

WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY

Minutes of the Management Committee meeting no 65

held on Tuesday 29 November 2016 at 7.30pm

Present: Adrian Olsen (Chair), Tao Tao Chou, Sally Duncan, Nicholas Orme, Paula Reynolds, Brian Shine, Raquel Stremme

In attendance: Rebecca Burt (FirstPort Property Services)

Minute taker: Imogen Olsen

1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Greg Barnes, Ann Hall, Adrian Mourby, Louise Robertson, Hilary Sorensen, Mary Tovey; Rachel Dolacinski (FirstPort Property Services)

2 Minutes

Approval of the minutes from meeting 64, 4 October 2016

2.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

3 Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 It was agreed to make the Q&A session held before Meeting 64 a regular annual feature for September/October, in addition to the Q&A session after the AGM.

3.2 The estate agents' boards in Cox's Ground and on the Elizabeth Jennings Way bridge have now been removed.

4 HMOs in freehold houses and apartments

4.1 No response has been received to communications sent by FirstPort from either the resident in question or the City Council. It was agreed that FirstPort would check the Council website to see if there is a list of HMOs; if it is possible to check the list and Waterways properties are on it, that would constitute a clear proof of a breach of the lease and FirstPort would pursue this through their breach of lease procedure. If the Complins Close house and flat do appear on a list of HMOs, then FirstPort will use this to take further action. The council has not clarified whether it can refuse HMO status for Waterways properties on the grounds of a breach of lease. If necessary the Chair would write to Cllr Liz Wade about what powers the Council might have to intervene.

5 Progress on parking plans for Elizabeth Jennings Way and Frenchay Road

- 5.1 It seems the plan for Elizabeth Jennings Way will go ahead. However, several objections or comments on the plans for Frenchay Road have been made and the Council will be producing some alternative proposals in the new year.

6 Welcome to The Waterways booklet

- 6.1 A Director has now checked the final version and suggested some changes in terms of the user friendliness of the document. The final corrected version of the map is still awaited from a Director.

7 Railway line developments

- 7.1 Network Rail has submitted two more planning applications to the Council which in effect renege on their promises to install Tata Silent Track and seek to overturn all restrictions previously imposed on the number of trains. In the meantime, they are advertising the new service from Oxford to Marylebone from December 12 without fulfilling all the current planning permission conditions. This is a blatant disregard of the planning permission and it has caused outrage among affected residents, many of whom have lodged objections on the Council website. There has been much angry correspondence with members of the Council, including the Council leader, Cllr Bob Price, demanding that the Council uphold the integrity of the planning process in the face of corporate bullying from large organisations.
- 7.2 The acoustic glazing has been installed in eligible properties in Stone Meadow and Cox's Ground and has received very favourable feedback from many of the residents affected.
- 7.3 Work on reducing the trees behind Cox's Ground and Stone Meadow has now been completed. Rob Mashford of Network Rail was very helpful and enabled cooperation between MBS and their tree contractor Coombes to finish the job in time for the line to reopen for training.

FirstPort reported problems in removing waste produced by the tree works because of badly parked cars. FirstPort will co-ordinate dates for the temporary removal of the cars.

The owner of 26 Cox's Ground has requested compensation for having to clean their conservatory roof after the tree works. FirstPort have asked for photographs.

8 Sub-Committee news round-up

8.1 Finance

- 8.1.1 The accounts were signed off on 27 October and issued to members soon after. It was remarked that Critchley had left it until the very last minute: they had taken two and half months, but had offered no explanation for their slowness. This was something we should consider when we put the accounts out to tender in the new year.

8.2 Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee

8.2.1 Roof replacement/repairs: no guarantee had yet been received from Midland Roofing for their roof replacement at 108-126 Frenchay Road. A director agreed to chase this up.

