

Chocolate Works Residents Association & Watson Joint AGM

Wednesday, 01 December 2021

7pm - 9pm St Chad's Church Hall, Campleshon Road York

Meeting Minutes

Apologies received: (4)

Christine Alderson

Beki Hagger

Colin Spence

Janet Spence

Attendees: (8)

Steve Davenport (Chair CWRA)

Terry Wilson (Treasurer CWRA)

Mike Hurst (Website CWRA)

Gary Cole (Parking CWRA)

John Stevens (Planning & Transport CWRA)

Grant Coupland (Medallion House CWRA)

Ian Omant (MD Watson Property Management)

Kristiaan Oughton (Maintenance Surveyor Watson Property Management)

Resident attendees: (29)

(names taken directly from sign-in sheet, so apologies if it appears impersonal, and for any spelling errors.)

Peter Lees

Andrew A

Vaughan x 2

Norma Rees

Bowling

David Kerr

Ypey x 2

A. Erdi Ozturk

B. Barry

G. Kendall

C. Thompson

Liz Holmes

Howard Lovelady

Meg Spreckley

J.P. Rigby

P.W. Rigby

J. Mckevitt

Isobel Wilson

Heather Rowland

Neil Rowland

Martin Harmer

Beryl Davey

Jane Hurst

Peter Skardon

Clare Skardon

Mr & Mrs Clark

Sue Dark

1. General Introductions of CWRA & Watson personnel

The Chair thanked and welcomed everyone for coming, set out the broad agenda for the meeting, and then asked each member of the Committee to introduce themselves.

Committee Members did so, and highlighted some of the issues they had been involved in, and successes achieved. These will be noted in the relevant section later.

Watson personnel also introduced themselves.

2. Approval/Matters Arising from Minutes 14/10/2019

The Minutes were accepted as a true and accurate record.

Item 7, specifically “Car Park A” and “Noise from the Electricity sub-station” were identified as matters arising.

2a. Car Park A.

Following a resident query as to whether Car Park A, at the Racecourse, could still be used by residents on race days (when parking is particularly problematic), the Chair had been in touch with the Racecourse.

Their response was to confirm that residents and their visitors may use Car Park A on race days provided they show the stewards their Chocolate Works parking permit.

2b. Noise from Campleshon Road Electricity Sub-Station

This has been a long process, and was highlighted in the 2019 AGM. New residents may have noticed the excessive noise from this substation, which particularly adversely affects residents living closest to it in Neapolitan House, Hallmark House etc.

On our website newsletters it can be seen that we co-ordinated eight letters of objection to the noise and sent these to the Council on 23rd June 2020. This was followed up by emails in September 2020, and lobbying our Ward Councillors to get on the case, and finally led in November 2020 to Northern Powergrid agreeing to fix the noise at a cost to them of over £200,000.

Following a process of monthly reminders, complaints and chivvying we have received a forwarded email this morning from Ian Gray, Environmental Health Officer at CYC, which he received from Northern Powergrid.

Northern Powergrid say –

“dBA Attenuation and our Civil contractors are due to start on site next week. Although it may appear that nothing has been happening, the screens have been under construction in Essex and as these are bespoke built units there have been design issues on site that needed to be addressed which unfortunately meant we missed our previously booked outage window.

The existing acoustic screens need to be dismantled and taken away and the ground/foundations prepared before any new installation can take place. We hope that this will all be completed in January.”

So, hopefully, affected residents will be able to open their windows next summer without being affected by the noise.

3. Treasurer’s Report

The Treasurer began reporting with a bit of background history. The CWRA was inaugurated in October 2018 by Nicole Bruhaux, Hilary Jones and other residents of Bayldon Square.

Income was generated for the following purposes –

- a) incidental expenses e.g. Website fees, booking Halls for meetings
- b) to fund the defibrillator which now sits on the side of Hallmark House.

and was done in three main ways –

1. Residents paid £5 for membership, during the first year of membership
2. Fund raising by residents, mainly by former Committee Member Claire Skardon e.g. Fayre on the Square, Ukulele events, at the Carol Service etc.
3. Grant of £999 for the defibrillator, achieved by former Committee Member Mafalda Queiroz

At our first AGM 14 October 2019 we had a balance of **£887.72**, after we had paid for the defibrillator and its case.

At about this time, the Committee decided to waive any membership fee for residents; and, due to the pandemic, fund raising has been severely curtailed.

In the 2 years since then we have received two sums - £62.39 from a carol event in December 2019 and a ukulele event in July 2020

In this same period we have made two purchases – £86.08 Public indemnity insurance for The Chocolate Works Social Group in July 2020, and £52.61 fees to maintain the Chocolate Works Website for a further year from April 2021.

Leading to a current Balance of **£811.42**

4. CWRA Successes.

The Chair highlighted the successes of the past two years, and also responded to resident queries. Coupled with the statements of Committee members at the beginning of the meeting, these are noted here.

