

WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 81

7.30 pm, Tuesday 16 July 2019

Present: Adrian Olsen (Chair), Tao Tao Chou, Nicholas Orme, Paula Reynolds, Louise Robertson, Brian Shine, Hilary Sorensen, Raquel Stremme, Mary Tovey

In attendance: Rachel Dolacinski, FirstPort Property Services

Minute taker: Imogen Olsen

1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Ann Hall, Adrian Mourby, Liz Wheeler

2 Minutes

Approval of the minutes from meeting 80 held on 21 May 2019

2.1 The minutes of meeting were approved, with a correction to the date in the last line of 15.1, where '2010' should read '2020'.

3 Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 (4.1) FirstPort had investigated the damp in a director's flat and had advised accordingly.

3.2 (9.2.4) It was agreed that the Welcome to the Waterways booklet was not in need of updating and that there was sufficient stock for the time being. A new edition could be considered if and when a Controlled Parking Zone were to be introduced.

3.3 (9.2.6) The Chair had met the owner of the Frenchay Road apartment which had suffered ceiling damage during recent roof works. The owner did not accept the Chair's explanation that the ceiling repair cost should be borne by the block's reserve fund because the damage was not the responsibility of the roofing company as the fixed tiles had to be removed before the re-roofing could take place. The owner had decided to contact FirstPort again direct to request further information although nothing further had been heard either by FirstPort or by the Chair.

3.4 (9.3.8) FirstPort confirmed that a second letter had been sent to affected residents explaining the decision not to install a gate between 12 and 14 Lark Hill. No feedback had been received.

3.5 (14.1) FirstPort had written to the owner of the apartment who had been hanging washing on the balcony, and no further washing had been seen since.

4 Railway line developments

4.1 There was nothing to report. A resident had asked why vibration problems had not been included in the noise-monitoring exercise, but this had not been part of the brief as there had been insufficient money and this would need a new fund-raising campaign.

5 Negotiation with Berkeley Homes concerning transfer of estate freehold to WMC

5.1 The director leading these negotiations gave a progress report. She pointed out that the acquisition of the freehold of relevant parts of the estate was the first object in the Memorandum of Association of the company. Three directors had met that morning to discuss progress and had decided that, as sufficient progress had been made with Berkeley Homes in resolving the silt issues of the watercourse, it was time to instruct a solicitor and to ask Berkeley Homes to send a draft contract. The committee agreed to go ahead with the freehold transfer to WMC once BH had provided a corrected plan of the estate. [Subsequently this corrected plan has been provided by Berkeley Homes.]

6 Sub-Committee news round-up

6.1 Finance

6.1.1 The Chair raised a question arising from the preliminary 2018-19 actual v budget figures recently circulated, but FirstPort explained that these costs had still not been finally allocated and that the first quarter actual v budget figures for 2019-20 should have been sent out; FirstPort will send out these figures.

The Treasurer pointed out that the accounts for 2018-9 would need to be finalised by the end of August in order to give the auditors sufficient time. FirstPort reassured the meeting that the relevant department was being constantly reminded of this deadline.

6.2 Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee

6.2.1 Steam cleaning of the exterior walls was currently being carried out on 2-32 Elizabeth Jennings Way and was judged by all to be a resounding success. Further blocks would now be given the same treatment.

6.2.2 The lift had been repaired at 108-126 Frenchay Road but unfortunately it had stopped working again a week later. This time the battery was at fault, a simple problem unrelated to the previous breakdown. Repairs were due shortly.

6.2.3 No further problems had arisen with roof repairs.

6.2.4 There had been no further signs of airbnb or short-term lets. However, it was agreed that eternal vigilance was required.

6.3 Gardening Sub-Committee

6.3.1 The committee reviewed the action discussed at the previous meeting regarding the storage of refuse bins at the front of houses.

Work was in hand to improve access to the passage way between Frenchay Road and the wildlife corridor. When repairs to the gate and path were complete, the affected residents would be sent an explanatory letter.

The impeded access for bins to the rear gardens via the car park in the north east corner of Complins Close posed an insoluble problem and it was agreed that no further action needed to be taken.

A letter had been sent as agreed to no. 26 Stone Meadow suggesting that a gate could be installed in the rear fence to give access to the garden, as the construction of no 26a had removed the previous rear access.

It was unanimously decided that it was now time to take this item off the agenda.

- 6.3.2** Evergreen had supplied an estimate [of £14,250 plus VAT] for replacing with block paving the worst two areas of damaged paving stones in front of 115-141 Frenchay Road. This was much cheaper than the previous two estimates for replacing with new paving slabs. A director had compiled a list of local contractors who install block paving and it was agreed that FirstPort would obtain two further estimates for comparison before meeting Evergreen to discuss and making a final decision.

