

WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 57

7.30 pm, Tuesday 14th July 2015

Present: Adrian Olsen (Chair), Imogen Olsen, Louise Robertson, Nicholas Orme, Tao Tao Chou, Raquel Stremme, Sally Duncan, Hilary Sorensen, Greg Barnes, Sowon Park

In attendance: Jeetindar Gill, FirstPort (from item 6 onwards)

Minute taker: Emma Thompson

1. Apologies

1.1 Mary Tovey, Paula Reynolds, Adrian Mourby, Ann Hall.

2. Minutes

Approval of the minutes from meeting 56 (12/05/15)

2.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

3. Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 It was agreed that at the next AGM, the main proceedings would be closed before opening the floor to a wider debate. The minutes from the last AGM included the subsequent discussion which would remain in the records. It was requested that one amendment should be made in connection with the reporting of the management of the poplar tree on the Frenchay Road green adjacent to the canal. FirstPort was asked to amend the minute which stated that the WMC had 'taken legal action' to 'had considered taking legal advice.'

3.2 It was noted that spikes had now been installed on the porch of 2-32 Elizabeth Jennings Way to stop pigeons from landing and this item could be closed.

3.3 The remaining Waterways Character Assessments had been completed. Photographs had been included in all the studies and the reports had been sent to the Planning Department. No acknowledgement had been received and the Chair agreed to follow up with the City Council. At this stage the assessments did not cover the assets owned by GreenSquare. Richard Grant from the Housing Association had been given the necessary information to enable the company to develop its own assessments but no response had been received to indicate whether GreenSquare would pursue the idea.

3.4 Councillor Howson had been asked to clarify the timeline for the proposed parking restrictions for the Waterways and he has been pressing the County Council but no news had been forthcoming. The WMC accepted that it was likely to be some time before the County Council would be able to action the proposed parking management plan on some of those roads adopted by the Council. In the meantime, it was agreed that yellow lines should be put down on land under WMC management and that FirstPort and a number of directors should complete a walk around to identify those parts of the estate which would benefit. One area which had already

been identified was the entrance to Clearwater Place by the nursery. Similarly it was suggested that during the walk around consideration should be given to those areas which needed 'residents only parking' signs to deter visitors from inconveniencing residents.

- 3.5 It was agreed that the owners of each block should be consulted on whether they would like to have numbering on parking spaces. The system devised would avoid the potential for anyone to know which apartment might be unoccupied in the absence of a parked vehicle.
- 3.6 Photographs had been taken of vehicles that had been removed from the development because they were causing an obstruction. It was proposed that these images, along with a suitable caption, could be left on the windscreens of vehicles which were restricting flow throughout the development, but only on those roads which were the responsibility of the County Council.
- 3.7 It was reported that the letter to curb residents from leaving their wheelie bins at the front of properties, which was contrary to the covenant, seemed to be working.

4. Objectives 2015-16

- 4.1 Having had the opportunity to review the objectives it was agreed that the four objectives presented at the last meeting should be accepted, subject to a minor amendment. These objectives being to:
- Complete the work to clear the silt and obstructions from the watercourse and to produce a long term maintenance plan.
 - Secure the transfer for the freehold land of the Waterways development from Berkeley Homes to the WMC.
 - Work with Oxfordshire County Council to solve the parking issues on the development.
 - Support the implementation of satisfactory noise, vibration and mitigation measures in relation to the railway line developments on the western border of the development.

5. Railway line developments

- 5.1 Whilst a number of conditions had been imposed by the West Area Planning Committee of the City Council on Network Rail in order to discharge condition 19, it was unclear whether, or how, the council could enforce these conditions. There were also grave concerns about whether the conditions as published by the council really reflected the original intentions of councillors. Network Rail had agreed to trial a new silent form of track but had stated that it would be implemented only if appropriate, but even then possibly only in section H at Wolvercote, and not necessarily in section I (our section). It was noted that officially no decision could be made regarding the impact of the HS2 development because the body responsible had yet to publish how it proposed to move construction and spoil material. However it is almost certain we will be severely affected by these material movements but the City Council claims it currently has no powers to influence this. It was also reported that the electrification of the railway line would currently not continue north of Oxford which meant that diesel freight trains would continue to run on the line adjacent to the Waterways. To date, the local MP had been very supportive.

- 5.2 Residents in Wolvercote were taking legal advice and had suggested that it would be useful for Waterways' residents to do likewise. It had been suggested that a donation of £100 from WMC should be given to a mutual legal fund that has been set up by Wolvercote residents. Whilst all those present agreed that such a donation should be made, First Port was asked to review the constitution to ensure that using the service charge from owners to contribute towards a project outside the boundary of the development was not contrary to the constitution or required approval by the members. It was acknowledged that the directors could donate on a personal basis and that the railway line could damage the value of properties within the development which was the grounds upon which the WMC would wish to make the contribution.
- 5.3 It was unclear when donations needed to be received [subsequently established to be the end of July]. First Port was asked to establish the timeframe and, if appropriate, notify residents along Stone Meadow and Cox's Ground that a fund for legal advice was being established by residents elsewhere.