4a Planning Objections/Activities (since the 2019 AGM)

- We successfully objected to David Wilson Homes application to replace the originally planned houses in Phase 2 of Robert Street and Clock Tower Way with Apartment blocks (known as Block L & Block M)
- We successfully got the Council to instruct David Wilson Homes remove a planned penthouse from the top of Orange House (which we believed would adversely impact the views of The Clock Tower, and The Residence)
- We successfully got a planned addition of a penthouse blocked on other apartment blocks, including Cocoa House & Thistle House
- We objected to the proposed opening hours of the Co-op and had them reduced by one hour at either end of the day to minimise noise nuisance to neighbours in the vicinity.
- We requested double yellow lines on Campleshon Road at the entrance to Clock Tower Way because parked cars were blocking visibility and increasing the risk of an accident (one person had already been knocked off a bicycle)
- We successfully campaigned to get something done about the noise from the Electricity sub-station (see above)
- We have made suggestions relating to the proposed Co-op which have resulted in the Amazon lockers being changed to a more sympathetic colour,

and our concerns about noise from refrigeration units being taken into consideration,

- We have been consulted about both the proposed Brain Injury Unit on Land South of the Residence and also the Supported Housing Development on the old Kraft Car Park on Bishopthorpe Road.

In both instances concerns have been raised by us about -

- * The impact of traffic on Bishopthorpe Road and environs,
- * The need to review the 40 mph and 30 mph speed limits in the light of increased pedestrian access across Bishopthorpe Road in that area,
- * The need to review the impact on the Sustrans cycle network, in particular down towards the river
- * The need for a safe pedestrian crossing at the south end of the Campleshon Road/Bishopthorpe Road Junction (we have asked for this twice from the Council and will continue to do so),
- * the impact upon an already oversubscribed and difficult to access GP Surgery of two developments of residents whose medical needs are greater than the average population)
 - We have asked the racecourse if they could provide an event for us as near neighbours. They agreed to this in early 2020 and it would have included a talk, drinks & nibbles and the opportunity to visit “backstage” e.g. the weighing room. We are in discussions about this once more and barring pandemic issues, reasonably optimistic that something will be arranged.

4b Less successful Planning Activities

- We were unsuccessful in our objection to planned houses on Clock Tower Way becoming the apartment block now known as Cocoa House.
- We were too late to alter the Orange House application, although Councillors on the Planning Committee retrospectively regretted allowing a block of such density to be placed in that particular site.
- We lobbied, unsuccessfully, against the sale of alcohol in the proposed Co-op on Race days due to concerns about potential anti-social behaviour. The Co-op has promised to monitor the situation and we will also do so.

- We have twice tried to get a safe crossing at the south side of the Campleshon Road/Bishopthorpe Road junction

4c Lobbying David Wilson Homes

- We persuaded David Wilson Homes that the boundary of the development needed a fence, or planting. We know that the Laurel has not succeeded when planted under conifers and have asked David Wilson Homes to come up with a solution before they leave.
- Because of our consultations with residents we identified two faults common to a number of houses –
 - * Failings in a number of wet rooms to early properties, ranging from cracked and failing grouting to leaks. David Wilson Homes have sub-contracted a firm to replace the wet rooms of over 20 properties, and also changed the design of wet rooms/shower rooms since late 2019.
 - * Failings in some fibre glass gutters leading to us asking David Wilson Homes to survey all gutters. The survey was inconclusive but David Wilson Homes assure us that the gutters are covered by a ten year warranty which we continue to ask for. The properties are also covered by a ten year NHBC Warranty.
- The Chair has done an audit of plants on the development to compare with a proposed end-audit to be completed by David Wilson Homes. He has also lobbied the developer to replace the damaged trees on Bayldon Square (David Wilson Homes say that this will happen on 10 December)
- We meet quarterly with a Managing Director at David Wilson Homes to get updates on progress and make requests (e.g. the laurel hedge, replacement trees). He tells us that they anticipate completing in February/March, and that it is anticipated that the Co-op will open in April 2022.
- A resident successfully asked David Wilson Homes for Bird guards to protect baby birds from falling into the downstairs hoppers in the houses. Ninety were supplied and fitted by residents. David Wilson Homes have said they will fit them as standard in all remaining properties.

4d Liaison with Watson Property Management

The Chair highlighted the following –

- A monthly walkabout with the maintenance Surveyor to identify any issues which may need addressing
- Watson have agreed to do a bi-annual survey of house gutters to see if any work needs doing (they are already responsible for Apartments)
- There is an agreement that Watson set aside £5,000 per year for landscape improvements.
- The CWRA have also worked with Watson to try to standardise Fire Safety procedures across ALL apartment blocks. This was advertised in detail in the August 2021 Newsletter. There is still further work which will still take place to complete this, which might include the nomination and training of named fire marshals.

Some discussion took place about whether there was a National procedure on fire prevention in apartments. There seemed to be a conclusion that policies have changed frequently and there isn't one currently for apartments of four storeys or less

5. Questions from the floor

Questions were posed at various points through the proceedings.

