

**WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY**  
**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 66**

**7.30 pm, Tuesday 17 January 2017**

**Present:** Adrian Olsen (Chair), Greg Barnes, Tao Tao Chou, Sally Duncan, Ann Hall, Adrian Mourby, Nicholas Orme, Paula Reynolds, Louise Robertson, Brian Shine, Raquel Stremme, Mary Tovey

**In attendance:** Rebecca Burt and Rachel Dolacinski, FirstPort Property Services

**Minute taker:** Imogen Olsen

**1 Apologies for absence**

1.1 Hilary Sorensen

**2 Minutes**

**Approval of the minutes from meeting 65, 29 November 2016**

2.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

**3 Matters arising from the minutes**

3.1 (11.1) The anti-slip surface has been applied successfully to the northern wildlife corridor bridge.

3.2 (12.2) GreenSquare have now proposed a 4ft 6ins high wooden fence instead of the metal railing WMC had suggested, for the land at the back of their Clearwater Place block. It was agreed that, although not as good as our suggested black metal railings, this would be acceptable.

3.3 (12.3) Nothing further has been heard regarding the personal injury claim from a cyclist who fell on the wildlife corridor bridge.

3.4 (3.2) Another estate agent's board (from Scott Fraser) has appeared on the balcony of a Complins Close flat overlooking the Elizabeth Jennings Way bridge. The Chair has written to Scott Fraser and asked them to take it down.

**4 HMOs in freehold houses and apartments**

4.1 The Chair has written to Councillor Liz Wade about our concerns regarding HMOs and Airbnb and asking if the council may act on these issues. She is aware of the problem and will take it up with city council officers.

The list of HMOs on the Council website appears to have been updated since last May, as it now includes none from The Waterways. This may be as a result of FirstPort's writing to them about the HMO in Complins Close (31). However, anecdotal evidence

points to this same property being still in multiple occupation. It was agreed that FirstPort will check on this and if necessary report this breach in the designated place on the Council web site, and take further action under the breach of lease procedure if the HMO continues. See also 8.2.8 below – FirstPort will write to all owners to re-state that HMOs are not allowed in any property on the Waterways.

## **5 Progress on parking plans for EJW and Frenchay Road**

- 5.1 The yellow lines have now been painted on EJW: however, the cycle path crossover into the Bainton Road path has still not been done. The Frenchay Road part of the plan is now subject to revision and consultation, following comments.

## **6 Welcome to The Waterways booklet – update**

- 6.1 This is now ready to be printed by FirstPort. A Director will liaise with FirstPort over the copy and print run.

## **7 Railway line developments**

- 7.1 The noise barrier has been completed, as has the double glazing work on affected properties. This latter is reported to be very effective.

As far as planning issues go, Network Rail has submitted two planning applications to cancel the requirement to install silent track and to abolish the limits on the number of trains. A significant number of objections have been lodged with the council. These applications were to have been discussed at a West Area Planning Committee meeting on 24 January but this now seems to have been deferred. Following high-level meetings the Minister has sent a letter to Network rail asking them to re-consider their relations with local communities. Also Paul Buckley from Wolvercote (a retired Oxford Professor of Engineering) has written to the council detailing many errors and false assumptions in Networks Rail's justifications for rebutting the installation of silent track.

- 7.2 The waste produced by tree works next to the railway line has now been cleared away. Evergreen have started to repair the damaged area of grass in Cox's Ground with the addition of new topsoil, but FirstPort will ask them to postpone re-grassing until other building work in the area has been completed in the spring.
- 7.3 The conservatory at a house in Cox's Ground (26) has been pulled down, so no compensation for cleaning its roof during the tree works will need to be considered.
- 7.4 Network Rail has been very helpful over the replanting of trees and shrubs along our boundary to fill in gaps and thicken up the corridor next to the railway between Hook Meadow and the Trap Grounds. WMC directors met Ruth Voight, Environmental Officer from Carillion, and Rob Mashford of NR, who was keen to supply a team in the new year to clear the ditch area before planting. The Woodland Trust also has a scheme to part fund the creation or restoration of wildlife corridors, but if we were successful in applying for this, it would be for next winter. Meanwhile a director agreed to pursue Rob Mashford regarding a clearing team while the workmen are still in the area. FirstPort agreed to chase Evergreen to repair fences damaged by the tree work.