FirstPort explained that it was proving difficult to find enough roofing contractors to quote for the other flat roofs. Out of eight contractors approached, only one had given a price. This means the work cannot now be done before winter. FirstPort are looking for new roofing companies and any local suggestions were invited. It was suggested that splitting the work into individual jobs might make it more appealing to smaller contractors. It was agreed that we would reluctantly have to make do with two quotes if necessary, rather than the usual minimum of three.

8.2.2 Carpet replacements: two blocks have been completed and the remainder are undergoing the Section 20 process. Two local contractors have been included in the list of contractors asked to quote: Textures Flooring and Kennington Carpets.

8.2.3 The mobility scooter has been removed from the corridor outside 16 EJW, although the furniture is still there. This will be monitored. It has been clarified with the owner that this corridor is the responsibility of the WMC. After some discussion it was agreed that our general policy will remain that mobility scooters are never permitted in corridors or other communal areas, but they can be placed in cycle stores. Generally communal areas in apartment blocks must be kept clear of all obstructions at all times.

8.2.4 The trial cleaning of rendering on apartment block walls will be reviewed in the spring.

8.2.5 Apartment block redecorations are going according to plan, with the Section 20 process currently being implemented. No local contractors have been recommended but suggestions were invited.

8.2.6 CCTV: FirstPort have written to two blocks, 2-32 EJW and 44-60 Frenchay Road, but received no comments. We shall therefore go ahead with installing CCTV in these two blocks as an experiment. The refuse store at Clearwater Place is probably not suitable for the installation of CCTV because of its limited electrical supply.

8.2.7 Nothing further has been heard from the resident who wanted an electric car charging point in Clearwater Place.

8.2.8 The food caddy recycling system is being gradually introduced for apartment blocks. The Council are supplying small green caddies for food to each apartment and a red bin for each bin store to receive the contents of individual caddies. It seems there is not enough room for these in some of the bin stores. FirstPort have reported this to the Council, who have no solution to offer but simply say the system is compulsory. The situation remains unresolved.

8.2.9 Airbnb: it is proving difficult to find out which are the properties being advertised. Directors were encouraged to be vigilant for possible Airbnb lettings. FirstPort have written again to all agents to say that short-term subletting is not permitted. After some discussion it was agreed that the Chair would write to Cllr Liz Wade to ask if the Council is aware of the problem in Oxford and might consider a crack-down on Airbnb, possibly

via the use of a register with fines and taxes as in some other cities.

- 8.2.10 Wooden flooring: after much discussion it was agreed that we should not permit the installation of wooden floors as a matter of principle, even with acoustic underlay. We have not been able to find any authoritative, independent evidence that these underlays are as effective as carpets in preventing sound travel. But also, the lease specifies carpeted floors only; if we gave permission for wooden floors of any description we would be in breach of this clause and might risk legal action to reinstate carpets by future owners of apartments underneath. This would be a permanent risk. FirstPort will therefore write to the two residents who have asked if they can install wooden floors and explain why we have to refuse permission even with acoustic underlay.

8.3 Gardening Sub-Committee

- 8.3.1 The Watercourse Sub-Committee had met. Silt build-up is still an issue, with 2 dry tonnes being deposited a year from the Woodstock/Banbury Roads catchment area, according to Dr Curt Lamberth's report. However, a board has been inserted by a member of the sub-committee into the brick weir near the exit to the Trap Grounds; this has raised the water level by a few inches which benefits aquatic wildlife and covers the silt present. The water in the wildlife corridor stream and balancing pond is now generally very clear and the raised weir level causes a small waterfall which aerates the water beneficially before it enters the Trap Grounds.

A major meeting with Thames Water, Berkeley Homes, the City Council, the Environment Agency and others is still under consideration but more research needs to be done first. A director is contacting an expert in SUDS (Sustainable Urban Drainage System) for a potential consultancy to advise us on the design of our system.

