

Rivermead Residents Association

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 7.30pm, Monday 25th October 2010

Minutes from the previous meeting

Rachel Gama (Chair) welcomed the attendees to the meeting. There were about 20 present. Previous minutes of last year's AGM were approved.

Chairman's report

While awaiting the arrival of representatives from Freshwater there was an update on the lease extensions situation. Tim McCormick addressed the meeting and explained the procedure so far and the stage reached with Freshwater.

Rachel updated the meeting on the success of the Summer Party and that it raised £100 for the Nottinghamshire Hospice.

Rachel informed the meeting that there had been ongoing problems with noise disturbance in the flats. Freshwater had been informed many times about this and we were told that any complaints should be directed to them and not to the Association.

Following problems about the garage doors and entry doors, the number to contact Freshwater will be put on the notice boards and during out of hours there is an emergency number on the answerphone which should be used for emergencies.

Rachel said that Freshwater should be attending the meeting to discuss the ongoing issues and concerns about the service charges and the rise of these charges to cover planned major works (reported on later in the minutes).

The communal aerial charge was also an issue to discuss with Freshwater when they arrived. Some residents may want to pay @£60 for the installation but not be charged over £200 to connect to the aerial. The RRA had informed Freshwater that the majority of residents did not want the aerial installed and would like the charge credited against the service charge invoice that had already been issued. Any issues that residents are not happy with on the service charge breakdowns should be addressed directly to Freshwater in writing.

One resident said that they had received a letter from Freshwater confirming that this aerial charge will be refunded (later discussed with Freshwater reps).

One resident asked about the asbestos removal and why the residents have to pay for this. Rachel explained that the survey was being carried out and Freshwater are to inform residents of the outcome (reported on later in the minutes).

One resident had written to Freshwater that we shouldn't have to pay as Freshwater had known about it for years but have left it undisturbed until now. It was also voiced that residents should challenge these charges every step of the way as Freshwater could put charge upon charge onto the annual service charges. Freshwater already have residents money and nothing is being done, there is no communication and no timeline of works. They have taken residents money and are doing nothing with it.

Rachel explained that she hoped that the Freshwater representatives would arrive at the meeting to explain this. She also said that the more residents that contacted Freshwater with regard to the asbestos the better, and that they should be pushed to address all concerns.

One resident put the idea forward that a template letter could be issued to every flat for the residents to sign and send back to Freshwater. Rachel pointed out that not all flats are privately occupied and that many are rented. Therefore the residents in those rented flats would not sign such a letter.

At 7.55pm Freshwater representatives arrived at the meeting (having been held up in traffic). Julian Keen (Area Manager) and his colleague Akim (who has taken over from Dave Beale).

Rachel briefed Julian and Akim on the discussions so far regarding the aerial and the asbestos removal charges and invited them to head the meeting to take questions and direct discussions about these issues.

Julian explained that the discovery of the asbestos has held the emergency lighting works up. It is important to deal with it. Investigations had only recently been completed which is why there had been little communication. They had obtained costings. Option 1 is complete removal of the asbestos and option 2 is to leave it and seal up the risers and re-route cables and pipes through another part of the building. There is asbestos in the risers and also the undercrofts of each building.

Initial investment cost is @£135k to deal with the asbestos by removal. Also £60k to remove the asbestos in the undercrofts (£195k total).

One resident asked if they had discovered the asbestos recently. JK said that there had been a survey carried out years ago but the asbestos in these areas was missed.

The resident stated that they had a letter from Dave Beale saying that Freshwater had known about this asbestos for years. JK said that the risers were not accessed at that time. Many residents asked how that had come about and that if the survey carried out had not accessed certain areas then this should have been stated in the survey.

JK stated that the asbestos was found in the recent survey and as the electric/gas/water/tv cables go through the risers, any maintenance that needs to be carried out in these areas needs to be in an asbestos free environment.

Rachel pointed out that the question is who is responsible for paying for something that was missed years ago? That is the issue that residents are concerned with. One resident said that if the asbestos has been there for years and missed on the last survey that it is not the responsibility of the present residents to pay for its removal.

JK stated that the asbestos is on the walls and now that it has been discovered it has to be safely removed.

One resident asked how this was going to be carried out while the flats were in full occupancy? JK replied that the process would be performed by a series of air locks.

There was also concern raised about the possibility of asbestos being present in the bathrooms of the flats. JK said that the communal soil pipes were the responsibility of Freshwater but that the internal pipe and fittings within each bathroom were the responsibility of the residents and that if any resident had concerns regarding this they should have an independent asbestos survey carried out in their flat.

