

**WATERWAYS MANAGEMENT COMPANY**  
**MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING NO 90**

**7.30 pm, Thursday 14 May 2021**

**Online meeting via Zoom**

**Present:** Adrian Olsen (Chair), Tao Tao Chou, Ann Hall, Kate Lack, Adrian Mourby, Paula Reynolds, Louise Robertson, Hilary Sorensen, Raquel Stremme, Mary Tovey

**In attendance:** Rachel Dolacinski and Natalie Griffiths, FirstPort Property Services

**Minute taker:** Imogen Olsen

**1 Apologies for absence**

1.1 Nicholas Orme, Liz Wheeler

**2 Approval of the minutes of meeting 89 held on 16 March 2021**

2.1 The minutes were approved with two corrections: (a) at 4.1 the auditors are Wenn Townsend, not Wayne Townsend; and (b) at 10.1 'the area's maintenance, mainly grass cutting' should be expanded to read '...mainly grass cutting but in the past also damaged grass repair and replacement and fence mending,...'

**3 Matters arising from the minutes**

3.1 (3.1) GreenSquare had now written to the resident at 4 Clearwater Place giving them a date (7 June) by which they must remove the noisy laminate flooring.

3.2 (3.3) Nothing further had been heard from Berkeley Homes regarding the transfer of the freehold to WMC.

3.3 (6.2.2) Double yellow lines had been renewed in Complins Close and some visitor parking marked with a 'V'. New 'T' lines were yet to be repainted to mark out individual spaces.

3.4 (6.2.3) The repair to the roof leak at 25 Stone Meadow was now the subject of a Schedule 20 consultation.

3.5 (6.2.4) There was some confusion regarding the defective bin store light in Complins Close, which had been reported as mended by the contractor but which was still not working. FirstPort would investigate.

A director [PR] requested that FirstPort send a letter to residents reminding them not to dump piles of electrical equipment in the bin store.

3.6 (6.3.8) The new No Through Road signs had been erected in Stone Meadow.

It seemed that the new Controlled Parking Zone has been successful in reducing the parking problems across the estate.

#### **4 AGM in the autumn**

- 4.1 It was agreed to hold the AGM on Tuesday 2 November 2021. A plan for action would need to be established.

#### **5 Electric vehicle charging**

- 5.1 Government policy had introduced new factors which meant it was too early to take further action or make any plans. The sub-group should meet and discuss how to proceed . It was pointed out that in any case WMC were currently unable to instal any new structures under the restrictions imposed by Berkeley Homes.

#### **6 New East-West Rail proposals**

- 6.1 A document had been received through the post by all residents concerning future East-West Rail developments. Detailed information was sparse but there were two areas of concern: (a) the number of extra trains, and (b) the extension of track capacity between Oxford and Oxford North. It was felt that this probably applied to lines alongside Jericho rather than those bordering the Waterways, but it was agreed that Councillor Howson should be approached for clarification. Residents should be encouraged to respond to the online consultation by early June.

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

##### **7.1 Finance**

- 7.1.1 FirstPort confirmed that work on the accounts was in hand and that they would be ready in time to meet the new autumn date for the AGM.

##### **7.2 Apartment Blocks Sub-Committee**

- 7.2.1 FirstPort clarified the situation regarding redecorations and specifications, which would in future be produced on a job-by-job basis so that costs can be clearly seen and priorities established.
- 7.2.2 The lift modernisation programme had been discussed with the FirstPort surveyor at a sub-committee meeting earlier that day. He had reported that previous maintenance on the Frenchay Road blocks had been poor, and FirstPort agreed to seek compensation from the contractor. Detailed costs would not be available until a new specification had been drawn up and the work put out to tender, but it would be very costly and reserve funds are being accumulated. The first priority for lift modernisation work is 44-60 Frenchay Road, followed by 108-126 and 95-113 Frenchay Road.
- 7.2.3 Investigation of the stacked window openings at 30-47 Cox's Ground was in hand.
- 7.2.4 A director [PR] raised the subject of a large dog being kept at 2 Complins Close, an apartment, when all dogs apart from guide dogs are forbidden. FirstPort would write to the owner of the apartment. The resident had claimed that the Chair had given her permission but this resulted from a misunderstanding in correspondence.

### **7.3 Gardening Sub-Committee**

7.3.1 A complication had arisen regarding the resurfacing of the parking area in Cox's Ground. Owners of nos 26-29 which had had their garage converted into a living room had for some time been using the parking spaces opposite the houses which may possibly have been intended for the owners of apartments. It is not clear who owns these spaces or has the right to use them and whether or not they have been paying or should pay if they haven't towards the communal car park fund. Berkeley Homes had been approached in the hope that they could explain what the situation is and whether any special arrangements had been agreed in the past. Until this had been clarified the proposed resurfacing of the car-parking areas would have to wait.

