing in the current year.

* We have commissioned a local web designer to help us in redesigning and updating the SHRA website.
* We are reviewing our health and safety policy to make sure that people taking part in our activities our safe.
* In the past SHRA was involved with HACAN – Heathrow Association for the Control of Aircraft Noise - and was against Heathrow expansion. In the light of the proposed third runway debate this may be something we engage with on behalf or residents.
* Our planning officer, Mike Allsop, is vigilant in monitoring planning applications to make sure that they are sympathetic to the area. It remains to be seen how the Government’s proposed relaxation of planning rules impacts our area.
* Although we are outside the immediate area of the Allianz Stadium their vision for the future does involve increasing the number of non-sporting events from 3 to 15 a year. SHRA will consider whether to take a view on these proposals.