

WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY

Minutes of the MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 63

held at 7.30 pm on Wednesday 13 July 2016 in the Community Room

Present: Adrian Olsen (Chair), Tao Tao Chou, Sally Duncan, Adrian Mourby, Paula Reynolds, Louise Robertson, Hilary Sorensen, Raquel Stremme, Mary Tovey

In attendance: Rebecca Burt and Rachel Dolacinski, FirstPort Property Services

Minute taker: Imogen Olsen

1 Apologies for absence

1.1 Greg Barnes, Ann Hall, Nicholas Orme

2 Minutes

Approval of the minutes from meeting 62, 10 May 2016

2.1 The minutes were approved as an accurate record.

3 Matters arising from the minutes

3.1 It was agreed that FirstPort would send out a letter in early September inviting residents to a 30-minute Q&A session to be held at 7 pm before the 4 October WMC committee meeting. The letter will specify that all questions must be submitted to FirstPort in advance, by 21 September 2016.

3.2 Legal advice had been sought regarding the dispute with Claydon Freehold Ltd over the roof repairs to 108-126 Frenchay Road. It had taken some time, but Claydon had now signed a letter of agreement, accepting all the conditions laid down by the solicitor. As a result, a new director from that block will join the committee and FirstPort will pay the roofing invoice. Claydon have decided not to proceed further under the Right to Manage legislation.

It was agreed that the solicitor had provided an excellent service. Two directors were thanked for all their hard work in bringing about a successful conclusion to this episode.

4 Proposal of new Committee member

4.1 It was agreed that Dr Brian Shine would be co-opted to the Committee. The Chair would contact him and arrange an informal meeting as soon as possible. A director expressed the wish to meet him too. The Chair said that all would be welcome to attend.

5 Welcome to The Waterways booklet

5.2 The first draft by a director was now complete and a copy would be sent to all directors by the Chair. Comments should be returned the relevant director and the Chair. FirstPort requested that candles be added to the list of items forbidden on balconies. The Chair will remind a director that he has agreed to produce a map of the estate.

6 Railway line developments

- 6.1 The site meeting with Network Rail had been useful, interesting and productive. Trees are a major concern among residents, but NR said that most of the trees on their land would be preserved. The signals would now be sited further north, beyond the estate, and fewer trains would be idling. NR representatives were dismissive of Tata Silent Track and said there would be more beneficial impact from the new line itself, which will be quieter and smoother. NR said that new track would also be laid on the main lines as well as the new lines. Workmen were making efforts to be less disruptive, particularly at night.
- 6.2 Network Rail have recently told the Council that they will not after all be implementing Tata Silent Track. The group from Wolvercote has sent a detailed letter to the council on behalf of all of us disputing this, and WMC will lend support. NR also have submitted planning applications to change the noise and vibration monitoring period from the 72 months stipulated by the council to 18 months, thus avoiding monitoring the full implementation of all the future East West rail services, particularly freight, which will take some years. Objections can be made via the Council planning website and the Wolvercote group has written a detailed letter of objection to the council on behalf of all of us relating to the noise application.
- 6.3 Some residents were confused about the various acoustic glazing options on offer, so the Chair arranged a meeting for those affected to voice their concerns. Following this, NR have said they will organise a demonstration by the contractor of the different options sometime in July but so far this has yet to materialise.

7 Sub-Committee news round-up

7.1 Finance

- 7.1.1 FirstPort reported that the first draft of the end-of-year accounts is now ready. A director will receive it by the end of July. We are therefore on target for getting the accounts to Critchley's by the end of August.
- 7.1.2 It was agreed to wait until after the audit in November before going out to tender for auditing services.

7.2 Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee

- 7.2.1 As a result of the recent roof survey, three blocks have been prioritised for roof repairs. Section 20 consultations have been started for these blocks plus one other and these are now at the tendering stage. Local contractors have been included on the list.
- 7.2.2 Two blocks are having carpet replacements and further blocks are at the tendering stage. 108-126 Frenchay Road will need separate attention as Claydon withdrew from an earlier consultation exercise, and this will be discussed at the next meeting of ABSC. The Chair will ask Dr Shine to canvass opinion regarding new carpets for this block.
- 7.2.3 There had been a request to install wooden flooring with a noise dampening underlay in an apartment in Complins Close. The owner has agreed to research this material to

provide independent evidence of its effectiveness. FirstPort have asked an independent specialist for advice. If this material does prove effective then there would be no reason to refuse the request, and it could provide an example for the future, as the lease allows for a suitable alternative to carpet if approved by the WMC. It was agreed that the owner of 37 Complins Close, where hard floors have already been installed without permission, was in breach of covenant and that FirstPort would write and tell them so.

- 7.2.4 The new signage for the outside of apartment blocks is on order.
- 7.2.5 The trial cleaning of rendering on one of the Elizabeth Jennings Way blocks was a success. If this improvement is maintained, it was agreed that this method of cleaning should be tried next on 2-32 Elizabeth Jennings Way.
- 7.2.6 The process of redecoration, both internal and external, is under way for eight blocks. Tenders are now all in.
- 7.2.7 FirstPort had obtained an overall quotation for installing CCTV in apartment blocks throughout the estate in order to monitor the post boxes and entrance lobbies. As modern CCTV is both simpler to install and cheaper to run than it used to be, it was agreed to proceed with obtaining further more accurate quotations for individual blocks using the standalone system (not the networked system). It would then be up to each block to agree on whether to go ahead. FirstPort would write to all apartment owners to consult them on the plan.
- A director requested that a quotation also be obtained for the rubbish room at Clearwater Place, where the system is being regularly abused. This was agreed.
- 7.2.8 FirstPort confirmed that local contractors were now being asked to quote for carpet replacement and roofing. The ABSC was asked also to nominate suitable local decorators and other appropriate local contractors.
- 7.2.9 Sky updates have now been installed in all but four blocks.
- 7.2.10 The faulty lift in Complins Close is now working. Thyssen Krupp have recommended several updates and have submitted a quotation. Section 20 consultation has started. Reports are now also in on other blocks, and six further Section 20 consultations are out for lift work.