Q. Can we ask for Bird Guards to be fitted to all hoppers, including those which are difficult to reach?

A. We will ask the question

Q Do Watson check on courtyards, when doing their walk round?

A. Yes.

Q. Is there a time limit on fire alarms?

A. There is no evidence that there is a requirement for a time limit

Q. The parking “V’s behind Devon House are fading. Who is responsible for these?

A. It will be Watson’s responsibility once David Wilson Homes leave

Q. Can I buy a parking space (I live in a 1 bedroom flat and don’t have one)?

A. There may be opportunities for dialogue with individuals who have a space which they do not use.

Q. How does the developer work out how many parking spaces to allocate?

A. This is determined by City of York Council. They have a formula which they use at the planning stage. Also, it is apparent, when looking at forthcoming developments (e.g. The Cocoa Works at the old Rowntree site) that the Council is further restricting the number of parking spaces available to prospective residents. Resident parking schemes are becoming more widespread, and car ownership and usage is being discouraged.

Q. Whose responsibility is it to maintain the fir trees?

A. When the development is complete this will be the responsibility of Watson, and by implication, residents on the development via their fees. Therefore it is vital that we ensure that their tree audit is done thoroughly so that Watson take over the perimeter without unnecessary problems.

Q. Did you know that the gas station on Bishopthorpe Road, at the back of Thistle House, is really noisy?

A. No. But we will now factor that in, along with the refrigeration from the proposed Co-op, and the improvements to the Electricity sub-station, for ongoing monitoring.

Q. What is adoption? How will it work?

A. This is a complicated question, which came up in various guises throughout the evening.

Upon completion, David Wilson Homes start the process of leaving the development and the Council begin to adopt the public spaces

This means that responsibility for drains, street lighting, any gas or broadband cable, and pavements and roads etc. become the responsibility of the Council. This transfer can take 2-3 years as the Council audit items and ask the developer to set them right before they will sign off on it.

Adoption of the roads is slightly more complicated because the parking spaces, set off the road and in courtyards, remain private. Therefore, the Council will have to adopt parts of the development. The leased parking spaces will remain the property of their owners, and the existing parking scheme and monitoring will continue.

How this “partial” adoption will play out is unknown, and it is the sole responsibility of the Traffic and Highway Development Department of the Council, with whom we have already had some discussions.

Q. Can the automatic closers in Coca House be fixed, and whose responsibility is it?

A. Watson have made a note of it, and it will be fixed. Watson’s MD noted that these closers are filled with fluid which expands and contracts at different times of the year, requiring adjustment. He went on to say that if these were broken, they would be the responsibility of David Wilson Homes (within the 2 year time limit). However, adjustments would be Watson’s responsibility.

Q. Who pays for the replaced Water Pump in Carousel House? Watson or David Wilson Homes?

A. Watson stated that they will bill David Wilson Homes as it falls into the category mentioned in the answer to the previous question.

Q. What is the warranty on railings, render, roofs, gutters Should the CWRA ask David Wilson Homes for all of these?

A. The warranties for each may be different. However, all properties are covered by a 10 year NHBC warranty which was supplied with our Welcome packs. Watson’s MD stated that this is the best warranty currently available.

Q. Who is responsible for clearing wasps?

A. In the apartments, Watson have responsibility for all vermin control, including wasps. They use Vermex as their approved contractor, as do City of York Council. Householders are responsible for their own pest control.

Q. Did you know that the new street light on Robert Street is in someone's garden?

A. We will explore this.

Q – Can I take the opportunity to advertise the Carol Service 6.30pm – 9.00pm Friday, 17th December on Bayldon Square? Mulled wine will be available, and we are collecting for Carecent (a local charity for the homeless).

Q. Could the CWRA and/or Watson consider doing a qualitative survey of residents to help determine their needs and priorities in the forthcoming year?

A. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

Q. What can we do about electric car chargers?

A. Watson's MD stated that he has regular meetings with local councils. York have stated that their strategy is to create three hyper hubs around York, and also to encourage supermarkets and existing petrol stations to provide fast chargers, rather than to pursue a host of individual chargers. Currently it is possible to charge a Tesla fully in 20 minutes. Within a few years this time limit is likely to be reduced.

Q. From the Chair. If anyone is interested in becoming more involved with committee, please get in touch with him at chair@cwra.co.uk

Also, we are looking for someone who may wish to provide secretarial support, and also someone who may have legal expertise.

6. Watson Update

- Watson have changed the grounds Maintenance Contractor
- The aim is to increase their hours next year
- They anticipate seeing improvements up to February, before work reverts to mainly grass cutting

- They are getting quotes to finish improvements to Bayldon Square. Once these are in they will start the process of consultation with residents
 - The Maintenance Surveyor also pointed out that they have made a concerted, and mainly successful, effort to remind residents that bins should not be stored in courtyards and public spaces.
 - He is on site a couple of times a month
 - Similar reminders regarding washing on balconies have also been sent out.
 - They are currently waiting for a cherry picker to replace the light on Robert Street.
7. Date and time of next AGM.
- To be confirmed. But provisionally, November 2022.