## **8 Sub-committee news round-up**

### **8.1 Finance**

8.1.1 It was agreed to tender the WMC accounts. Critchley's were very slow last time, leaving it to the last minute. Furthermore, the tendering of this contract had been discussed at the last AGM and passed by a vote of hands.

### **8.2 Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee**

8.2.1 (a) No guarantee has yet been received for the roof repairs at 108-126 Frenchay Road. A director agreed to chase this up.

(b) FirstPort have still received only one estimate from the nine contractors approached for the bulk of roof repairs. Midland Roofing are now coming to have a look and if they supply a price we shall probably have no option but to continue the Section 20 consultations with only two estimates, whereas normally we would require a minimum of three. The twenty-year guarantee is proving a problem with many contractors. The other solution is to split the job into smaller sections.

8.2.2 All carpet replacements are now going ahead.

8.2.3 The trial cleaning of rendering on apartment block walls will be reviewed in March/April. FirstPort pointed out that the alternative of repainting would be very expensive as all the block would need to be done to ensure colour consistency and this would then need to be repeated regularly.

8.2.4 CCTV has been installed in two blocks. It was agreed that the pictures are excellent and that we should now proceed with obtaining a final cost for each of the remaining blocks. As this is not a Section 20 consultation, installation can be agreed by a simple vote of the owners in each block.

FirstPort reported that the lighting in the Clearwater Place bin store is to be upgraded and vandal-proofed; we can then consider installing CCTV.

8.2.5 Electric car charging point in Clearwater Place: the electrician has confirmed that this would be a complicated and expensive business. It was agreed not to proceed for the time being and to keep it under review to see if costs come down in the future as this technology becomes more ubiquitous.

8.2.6 The new food caddy system is working well, on the whole. Any dirty red bins can be jet-washed in the summer. Ae bin store has not yet received a red bin, perhaps because it is shared with GreenSquare tenants.

8.2.7 It had been decided at that day's ABSC meeting that FirstPort would write to the owner of an apartment in EJW (92) to notify them that they are in breach of the lease as their flat is being sublet on Airbnb.

8.2.8 It had been agreed at committee meeting no. 64 4 October 2016 (item 8.2.12 - 1 and 2) to formally clarify and reaffirm the minimum letting period of six months for leasehold apartments, which was first agreed at WMC committee meeting 14 11 September 2008 (item 8.3), and that short-term lettings such as through Airbnb are not allowed as they breach this regulation and other lease conditions. FirstPort will check whether it is necessary to ratify this regulation at an AGM. If not, it was decided that FirstPort would write to all owners (draft version to be sent to the Chair) to say that this regulation concerning short-term lettings, together with the banning of the use of freehold houses and leasehold apartments as homes in multiple occupation (HMOs), are formal estate regulations and breaches will be pursued. At the same meeting 64 4 October 2016 (item 8.2.12 – 3) it was agreed that the policy on pots, furniture, ornaments, etc on apartment balconies should be changed and FirstPort will also inform owners of this in their letter.

FirstPort will send letters to any owner whose property is clearly identified as being in use as a short-term letting or as an HMO, and will subsequently use their breach of lease procedure as necessary.

8.2.9 Local contractors: directors would keep an eye out for likely firms and pass on their names to FirstPort.

8.2.10 There was some negative feedback from a resident regarding FirstPort's letter refusing permission to install wooden flooring; however, the matter is now concluded.

