

**WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY**  
**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 80**

**7.30 pm, Tuesday 21 May 2019**

**Present:** Adrian Olsen (Chair), Tao Tao Chou, Paula Reynolds, Louise Robertson, Brian Shine, Raquel Stremme, Mary Tovey, Liz Wheeler

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

**Minute taker:** Imogen Olsen

**1 Apologies for absence**

1.1 Ann Hall, Adrian Mourby, Nicholas Orme, Hilary Sorensen

**2 Minutes**

**Approval of the minutes from meeting 79**

2.1 The minutes of meeting 79 held on 19 March 2019 were approved.

**3 Matters arising from the minutes**

3.1 The Living Waterways Award plaques had now been installed next to the canal-side murals.

3.2 The gardening contract had been tendered and subsequently awarded to Evergreen. This decision had been taken via email. The Oxford University Parks Department had declined to tender because of pressure of work.

3.3 The 'fly-tipping' behind the Complins Close car park had been cleared away by the owner of the house in question.

**4 Matters arising from the Annual General Meeting and Q&A session**

4.1 FirstPort had spoken to a resident complaining of damp in an apartment, which upon investigation had proved to be caused by condensation.

A director reported that her own apartment was showing signs of damp. FirstPort agreed to investigate.

4.2 There had been some discussion about the proposed Controlled Parking Zone. The Chair had subsequently met the local councillors and Councillor Howson (county council) had reported that further progress would probably have to wait until the autumn because of shortage of staff.

**5 Allocation of directors to sub-committees for the year**

5.1 Those directors who were present were all happy to continue in their old positions.

## **6 Annual objectives for 2019-20**

6.1 A list of objectives previously circulated by the Chair was agreed. The Chair would upload this list on to the WRA/WMC website.

## **7 Railway line developments**

7.1 The report from Sound Barrier Solutions had been received, judged to be very good, and circulated to various concerned groups and local councillors, including David Stevens of the City Council. The councillors had been interested and supportive when the Chair had met them on 19 May. We now had a baseline figure for comparison with any possible future increases.

The Chair has written to David Stevens concerning the questions about the sound barrier installed in our section raised in the report.

## **8 Negotiation with Berkeley Homes (BH) concerning transfer of estate freehold to WMC**

8.1 The director handling this negotiation was not present but the Chair reported that there was no progress to report. The corrected map had still not been received back from BH and we are still waiting to progress this matter.

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

### **9.1 Finance**

9.1.1 The Treasurer thanked FirstPort for their swift response over various questions concerning the budget and for reducing the management charge increase from 3.5% to 2.5%. FirstPort advised that this reduction would be reflected in the second billing as the first billing had already been completed.

### **9.2 Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee**

9.2.1 The leak at 139 Frenchay Road had been repaired and redecoration was awaited.

9.2.2 Exterior cleaning and redecoration of apartment blocks was soon to be carried out.

9.2.3 There did not seem to be any new instances of airbnb or short-term lets.

9.2.4 A director asked whether we needed to update the Welcome to the Waterways booklet and suggested that people should go through it to judge. The Chair still holds a stock sufficient for the time being.

9.2.5 A lift in a Frenchay Road block previously reported as repaired had developed a new fault. Ace had said that parts were no longer manufactured and quoted a high price for the repair; however, City Omega had said that parts were still available. A quote from City Omega was now awaited.

9.2.6 The Chair had received a complaint from the owner of a Frenchay Road apartment regarding ceiling damage and a leak caused by the flat roof works last year and

suggesting that the roofing company was liable for the cost of the repairs to the apartment's ceiling. FirstPort gave an account of the matter, which had started in April 2018 with a first small leak from the worn-out flat roof before the roofing works started; this had been caused by wear and tear to the old roof and so was not covered by the block's insurance. On starting the works the roofing company found that some tiles had been glued down and these had to be hammered off before any replacement work could be done. This was what caused the ceiling damage and a subsequent small leak; FirstPort said that the roofing company could not be held liable for the ceiling damage as it had no other option but to remove these tiles as best they could before the job could be done. This had been discussed at the Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee meeting in December 2018. Therefore the cost of repair and redecoration is to be borne by the existing reserve fund of the block and neither this owner nor the other owners in the block have anything extra to pay. The Chair had arranged to meet the resident the following day (22 May) to clarify.

### **9.3 Gardening Sub-Committee**

- 9.3.1 There was some discussion of a report on the storage of refuse bins which had been produced by a director and then circulated. It was agreed that WMC should be seen to be helping people comply with the storage covenant in problematic areas. It was decided to send a third letter to those still not storing their bins in the proper place, but it was agreed that there could be no final solution as legal action would be inappropriate. Three areas pose particular issues:

Block of terraced houses on west side of Frenchay Road. Work is still in progress to improve access via the central alleyway. Nothing else can be done.

Complins Close (east side). For certain houses the car park impedes access to the rear, and it seems there is nothing to be done here. Some affected residents hide their bins behind a trellis, but FirstPort's legal department have advised that this is not a suggestion that should be approved or put in writing as it would give the trellis/hedge solution legitimacy and set a precedent. It was agreed no further action is to be taken.