6. Health and Safety

- 6.1 FirstPort advised directors that a child had managed to wedge their foot underneath the entrance door to an apartment block. The design precluded reducing the gap other than by purchasing a thicker entrance mat, which was being actioned.

7. Sub-Committee round up

7.1 Finance Sub-Committee

- 7.1.1 It was noted that the accounts were due out in August for directors to review. FirstPort would obtain an update and advise the Chairman so that the directors could organise a meeting to analyse the figures.

7.2 Apartment Block Sub-Committee

- 7.2.1 It was reported that 8 Cox's Ground was being sublet as Oxford Apartment Guest House. The owner had been asked to cease the tenancy as the tenant was contravening the lease by subletting and for short periods.
- 7.2.2 The tenancy on another apartment which had been sublet to Airbnb had been cancelled and the locks changed.
- 7.2.3 Penny and Sinclair had been advised for at least the second occasion that short term lets (shorter than six months) were against the lease for apartment blocks within the Waterways development. The same agent had been notified two years previously and yet it continued to rent three known properties on this basis within the Waterways on Elizabeth Jennings Way, Lark Hill and Clearwater Place.
- 7.2.4 Slow progress was being made on the Section 20 consultations which had been reported at the previous meeting. Only two contractors had been prepared to offer a 20 year warranty on a flat roof. The majority of contractors would provide a warranty only if the roof were subject to an annual inspection.

- 7.2.5 Only one block had voted to receive an upgrade to Sky dual feed. It had been established that Sky was due to complete another upgrade in the autumn at which point the work would be initiated. It was suggested by FirstPort that Sky might even upgrade all the apartment blocks free, if requested.
- 7.2.6 Three apartment blocks would benefit from carpet replacement over the next few months, with another five blocks scheduled in the next phase. Owners had stated a preference for Neptune Azure.
- 7.2.7 It was noted that the Welcome to the Waterways booklet required updating and there was a general consensus that it should be shorter. It was agreed the review should proceed in three stages:
- (a) Directors (and GreenSquare) should be sent a copy of the current content to establish what should remain, what should be deleted and whether anything else should be included. A small group of Directors will then produce a final contents list.
 - (b) The content would subsequently be written by two directors
 - (c) The document would be given a final proof and edit

7.3 Gardening Sub-Committee

- 7.3.1 It was reported that Aquatic Solutions would be returning in September to continue the silt removal in the wildlife corridor (dates to be confirmed). On the east side the water was now flowing freely and quickly through the siphon under the canal due to the removal of an obstruction from the underground section of the swale. Prior to deciding whether to revoke the licence to discharge water into the canal, it was agreed that FirstPort should invite MetroRod to provide a quotation for a camera survey and other appropriate work to make sure nothing else could potentially stop the flow of water over the autumn/winter.
- 7.3.2 A meeting had taken place with Thames Water on 11th June to discuss the pollution incident which had taken place earlier. It seems that Thames water has undertaken a number of inspections and flushings since the pollution incident but we have not been told the outcomes of these. Separately, it was thought by all parties that there was a possibility that some sewage was entering the system, probably from a mis-connected house drain. Whilst no response had been received from Thames Water, the Environment Agency had advised that Thames Water is investigating but that no mis-connection had been found so far.. A dye had been inserted into the drainage system by Thames Water which had turned our watercourse green but we have no idea why this was done. Thames Water has promised a full narrative of events with explanations and outcomes but this has not yet appeared.
- 7.3.4 It had been proposed that a multi-agency meeting should take place between the current landowner (Berkeley Homes), the engineer who had designed the watercourse, the Environment Agency, Thames Water, the County Council Highways Section, and the WMC to discuss what could be done to resolve a sustainable urban drainage system that is continually filling up with excessive amounts of silt and

possibly other contaminants. This was unlikely to take place until August due to the availability of a representative from Berkeley Homes.

