IRARA

Your voice in the local community

IRARA AGM meeting Tuesday 20 October 2026

Attendees

Committee: Shaun Thomas, Claire Law, Helen Skipp, Sue Roberts, Liz Haxton

Residents: Brian Skipp, Simon Amstutz, Paul Haxton, Adrienne Lee, Jack Kennedy, Vickie Thomas,
Councillors: Cllr Sue Lissimore

Apologies: Chris Brigstoke- Williams (Committee) Will Emrich (Committee),Cllr Richard Bourne, Katie Vargas, Lorraine & John Stonehouse, Madge , Charlie Law, Paul Roberts, Katy Vargas.

ST welcomed everyone to this year's AGM

Minutes from Previous AGM
ST confirmed that the Committee had signed these off and that they had been distributed via email and added to the website (as suggested at last years AGM)

Matters Arising from last years meeting

20mph and double red lines or traffic calming - Cllr Sue Lissimore had confirmed by email in the year as follows: *I've spoken with our Highways Engineer. Whilst the Irvine Road area is on the list for speed checks, none are being done at the moment because everything has halted due to the reorganisation of Local Government. This is due to the time it takes to design and implement a scheme if the data shows work needs to be done. As ECC will cease to exist in probably 2027, there would not be enough time. However we are waiting for an announcement from the Cabinet member on what will happen before then as it's obviously not good to have nothing happen for years.*

Cllr Lissimore (Cllr SL)at the meeting confirmed that the Local Govt reorganisation has been postponed and will not happen in the current Govt. She also stated that there are no mechanisms for Cllrs to request 20mph speed checks.

Simon Amstutz (SA) suggested that IRARA consider a Community Speed watch. Cllr SL said that we would need to go through the police for this. The Committee to consider Community Speed watch

Street trees/ benches/ wildlife area

Shaun Thomas (ST) advised that the committee are still pursuing Street trees & benches/wildflower area.

1. We have lost contact with the Council regarding replacement street trees having previously benefited from a survey we conducted and help from Nick Day resulting in the planting of a number of trees. Some gaps remain which we would like to fill but do not know who to approach. He said that he has been told that the City Council no longer has any links to staff at ECC regarding street tree planting. Cllr SL said she will try to get a contact for us.
2. We have previously met with Jess Rosedale, (Greening Officer) to discuss the possibility of a wildflower area &/or benches on the Irvine Road Field and despite chasing have not heard back. Cllr SL said that some Cllrs have a funding allocation for benches. The Committee will contact Cllr Bourne re bench funding

While on council business, ST mentioned the area by the allotments

Cllr Bourne has advised "Cadent Gas were responsible for restoring the Council-owned land following their works on Irvine Road. The matter has been passed to Steve, who will be visiting the site to inspect the area and confirm whether the restoration works have been completed satisfactorily, as Cadent were in the process of seeding the ground.

If, following the inspection, the restoration is found not to be of an acceptable standard, Steve will contact Cadent Gas to request that any outstanding repairs or remedial works are carried out.

We will update you further once the site visit has taken place."

ST advised that the committee have discussed about the possibility of new trees to be planted in that area so have made that suggestion on, too. We would be willing to assist if that proved helpful - even if we do it ourselves and acquire tree guards. Awaiting response from Cllr Bourne

It was agreed that residents can decide to do some light tree maintenance at their own risk. The committee also agreed to put a reminder in the newsletter, asking residents to cut back their own hedges and trees

Has been done but not in newsletter which we hope to do before end of 26

Street Meet Location 2026.

ST had sent out a message - but had received no response, and hence the Street Meet 2026 took place in Irvine Road again

A Bunting making evening – it was suggested that we hold a Bunting making evening at the Arc Light Bowls club in the winter – to make reusable bunting for events. The Committee will arrange

This was done

Simon A suggested that to increase attendance at next year's AGM, we look at inviting a local speaker (such as the Civic Society) .

Despite numerous attempts, (by Helen Skipp) we had been unable to secure a speaker (from The Civic Society, Archaeological Society, Jumbo). Will try again next year, and will also contact Bob Russell.

Simon A suggested a Christmas Window display competition.

This was done and was a big success

A Dawn chorus event was suggested

Dates didn't work. Will consider again

Sue Roberts suggested organising coffee break meetings in the street, for people that work from home.

This was a good idea but SR had been too busy to take on and make work. Committee to put in newsletter and see if any residents would like to organise

3. Chair's Report –

ST explained that IRARA should be considered as the "majority shareholder" in the Orchard, not only having driven its creation but also being responsible for the appointment of the majority of the Orchard's Trustees.

Orchard

Last Oct 2025 – There was a lot of interest in our stand (hosted by Nick and Wayne) at the Apple Day at Firstsite.One of the experts also helped identify one of our few remaining apples - it's a Blenheim Orange.

Thanks to the very generous loan of the chipper by Upson Mowers we were able to chip all of the prunings from the past two years. This is used in the Orchard as mulch and compost. We also chipped the apple wood separately with a view to making this available to those who want it for bbq smokers next spring.

Thanks to everyone who came along to the January Wassail given how cold it was (even without the snow). A great turn out, lots of noise and some excellent joining in with AnnieMation. Sadly the harvest did not quite live up to the promise of the event. And we raised almost £100 for the Orchard, too.

25th April open day – An attendee said "Really lovely open day today, great activities and cakes - many thanks for organising it and great to see everyone."