Stone Meadow, nos 26 and 26a. No 26a was built after the rest of the estate in the side garden of no 26, blocking access from the front to the rear of both houses. Both properties were then sold on with no rear access. No 26a could keep their bins at the side of the house, while a letter would be sent to no 26 suggesting they insert a gate in their rear fence to provide access from the garden to the rear.

- 9.3.2 Another very high quotation had been received for replacing the three priority paved areas with stronger paving slabs. As both quotes were very expensive, other solutions were discussed. A director pointed out that Evergreen had replaced so many individual broken slabs that in fact large areas of paving did not need to be replaced at all at the moment. It was agreed to ask Evergreen to quote for repaving the two worst sections to a high specification.

There was some discussion as to whether the cost of these works to paths fall under Schedule 1 (estate costs) or Schedule 3 (car parks). FirstPort's view is that they fall under Schedule 1, but one director who was absent had asked for no decision to be made on this point until her views could be put to the committee. It was agreed that there was no immediate need to decide on this issue and that further discussion could take place.

An alternative surface of bonded resin had been investigated but had proved likely to be as or even more expensive as it needed to be laid on a concrete or tarmac foundation. It was suggested that this might be suitable for the car-parking areas in need of resurfacing.

9.3.3 FirstPort reported that MBS had declined to take out the alder stump in Frenchay Road as it was too difficult and had advised that any replacement tree in that location would not survive. This agreed with what Evergreen had advised earlier. FirstPort had therefore asked Sylva Trees to supply a report. It is likely that a replacement tree will have to be planted a few yards further along the railings to avoid the stump.

9.3.4 Most of the new planting carried out by Evergreen throughout the estate seemed to be doing well, despite the drought, although some plants in Complins Close were looking sickly. [They have subsequently been watered by residents and Evergreen.] A small section of the netting barrier fence protecting the areas of grass seeding by the lake had been knocked down and will be re-erected. Some of the seed had now sprouted, if patchily. Evergreen will deal with the weeds that have grown when the grass is stronger.

9.3.5 There had been a complaint by a resident in Stone Meadow about the 'ferocious pruning' of some shrubs and hedges. It was agreed that, while this view was a personal one, there were some places in Stone Meadow that did need attention in terms of replanting shrubs. The resident would be invited to attend the next garden walkabout by the GSC when it reached that area of Stone Meadow. Evergreen had reduced the amount of pruning in general, as agreed last year and many people have expressed their satisfaction with how the estate looks in general.

A resident in an apartment block at the end of Frenchay Road had asked for a hedge to be reduced in height, but permission had not been given.

9.3.6 Stuart Divall's plans for the stone weirs in the watercourse had been received and a meeting of the water group was scheduled for 24 May to discuss future action. It was possible that a project manager would have to be employed. There was also the question of future maintenance. Before any action could be taken, however, the freehold would have to be transferred from Berkeley Homes. All this would take some time, although the application for permission to install the stone weirs had already been submitted to the City Council in the name of WMC and approved.

9.3.7 There was no further news regarding the damaged Thames Water inspection chamber on the canal towpath. Resurfacing of the towpath was now scheduled for the autumn, according to local councillors, the delay being partly because water voles had been found in the area.

9.3.8 The question of the request for a gate between 12 and 14 Lark Hill gate was revisited as one resident had claimed that FirstPort's letter conveying the management committee's decision against its installation had not been received. FirstPort had checked and said it had been sent, but the person who had written the letter had left the company and no details could be found. FirstPort agreed to send the letter again, with an explanation.

9.3.9 After the AGM a message had been received from a resident in Complins Close thanking the committee for the re-planting work done there.

9.3.10 A director reported that children were leaving rubbish at the back of Clearwater Place. Evergreen would clear this away.

## **10 Scrutiny**

10.1 There was nothing to report.

## **11 Feedback**

11.1 There was nothing to report.

## **12 WRACIC**

12.1 A director reported that the Easter Egg hunt had been a great success. A director reported that a WRA representative had now formed a good relationship with the owner of the block containing the Community Room, thus making communication much easier.

## **13 Managing Agent**

13.1 Section 20 consultations were all in order.

13.2 The committee bade farewell to Rebecca Burt, who was moving to a new position within FirstPort after nine years with the Waterways. Committee members expressed their great regret at her departure and a token of thanks was presented to her. Rebecca thanked the committee for all their help over the years. FirstPort were currently recruiting for a replacement, and meanwhile Rachel would continue in her position.

13.3 FirstPort had begun to explore the idea of employing an estate handyman and were still comparing the relative costs of doing this as opposed to paying for each separate job.

## **14 Any other business**

14.1 A director reported that someone was hanging washing on an apartment block balcony. FirstPort agreed to write to the resident in question.

## **15 Dates of next meetings**

15.1 The September meeting had been scheduled for 24 September, but the Chair would now be unable to attend on that day. It was agreed to change the date to **17 September. All directors are asked to note.** Dates for future meetings, all on Tuesdays at 7.30 pm in the Community Room, are now therefore as follows:

2019: 16 July, 17 September (plus Q&A session), 19 November

2020: 14 January, 17 March