

**DRAFT**

**WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY**

**Minutes of the Management Committee Meeting no 71**

**held on Tuesday 28 November 2017 at 7.30pm in the Waterways Community Room**

**Present:** Adrian Olsen (Chair), Tao Tao Chou, Sally Duncan, Ann Hall, Nicholas Orme, Paula Reynolds, Brian Shine, Hilary Sorensen, Mary Tovey

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

**Minute taker:** Imogen Olsen

**1 Apologies for absence**

1.1 Adrian Mourby, Louise Robertson, Liz Wheeler, Cath Whitehead.

**2 Minutes**

**Approval of the minutes from meeting 70, 3 October 2017**

2.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record, as were the notes of the Q&A session preceding the last meeting.

**3 Matters arising from the minutes**

3.1 The revised Frenchay Road parking plan had still not materialised, and it is clear that we shall have to wait our turn in the queue. Meanwhile it was suggested that residents who are affected should be encouraged to report problems to the Council, with accompanying photographs if available, in order to underline the need for action.

3.2 The GreenSquare bins left out in Stone Meadow had been reported again to the Council by FirstPort, who had pointed out they were on the public highway and constituting a danger. Nothing further had been heard.

3.3 All vestiges of the arson attack in Stone Meadow had now been cleared up, the parking area having been re-tarmacked under the house owner's insurance.

3.4 The tree obscuring the streetlight in Frenchay Road should by now have been cut back by Evergreen. FirstPort agreed to check whether this had been done.

3.5 Q&A session:

(1.1) FirstPort had contacted Mr Briggs about Baker's Dozen and the change of keys.

(1.2) The Gardening Sub-committee had yet to discuss the question raised by Mr Davis regarding the labelling of parking spaces but would do so in due course.

(1.3) The tree affecting Mrs Bowen's parking space had been examined and recommended for removal by Evergreen.

(2.2) The WMC has refused permission for the purchase of communal land in Cox's Ground.

## **4 Railway line developments**

- 4.1 After a disappointing response regarding monitoring of noise and vibration from the Council, the Chair had held a meeting with Ken Edwards and Rob Whitty (from the A34 noise barrier campaign), plus other interested parties. This had been very helpful and KE had recommended Giles Parker of Sound Barrier Solutions as an expert in noise measuring and mitigation. The Chair had contacted GP by phone and had a long discussion. GP has now submitted a quote of c. £7000 for baseline monitoring of noise so that we know what the current levels are, using two sites in the Waterways and two sites in Wolvercote. There is still £1000 in the kitty from the funds raised for legal advice, and another crowdfunding appeal for the remaining £6000 will be organised in the New Year. It was agreed that the question of Gift Aid would be investigated.
- 4.2 Regarding air pollution from diesel trains, including from freight trains idling for long periods at the signal north of Cox's Ground, city council officers had refused to recognise any problem or do any simple monitoring. However, Cllr Louise Upton had agreed our concerns are valid and agreed to investigate how this might be progressed but she had so far failed to report back.

## **5 Sub-Committees round-up**

### **5.1 Finance**

- 5.1.1 Distribution of the accounts is now complete, though some members had received two sets. FirstPort reported that, because the first mailing had failed to include every address, it had been decided to repeat the whole mailing as the simplest remedy. A Director said that some people who had agreed to online notification would not receive a mailed copy.
- 5.1.2 It was agreed that the performance of our new auditors Wenn Townsend had been very good. FirstPort reported that they had asked more questions than Critchley's had, perhaps because this was their first exercise with the Waterways.
- 5.1.3 There was some discussion of the accounts for Clearwater Place, which showed a large amount for drain-clearing. FirstPort explained that this was about right for an emergency weekend callout. It was agreed that in future FirstPort would use their own judgement whether to refer any large or unexpected charges to WMC.
- 5.1.4 FirstPort reported that they had received a complaint about the size of the Reserves figure. The complainant had been referred to the WMC Feedback page.

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

- 5.2.1 FirstPort reported that specifications had been produced by their surveyor and that there has been progress in finding roofing contractors. The new deadline for tenders was in early December, and there were now two contractors promising to submit quotes. This would be sufficient to proceed given the recent great difficulty in finding contractors willing to tender, although ideally there should be more than two.
- 5.2.2 Asset management plans for all the apartment blocks had been finalised and distributed to members of the ABSC. The next step was to compare the figures with the budget

when that comes up for consideration. It was noted that lift replacements would be very expensive, although RB pointed out that complete replacement was very unlikely and that the renewal of parts was the norm. The asset management plans look forward 50 years or more.

5.2.3 Carpet replacement for 108-126 Frenchay Road is out to tender.

5.2.4 FirstPort reported progress regarding the apartment in EJW which is being used as a short-term let. After four letters, E&M started legal proceedings against the owner, who then demanded evidence that the flat was being used in this way. FirstPort sent a screen shot of the relevant online advertisement, and the owner admitted recognising some of the furniture. E&M will continue to take action in order to persuade the owner to terminate the three-year tenancy as she is in breach of the lease. The ultimate sanction is for E&M to take over the property after court action.

FirstPort have still been unable to locate the other short-term let apartment, which is in Clearwater Place. Investigation is on-going. [This was subsequently identified as 14 Clearwater Place.]

