

**WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY**  
**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 76**

**7.30 pm, Tuesday 25 September 2018**

**Present:** Adrian Olsen (Chair), Tao Tao Chou, Ann Hall, Adrian Mourby, Nicholas Orme, Paula Reynolds, Louise Robertson, Hilary Sorensen, Raquel Stremme, Mary Tovey, Liz Wheeler, Cath Whitehead

**In attendance:** Rebecca Burt, FirstPort Property Services

**Minute taker:** Imogen Olsen

**1 Apologies for absence**

1.1 Rachel Dolaciniski (FirstPort), Sally Duncan, Brian Shine

**2 Minutes**

**Approval of the minutes from meeting 75, 17 July 2018**

2.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

**3 Matters arising from the minutes**

3.1 The Living Waterways Award plaques have been ordered but not yet received by FirstPort.

3.2 There had been no further news regarding the consultation process for the proposed Controlled Parking Zone across the estate. The first stage proposals and informal consultation should be revealed at some point.

3.3 The dead silver birch by the lake had now been removed.

**4 Feedback from the Q & A session**

4.1 It was agreed that such sessions are very useful, perhaps especially for new owners.

In relation to the Frenchay Road bin storage issue, a director expressed concern over the possible compromise of the transfer document requirement to store bins at the rear; the Chair pointed out that he had explained that he was speaking in a personal capacity having discovered the fact that the access to the rear of that particular row of houses was not built according to the plan and therefore was more difficult than elsewhere on the estate. The gardening sub-committee will look at the area on its forthcoming walk-around.

There was further discussion of the proposed metal fence in the Complins Close gardens. FirstPort explained that there had been no talk of a consultation or a majority decision, that the decision was up to the WMC and that a decision had in fact been made to install a metal, looped, 1 metre high fence. However, in view of recent strong opinions for and against a fence it was agreed that a meeting should be organised for

the owners.

FirstPort had received a further question at the last minute, regarding electric charging points for cars. We decided in the past not to investigate this at the moment as the situation and technology are changing so rapidly. The council is proposing to install trial pop-up charging posts in the pavement in old Frenchay Road aimed at houses without driveways.

## **5 Railway line developments**

- 5.1 Giles Parker had now completed the noise monitoring exercise, which was undertaken on five sites: two in The Waterways and three in Wolvercote. He will produce a report in due course and he will also produce a critique of Network Rail's noise assessment methods and projections. The objective is to establish a baseline of noise levels now to use as a comparison as and when levels increase.
- 5.2 Nothing further had been heard from Cllr Louise Upton regarding the noise pollution measurement trials the city council is undertaking and which might be applicable to our railway pollution concerns. The Chair would follow this up in the near future.

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

### **6.1 Finance**

- 6.1.1 The draft accounts for 2017-8 were complete and had been sent to the auditors. There had been an overall small surplus for the year. The main concern for the current year was the apartment block at 115-141 Frenchay Road whose complicated flat roofs are expensive to replace, particularly because of the extensive scaffolding needed. FirstPort explained that measures had been taken to boost reserves for that block.

A director expressed her gratitude to FirstPort's surveyor for his help in masterminding the roofing project.

- 6.1.2 The Treasurer had requested that FirstPort provide financial information more frequently, so they are now reporting quarterly to compare actual against planned expenditure to date. FirstPort emphasised that these will be very raw figures as no adjustments, corrections or re-allocations would have been made and the intention is only to give a rough idea of the current budget situation.

### **6.2 Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee**

- 6.2.1 The roofing works were progressing satisfactorily. A director asked what would happen in 25 years' time when the guarantees ran out, and FirstPort explained that the new asset management system and budget planning would ensure that there were sufficient reserves.
- 6.2.2 A decision had been taken regarding exterior cleaning/redecoration. Formation would be asked to quote for steam-cleaning some blocks and redecorating others. This quote would also include some interior redecoration.
- 6.2.3 There was some discussion of the problems caused by broken lifts. FirstPort had received a complaint about a broken lift from a resident at Clearwater Place who had

requested that Kone be used for repairs instead of the current contractor but FirstPort said that there would be no benefit in doing this. A director commented that more information would be helpful regarding the timescale and dates for repairs, although it was agreed that this could be difficult to determine precisely. FirstPort explained that the main problem is when spare parts have to be obtained: all lift contractors do not keep extensive stores of parts and normally these have to be ordered specially. Therefore there is inevitably a delay. However, FirstPort have now appointed a dedicated Lift Team to resolve these issues more effectively.

6.2.4 The problem of short-term lets and Airbnb seemed to have eased up: there were currently no Waterways apartments listed on the relevant websites as far as we can tell.

6.2.5 There had been a problem with misuse and overcrowding of the Clearwater Place bin store, as it is shared between WMC and GreenSquare blocks. FirstPort had investigated the possibility of building a new bin store for the exclusive use of WMC residents, but at approx. £25,000 the cost would be prohibitive. It was therefore agreed that the cleaning schedule would be increased from fortnightly to weekly. Meanwhile FirstPort would circulate the Council's information on bins to all residents who use this storage area. FirstPort would also instruct the cleaners to pay particular attention to the way cardboard boxes are discarded, and to move the empty bins to the front of the store. It was agreed that the CCTV in the bin store should remain in place.

### **6.3 Gardening Sub-Committee**

6.3.1 A director [HS] had been in touch with Thames Water regarding the damaged TW inspection chamber on the towpath, which overflows in heavy rain. Denise Kinsella of TW claimed that the siphon is working properly and to be unaware that there was still a problem after her investigation in May. She promised to raise an order to investigate it. A director (HS) pointed out that the working of the siphon was not the issue and it was clear that the inspection chamber on the tow path was damaged. Another director had spoken to Sarah Brown at the C&RT, who is aware that it will have to be sorted out before they start to resurface the towpath in the spring.

