

The Grange Freeholders Limited

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Minutes of Annual General Meeting of The Grange Freeholders Limited held at

7.00pm on 14th June 2017 at

The Cold Harbour, Ermin Street, Swindon SN26 8DJ

Present:

Paul Zukiewicz

John & Freda Tindale

Simon Adair

Diana Morris

John Morris

Director

Managing Agent

Managing Agent & Company Secretary

Attending:

Renate Neave

Lesley Anne Neesh

Melanie Kriegler

Louise Stubbs

1. Welcome and Introductions

John Morris chaired the meeting and welcomed those attending confirming that the meeting was quorate as there were at least two members present and introduced the director, Simon Adair, and the two managing agents, Diana Morris and himself.

John read the list of apologies received:

Phil Michaelis

2. Minutes of previous meeting

The previous Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on 22nd March 2015. The minutes were produced and agreed as correct.

The invoices for expenses, bank statements and accounts were made available to the meeting.

3. Formal Resolutions

Receiving the accounts

The accounts were previously made available on the company website and further copies made available at the meeting. The members resolved to accept the following resolution:

Resolution 1. To receive the accounts for the year to 31 March 2017

Re-election of Directors

John Morris advised the meeting that the Articles of Association of the company (the rules governing its operation) state that if there is only one director he must retire each year and may offer himself for re-election at the AGM. Only members who are dwelling-holders at The Grange may be directors. Simon Adair offers himself for re-election. The meeting unanimously agreed to accept the following resolution:

Resolution 2. To re-appoint Simon Adair as director

4. Service Charge Arrears

John Morris advised the meeting the amount of Service Charges outstanding at 31 March 2017 was £330.00 by the owner of No. 3 who has been contacted regarding the arrears.

5. Bank Account

The previous fee paying business bank account with Lloyds Bank has been closed and a charge-free Lloyds Bank Treasurers Bank Account has been opened. This should save £70.00 per year in bank charges. The company has also opened a deposit account with Aldermore Bank currently paying 0.85% interest. The Aldermore account is only able to accept deposits from the designated Lloyds bank account and can only make withdrawals to the designated bank account. Lloyds have paid compensation to the Company for the errors and delays in opening the Treasurers account to the value of £5.50 and £100. This money has been deposited into the Treasurers Account.

6. Maintenance

a) Lighting

The emergency lighting was checked and found to not comply to the regulations which stipulates that they should work for 3 hours on their battery back up with many lasting for less than 2 minutes. As a result and with the approval of the director these emergency lights were replaced last year with integrated LED sensor lights. The old emergency lights will be removed when the ceilings are next decorated.

b) Smoke Detectors

An inspection of The Grange's smoke detectors found that they had all exceeded their recommended 10 year life expiry date. These with the director's approval were all replaced last year.

c) Pest Control

During the course of the year The Grange has experienced problems with rats in flat 5. The pest controller was called and treated the problem which has not recurred to date. The pest controller recommended that action is taken to reduce the gap at the base of the cellar door to prevent rat entry. A member reported at the meeting that there is a bees nest at her back door to the left of the air vent. It was agreed that a pest controller would be asked to attend.

d) Asbestos Survey

It is a requirement that each block of flats has an Asbestos Survey carried out. Following the director's approval this was conducted last year and the 42 page report has been posted on the website for the convenience of the owners.

e) EICR

Following recommendation from the managing agents and with the approval of the director, a report was commissioned to conduct an Electric Installation Condition Report on the building. The report has been posted on the company website for the convenience of the owners. Two items were highlighted as classification code C3 which denoted improvement recommended; these were consumer unit not compliant with current regulations and not all circuits are protected by RCD.

f) Electricity Supplier

During the year the electricity supplier has been changed from a business tariff that charged a standing charge to Green Energy which does not impose a monthly standing charge. There should be a saving during the course of the year as a large part of the monthly cost is the standing charge.

g) Roof Leaks

During the year roof leaks to flat 1 and 5 have been reported. Following quotes being received and with the approval of the director, a contractor, NJ Roofing, was instructed to carry out the repairs. Scaffolding was required to carry out the roof repairs and the cost of the job was £1500. John advised the meeting that an email had been received the day before to advise that there is a leak in the roof above number 4 that is ongoing, a fact which the managing agents were previously unaware. A member advised that historically there had always been a leak in that part of the roof with water running down the windows at various times. It was suggested that the skylight may be a contributory cause of the problem. It was agreed to request the roofer examines that part of the roof.

h) Gravel

The gravel at the front of the building has become very thin and patchy and the under membrane is now visible. To improve the aesthetic of the site it was agreed that gravel would be purchased and delivered to restore the gravel depth to a reasonable level to cover the membrane. The members have agreed to participate in spreading the gravel. The members requested that the gravel is delivered on Wednesday 19th June 2017.

i) Gardening

The director and members are unhappy with the standard of gardening undertaken by Countrywide and felt that it severely impacted on the cosmetic appearance of the building. The grass cutting is poor and the hedges have been overgrown and unkempt. A member mentioned that in the original 2005 plans the whole of the front garden had been gravelled and there were no areas of grass whatsoever. The members are currently paying £75.00 per month for the gardening service. It was suggested that a quote be obtained from a qualified gardener however following a discussion it was decided that the members would undertake the gardening from next week and seek to dispense with the services of Countrywide. The members commented that the flowers that had been planted by Louise Stubbs were a welcome improvement to the site.

A member also commented that the hedge at the rear of Flat 1 is causing a line of sight visibility issue which is a danger to motorists.