Meanwhile an action plan has been agreed regarding the regular removal of silt. Some areas of the wildlife corridor have been seeded with yellow rattle (which is parasitic on grass and helps to keep it in check) and more water-loving plants will be planted on the banks in the new year.

- 8.3.2 As recommended in the Health and Safety report, Evergreen are to install a high-quality post and rail fence by the lake, about three feet high, with a gate for access by the pump maintenance company and others. Also Evergreen will install several sections of a strong chain-link fence in gaps in the trees by the lake which people use for illegal fishing.

It was confirmed that a pollarding programme is in operation for the trees. It was also recognised that the goat willows are inappropriate for the site and that eventually they might have to be taken out completely and replaced by more appropriate shrubs.

- 8.3.3 Metrorod are to start work levelling and clearing the swale on 1 December.

- 8.3.4 It was agreed that a Director should decide on the date of the next bicycle cull.

8.4 Scrutiny Sub-Committee

8.4.1 New draft Management Agreement with FirstPort: response still awaited from FirstPort. The issue of the inflation rate to be applied to FirstPort's fees will be included in the discussion as and when it happens.

The Sub-Committee has started to consider the issues involved in the tendering of the managing agent contract.

8.4.2 The Sub-Committee and the Gardening and Apartment Blocks Sub-Committees have updated their assessments of FirstPort's performance. This is generally satisfactory but the Chair will write to FirstPort about some concerns, for example Customer Services, where sometimes there are problems of communication and liaison with the Property Managers.

9 Feedback

9.1 Nothing to report.

10 WRACIC

10.1 The annual hog roast is scheduled for Saturday 10 December and planning is well under way, with the band from last year and many other attractions.

11 Managing Agent

11.1 The lift at Complins Close was repaired after a delay of ten working days. This seems an excessive delay but a major problem with all lift companies now is that they no longer carry large stocks of spares, so frequently these have to be ordered, causing a delay. Also for more complex repairs a more senior technician has to be booked in advance.

Other lifts need repairs which require a Section 20 consultation, and all dates are now booked in by FirstPort.

11.2 Two quotes have been obtained for anti-slip strips on the bridge in the wildlife corridor which still lacks them. It was agreed to accept the Evergreen quote, so that both bridges will now have non-slip surfaces. Signs saying "Cyclists Please Dismount" have been installed at each end of both wildlife corridor bridges.

12 Any other business

12.1 It seems the planning application for 26 Cox's Ground has now been agreed with no apparent issues for the WMC.

12.2 There was some discussion of the GreenSquare proposal to erect a five/six-foot fence across the grass at the back of their Clearwater Place block, including across the swale which is the responsibility of the WMC. Their intention is to prevent that grass area being used as a short-cut. This idea was not welcomed as it was felt that such a tall fence would not be in keeping with the ambience of the estate. The Chair suggested that lower black railings with a gate, in the style GreenSquare have used elsewhere in that area, would be more appropriate, while the swale itself must be left as it is. The Chair agreed to write to GreenSquare along these lines.

A director asked if anything could be done to control the children who roam around the estate. It was reported that in the past both GreenSquare and the police had been approached about this problem, but with little result. It was agreed that at their next walk-around the Gardening Sub-Committee would look round for suitable places to install relevant signs prohibiting ball games, etc.

12.3 The personal injury claim from the resident who fell off her bicycle is still with the insurers.

12.4 A director had raised the question of installing a bin for dog waste alongside the rubbish bin by the lake. But after much discussion it was decided not to apply to the Council for a dog waste bin as one had already been requested some time ago, without success. Furthermore, two would be needed (by the lake steps and by the green) and it was thought that the presence of such bins would encourage people to bring even more dogs to the grass areas.

13 Date, time and location of future meetings

13.1 17 January, 14 March (2017) – both Tuesdays at 7.30 pm in the Community Room.

Date for AGM: Thursday 27 April 2017 at 7.30 pm in the Woodstock Road Baptist Church. Booking to be confirmed.