

WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 45
7.30 pm, Monday 8 July 2013

Present: Louise Robertson (Chair), Tao Tao Chou, Sally Duncan, Adrian Olsen, Imogen Olsen, Nicholas Orme, Paula Reynolds, Mary Tovey and Lynda Williams.

In attendance: Rebecca Hill

Minute taker: Emma Thompson

1. Apologies

1.2 Apologies were received from Anne Hall, Raquel Stremme and Miles Thompson.

2. Private Business

2.1 None.

3. Minutes

3.1 Approval of the minutes from meeting 44 (13/05/13)

The minutes of the meeting were approved as a correct record.

4. Matters arising from the minutes from meeting 44

4.1 OM confirmed that all paperwork had been lodged with Companies House regarding the change of directors on the Waterways Management Company and that the AGM minutes from 23 April 2013 had been published on the 'Your Property Online' portal, replacing the previous minutes from 2012.

4.2 An article about the benefits of 'Your Property Online' had been drafted by OM for publication in the next edition of Waterways World.

4.3 In respect of the responsibilities matrix it was highlighted that a number of changes had been made. One of the directors agreed to be the first point of contact for the Apartment Block Sub-Committee (ABSC) and would also be a member of the Scrutiny Committee.

4.4 One of the new directors agreed to participate on both the ABSC and the Gardening Sub-Committee (GSC).

4.5 Another new director would be involved with the Scrutiny Committee and another director would be the main point of contact for the GSC, with assistance from a fellow director in the event of flooding across the development.

- 4.6 Directors were invited to confirm the accuracy of the contact details which could be made public. Some individuals had been highlighted but as the author of the document was not present it could not be clarified whether this indicated where information held on file had not been reconfirmed.

RESOLVED

- 4.6 That those items that had been completed should be closed.
- 4.7 That the revised matrix should be circulated to members for information.
- 4.7 That the previous Chair would be reminded about the need for access rights and guidance on Google docs for the new directors, which remained outstanding.
- 4.8 That the draft article on 'Your Property Online' should be forwarded to the Chairman of WMC for review before insertion into the development newsletter.
- 4.9 That two telephone numbers should be removed from the publicly available information and that clarification should be sought from the author on the highlighting within the document before final issue.

5. Health and Safety

- 5.1 It was noted that due to a group procurement deal the charge for the Health and Safety inspection across the development, which would take place in the Autumn by a risk specialist, would cost less than the previous year.

6. Updates from Managing Agent

- 6.1 None to report.

7. Items from WRACIC

- 7.1 The nominated representative from the WRACIC was reminded that a written statement detailing how the previous funding had been spent had yet to be received. Until such evidence was forthcoming, no funding would be provided by the WMC

RESOLVED

- 7.2 That a written statement should be sent to the Chairman and Treasurer for review and action.
- 7.3 A director had contacted the Waterways World editor and they were due to meet to discuss production of the next newsletter. During the discussion it was identified that in addition to 'Your Property Online' other items which should be included were the scheduled clean-up of the wildlife corridor in August and a reminder on how to book the community room online. It was highlighted that additional channels would also be used to promote the information such as the notice board, mailings and flyers.

8. Report on the objectives for the year

To produce a plan of action to resolve maintenance issues relating to the Frenchay Road culvert and the wildlife corridor watercourse

- 8.1 Following the previous meeting, site drawings of the drainage across the development had been acquired from Ramboll which appeared to indicate that an overflow which would be owned by Thames Water had originally been planned to remove any excess water into the canal. This clearly had not been provided which had resulted in the residents having to pay the licence fee to the Canal and Waterways Trust. It was suggested by directors that in the event of the overflow being properly implemented there would be no requirement to continue to obtain a discharge licence. Whilst the newly elected Counsellor for the Ward remained sympathetic to the residents' plight, Oxfordshire County Council could not provide any further assistance but proposed that the WMC write to Thames Water directly.
- 8.2 PIMS had carried out testing across the development to establish whether the silt was polluted but the results had not been received. MetroRod had advised against completing a die test to determine the presence of water flow as this would not indicate the percentage flow rate but simply indicate whether water was passing through the siphon even if it was at an extremely slow rate.
- 8.3 An engineer, and resident of the development, had reviewed the variety of reports which had been produced regarding the watercourse problems and had recommended that the swale between the lake and the siphon should be cleared annually. OM reported that Total Drainage had been invited to carry out these works.
- 8.4 The original drainage specifications had also made reference to a number of grills, one of which had never been installed.
- 8.5 Concern was expressed that the lake remained at full capacity which meant that any rainfall could cause a repeat of the flooding experienced in 2012. It was suggested that the lake should be drained to a lower level during the Summer to provide the much-needed capacity during the winter period. The source of the water feeding the lake remained a mystery. Potential suspects included groundwater run-off, a Thames Water feed or an underground stream.
- 8.6 A proposed action plan had been prepared to mitigate against the re-occurrence of flooding. It was suggested that the plan be amended to refer to the partial lifting of the emergency break to avoid any water ingress in the absence of the director (TTC) who would be able to closely monitor water levels from their accommodation. It was proposed that the same director (TTC) should liaise with the gardening sub-contractors to ensure that the swale was cleared in accordance with the plan.