Management plan review - As Trustees of the Irvine Road Community Orchard, we are committed to managing the Orchard as well as possible. Our aim is to manage and celebrate this ancient orchard and its wildlife, engaging the local community wherever possible.

The Orchard's management is guided by a Plan that needs to reviewed every five years and we undertook the first review in Spring 2026. We employed the EWT as an independent organisation to undertake the work and have produced a new plan.

You may also see that we have built two Dead hedges as alternative wildlife habitat.

SA asked about some dead hedgerow on The Chase. ST said he thinks that this is managed by residents of The Chase, he will mention to the residents

Sorry to say that we had to cancel the fruit pressing this year due to the lack of apples (Ermine moth and drought) , but we did still have an open day on 13 Sept, with a chance to stroll around.

FUNGI FORAGE was held 18 Oct 26 – survived the drought and good to maintain the sequence of annual surveys

IRARA

Litter Picks - 3 since last AGM. Oct 25 and 2 other dates. Thanks to SR for organising. The last litter pick was very well attended, and litter had been particularly bad recently and a lot was collected. HS has written to Philip Morrrant School, and received a reply:

Thank you for contacting us about the litter on the path between Norman Way ends. Thank you for the photographs as that made it a lot easier to identify.

I have shared the information with the Headteacher and I can confirm we will deploy additional staff to concentrate on those areas. We will also do a reminder in the student updates.

We have experienced the squirrels and seagulls pulling things out of the bins on site, but the concentration in that area should be addressed by the additional litter picking in that area.

The site team already had on its schedule to empty the bins after lunchtime each day, to reduce the risk of any rubbish blowing out of the bins if they start to overflow, and the bins are sheltered with lids to reduce the impact of the wind whipping items out of the bin on a breezy day.

I hope that helps, both in addressing the litter along the path, but also ahead of the AGM. As a shared path, it might also be worth contacting the other two schools who also use the path to remind their students if you've haven't already done so.

It was also noted that litter bins were overflowing. Cllr SL said we could report this on the Council Website . Claire Law to report and monitor

Dec Christmas social – poor attendance but those attending enjoyed it. But it has been decided not to organise one this Christmas

It was great to see Advent windows lighting up our streets. One resident said : *"I must just say that this has been such a lovely thing to see..seeing our streets looking so beautiful and the decoration of the advent windows that are so wonderful has quite overwhelmed me. It has brought happiness and comfort to me to see such sparkle and care. So a huge thank to everyone who has joined in and made our little corner of the world so bright and full of light, you never know how such a thing can make a huge difference to someone's life..which might sound a bit silly but it's true".* Thanks to Helen Skipp for co-ordinating this

March quiz - Great fun at the Quiz night , thank you to everyone that came along and supported . Thanks to Claire and Charlie Law for organising another great quiz . Congratulations to team 'Helen Skipp ' for winning

Bunting making afternoon – In March , was well attended and a huge success. Thanks to Helen for co-ordinating and putting the bunting together.

Street Meet - The new bunting was up ready for our street meet. Thanks to everyone that helped, come along to admire it and find the flags you worked on. One resident said : " *What a glorious street meet! We feel very grateful to be part of such a lovely community and thank you so much to all that organised it, volunteered and put in energy! Our children loved it, as did we. Happy Sunday evening folks "*

The street meet included two Punch and Judy performances, table tennis, face painting and ice cream

4. Treasurer's Report including membership

HS presented her report

Opening Bank balance £2,121.83 closing bank balance £1,785.31

Income £504.61

Income £547.34 (£57 from subscriptions, £18.31 Bank interest, £472.03 fundraising/ donations, mainly from the quiz)

Costs £883.86 on printing, subscriptions and included £314.48 on the street meet and Christmas social and £454.08 to the Orchard of which £400 was for the one-off Management Plan.

HS pointed out that subscriptions were down, and we should push this in the coming year.

5. Election of Committee members

All current members are happy to re stand for a further year and nobody else wished to join. CL did say that she had been on the committee for 11 years now and was staying on as she would not want the IRARA to fold if the current committee stepped down.

6.Activites & Ideas for next year

- Halloween Trail, 31 Oct at the Orchard. We don't want to over advertise this in case of too much interest. But we will see how it goes, and consideration for next year as a fund-raising event, with sold tickets.
- Advent windows in Dec and an agreed resident's social tour on a date before Christmas day, with mulled wine and mince pies. (Make sure that this doesn't clash with Rotary Club Santa evening)
- Wassail will be on Sunday 10 January 2027.
- Quiz - Claire to confirm date with Jack
- Orchard Open Day – date tbc
- Street Meet – ST will ask on the Whats App group if anyone would like to organise in a different street. If nobody wants to organise, the committee are happy to organise one in the same area next year. To consider including a section of the street allocated for residents to have tables for a street sale
- Fruit pressing day in Sep 27, date tbc

Helen Skipp has suggested launching a **Local History Project.** Where residents could share and grow our knowledge of our local area. Helen suggested a possible sharing drop box. Adrienne Lee said she had interviewed 2 original residents in the past and would look for the transcripts. The Committee will discuss how to launch this idea.

Suggestion to **clear allotment path of leaves** – ST wondered if a working party time could be suggested to clear the length of the path once all the trees shed their leaves, as it has been very messy and slippery in previous years. Cllr SL said you can request the path be cleared on the Council website, or we could request a special compost bin if we want to do this ourselves. Committee to discuss at next meeting.

7 AOB

ST thanked everyone for attending and for Jack for allowing us to use the bowls club again