

## **WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY**

### **Minutes of the Management Committee meeting no 70**

**held at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 3 October 2017 in the Waterways Community Room**

**Present:** Adrian Olsen (Chair), Sally Duncan, Ann Hall, Adrian Mourby, Nicholas Orme, Louise Robertson, Brian Shine, Raquel Stremme, Mary Tovey, Liz Wheeler, Cath Whitehead

**In attendance:** Rebecca Burt and Esther Kolawole, FirstPort Property Services

**Minute taker:** Imogen Olsen

#### **1 Apologies for absence**

1.1 Tao Tao Chou, Paula Reynolds, Hilary Sorensen.

Esther was welcomed to her first meeting. It was agreed to send condolences to PR on the death of her mother.

#### **2 Minutes**

##### **Approval of the minutes from meeting 69, 11 July 2017**

2.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record with one correction: the number of the meeting (in the heading) should be 69, not 68.

#### **3 Matters arising from the minutes**

3.1 The revised Frenchay Road parking plan has still not materialised. The Chair agreed to contact Councillor John Howson and ask him to chase it up.

3.2 It had been agreed that it was impractical to send a copy of the Welcome to the Waterways booklet to all non-resident owners.

3.3 HMOs – the sale of the house in question is still pending but likely to happen soon.

3.4 FirstPort had written to GreenSquare regarding the bins permanently left out in Stone Meadow, but this had made no difference. A director pointed out that if these are causing an obstruction on the highway which could endanger partially sighted people, then the Council could be brought in to take action. FirstPort agreed to write to the City Council.

#### **4 Railway line developments**

4.1 The Council's response regarding noise and vibration monitoring beyond Network Rail's inadequate scheme had been disappointing. The question of doing our own monitoring is still being considered with the Wolvercote group.

4.2 The Chair had written to two rail freight companies (DBCargo and Freightliner) about their freight trains idling for up to 30-40 minutes at the North Oxford Junction signal, which is just north of Cox's Ground and beyond the end of the noise barrier, and the air

and noise pollution they cause. However both had replied unhelpfully that there was nothing they could do, even though DBCargo does have some stop/start locomotives in its fleet. Subsequent correspondence with the City Council asking them to undertake on-going air pollution monitoring had also proved unproductive, but the Chair will pursue the matter.

- 4.3 As a director felt they might have a conflict of interest regarding engaging the advice of Ken Edwards, expert on noise pollution, it was agreed that the Chair would contact him instead with a view to arranging a meeting. This director will provide him with Ken Edward's email address.

## **5 Sub-Committee news round-up**

### **5.1 Finance**

- 5.1.1 The accounts had been a fortnight late in arriving with Wenn Townsend (WT) from FirstPort, who explained that this had been because of staff change-over arrangements. Nevertheless, WT had reported that a very comprehensive job had been done on them by FirstPort and all was on schedule for sending out the final version to members. FirstPort and the Treasurer reported that WT seemed to be very satisfactory so far.

### **5.2 Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee**

- 5.2.1 Roof works remained a problem as it was still proving difficult to obtain tenders. Apparently the jobs are considered too small. FirstPort reported that the matter is now in the hands of their surveyors, who have further contacts among roofing companies and they will report back in due course.
- 5.2.2 The Asset Management plans have been revised and are now all ready for review.
- 5.2.3 New carpets have now been requested by 108-126 Frenchay Road. Two quotes have been obtained, but on different specifications. FirstPort are sorting out this issue. Both quotes would necessitate a Section 20 consultation.
- 5.2.4 The Airbnb website has been changed, so that it is now impossible to work out whereabouts on the estate properties on the estate are being offered. The Short Term Lets website indicates that only one property is currently being offered by them, in Clearwater Place. This is being pursued with the owner by FirstPort.

Local councillors have told the Chair informally that the City Council are unlikely to do anything to curtail the activities of Airbnb in Oxford as they are too keen to encourage tourism and there is a lack of accommodation on Oxford.

There was some discussion of the apartment in EJW which is being offered as a short-term let and whose owner claims that she cannot get out of her contract with the tenant who is sub-letting. The problem is hers and FirstPort have suggested she seek legal advice.

### **5.3 Gardening Sub-Committee**

5.3.1 A follow-up multi-party meeting had been arranged by a director for Wednesday 4 October, in order to pursue the matter of excessive silt in the watercourse. It was agreed that Stuart Divall would be taken to see the swale afterwards so that he could give an opinion as to its current state.

5.3.2 Metrord has still not been able to level the swale. It was suggested that they do not want to do the job and that another contractor should be sought.