7.3 Gardening Sub-Committee

- 7.3.1 Curt Lamberth's report showed that the water in the swale from the lake is silt-free, but that the balancing pond and wildlife corridor is receiving two tonnes of dry silt per annum. This must be coming from the Thames Water part of the system. A director is pursuing Thames Water for their maintenance records for the silt trap in their pipe from the Woodstock Road and for the siphon under the canal. The silt trap is in fact an oil interceptor, which used to be maintained annually when there was a factory on the site. When we finally get these records, we can organise a meeting with the various bodies concerned (Thames Water, Oxford City Council, Berkeley Homes, Environment Agency, Trap Grounds) in order to plan a long-term silt management programme. At the moment it seems vital that Thames Water should clear the oil interceptor regularly or adopt some other means to stop the silt entering our system.

- 7.3.2 The drains in Frenchay Road had recently been cleared by Thames Water following a pollution incident after very heavy rain at the end of the wildlife corridor near the Trap Grounds. TW found the sewer blocked by fat balls and nappy liners, and also found another surface water drain almost completely blocked by gravel. This could not have been cleared since the estate was first developed. The good news was that the Environment Agency and Thames Water had responded instantly when the pollution incident was reported, and that the gravel blockage had caused no actual damage to the drain in question, which was still in good order. However, after the clearance it looks like quite a lot of silt has been deposited in the west part of the balancing pond.
- 7.3.3 Following a meeting with Metrorod, FirstPort were still awaiting their report on the uneven flow and the slimy silt on the bottom of the swale. This silt and slime has probably resulted from erosion from the banks that were shored up and made steeper during the period of flood, and from algae and similar growth in the standing water.
- 7.3.4 Excellent progress was reported on the mural project for the canal bridges. In mid-August a plea will go out for volunteers to paint the base coat on which the artists will do the actual painting, and then to apply the anti-graffiti coat. The sides of the bridges have already been cleaned of graffiti in readiness. The grand opening of the murals is planned for 10 September.
- 7.3.5 MBS have now received a more sensible response from Network Rail in relation to the planned tree reduction works alongside the railway line, and we will not have to pay their exorbitant original charge to close the line. But the work has to be done before mid-November when Chiltern Railways will start testing live trains on the new line. MBS has completed a tree survey, which FirstPort will circulate, and will shortly submit their quotation, which FirstPort will also circulate. It is likely that some of the trees should be removed completely as they are unsafe and replaced with more suitable trees. If we simply keep on reducing them, it is likely that Network Rail will want to charge us for closing the line during the work. Affected residents will be consulted before any decisions are taken.
- 7.3.6 Bike stands and railings have now all been painted.
- 7.3.7 Fishing in the lake continues to be a problem, with associated bad behaviour worsening. One director had been subjected to racial abuse when they pointed out that fishing is illegal and there was a threat to throw a camera into the lake. One of the culprits is thought to be the son of a GreenSquare tenant, and a director offered to investigate. There was some discussion about blocking the gaps around the lake with brambles or nettles. This will be discussed at the next Health and Safety inspection and then at the next Gardening Sub-Committee meeting.

7.4 Scrutiny Sub-Committee

- 7.4.1 A response is still awaited from FirstPort on WMC's mark-up of their new draft management agreement.
- 7.4.2 It was agreed that the dual property manager arrangement at The Waterways was working very well and no changes were required

7.4.3 It was agreed that discussion of the tendering of the managing agent contract should be left to a later date.

8 Feedback

8.1 There had been no communications to Feedback since April 2016.

9 WRACIC

9.1 A summer event is planned for 10 September to coincide with the mural opening. Volunteers will be needed.

10 Managing Agent

10.1 The ramp in Lark Hill has been completed, but it was agreed that it seems very steep and that this should be raised at the next Health & Safety inspection. It is not clear whether a hand rail should be installed or whether the ramp is wide enough to allow this.

10.2 The order has been raised for the next Health & Safety review, though no date has been booked in as yet. It was agreed that the review should include lakeside planting.

11 Any other business

11.1 There are now a number of Airbnb or similar short-term lets on the estate. FirstPort are writing to all owners identified so far and directors are keeping an eye out for further instances, particularly frequent cleaning activity and regular comings and goings by strangers.

11.2 There has been a request to the freeholder to purchase a loft for an extension in a Frenchay Road apartment block. FirstPort has responded along similar lines to a previous application in Complins Close, listing the issues that would arise from extending into a shared roof space.

11.3 GreenSquare propose fencing off an area of grass to the south behind its Clearwater Place block. A site meeting had been held at which WMC had explained that we need to maintain access to the swale. A response is awaited from GreenSquare.

11.4 A resident who had fallen off her bicycle and broken an arm has sued WMC for damages. FirstPort has handed this claim to the insurers who have requested full details, including photos. So far FirstPort have heard nothing further.

12 Date, time and location of future meetings

12.1 4 October, 29 November 2016, 17 January, 14 March 2017 – all Tuesdays at 7.30 pm in the Community Room.

The meeting on 4 October will be preceded at 7 pm by a 30-minute Question and Answer session.