5.2.5 There was some discussion of the latest 'chemical incident' at an apartment (112 EJW), following an arrest of a man in the flat at 5.26 am on 9<sup>th</sup> November. The entire block was evacuated by the police and emergency services as the police and the arrested man had suffered chemical injuries. FirstPort had attended and had contacted the owner of the apartment, who was horrified and will liaise with the letting agent to bring the tenancy to an end. FirstPort reported that the communal carpets will need to be cleaned and the door of the flat replaced. RB had been helpful in contacting the agents of neighbouring flats to obtain keys so that the police did not have to break down doors to do safety inspections. St Hugh's College had accommodated occupants evacuated from the block. RB and the Chair had visited them in the college, where they were very well looked after, and the Chair subsequently sent a note of thanks to the Principal.

Councillor Howson had been helpful regarding the bollards at the end of Frenchay Road, which had prevented access to EJW for a delivery lorry during the emergency. He will take up with the county council the suggestion from a resident at the last AGM of a secure key cupboard located under the Complins Close arch, and FirstPort will also investigate this plan.

5.2.6 The owners of 56 Frenchay Road, who had been refused permission to extend into the roof space above their flat, had contacted the Chair with a plea for a reversal of this decision. The Chair had replied that, as the lease forbids any interference with the roof timbers, structures, etc, both WMC and E&M are unable to give consent to any extension or conversion.

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

5.3.1 A Director reported on the follow-up multi-party meeting on 4 October 2017 between Curt Lamberth, Thames Water, Berkeley Homes, Stuart Divall (the original designer of the watercourse) and WMC. This had gone well.

(1) The tone of the meeting had been constructive and cooperative. It was explained that the design of the watercourse had been at the behest of the Environment Agency

to accommodate the water from the under-canal siphon that had long drained into a ditch alongside the canal tow path. BH and SD are now investigating how to trap the silt more effectively in the whole of the balancing pond section to the east of the Frenchay Road culvert before it enters the rest of the watercourse. The aim is to slow the flow of the water so the silt deposits itself in this section which is easier to clear.

(2) TW finally admitted that their 'silt trap' east of the Bainton Road cut through path is in fact an oil interceptor. They are now investigating five 'catch pits' in the Summertown catchment area beyond the estate which have not been looked at for years and so probably need cleaning and then regular on-going maintenance. This may help to reduce the amount of silt entering our system from beyond the estate.

[3] Both BH and TW have given £1000 each to silt clearance costs as one-off contributions.

The Chair then reported on SD's walk around the swale east of the canal.

(1) SD had advised that we should clear the undergrowth and overhanging vegetation at the eastern end of the swale behind Clearwater Place.

(2) The base of the swale should be plain grass, so we need to get rid of the weeds.

(3) On the western side we need to get rid of the tough grass clumps which are holding up the flow.

(4) Evergreen have agreed to carry out all the work.

(5) There remains the problem of the peaks and troughs in the swale. It was agreed that we should look again at this again once all the other work is complete.

5.3.2 FirstPort reported that the damaged grass in Cox's Ground would be re-turfed or re-seeded in the spring.

5.3.3 The Chair gave an account of the last GSC walkabout. The main issue had been trees, including the alder in Frenchay Road which had been complained about in the Q&A session. Evergreen have now recommended removal of this alder as the root plate is moving.

5.3.4 It had been agreed that a specification for the replacement of paving slabs would be drawn up in the New Year and a list of priorities established. FirstPort advised that a specification has been produced for the re-surfacing of car parking areas and three options had been given (paviours were ruled out as too expensive). The surveyor recommended the middle priced option. FirstPort will check whether this is the plain tarmac option or a gravel-topped surface. Again a list of priorities will be drawn up as they cannot all be done at once.

A director [commented that the individual parking spaces are too small for many larger cars, and asked whether more space could be allocated when the areas are resurfaced, possibly by including parts of the walkways. Given the lack of space this would be very difficult.

5.3.5 The Chair had reported furniture dumped at the south end of Stone Meadow to GreenSquare, and the furniture had been removed.

5.3.6 The bike cull on 30 October had been a success, with 45 abandoned bikes and locks collected.

5.3.7 Evergreen had advised that the dying poplar on the Green would have to be removed as

it could prove a danger. A Director had asked the Canal & River Trust if they could contribute towards the cost, but they have refused. This will need further discussion, along with the idea of carving the base of the poplar into a sculpture.

- 5.3.8 It was decided to liaise with WRACIC over the idea of hanging our C&RT Living Waterways Award, and possibly accompanying photographs of the murals, on the wall of the Community Room.

#### **5.4 Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

- 5.4.1 It was decided that the next meeting would be arranged in the New Year. The Chair said that the monitoring reports from the GSC and the ABSC would be called for in the new year prior to the meeting.

#### **6 Feedback**

- 6.1 No feedback had been received.

#### **7 WRACIC**

- 7.1 The Christmas hog roast was set to take place on Saturday 2 December. A new edition of the newsletter was in preparation and should be distributed shortly.

#### **8 Managing Agent**

- 8.1 There were no new Section 20 consultations to report.
- 8.2 Congratulations were extended to Rachel Dolacinski on the birth of her son, Arlo. Both are doing well.

#### **9 Any other business**

- 9.1 None.

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

- 10.1 16 January, 13 March (2018) – both Tuesdays at 7.30pm in the Community Room.