



Powderhall Village Owners Association

Minutes of the 2009 Annual General Meeting held in Broughton Primary School Hall at 7:30pm on Monday 11 January 2010

Agenda

- Apologies and Welcome by Chairman
- Formal approval of Minutes of 2008 AGM
- Councillors Blacklock and Lang
- Summary of Factoring Issues – Sarah Wilson
- Decisions on ‘Fabric Funds’ and Insurance Excess
- Approval of Accounts
- Election of Committee for 2010
- AOB

Apologies and Welcome by Chairman

The chairman, Roddy Martine, opened the meeting by welcoming the disappointingly small number of Powderhall residents (20 in all) to the meeting, and also extended a warm welcome to two of our City Councillors, Angela Blacklock (Lab.) and Louise Lang (Lib. Dem.), and to our Factor, Sarah Wilson, Head of property Management Property Services at Charles White. Apologies were received from our Community Police Officer, Simon Daley, and from three residents Stephanie Scott, Neville Washington and Peyman Taheri.

Roddy summarised some of the activities in the development during what has been a relatively quiet year. He emphasised that the committee’s priority in difficult financial times has been to keep maintenance and management costs to a minimum. Simon Daley had forwarded crime statistics for Powderhall in 2009 comprising three stolen bicycles, one stolen cat and one car break in – these figures are an improvement on previous years. There have been a number of burglaries of ground floor flats in the Broughton Area in recent months, and the advice for residents of ground floor flats is to keep valuable items such as laptops and cameras hidden from view, and to use the bicycle stores in each block.

Roddy stated that the major issue of the past few years – the adoption of Powderhall Road by the Council and related issue of residents parking at Powderhall – remains unresolved. He re-iterated that the scheme we have in place to control parking is working well, and while we are not pushing for an early resolution, he asked the Councillors present to ensure that the Council would not spring a solution on us without first consulting us.

In closing, Roddy invited the Councillors present to comment on the timetable for the completion of the Water of Leith Flood Prevention Scheme work at Powderhall, and comment on the recent problems with delays in rubbish collection and gritting of roads by the Council during the recent cold spell.

Formal approval of Minutes of 2008 AGM

The meeting was asked to confirm that the Minutes of the 2008 AGM were an accurate record of that meeting. This was proposed by Susan Corbett and seconded by Gordon Chrumka, and approved unanimously.

Councillors Blacklock and Lang

Louise Lang spoke first, saying that because we have a system in place for controlling parking at Powderhall that works and that we are happy with, she has deliberately not been pushing this issue with Council officials and forcing its legal team into making a decision. She re-stated the last Council position which is that we can decide whether Powderhall Road becomes part of the N1 CPZ (those parking there would need to purchase a residents permit from the Council) or stay outside the N1 CPZ (no charge for parking but we would not be allowed to use Central Ticketing to control parking). Louise promised that no decision would be sprung on us without consultation.

Both Louise and Angela spoke on the timescale for the implementation of the Water of Leith Flood Prevention Scheme, which has had to be revised because of budgetary constraints. The good news is that the first phase of the work will be on the stretch of the river between Bonnington and Stockbridge that includes Powderhall. Work is scheduled to start in Autumn 2010 and take up to eighteen months to complete. Since we had previously been informed that the work would commence in 2009 and be completed by Spring 2010, there was a comment from the floor that residents should have been informed of the delay in timescale when it became known..

During the year, Louise had been dealing with complaints by residents about the smell coming from the Powderhall Waste Processing Depot. The problem had been particularly bad during the hot summer months but changes in working practices including closing overhead doors quickly after lorries have emptied their loads and shipping processed rubbish off-site by train more frequently had improved matters. Louise was not hopeful about an early closure of the plant because of the difficulty of identifying a new out-of-town site with easy access to the rail network, but Angela had been given more positive news from the Council officials she had consulted.

Both Councillors conceded that the recent long cold spell (17 separate falls of snow in Edinburgh over a three week period) had caused major problems with rubbish collection and with clearing roads. The decision had to be taken to grit priority routes in the city, but a programme is in place to refill gritting bins for local use such as those we have at Powderhall. Rubbish collection is now back to normal and the backlog is being cleared. Louise said that if the bins at Powderhall had not been emptied by the end of this week, she should be contacted because local neighbourhood teams have been set up specifically to deal with rubbish hotspots. Sarah Wilson commented that she is in the process of arranging a meeting with the Council's Andy Anderson or David Bain on site at Powderhall and whoever attends will assess whether the existing number of rubbish and recycling bins is adequate. Until recently, rubbish bins at Powderhall had been emptied twice a week, but one resident who phoned the Council recently had been told that general rubbish was now only collected once a week. Sarah offered to raise this issue at her forthcoming meeting.

Action **Sarah to meet with Andy Anderson or David Bain to discuss whether current provision of bins at Powderhall is adequate for the number of flats in each block, and to provide information on the timetable for emptying each type of bin.**

Louise reported that she had also been asked to try to resolve the problem of tall trees on the neighbouring B&Q site blocking natural light for flats in 1 and 2 Brae. She has had a disappointingly negative response from B&Q management who claim that there is no legal or health and safety issue involved, and that there is no obligation to reduce the height of the trees concerned. Louise will liaise with Council experts before deciding what to do next.

Before closing, the Councillors reminded the meeting that any issues of concern can be raised with either of them at their local surgeries. Angela is at McDonald Road Library between 6pm and 7pm every Monday evening, and Louise is at Broughton Primary School at 6pm on the first Monday of each month and at Lorne Primary School at 6pm on the first Wednesday of every month.

The chairman thanked the Councillors for giving up their time to attend the meeting and asked the meeting to show their appreciation in the usual way.