John Morris explained that from an insurance point of view carrying out the gardening by the residents may cause issues with liability, etc. The members present decided that they would informally set up a rota and write to the company to state that they accept all liability for carrying out the work themselves.

The hedges outside no. 3 are extremely overgrown and needs reducing considerably. It was suggested that once the hedge is trimmed it may just be woody and no longer viable. In this case the existing remnants of the hedge would be removed and a new hedge planted. It was pointed out that if the hedge had to be removed there may be issues with people cutting across in front of no 3 to gain access to the front door via the shortest route.

Simon Adair volunteered to trim the hedge and then, in consultation with no. 3, decide whether it should remain or be replanted.

It was suggested that at some time in the future wrought iron railings could be installed on the site to encourage visitors to use the pathways and not cut across the grass. It was also commented on that the majority of the attendees at the meeting would prefer the site to look more uniform.

The service charge is currently only in respect of the building with estate charges made separately by Countrywide. A suggestion was made that if the maintenance of the garden is carried out by residents that a reduction in estate charges may be available. Simon agreed to discuss this with Countrywide.

Countrywide may have a reserve fund for maintaining the estate. It was agreed that Simon would approach Countrywide to see whether any funds would be available if the members wanted to carry out higher cost items in the garden area, e.g. railings.

It was mentioned by some of the members that the hedges outside 1 and 2 have also become extremely overgrown and need urgent trimming. John advised that it may not be the right time of year to trim hedges due to nesting birds, etc.

Simon agreed to mow the grass next week and carry out some of the hedge trimming at an appropriate time.

j) Downpipe

On inspection of the site it was assumed that the right hand "L" shaped corner was damp by the gravelled area as the downpipe was leaking/blocked. A member stated that as she checks the downpipe for blockages regularly and that it is not the cause of the dampness in that corner. As that corner of the site is constantly in the shade it was determined that the gravel is there to assist with drainage.

It was also mentioned that the downpipe by the postboxes/utility boxes is also leaking. Simon advised that this is Countrywide's responsibility and suggested he liaise with Countrywide in order to rectify the situation.

A member at the meeting advised that in his opinion the area had become like a potting shed with pots and a garden tool being left in front of the house. The member responsible agreed to remove the items.

There was also a request that dog waste bags are deposited in the appropriate receptacle as soon as members return from dog walks and not later that day as it is unsightly and a potential hygiene risk.

7. Management Fee

John Morris advised the meeting that the fee agreed as Managing Agents for the current year was £1095 and it was proposed that this be increased in the next financial year to £1,128. The increase was unanimously agreed by the meeting.

8. Expenditure Forecast

The expenditure to date and estimates for future years and cash flow projections were reviewed in detail. At present there is only about £3,500 in the bank account.

John advised that the reserve level held by most resident management companies they act for aim to hold funds equal to about two years of service charge income. As this is only a block of 6 flats if an emergency occurs there are not very many owners to contribute to the cost of repairs.

9. Service Charges

The current service charge is £1,200. It is proposed that this is increased to £1,260 from 1 April 2018 with the offer of a £60.00 discount for prompt payment instead of in instalments. This would enable more funds to be available at the beginning of the financial year which would assist in scheduling maintenance work. Alternatively members may pay in 10 equal monthly installments. The members agreed that in the event of major expenditure they would agree to pay a supplementary charge invoice.

10. Any other business

a) Cleaning

It was agreed by the members that the current cleaner for The Grange is not carrying out her job thoroughly and as a result many areas are left in a poor state. It was agreed that a quote could be obtained for an alternative cleaner and presented to the director. In the meanwhile the cleaner would be given the opportunity to improve her standard of cleaning.

b) Carpet Cleaning

The members discussed that a previous owner/resident of the house had dogs who had had “accidents” on the carpets on the stairs and landing. Unfortunately, because of this the smell of the carpets in the warmer weather is unpleasant. The meeting agreed to obtain a quote for carpet cleaning as soon as possible. Simon volunteered to hire a carpet cleaner and carry out the job himself but after a discussion it was decided that it would be better if a professional carpet cleaner were engaged.

c) Internal Decoration

The members agreed that the internal decoration in the house is in a poor state. This item is in the draft budget but not until the next financial year. It was agreed that John would meet Simon on site to assess the state of the internal decoration and also obtain quotes to “freshen up the walls”. Simon commented that in view of the lack of funds he would suggest that consideration be given to a supplementary service charge invoice to cover this item once a quote is obtained. He stated that he would prefer not to use the reserve except in the event of emergency major expenditure

d) Window Cleaning

The site used to regularly employ a window cleaner, however, despite attempts to contact him this has been unsuccessful. It was agreed for the managing agents to obtain a quote for their regular contractor to carry out the window cleaning on a 4 times a year basis.

e) Front Door Lock

A member advised that the front door lock is not always staying locked and with a little pressure will give way and allow non residents access into the building. John explained that on many sites where they are engaged, maglocks are used as a far safer and secure alternative to a yale lock. Simon offered to look at the lock to determine the problem. In the event of a repair not being possible then there would be a review of the situation.

f) Directors and Officers Insurance

This has been renewed with a premium of £100 plus insurance tax which is a reduction on last years premium of £125 plus insurance premium tax.

The buildings insurance was £1,252 plus tax last year with the rebuilding cost insured of £2,719,168. It was agreed to assess whether it would be prudent to engage a surveyor when the insurance is due for renewal to determine whether the building is currently being over insured. It was agreed to defer this measure until funds are available.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm