

WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 69

7.30 pm, Tuesday 11 July 2017

Present: Adrian Olsen (Chair), Tao Tao Chou, Sally Duncan, Ann Hall, Adrian Mourby, Nicholas Orme, Paula Reynolds, Louise Robertson, Hilary Sorensen, Mary Tovey, Elizabeth Wheeler, Cath Whitehead

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

Minute taker: Imogen Olsen

1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Brian Shine, Raquel Stremme

The Chair welcomed a new Director, Cath Whitehead, to the meeting.

2 Minutes

Approval of the minutes from meeting 68, 18 May 2017

2.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record with one correction: 8.2.6 should read: 'There is yet another new instance of advertising short-term letting at 139 Frenchay Road...'

3 Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 (3.3) The revised Frenchay Road parking plan has still not materialised from the county council. A director agreed to contact Councillor John Howson and ask him to chase it up.

3.2 (3.4) The Welcome to the Waterways booklet has now been distributed to residents. FirstPort will send copies to non-resident owners and the Chair will supply FirstPort with enough spare copies when they tell him how many are needed. A Director will display a copy in the lobby of each apartment block, and FirstPort will put the whole booklet online.

3.3 (3.5) HMOs – the house in question is now being sold.

3.4 (4) AGM – it was agreed to hold another Q&A session before the next committee meeting, as we did last year. This will take place at 7 pm on 3 October 2017. FirstPort will issue a letter and ask for questions to be submitted in advance if possible.

3.5 (5.1) A new Director agreed to join the Scrutiny Sub-Committee. She was also invited to join the Gardening Sub Committee walk-arounds if free to become familiar with the estate.

4 Railway line developments

- 4.1 The Chair reported that Network Rail have agreed to do some vibration monitoring in Wolvercote, but that people are in dispute over the precise arrangements . We may have to do our own noise and vibration monitoring at a later date in conjunction with the Wolvercote group, possibly with the aid of crowdfunding.
- 4.2 The question of idling trains had been raised by residents worried about the noise and pollution they cause. After some discussion, it was agreed that a director would liaise with the residents affected and compile details of when trains are idling and for how long. The Chair would then write to the relevant train operating company/ies in an attempt to get the drivers to switch off their engines when idling.
- 4.3 A new director spoke about a contact she knows in the field of noise barriers. Ken Edwards is an expert on the subject and would be happy to help the WMC. The Chair suggested that a meeting with Ken Edwards, preferably including Paul Buckley of the Wolvercote group, would be very useful, and agreed to pursue this.

5 Sub-Committee news round-up

5.1 Finance

- 5.1.1 A meeting had been held on 25 May between Lee Baker of Wenn Townsend, The Treasurer, the Chair and FirstPort. This had gone very well and it was reported that the new accountants seem very well organised and ready to process our accounts. FirstPort are to start drafting the accounts.

5.2 Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee

- 5.2.1 There had been an application from the Freeholder to reconsider our refusal to agree to the loft conversion in an apartment block in Frenchay Road. The ABSC had unanimously opposed this application at their earlier meeting, and after some discussion their decision was upheld by WMC.
- 5.2.2 FirstPort reported on progress in finding roofing contractors. Twelve contractors have now been approached, and they all say the job is too small. FirstPort are rewriting the specification. Some roofs now require attention, and FirstPort agreed to speed up the process.
- 5.2.3 The CCTV is all installed and working successfully.
- 5.2.4 The asset management plans for apartment blocks have been redrafted by FirstPort, who are now checking them before forwarding to WMC.
- 5.2.5 Carpet replacements are all going according to plan.
- 5.2.6 A decision on treating the rendering has been postponed until the spring, while the trial areas are fully analysed. So far the trial seems to be successful.
- 5.2.7 It was reported that the Council have agreed to supply a bigger food bin for Clearwater Place. This item can now be taken off the agenda.

5.2.8 It was reported that there are further examples of short-term lets being advertised, including one in 92-126 EJW whose owner was unaware of what was happening. She has now given the tenant notice of termination. FirstPort will try to identify which are the flats involved so that they can inform the owners. The Chair has written to Councillor Liz Wade to ask whether Oxford City Council are planning to take action against Airbnb, as several other cities around the world have done, and he will chase her up.

5.3 Gardening Sub-Committee

5.3.1 Minutes had been circulated from the multi-party meeting held on 26 May 2017 with Thames Water, Berkeley Homes, Oxford City Council, Oxford County Council, Dr Curt Lamberth and WMC to discuss the problem of excessive silt in the watercourse. This had been organised by a director who spoke at length about the meeting. Thames Water and Berkeley Homes both acknowledged all the hard work put in by WMC in trying to understand the issues and that the amount of silt passing into the system is far in excess of what was expected. There is now a glimmer of hope that the parties will work together to produce a solution, the most likely outcome being a larger balancing pond. Thames Water is investigating our request that they donate £1,000 per annum towards the cost of silt clearance, and Berkeley Homes say they will donate the same amount if Thames Water agrees. Berkeley Homes have been informed that WMC will not agree to take over the freehold until the problem is solved satisfactorily. A further meeting is to be held in late September, again to be set up by a director.

Thanks were recorded to this director for her great achievement in getting all parties around the table for such constructive talks. This had required much hard work and persistence on her part.

5.3.2 The swale levelling works seem to have ground to a halt. Evergreen have cut back the vegetation on one side of the swale, but Metrorod may be unable to proceed until the other side is also trimmed back. FirstPort will ask Evergreen if they can cut back the far side and also liaise with Metrorod.

5.3.3 A resident has objected to the use of glyphosate as a weed killer on the estate. It has been agreed that Evergreen will continue to use it for weed-spraying, but that warning signs will be put up whenever spraying is in progress. These signs have now been ordered by FirstPort.

5.3.4 Mass replacement of paving stones will be carried out in stages. A director is in discussion with Evergreen about which are the most urgent areas. The gravel car parks are also urgently in need of attention and a specification for their repair and a priority list is being drawn up by FirstPort.

Paving stones which were broken by a contractor working in Clearwater Place will be replaced by the contractor concerned.

5.3.5 The next stage of the canal murals is due to be carried out 24-26 July, with the painting of the arches under the Frenchay Road bridge by the same team that did the original murals. Anti-graffiti paint will then be applied by volunteers.

5.3.6 The Waterways canal murals project has reached the final of the C&RT Living Waterways awards. The awards ceremony will take place in Birmingham on 27 September, and

representatives of the project will attend. Before then, a film crew will visit to make a short video of the project for the awards ceremony.

- 5.3.7 There was some discussion of the house building work going on at the top of EJW. It was agreed that on the whole this had been well organised and not too messy. Complaints about contractors parking on WMC grass had been dealt with swiftly and efficiently, although vans were still parking on the narrow verge by the pavement. It was agreed that, if the grass is damaged, restoration will be requested.
- 5.3.8 OCV are unlikely to be able to devote a day to the wildlife corridor this year as they are so busy. A resident who is in regular contact with them hopes that next time they work in the Trap Grounds they may be able to spare us some time, or at least lend us some tools. Meanwhile a director will liaise with Evergreen over what work needs to be done and when to schedule it in.
- 5.3.9 The badly damaged grass area in Cox's Ground next to the railway line will be reseeded in the autumn. FirstPort will ask Evergreen to schedule the work in.
- 5.3.10 A resident in Stone Meadow had complained about four alder trees which need cutting back. FirstPort confirmed that this work was scheduled for the autumn. The Chair agreed to inform the resident.
- 5.3.11 A skip had been parked on the grass at the end of Frenchay Road for use by the Trap Grounds, which had not been removed. A resident had asked the Secretary of the Trap Grounds to remove it, and the Chair agreed to remind her that permission should be sought in future.

5.4 Scrutiny Sub-Committee

- 5.4.1 FirstPort said that a response had been sent regarding WMC mark-up on the new draft management agreement, but this had not been received. FirstPort would look into the matter. [This issue was subsequently resolved and was the result of some confusion over the management fee specifically rather than the management agreement as a whole, which is still outstanding.]

6 Feedback

- 6.1 No comments had been received.

7 WRACIC

- 7.1 The liaison director was not present. Two directors had attended the communal lunch on the green in June, which had been pleasant but sparsely attended.

8 Managing agent

- 8.1 Section 20 consultations were all going through, and the work on the lifts had been completed.

9 Any other business

- 9.1 It was announced that Rachel Dolacinski would shortly be going on maternity leave and that a replacement would be appointed. Best wishes were extended to Rachel.
- 9.2 A resident in Complins Close had complained that all the bicycle racks were full. A director agreed to show her the bike store and another bike rack close by. Meanwhile the bicycle cull team would bear this in mind for the next cull.
- 9.3 A director complained that a bin was consistently being left out by a GreenSquare tenant. FirstPort agreed to write to GreenSquare.
- 9.4 A director complained about the moss growing on the pavement at the foot of a bike stand in Cox's Ground, but it was pointed out that as this was council land there was nothing WMC could do.

10 Date, time and location of future meetings

10.1 Dates of next meetings:

3 October, 28 November (2017), 16 January, 13 March (2018) – all Tuesdays at 7.30 pm **EXCEPT FOR** the next meeting, 3 October, which will start with a Q&A session at 7.00 pm. All meetings will be in the Community Room.