RESOLVED

- 8.7 That Thames Water should be reminded of their legal obligation to provide a suitable overflow into the canal to ensure adequate drainage from the lake.

- 8.8 That Berkeley Homes should be contacted after the east side towards the siphon had been cleared to explain why the grill and overflow had never been provided as part of the initial build as planned and that compensation for payments made to the Canal and Waterways Trust should be re-paid to the Waterways Management Company.
- 8.9 That PIMS and Clearwater should be contacted by OM to ascertain the practicality of lowering the water level within the lake.
- 8.10 That a mapping exercise completed by a director should be circulated to directors as a useful aid memoire in respect of the companies involved across the development in managing the watercourses and their respective responsibilities.
- 8.11 That the action plan be approved, subject to the minor amendment proposed.
- 8.12 That a director (TTC) should meet with the gardening sub-contractors to ensure that the remedial work within the swale was undertaken correctly.
- 8.13 That once Total Drainage had cleared the watercourse, licence payments to the Canal and Waterways Trust should cease on the premise that the savings from no longer having to pay for the monthly discharge fee would more than compensate for having to apply for a new licence if negotiations with Thames Water did not progress in a timely fashion.

9. To secure the transfer of the freehold land of the Waterways development from Berkeley Homes to the WMC

- 9.1 It was decided that in light of the previous discussion it would be prudent to delay the transfer.
- 9.2 It was reported that the new owner of the house by the lake had asked for permission from Berkeley Homes to purchase a 7 metre strip of land. Residents had objected directly to Berkeley Homes because the developer remained the land owner.
- 9.2 In the meantime, a director had been in discussion with Berkeley Homes in their capacity as a concerned resident. It had been confirmed that a covenant could be placed on the land to ensure that no structure could be built on the plot. In addition, a smaller strip of 4 metres could be sold where the land was adjacent to an apartment block. The sale of land could also result in the removal of a hornbeam tree.
- 9.3 Directors queried why the WMC had not formerly been notified as the final designated owner of the land and the body responsible for its upkeep. Furthermore, the size of the strip of land being purchased was of such a scale to be of concern. It was unanimously agreed that the WMC should raise its dis-satisfaction with the freeholder.

RESOLVED

- 9.4 That a director draft a letter of objection to the transfer of the land by Berkeley Homes to the applicant.

Sub Committee news round up

10. Finance Sub-Committee

- 10.1 It was noted that the indemnity insurance renewal had been signed and issued to the insurance brokers.
- 10.2 OM was able to report that it was on track to meet the agreed schedule for the production of the accounts.

11. Apartment Block Sub-Committee

- 11.1 It was reported that a resident had asked for the communal bins to be cleaned. This was an additional expense and would only be undertaken when requested by residents. A letter had been issued by OM enquiring of the owners whether they wished to have the bins cleaned at the extra expense. The resident concerned had asked for the letter to be re-issued stating that unless owners objected, the bins should be cleaned. Directors concurred that owners should be given the option to opt-in rather than opt-out and that the letter should stand.
- 11.2 The same resident had also enquired whether the carpets could be cleaned twice a year instead of once. It was agreed that the expense could not be justified based on an inspection of the current cleanliness of the carpet concerned.

RESOLVED

That directors concurred with the response adopted by the Managing Agent.

12. Gardening Sub-Committee

- 12.1 Directors were reminded that Oxford Conservation Trust would be organising the removal of the silt from within the wildlife corridor in August. The organisation would be providing tools, insurance and training for anyone within the development who wanted to help.

RESOLVED

- 12.2 That a director should draft a letter (for clearance by the Chair) to all residents encouraging them to get involved in the event.
- 12.3 That the treatment of the non-slip surface on the bridges should be completed whilst the weather was conducive.
- 12.4 That a letter should be issued to residents in advance about the intention to trim the Hazels surrounding the lake in the Autumn.
- 12.5 That a diseased tree by the bin store in Complins Close should be treated.

13. Feedback

- 13.1 OM confirmed that notices discouraging the retention of bicycles in communal areas had been placed in apartment blocks.
- 13.2 It was unanimously agreed that one resident continued to take up a disproportionate amount of time which was bordering on vexatious behaviour.

RESOLVED

That a director should draft a warning letter giving them sufficient notice to improve or receive a reduced level of service.

14 Any other business

- 14.1 Directors had met with a PCSO and the local City ward councillor to discuss the prevalence of bike thefts on the development and the anti-social behaviour by the lake and Clearwater Place.
- 14.2 The police had expressed surprise at the concern which had been raised by residents to bike thefts as no such thefts had been reported to the police from the development. As a result, the police were not monitoring for such activity.

RESOLVED

- 14.3 That articles should be prepared for the newsletter which actively encourages residents to report bike theft and to advise the police where there are instances of anti-social behaviour .
- 14.4 That notices should be included within bike stores stating that anyone using the storage facilities do so at their own risk.

15 Date of next meetings

The meetings for the year ahead were amended as follows:

8th July 2013, 9th September 2013, 4th November 2013, 13th January 2014 and 10th March 2014.