JK then explained that the undercrofts of each building were never accessed and would be managed by sealing these areas which would save the extra £60k overall cost. But that regular access is needed to the communal risers and so the asbestos there needs to be removed.

One resident made the point that regular access must have been made in the past years to these risers for routine maintenance etc – what is different now? Access has been happening anyway and has not been discovered until now. Freshwater must have known about the asbestos that was there.

JK stated that it would take approx 32 working days to complete the asbestos removal from all the blocks. The contractor will submit a method statement as to how this will be done.

The option of sealing off these communal risers and encapsulating the areas to ensure no further access and run the emergency lighting cables and other services through another part of each building would cost a further £50k, so this option is ruled out and the total removal option is recommended.

The overall charge for the asbestos removal and the installation of the emergency lighting is £1600 per flat to be charged in the regular service charges over a period of 2 years, ie. An extra £800 per year per flat.

Rachel pointed out that the lack of communication from Freshwater so far with regard to this issue was upsetting to the residents and that a letter should be sent to each flat to explain the latest situation.

JK explained that this had not been done so far as they had only just received the final figures for each option. He said that a letter would be sent to each

flat explaining the options, costs and recommendations and that it would be 2 – 3 months before the works were started.

One resident wanted assurance that no further areas would be found in the future which contained asbestos, resulting in further work and further charges ie in soil pipes, garages etc.

One resident also asked if the asbestos was used in the insulation boards and if this would be replaced. JK said that all the asbestos material will be removed and that the insulation sheets if there are any would not be replaced.

JK said that Freshwater will confirm which areas have not yet been surveyed. The extra service charges from this year which have already been charged/paid will be utilised for the removal of the asbestos and the extra service charges for 2011 will be utilised for the emergency lighting works.

Rachel reported that one resident has raised concerns also about the appearance of the shop and clinic, and the fact that they need some redecoration and repair to keep them looking respectable. JK stated that the occupants were responsible for these buildings and their upkeep and that Freshwater will write to them to request repair works etc.

There was then a heated exchange from one resident concerning a chartered surveyor from Langley Taylor sent by Freshwater to assess the charges for ground rent. He was not happy with the conduct of this surveyor. After a while, Rachel stated that it needed to be established whether Freshwater were connected with this surveyor and that any concerns should be addressed to head office.

Rachel concluded Julian and Akim's participation in the meeting and thanked them for attending and for their input. They then left the meeting.

Treasurer's report and presentation of the accounts

The Treasurer was not present at the meeting and therefore no full financial report was available, but general information was included in the agenda sheet. The main expenditure for the year was the annual hire of the room for the AGM and the website update.

Election of committee

Committee members were then elected onto the committee for the forthcoming year. These residents were Marilyn Ash, Gill Catchpole, Maria Cooke, Nicki Puckey, Tim McCormick, Jean Marsh, Marina Webster, Cat Coombes, Peter Walsh and Phil Luckett.

Election of officers

The following were elected into the officer positions:-

Chairman - Maria Cooke – seconded by Rachel Gama and Marilyn Ash.

Vice Chair – Gill Catchpole – seconded by Marilyn Ash and Nicki Puckey.

Secretary – Nicki Puckey – seconded by Rachel Gama and Tim McCormick.

Treasure – Peter Walsh – seconded by Gill Catchpole and Rachel Gama.

Lease extensions

Tim McCormick held a brief resume of the lease extensions for those interested/involved. Most leases have approx 60 years left. A letter had been drafted to Freshwater and the average cost of the least extension was £6k - £13k dependent of the size of flat and the location. This was for a 125 year least extension. Some residents may have already gone down this route and served notice to Freshwater of their requirements. Tim explained that you cannot serve notice about a lease extension until you have lived in your flat for 2 years. You can then serve notice to the landlords and ask for a 90 year extension and an offer of cost. Then the landlord negotiates and you have a survey done. With the current negotiations most people would have had an offer by now and be ready to negotiate.

Tim gave out the surveyor's details from Spencer Birch who had carried out the recent surveys.

Any other business

The subs for the forthcoming year will remain at £3.00 and could be collected after the meeting.

The padlock to the back gate to Rivermead had been removed and some times is not used properly. Freshwater are aware of this and have replaced the padlock. Keys are available from the caretaker.

The meeting concluded at around 9pm.