There was some discussion as to the allocation of costs for work to paths, with one director arguing that these should not fall under Schedule 1 (estate costs). The transfer document for houses and the lease for apartments seemed to be rather ambiguous. It was agreed that FirstPort's legal team would be requested to give an opinion as to whether the twenty or so properties with responsibility for their own front drives and pathways should be expected to contribute to the upkeep of other pathways across the estate.

- 6.3.3** Sylva Trees had attempted three times to remove the tree stump in Frenchay Road but had been unable to access the site because of parked cars. FirstPort were now in negotiation with the residents. Once the stump was removed it would be time to think of options for a replacement tree for consultation with local residents.

- 6.3.4** A resident had suggested that the poplar on the green appeared to be leaning more, although this might be because its foliage had strengthened generally since one section was cut off by mistake by the Canal and River Trust. FirstPort agreed to check when the next survey on the tree's condition was due. [Subsequently found to be spring 2020.]

- 6.3.5** Evergreen had removed the sweet chestnut which had been planted next to the poplar, as it had died.

- 6.3.6** A director had complained about antisocial behaviour on the grass area at the rear of Clearwater Place. This had begun when the trees by the lakeside had been felled, exposing that area to the public gaze and forcing those engaging in antisocial behaviour there to move on. It was agreed that FirstPort would ask Evergreen to install [dummy] CCTV cameras and would also put up a notices warning that the cameras were in action and forbidding the use of radios and music.

- 6.3.7** An update was given on the towpath upgrade between Aristotle Lane and Elizabeth Jennings Way which was still scheduled for the autumn, after the water vole breeding season.

- 6.3.8** A director reported on progress regarding the watercourse, stone weirs and silt clearance. The design for the four new stone weirs in the balancing pond was explained. With only a few questions outstanding, WMC would soon be in a position to approach a selection of contractors in order to obtain quotes for building the weirs. FirstPort agreed to assist with this exercise. Further research into maintenance of the weirs would then

be necessary. It was possible that it might in the end prove more cost-effective not to go ahead with this project but to continue with our current silt removal programmes.

6.3.9 The same director had contacted Thames Water (TW) about the damaged siphon inspection chamber on the canal towpath. It was now time to organise the next silt removal operation in the balancing pond and it was therefore necessary to warn TW in case of any further problems with the inspection chamber. Lanes had quoted for an alternative method of over-pumping the incoming water rather than blocking it off as originally used by TW, but this would be around £2500-3000 extra. It would therefore be preferable to use TW's own methodology. Denise Kinsella of TW had promised to check TW's position but had not yet done so and was now on holiday.

6.3.10 The Chair had heard a rumour that Keble College had sold off their football field to St Edward's School and the cricket pitch was to be sold to a property developer. The reason was lack of use of the sports facilities. It would be necessary to keep an eye out for any future planning permissions and to organise a community response.

6.3.11 According to the latest Berkeley Homes plan, it was possible that some of the trees behind Stone Meadow next to the railway lines did not belong to WMC but probably to Network Rail. It has always been assumed that the railings there marked the boundary. It was agreed that the solicitor chosen to deal with the freehold transfer should be asked to ascertain the position via the Land Registry records.

7 Scrutiny Sub-Committee

7.1 There was nothing to report. It was agreed that the FirstPort evaluation ratings would be carried out in the autumn.

8 Feedback

8.1 No feedback had been received.

9 WRACIC

9.1 The summer barbecue was scheduled for 21 September.

A director pointed out that the dog-owners who had previously allowed their dogs to foul the lakeside had now moved on to the area by the boaters on the canal and also to the passage way from Elizabeth Jennings way to Bainton Road. She would ask local children to design posters requesting people not to do this and put them up along the towpath and elsewhere.

10 Managing agent

10.1 There were no Section 20 consultations going through.

10.2 FirstPort reported that a new property manager had been appointed to replace Rebecca Burt. Natalie Griffiths was due to start in mid-August.

11 Any other business

11.1 A director reported that the lights in the bin store for Complins Close were not working.

FirstPort would check them out.

12 Dates of next meetings

12.1 Dates for future meetings, all on Tuesdays at 7.30pm in the Community Room:

2019: 17 September (plus Q&A session at 7pm), 19 November

2020: 14 January, 17 March

FirstPort agreed to send letters to all owners concerning the Q&A session at 7pm before the meeting on 17 September.