7.3.2 The path resurfacing programme was working well, with 2-32 Elizabeth Jennings Way and 30-47 Cox's Ground the next areas to be done. James will ask New Driveway to provide quotes for other paths area with badly broken slabs so that future priorities can be established.

7.3.3 A huge amount of tree work had been carried out recently by Arbocare, all around the estate, but there was still a lot left to do including the two dead trees by the green at the end of Frenchay Road, the branch reduction of the tree next to the Complins Close bin store, the branches overhanging the path down to the towpath by the Trap Grounds, finishing the pollarding of the willows behind Cox's Ground, the stumps by the post box, and the thinning of the trees by the lake.

There was much discussion concerning the felled black poplar on the Green, with some directors calling for the installation of a new large tree in its place. However, it was pointed out that four new trees had already been planted on the Green, two specifically in order to replace the poplar – a holm oak, which was already about 20 feet high after four or five years, and a new sweet chestnut. These would eventually grow large enough to fill the whole space and provide a focal point and they would also obscure the unattractive view across the canal which the felling had exposed. From an arboricultural point of view, another big tree placed in between these two would not be at all wise and also it would be impossible to plant a new big tree exactly where the poplar had been because the old roots were too extensive. A large tree would be prohibitively expensive to buy, deliver and install, and furthermore such large trees require a great deal of care if they are to survive. Therefore the suggestion will not be pursued.

7.3.4 Two areas of worn grass, on the Green and at the southern end of Frenchay Road, would be treated by Evergreen in the autumn. At the same time Evergreen would carry out a redesign of the latter area.

7.3.5 The swale behind Clearwater Place was in need of a clean-up as some unknown substance was floating around in it. A director offered to take a look and perhaps organise a working party to clear it out.

7.3.6 The heavy Evergreen workload was discussed, but James had now confirmed that with lockdown ending and new staff being taken on this was not a problem. FirstPort said that some of the jobs he would normally carry out had been given to other contractors.

7.3.7 Minutes from the last GSC walk-around on 20 April had been circulated. A director asked about the bollards and whether WMC had a key. It was explained that two of the

Frenchay Road bollards have keys controlled by the Council but that the third has a code which we know. The previous week the Chair had lowered this bollard in order to help traffic flow when a dustcart caught fire in Elizabeth Jennings Way and its contents had been tipped onto the road. Evergreen should be able to obtain a key to one of the bollards by the mini-roundabout on EJW.

A director asked about the bridge railings. Nothing had yet been heard about their being repainted, but another director had recently spoken to Councillor Howson who had told her he had not forgotten and would chase this up after the local elections.

A director asked what was being done about the dog mess by Clearwater Place, and FirstPort explained that Evergreen had been asked to supply and install a sign.

- 7.3.8 There was some discussion regarding the anomalous grass area by 25 Cox's Ground and its future status. It was decided that any change should be left until agreement had been reached with Berkeley Homes on the freehold transfer, as a request to revoke the licence would doubtless cause further delay. Until then Evergreen would continue to maintain this area as the owners of no 25 had clarified that the area was open for all to use.

#### **7.4 Scrutiny Sub-Committee**

- 7.4.1 FirstPort had agreed to provide the committee with more detail regarding financial information, quotations and costing on large projects such as lift modernisations.

#### **8 Feedback**

- 8.1.1 One item had been received on the Feedback web page: a previous property manager, Jeet Gill, had written to request a testimonial as he was setting up his own property management company. The Chair had provided a positive response with the assistance of other directors.

#### **9 Managing Agent**

- 9.1 Natalie Griffiths was leaving FirstPort to take up a position with another company. She was thanked for all her hard work. A replacement for Natalie was in the process of being appointed, hopefully within the next 28 days.

#### **10 WRACIC**

- 10.1 A mini concert for guitar was scheduled for 28 May on the Green (rain day 29 May), along the same lines as the very successful concert last August.

A litter pick would take place on 5 June, 2-4 pm. The Oxford Civic Society had had all its litter-pickers stolen from a garage, so financial contributions were being sought for replacements.

#### **11 Any other business**

- 11.1 The logs that had been left behind after the felling of the black poplar would be taken away in due course. The remaining stump and two other large logs will remain and had

been carved into rough seats by Arbocare. Evergreen would then clear up any last vestiges and tidy up the surrounding bushes. A director [LW] had suggested planting bulbs to brighten up the area.

**12 Dates of next meetings**

12.1 2021: 6 July, 14 September, 16 November; 2022: 11 January, 15 March

It was hoped that the next meeting could be in person rather than on Zoom.