Meanwhile the WMC silt clearance programme cannot proceed until the inspection chamber is repaired.

6.3.2 Berkeley Homes had sent a surveying team as a first stage in commissioning Stuart Dival to produce a design for the proposed stone weirs in the balancing pond/silt trap.

6.3.3 It was reported that Berkeley Homes are also working on the estate map which was annotated by WMC with ownership and boundary queries as a preliminary to the eventual transfer of the estate freehold to WMC.

6.3.4 It was agreed that the swale seems to be in a satisfactory state since the channel was dug by a resident, although this channel needs to be kept clear by Evergreen.

6.3.5 Antisocial behaviour by the lake had decreased significantly since the willows were felled; however, some of the school children had moved to the area by Clearwater Place. The Community Police were aware of the problem, which possibly involved drug-taking, and had attended several times. The late-night parties by the lake had ceased.

The Chair had received a complaint about noise emanating from two GreenSquare flats in Clearwater Place, but as the complainant was also a GreenSquare tenant the Chair had suggested they refer the matter to GS. The same complainant also reported late night disturbances in the car park area at the rear of the nursery. The Chair said there was little that we could do about this and advised continual reporting of incidents to the police non-emergency number 101.

- 6.3.6 Replanting by the lakeside will be discussed at the next Gardening Sub-Committee walkabout. It is possible that some of the stumps of the felled trees will have to be ground out.
- 6.3.7 The pruning and replacement of shrubs around the estate will also be discussed at the Gardening Sub-Committee walkabout. It was noted that Evergreen would have to be reminded to put in some new flowering shrubs, by popular request.
- 6.3.8 There was much discussion about the renewal of the Evergreen contract, which runs until the end of April 2019. It was agreed that this was something that should be done regularly to demonstrate value for money. FirstPort had recently discovered a new contractor who might be suitable for The Waterways, and it was agreed that a quote should be obtained from them. Evergreen had been slow or reluctant to carry out some tasks recently, although their expertise with tree surgery and their very detailed knowledge of the estate and past actions were important factors in their favour. It was also acknowledged that the gardeners are very willing, work hard and are pleasant to deal with. The annual payment to Evergreen is £54,000 plus extras work commissioned.
- 6.3.9 FirstPort were still waiting for the surveyor's report on the cracks in the lakeside retaining wall underneath the new Fisher's Row houses. The surveyor had investigated the planning consent regarding the foundations for the new buildings.
- 6.3.10 Work on replacing the paving slabs will commence once the scaffolding around the estate is removed. Two priority areas have been identified.
- 6.3.11 There was further discussion regarding the proposed Complins Close railings. FirstPort had received a lot of negative feedback on the proposed metal railings, and opinion was very divided. It was agreed that a meeting should be held, for owners of both houses and apartments, and excluding tenants, in order to let owners talk together. A director agreed to chair the meeting and to arrange a date.
- 6.3.12 FirstPort will arrange for the gate to the lake side next to the pump to be self-closing.
- 6.3.13 Proposed electric car charging points in old Frenchay Road – covered in item 4.1.
- 6.3.14 The Big Rake exercise on 16 September had been more successful than last year's, thanks to publicity.
- 6.3.15 The question of installing a gate to an alleyway in Lark Hill was further discussed. No feedback from residents or owners had been received over the summer and there was no evidence of further antisocial or criminal behaviour in the area. Therefore the decision was taken not to install a gate. FirstPort would write to all owners and residents of the affected properties.

## **6.4 Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

6.4.1 There was nothing to report.

## **7 Feedback**

7.1 One inquiry had been received, regarding the ownership of land abutting the canal behind Complins Close. The resident had failed to obtain an answer from FirstPort, who promised to look into the reasons for this. [Subsequently the enquirer wrote to say that she had resolved the issue herself and no further action was required.]

## **8 WRACIC**

8.1 The summer party on 8 September had been a great success, although some had felt the band was too loud. Next year it was planned to start earlier and to choose a quieter band. WRACIC had had to buy a generator and lights this year, as Carillion were no longer around to lend theirs. FirstPort requested that the generator be emptied of fuel before storage. A director agreed to ask a member of WRACIC to do this.

8.2 WRACIC had submitted a request for their grant, in fact to cover two years as none was paid last year. A previous AGM had agreed that a grant of up to £1200 per annum could be paid. The total requested was £2000, and as required a list of costs had been provided which was reviewed by the committee. A director proposed the payment of this sum of £2000, which was then agreed unanimously. FirstPort would arrange for their accounts department to pay upon receipt of the minutes with accompanying note from the Chair.

8.3 A director reported that the next litter pick would be held on 6 October, and the Christmas event on 8 December. [The litter pick date was subsequently changed to 13 October.]

## **9 Managing Agent**

9.1 Section 20 consultations are all in hand.

## **10 Any other business**

10.1 A director raised the question of bins left on the pavement in Stone Meadow. As the resident in question is a GreenSquare tenant, FirstPort suggested that he should write to the Council via its website reporting page to report a pavement obstruction.

10.2 A director asked whether any planning applications had been seen regarding dormer windows in Complins Close, but it was pointed out that we no longer receive these automatically.

## **11 Dates of next meetings**

11.1 20 November (2018), 15 January, 19 March (2019) at 7.30 pm in the Community Room.