

St James Park (Long Ditton) Estate Company Limited

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at St Andrews Church, St Andrews Road, Surbiton on Wednesday 23rd July 2014 at 8.00pm

The record of attendance and apologies is held at the Company's registered office.

Mr Robert Smith, the Chairman of the Estate Company, introduced the meeting and chaired the meeting and the following items of business were discussed:-

He advised that the local Community Police had been invited to the meeting and had agreed to attend to answer any queries raised by residents but unfortunately they had to postpone their attendance at the last minute. It was hoped that this could be re-arranged for a further time.

1. **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held Thursday 26th September 2013 which had previously been circulated were formally approved by the meeting.

2. **Matters Arising**

There were no substantive matters arising in respect of the Minutes which were not to be dealt with at this meeting.

3. **Chairman's Report**

The Chairman gave his report to the meeting, the text of which is attached to these Minutes.

The meeting confirmed the Chairman's Report.

4. **Accounts**

The Accounts for the Company for the year ended 31st December 2013 were presented to the meeting having previously been circulated.

The Chairman dealt with this within his Report.

It was requested and agreed that additional monies collected for infrastructure and the grounds reserves be ring-fenced and clearly shown in the Accounts as specific items.

There were no substantial queries in respect of the Accounts and these were adopted by the meeting.

5. **Gardener's Report**

Much of this had already been covered in the Chairman's Report, however, in respect of particular queries raised:

In respect of the Rose garden from Williams Grove, concern was expressed as to the condition and general overall overgrown appearance thereof. Wallakers would investigate this further with Landform, the contractors, and put together proposals in respect of this.

In respect of the re-planting scheme, after some discussion and the availability of the proposals, it was agreed to proceed with phase I of the scheme for completion of the re-planting to the Williams Grove square after satisfactory completion of the new Beech planting at the ends following the satisfactory eradication of the Vine Weevil.

The further phased proposals would be considered and agreed by the Directors to the other areas of the Estate.

There were a number of comments about the general standard of maintenance of the grounds by Landform. Mr Heald advised that Wallakers met with them on a regular monthly basis to review their Contract and works undertaken and highlight areas of concern. Residents were requested to report these to Wallakers as necessary so that these could be fed back to the gardeners.

In respect of the trees to the development, it was reported that a detailed Tree Survey had been commissioned to assess the condition of the trees and obtain firm recommendations in respect of their regular pruning etc. It was agreed that Turners would not be used for any tree works on the development in the future and that alternate contractors would be used.

6. **Directors**

No formal nominations had been received for the position of Director.

Any Shareholder wishing to become a Director could be co-opted during the year and could by invitation attend Directors Meetings with a view to formal election at next year's AGM.

7. **Any Other Business**

The question of parking was again discussed. Whilst this had improved and the number of abandoned vehicles reduced by concerted effort to have these removed from the site, it was agreed that vehicles not showing a permit should continue to be targeted and the Concierge should increase his efforts to deter illegal parking on the development and the wording on the statement to be attached to the vehicle should be revised. In addition, commercial vehicles should not be parked on the Estate and the Concierge would be requested to target these as necessary.

The question of mobile phone reception was discussed as this was intermittent and poor at various parts of the development. Whilst it was considered that little could be done to improve this, the Board would consider this further.

In respect of the 'path of desire' in the half moon by the roundabout, Wallakers explained the situation that a suitable path would be provided with planting adjacent. After discussion, it was agreed to review these plans and have the area surfaced with no requirement for planting.

Complaints were received in respect of gravel in gutters etc. and Mr Heald agreed to discuss this further with the Concierge and arrange for this to be dealt with.

The handling of complaints was raised by the meeting and in particular call-backs and updates from Wallakers, the Managing Agents and Mr Heald advised that both Mr Catto and himself were the Property Managers and he had a team of staff at his Surbiton office who could deal with matters as they arose. His mobile number was readily available so he could be contacted on regular basis including outside office hours. The Board agreed to look into this further with Wallakers and agree procedures in respect of this.

In respect of the regulations for the development, these had been included within the Residents Handbook which was circulated to new owners as soon as Wallakers received notification of their change of ownership. This was revisited and updated on a regular basis and formed a useful information pack for residents.

There being no further substantive business the meeting closed.

Chairman's Statement – St James (Thames Ditton) Estate Co Limited AGM 23rd July 2014

On behalf of my fellow Board members I would like to welcome you to this Annual General Meeting of St James Park (Long Ditton) Estate Company.

Historically these AGMs have always been held later in the year, however as requested at the last AGM we have brought the meeting forward to coincide with the publication of the accounts and to ensure the points discussed are more current.

Over the next few minutes I would like to cover a number of areas. These can be broken down into three main topics. Firstly the governance of the Board and running of the company including finances; and then I will focus on the two main areas that the board have concentrated on which are infrastructure maintenance and planning and the grounds.

Myself and my fellow Board members will happily answer any questions you may have but I request that you ask these once I have made my full statement.

To start I would like to express my thanks to the whole Board for their tireless efforts in managing the estate. It is important to note that none of the Directors are remunerated in any way for their efforts, we do it because we share with you a commitment to maintain the estate to a standard that reflects the community we wish to live in and to maintain and enhance the value of the estate.

Following the appointment of Tony holder as a Director at the last AGM the Board composition has remained the same, comprising 7 Directors. The Board now has a broad range of skills and interests which has enabled constructive debate at meetings. Since the last AGM the Board has met four times, typically meeting every two months.

As Chair and on your behalf I would like to thank all the Directors for their tireless work and the time they have contributed.

We are always looking for new Directors and would encourage any of you who would like to shape the community we live in to let myself or Robert Heald at Wallakers know and we can let you know what is involved.