- 7.3.5 A resident had notified a member of the WMC that Lanes4Dranes had been seen working on the Thames Water drainage system via the inspection chamber on the cycle path to Bainton Road. It was agreed that a director should follow this up.
- 7.3.6 Fifteen volunteers had taken part in the recent graffiti removing weekend event organised with the Canal and River Trust. The pressure jet had unfortunately broken down on the first day which had meant that the graffiti 'busters' had focused their activity on removing material from under the bridge on Elizabeth Jennings Way and had been unable to tackle the bridge on Frenchay Road.
- 7.3.7 Despite removing graffiti from street furniture within the immediate vicinity of the bridge, more graffiti had replaced it which had been reported to the new Council graffiti tsar. As the bridge was owned by the County Council, Councillors Liz Wade and John Howson will discuss with the Canal and River Trust whether a mural could be a long-term solution.
- 7.3.8 A director is investigating the cost of employing the City Council to remove the graffiti around the development (excluding those items under private ownership) to speed up the cleaning process. Alternatively, the gardeners may be able to do the job.
- 7.3.9 The cull on 7th July had removed a further 18 bicycles and many locks/chains. Another bicycle cull would be undertaken in the autumn. Tagging would take place in November, with items being removed in January 2016.
- 7.3.10 It was noted that the 'no fishing' sign had not been replaced by the lake. FirstPort was reminded of the action which had been agreed at the previous meeting. It will be fixed to the railings next to the steps down to the lake.
- 7.3.11 The Chairman was reluctant to write to a local school regarding the misuse of the lake side as there was no hard evidence to suggest that the litter was being left by their pupils and not by residents on the estate. It was agreed that if there was a marked improvement over the next few months it would indicate that those boarding at St Edwards were the most likely culprits.

7.4 Scrutiny Sub-Committee

- 7.4.1 The Committee was due to meet next week and the agenda would include a review of the proposed new management agreement with FirstPort and the managing agent assessment sheets from the Apartment Block and Gardening Sub-Committees.

8. Feedback

- 8.1. Letters had been issued to the letting agent, tenant and owner of an apartment block on Stone Meadow regarding a dog being kept on the premises which was against the covenant. It was noted that the dog was on the premises several times a month when a visitor came to stay. No further action would be taken at this time.

- 8.2 Communal hallways within 2-32 Elizabeth Jennings Way continued to be blocked despite numerous letters being issued to residents. Residents had been warned that any objects found in the hallway on the day of an inspection would be removed if found. Naturally residents had kept the hallway clear on the day concerned with the exception of a pair of shoes. It was agreed that FirstPort should inspect the premises unannounced in the early morning and remove any obstructions as residents had had sufficient warning.

9. WRACIC

- 9.1 It was noted that the next Summer Barbeque would be held on 12th September 2015. The WRACIC is seeking volunteers to help with the event.
- 9.2 A request had been received from the Chair of WRACIC for their annual grant from WMC. A sum of £1,500 (the same as last year) was proposed and agreed.

10 Managing Agent

- 10.1 Following a change in procedure, FirstPort had to get consent from the WMC when seeking service charge arrears from an owner. It was agreed that the Chairman should sign the relevant consent forms so that FirstPort could pursue legal action.
- 10.2 The owner of 3 Stone Meadow was disputing the recharge which had been made as a result of Evergreen attending to remove the number from their parking space. The owner was claiming that the remedial work had been successfully undertaken by their own contractor and had submitted a photograph to this effect. The Gardening Sub-Committee had previously visited the site and noticed a very botched attempt to remove the number and so had asked Evergreen to do the work. The committee decided to ask FirstPort to continue with the recharge and as appropriate obtain evidence from Evergreen that they had indeed carried out the work.
- 10.3 A request had been received for the establishment of a herb garden at the back of 2 Elizabeth Jennings Way. It was agreed that this should be reviewed by the Gardening Sub-Committee at its next meeting.
- 10.4 FirstPort reported that it was looking for volunteers to participate in a video to help owners who had no previous experience of managing an estate. Directors were asked to contact FirstPort if they were interested.
- 10.5 Directors were reminded that FirstPort had introduced its 'WOW' awards aimed at thanking valued employees.

11 Any other business

- 11.1 FirstPort was asked to issue a letter advising residents of the next 'Big Dig' with the Oxford Conservation Volunteers which was scheduled for 27th September 2015.

- 11.2 Directors were reminded to provide their identification and completed 'Know your Client' form to FirstPort in order to comply with Anti Money Laundering legislation. Jeet Gill is in a position to witness and authenticate original documents.
- 11.3 The implications of the new government 'Right to Buy' scheme were discussed. Anyone buying their property from GreenSquare would fall outside the maintenance agreement. It is possible that over time, GreenSquare would have fewer properties across the estate and would have less funds to maintain them and those residents would not be contributing to the upkeep of the estate. It was agreed that the implications of the legislation should be raised with the local MP, Nicola Blackwood in a letter to be drafted by a director.
- 11.4 Three planning applications had been brought to the attention of directors – 47 Stone Meadow, 85 Stone Meadow and 20 Cox's Ground, none of which were contentious.

12 Date, time and location of future meetings

- 12.1 It was noted that future meetings would be held at 7.30 pm in the Community Meeting Room as follows:
15th September 2015
17th November 2015
12th January 2016
15th March 2016