Summary of Factoring Issues – Sarah Wilson

Sarah summarised the main tasks that she, as our Factor, had undertaken during the year. They included:

Liaising with B&Q management to get the trees that are blocking light for flats in 1 and 2 Brae trimmed. Although some overhanging branches were trimmed, the height of the trees was not reduced as expected. Sarah tried unsuccessfully to get B&Q to reduce the height of the trees and when Councillor Lang became involved, hoped that the extra clout of Council involvement would resolve the issue.

Invitations to Tender for the Gardening Contract at Powderhall from 1 April 2010 have been sent out, based on the new gardening maintenance specification produced by the gardening sub-committee. Quotes are expected to be with the committee within the next few weeks.

Annfield Cleaning Services appear to be satisfactory, judging by the virtual absence of adverse comments.

Liaising with Schindlers regarding the options for reducing lift maintenance charges at Powderhall, one of the major costs for residents in blocks with lifts. One possibility is negotiating a better deal for the current Gold level contract we have; another is to change to the cheaper (about two thirds the cost) Silver level contract, but call-outs outside the hours 8am to 5pm Monday to Friday will be charged at £120 to £160 per hour. The committee will consider this at the meeting on 27 January and decide whether to ballot owners on a change.

There is a major issue with mice infestation in 1 and 2 Brae. Menco has repositioned baited traps around the development but once mice have gained access to a block, their eradication is the responsibility of owners. One resident of 2 Brae has approached Gavin Lindsay of Anglo Scottish Pest Control for advice and his view is that if sufficient flats in a block have treatment at the same time, there is a good chance of complete success – a preferential rate was offered for flats having treatment at the same time. Sarah offered to circulate this information to the owners in other blocks and ask whether a higher standard of external control (at a higher cost) would be acceptable. There is a suggestion that blocks with bin stores are those most likely to be affected. This topic will be discussed further at the committee meeting on 27 January.

Action **Sarah to check that Gavin Lindsay will honour preferential rate already quoted and circulate information to all blocks. Also, to enquire whether the current basic level of external protection is sufficient.**

Questions to Sarah were invited. Gordon requested an electronic copy of the document giving details about how to register an insurance claim with Deacon Insurance Brokers.

Action Sarah to provide Gordon with an electronic copy of this document.

There was suggestion that all bin chute doors should be blocked off, and general rubbish should be taken in person to the bin store as happens with recyclable rubbish. This will be discussed further at the committee meeting on 27 January.

In response to a question, Sarah explained the debt recovery procedure that Charles White implements should the occasion arise.

Sarah provided copies of the Charles White accounts for the management of Powderhall Village in 2009 and a copy is appended to these Minutes. The chairman thanked Sarah for taking the time to attend the meeting and asked those present to show their appreciation in the usual way.

Fabric Funds and Insurance Excess

The number of owners attending this AGM was insufficient to make a quorum, so these topics were aired and the committee will discuss the most efficient way to ballot all owners on these topics.

Fabric Funds. Up till now, when any large maintenance or repair project needs to be undertaken, owners are billed for this when the work is done. An obvious example is the repainting of the communal areas over the last two years. It has been suggested that rather than being presented with a large bill every 4 or 5 years, four separate building 'fabric funds' are set up for the Brae, Road, Bryant Rigg and Miller Rigg and a charge of (for example) £10 is added to each quarterly bill for transfer to the appropriate fund. Such a scheme has the additional advantage that any owner only at Powderhall for a short time and who has moved on before the next major maintenance work is scheduled, will be contributing proportionately to the upkeep of the buildings.

Those present who offered an opinion were generally against this proposal.

Insurance Excess. As you know from recent letters from Sarah, the vast majority of buildings insurance claims at Powderhall are for water damage, and usually the flat or flats affected are not those where the leak originated. Currently, the insurance excess charge of £250 has been shared equally among the owners of all the flats covered by the particular policy. It has been suggested that it would be fairer to charge the insurance excess to the owner of the flat where the problem originated. If approved, this proposal would only apply to the situation outlined above. In most other cases (roof damage, etc.), the excess would continue to be shared among all the owners.

Those present who offered an opinion were generally in favour of this proposal.

Approval of Accounts

Copies of the Association Accounts, prepared by Bill Scott the Treasurer and independently examined, were available at the meeting, and a copy is appended to these Minutes. The meeting was asked to approve the accounts. This was proposed by Joanna Bytheway, seconded by Gordon Chrumka and approved unanimously.

Election of Committee for 2009

Roddy stated that since Stephanie Scott would be leaving the development, she would not be continuing on the committee for 2010. Roddy thanked Stephanie for all her efforts on the committee over the past two years. William Mackie offered to join the committee for the coming year. All other committee members had indicated their willingness to continue in 2010. The new committee for 2010 was approved unanimously. Roddy stated that anyone else willing to join the committee would be most welcome.

There are stair reps. for all the properties at Powderhall. However, the stair rep. for 12 Powderhall Road does not have e-mail, making distribution of information to those 6 flats more difficult since the deactivation of the service button on door entry systems.

AOB

Roddy said that over the years, attempts to form a social sub-committee at Powderhall had failed, but was convinced that it was worthwhile trying again. The aim would be to organise one outdoor social event in summer to try to generate more of a community spirit than exists at present in Powderhall. Three of those present, Susan Corbett, Susan Jack and Christine Triay, said they would be willing to help with such an event if someone was prepared to organise it.

Roddy said that it had been decided to rename the gardening sub-committee as the Powderhall Gardening Club to emphasise the fact that it is an informal gathering of residents at Powderhall interested in improving and expanding the flower beds on the development. Anyone interested in joining the Gardening Club should contact Roddy directly or through their stair rep.

There being no further questions, the meeting closed at 9:20pm.