The Company is responsible for managing the roads, pavements and related infrastructure as well as the communal gardens on the Estate. In addition we also look to enhance the value of the community through events such as the successful Christmas Carols (sadly in the rain!), the maintenance of the website which provides a lot of useful information about the Estate, maintaining the estate handbook and dealing with frustrating issues such as parking issues, noisy animals, garden maintenance and the perpetual challenges of pumphouse maintenance which remains a considerable cost. As has been noted at previous AGMs we continue to ask you to be conscious of what you flush, the estate handbook available on the website has more information on this.

If, like me, you have been a resident since the estate was first built, you will be aware of the ongoing issues of transferring the freehold from the developers to the estate company. I am pleased to note that this has now been concluded and the company now holds the estate freehold which provides some additional leverage when dealing with certain issues, such as abandoned cars – although I am pleased to report that currently there are no known abandoned cars on the estate.

The overall budget that we manage is around £150,000 and we continue to operate within this. The principle areas of expenditure are:

- provision of a part time concierge who looks after the day to day maintenance and housekeeping requirements of the estate
- maintenance and repairs to the pumps, which I have mentioned

- managing agents fees, Wallakers have been supporting the management of the estate for a number of years. On your behalf I would like to take this opportunity to express our thanks to Robert Heald and the team at Wallaker's
- and grounds maintenance, which I will come onto in a moment

The accounts also include some reserve monies and as I will mention we are looking to increase these to a more realistic level to manage and limit the impact of future expenditure in overall repairs and replacements.

Historically these reserve monies were held with the Co-Operative Bank which has been subject to extensive public and media scrutiny. The potential risks of this were considered by the Board, and given our desire to take a very cautious approach we moved all monies to an account with HSBC.

I would now like to turn to one of the principle areas of focus for the Board, the estate infrastructure.

At the request of the Board Wallakers has undertaken a detailed review of the estate infrastructure and provided the Board with a comprehensive report. They found that:

- the perimeter fencing was well maintained and appropriately covered within current maintenance budgets
- the pavements were generally in a good condition and feel with prudence and regular maintenance the current budget allowance should cover what is required
- the one area the report raised was in regard to the roads. This included both immediate repair requirements, such as from the junction of Chadwick Place with Williams Grove as well as other areas which will need some resurfacing sooner rather than later.

When discussing this the Board took into consideration a number of elements. Firstly the life of the roads is over some 20 years and therefore whilst there may be some areas of repairs, there is not a need to re-surface the whole estate which would be a considerable cost of around £250,000. Therefore the approach should be one of selective repair.

This leads to the second consideration which is the appearance of the estate. Patching roads could significantly impact the appearance and value of the estate. The Board has therefore taken an approach that rather than just individual patching, when maintenance is required areas will be resurfaced.

In both recognising the overall cost, based on detailed estimates provided, and our desire to take a planned and structured approach to the work, the Board has recognised the need to increase the reserves we collect to accommodate the estimated works.

Alongside this we also looked at the efficiency of the street lighting across the estate. Given recent technology developments in LED lighting the Board recognised that this could lead to reductions in running costs. Having reviewed this the Board felt that the business case for full conversion is not sufficiently compelling, however we are converting as and when light units need replacing.

Moving from the infrastructure the Boards next main discussions has been in regard to the grounds. Since the estate was first occupied the Board have had to deal with a number of issues be that poor management and maintenance through previous grounds maintenance contractors; the challenges of watering the grounds; or the serious infestation and challenges of the vine weevil.

One positive step forward was the appointment of Landform in March 2011. Over the last three years they have delivered a step change in the day to day maintenance and upkeep of the grounds; have invested in improving areas of the estate and worked with the Board to eradicate the vine weevil and look at how we can sensibly develop the grounds moving forward.

At the last AGM Landform presented a grounds proposal for the estate. The Board recognised that this was well received but the consensus from yourselves was that you would like to see more colour around the development; as much maintenance free planting as possible and to keep any special features at a minimum.

Taking these comments on Board and following a full estate walk around by the Board a revised specification was put to Landform who have presented the revised grounds proposal which has been available on the estate website.

This fully costed proposal for a three plan to transform the planting around the estate in those areas that need it was reviewed and approved by the Board with planned works starting in Williams Grove in the Autumn.

Alongside this the Board has also commissioned a tree specialist to survey all trees on the estate so that an informed pruning programme can be put in place.

As with the maintenance of the roads, the current reserves are insufficient to cover the required ground works. Given the costed proposals we have been able to calculate the costs and considered the implication on the service charge.

For many years the service charges have stayed static. The half year charge in 2006 was £181 and this actually fell slightly over the next five years to reach £179 in 2010. This approach was not sustainable and so in the 2nd half of 2011 the Board increased the charge by £45 to meet the revised grounds maintenance contract. In addressing the grounds challenges, particularly around the eradication of the vine weevil and replanting works, we increased the last half year charge 2013 with a specific charge of £50.

We discussed this at the last AGM and it was requested that proper costed proposals be reviewed by the Board before any decision was made to keep this £50 increase. Therefore the first half year 2014 service charge excluded it. Now we have the full costs and taking prudent assessments of risks and needs we have been able to make an informed judgment of potential reserve requirements over the next five years. On this basis the Board agreed to maintain the £50 increase which you will have seen in your last statement.

I am sure you will agree with me that we need a sensible service charge that not only reflects the costs of running the estate but also provides appropriate reserves so that we can manage cost effective strategies to develop it and maintain the standards we have enjoyed. Having gone away and done the research we believe that this is the correct approach and will provide appropriate funds.

To close I would like to re-iterate my thanks to my fellow directors for their hard work and commitment. Our one objective continues to be to maintain the grounds and roads infrastructure of the estate so that we all enjoy a quality environment and local community that we all want to live in.

Thank you.