5.3.3 The damaged grass by Cox's Ground will be either reseeded or turfed, depending on what is decided at the next gardening walkabout. There is also a gap in the fence there which James has been asked to repair.

A director complained about the damage to grass at the top of EJW, where the new houses are being built. However, this work is now coming to an end and the building company has so far been quite good at clearing up after themselves: it is assumed that they will attend to any damaged areas in due course. They will replace the grass strip next to the pavement on the lake side that they have temporarily covered with tarmac.

5.3.4 Long-term plans were discussed for replacing paving slabs with something more substantial and relaying car-park surfaces throughout the estate. These plans will have to be done in priority phases as they are certain to be very expensive. A director had brought in samples of small paving blocks and it was agreed that these would be further discussed at the next gardening walkabout. FirstPort had obtained a surveyor's specification with three options for relaying car-park surfaces. The surveyor had recommended the mid-priced option.

A director mentioned some loose paving stones outside 25 Lark Hill and it was agreed that Evergreen should be instructed to relay these. The exact location will be identified on the next gardening walkabout.

5.3.5 The Frenchay Road bridge arches were painted in July by the same team as did the murals in August 2016. They depict the flora and fauna as found in the Trap Grounds, the canal and surrounding areas. They have received an overwhelmingly positive response for residents and visitors alike. A director was formally congratulated and thanked for both inspiring and driving this project, which was the winner recently in the Art and Interpretation category of the Canal and River Trust's Living Waterways Awards, and presented at a ceremony in Birmingham on 27 September. The murals have now become a tourist attraction in their own right.

5.3.6 It was agreed that the house-building work in EJW had not caused too many problems. The building company had been most cooperative in dealing with any complaints.

5.3.7 The next bike cull had been set in motion: tagging of around 100 bikes was now complete and all was on schedule for clearance later in the autumn.

5.3.8 The poplar on the Green seemed to have suffered over the summer, losing all its leaves very early. It was agreed that, subject to expert advice, it might now have to be felled. A director reported that she had sent FirstPort the old email trail from when the C&RT had first cut down part of this tree in error. It is hoped that the C&RT will complete the

falling, if agreed, and contribute to the costs involved in turning the stump into a sculpture. A director agreed to supply the name of a tree sculptor in Oxford whose work she had admired.

- 5.3.9 There had been a case of arson in Stone Meadow, in which a car had been torched causing damage to the house and the parking space in front. FirstPort reported that the loss adjusters had been and two quotes were being sought for rectifying the damage. No news had been received from the police as to the identity of the culprit, but it was generally assumed to be the same person who torched six other cars in North Oxford a few days later and who has been charged with these offences.
- 5.3.10 The new wooden fence by the lake had been vandalised in three sections at its eastern end. This would be discussed at the next gardening meeting, along with the possibility of installing CCTV, or dummy CCTV.
- 5.3.11 The next gardening walkabout would be held on Wednesday 11 October at 9.30am and all directors were invited to attend.
- 5.3.12 More furniture had been dumped at the southern end of Stone Meadow. It was agreed that the Chair would write to GreenSquare and ask them to arrange for its removal.
- 5.3.13 A director reported on The Big Rake of 17 September, which had attracted only three volunteers. Another director offered to produce and put up posters next time, and suggested it should be called The Green Gym to entice more people.
- 5.3.14 FirstPort had received notification from the Council that a tree was obscuring a street light in Frenchay Road. Evergreen had been instructed to cut back the foliage.
- 5.3.15 The Chair had received a complaint from GreenSquare regarding traffic speeding in Clearwater Place. It was unclear whether this was on the public highway or on WMC land (unlikely). He had replied to explain that there was nothing we could do to stop people speeding down EJW if that is where the problem lies and suggested GreenSquare add their protests to our own by contacting the County Council.

## **5.4 Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

- 5.4.1 The next meeting would be set up in the near future.

## **6 Feedback**

- 6.1 Nothing had been received on the Feedback web page.

## **7 WRACIC**

- 7.1 The late summer barbecue had been a great success, with a higher turnout than on previous occasions. Takings had totalled £500. The Christmas event had been scheduled for early December.
- 7.2 Newsletter distribution had been a problem, and the list required revision.
- 7.3 The litter-pick on 30 September had gone well, with plenty of volunteers.

**8 Managing Agent**

8.1 There were no Section 20 consultations to discuss, and FirstPort had nothing further to report.

**9 Any other business**

9.1 None.

**10 Date, time and location of future meetings**

10.1 28 November (2017), 16 January, 13 March (2018) – all Tuesdays at 7.30 pm in the Community Room.