### **8.3 Gardening Sub-Committee**

8.3.1 Watercourse Sub-committee:

(a) A meeting with Robert Wray, a Sustainable Urban Drainage System consultant, had taken place. He had informed us that we do not in fact have a fully functional SUDS, in its modern sense. Ours is an older, traditional system reliant on silt traps and gully-pots to trap pollution and silt before they reach the lake or wildlife corridor. They are rarely totally effective as they need regular emptying and there is a tendency for heavy rain to wash silt, etc out of the traps and pots. Replacing this system with an up-to-date SUDS would be prohibitively expensive, so we shall have to rely on regular cleaning and maintenance.

(b) The recent pollution incident in Frog Lane Ditch next to the Trap Grounds was discussed. It did not affect the Waterways systems.

(c) Evergreen are to buy plants for the wildlife corridor as specified by Dick Mayon-White and they will be planted by directors as guided by him. Yellow rattle seed has already been scattered which, as it is a parasite on grass roots, would help to keep the grass in check.

(d) The multi-party meeting with Thames Water and others will be arranged by a director at a suitable time.

8.3.2 Evergreen have received the order for new wooden fencing to be installed by the open part of the lake by the mini roundabout. This is a requirement from the recent Health and Safety inspection, as there is insufficient room by the lake edge to put in suitable protective planting. FirstPort will check on the position regarding the chain-link fence:

Evergreen had advised that lakeside planting would not be an effective deterrent against fishermen and that two short lengths of strong chain-link fence hidden in the trees by the shore would be a possible solution.

8.3.3 Metrorod's work to dig out and level the swale on the east side of the canal had been put on hold until after the meeting with Robert Wray (above). FirstPort would now reinstate the order (date subsequently confirmed to be 14 February).

8.3.4 Tree pruning is in progress. Shrub replacement and mulching will be done later.

8.3.5 No date was fixed for a further bike cull as there do not seem to be many abandoned ones around. A director will consider one for the spring.

8.3.6 The ramp in Lark Hill had been fine in recent icy weather.

#### **8.4 Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

8.4.1 New draft management agreement with FirstPort: response still awaited on WMC mark-up.

8.4.2 There was some discussion of FirstPort's reply to the Chair's letter to Neil Taylor expressing some concerns relating to the Customer Services team. It was generally felt that the new liaison systems were working well and that Customer Services had greatly improved their response. The situation would be monitored. FirstPort explained that they are bringing in a new tailor-made approach to The Waterways as it is such a large estate: this will include having our own email address for reporting problems to Customer Services. [FirstPort has subsequently confirmed that our dedicated email address for reporting issues, complaints, etc will be Waterways@firstport.co.uk.]

8.4.3 The sub-committee is looking at potential new managing agents. This matter will be discussed more fully at the next meeting in relation to a possible motion to the AGM.

#### **9 Feedback**

9.1 Nothing to report.

#### **10 WRACIC**

10.1 The hog roast in December had been a great success, despite the heavy rain. The excellent book presents for the children were praised; these are paid for by an anonymous donation, and gratitude was expressed for this. Thanks were extended all round for a memorable event. Photographs are on the WRA Facebook page.

#### **11 Managing agent**

11.1 All Section 20 consultations have now been done for the lift repairs.

11.2 All Health & Safety inspection recommendations have now been actioned.

## **12 Any other business**

12.1 There did not appear to be any new planning applications on the Council website.

12.2 The Chair showed a flyer from the Summertown and St Margaret's Neighbourhood Forum about the proposed Neighbourhood Plan for North Oxford consultation. Further details are on view in Summertown library and the North Oxford Association. The consultation runs until 27 February.

12.3 Minor problems were raised concerning a faulty bin store lock and blocked gutters. FirstPort noted these for early repair.

12.4 Following the painting of the yellow lines in EJW, there are now some spare cones. These can be stored in a Frenchay Road bin store.

## **13 Date, time and location of future meetings**

13.1 The next committee meeting will be on 14 March 2017 at 7.30 pm in the Community Room.

**The AGM will be on 27 April 2017** in Woodstock Road Baptist Church. The Secretary to book the church on her return from holiday.

Dates were agreed for committee meetings after the AGM: **9 May, 11 July, 3 October, 28 November (2017), 16 January, 13 March (2018) – all Tuesdays at 7.30 pm.**