



Powderhall Village Owners Association
MINUTES from Committee ZOOM meeting
Wednesday 23rd June 2021

Present.: Nick Baker, Gordon Chrumka, Jane Garrett (Minutes), Roddy Martine (Chair and acting Secretary), Kevin Patch, John Riley, Richard Ross, Kathryn Tomlinson.

Apologies received: Karen Shewan, Sabine Goldhausen, Frans Kooy, Stuart McAlister,

In attendance:: Sarah Wilson from Charles White Factors

1/ Approval of previous minutes (21.04.21). These were approved.

2/ Review of Actions by Sarah Wilson

- **Parking**

The new parking permits have been sent out to residents.

The new Private Parking signage is in place to make it clearer what the parking arrangements are at Powderhall. Parking issues had been particularly bad at The Brae and around the Town House areas. Frans has reported that parking issues seem to have improved recently. Any problems with parking will continue to be reviewed by the Committee.

- **Fibre Optic systems**

Sarah has had further communication with CityFibre and Hyperoptic. The Wayleave has been signed by Sarah and both companies have completed surveys which will be forwarded to the committee before a final decision is made. Hyperoptic seem to do a tidier job in terms of cabling. Further decisions will be made by the Committee and information forwarded to residents.

- **Lighting**

The lighting upgrade has been completed at Powderhall Road and The Brae. The Rigg will be completed last.. There has been some delay to the arrival of fittings. Some of the street lights have been upgraded by Edinburgh Council. The remainder of the lighting will be upgraded to LED following quotes received by Charles White.

- **Paintwork**

Paintwork and carpet cleaning/ renewal may be carried out at the end of the year. The Tendering process is in place at Charles White and three firms have been asked to submit tenders.

- **Doors**

The adjusters have been dealt with and doors should be working more efficiently.

- **Horse box**

A Horse Box has been parked in Powderhall parking bays for some months. It has now been removed.

NB: Since this PVOA Meeting, it appears the Horse Box has been removed.

3/ Dog Fouling:

- Richard reported that dog fouling on Powderhall grounds is still happening at an unacceptable level particularly as dogs are walked through the development to access St Marks Park. The children's play area at The Brae is spoiled and the dog mess continues to pose a health and safety hazard for small children who may play on the grass. The Committee discussed the possibility of having more flowerbeds and low hedging in the area concerned so that the area is improved generally and looks more like a garden and improves how the space is used. Currently, funding is an issue so this may not yet be feasible.
- Roddy reminded the Committee that it was Edinburgh Council who had created a through way to and from St Mark's Park, so there is a limit to what we can do but that the committee would not lose sight of the matter.
- This is a concern that would probably need to be discussed at the PVOA AGM.

Sarah to Action 01/09/21

4/ Costs: Insurance, Cleaning, Gardens

- Nick Baker attended the Committee Meeting to discuss the recent costs of Insurance, Cleaning and Gardening. Some residents have expressed concerns at the cost of insurance and the escalating rise in costs for cleaning and gardening.
- The Committee and Sarah Wilson had an extensive discussion about these issues and recognise the concern they present to some residents.

- The main question raised by Nick was: looking back at the escalation of costs, are they reasonable?
- The higher costs of insurance are related to the extraordinarily high number of claims for flooding and water damage (94%). Could this be, partly at least, due to lack of care on some residents' parts? Nick asked if the Deeds could be changed so that not all residents share the costs of any damage.
- Sarah told the Committee that there are four separate insurance policies in Powderhall Village- one for each section of the development – Town Houses, Rigg, Road and Brae. Charges are shared only amongst the particular parts of the development affected by damage.
- Sarah also explained that there have been higher costs at Powderhall due to the original fittings ageing and breaking. Central heating pipes were also fitted under floorboards and behind fittings so residents don't always realise there is a leak in their property.
- There followed a discussion between Committee Members about these issues, with the main points being:
 - Powderhall is a community, mainly flats, and it would be unrealistic for each flat to have their own policy.
 - As a consequence of the above community policy, could that mean that some residents are being covered for their lack of care to their properties?
 - If the onus was on individual owners to pay the full excess for the damage caused by a leak in their property, would there be less claims?
 - The price people may pay elsewhere for a single property may not be proportionate to what is paid in a community block policy where the excess is shared.
 - Is there any evidence that there are more issues with leaks in let properties than in others?
- Sarah Wilson's responses:
 - The excess on water leakage is extremely high. These issues are partly related to the age of the buildings and the requirement now to replace original fittings and ageing parts.
 - It may also be that some owners do not maintain their properties adequately, although Sarah felt that the large majority did maintain their properties. But the water leakage issues are not due to lack of maintenance in all cases.
 - It may be that residents should be referred to their original Deeds and Conditions. We should try to get further agreement amongst residents over water damage and the issue of excess payments. Should the person causing the damage pay the full excess charge for

example- even if they were unaware of the problem?

- Kathryn made the point that if residents don't know they have a leak and this damages others properties then the cost of the excess could be a hardship.
- Nick made final points that he felt Charles White did a brilliant job overall, but that some terms in the original Powderhall agreement were poor, and that those residents who might shun responsibility over damages were wrong, and that more information about this issue should be shared with residents.
- **ACTION**
 - Sarah will obtain further information from the Brokers about the insurance costs and share these with residents.
 - Further explanation will also be given to residents about the increase in cost of Cleaning (which did not increase for some years) and the cost of Gardening which tends to increase in line with inflation every year.
 - These issues will be further discussed at the next Annual General Meeting. It was re-emphasised that the plumbing inspections introduced by CWL in 2019 be taken further to prevent such events.

5/ Annual General Meeting and Matters pertaining to it

- Roddy expressed his concerns at there having been no recent face-to-face AGM where issues can be discussed openly by all of the homeowners and residents of Powderhall Village.
- However, all issues brought to the attention of the Committee are fully discussed and minuted, and the minutes are posted on Stair Notice Boards, on the Powderhall Village Web Site and Facebook Page for all of the residents to view.

6/ AOB:

- **Facebook**
 - Although there are 335 Powderhall Village Owners, there are now 406 members.
 - Facebook Friends are reminded that Facebook should be used for community issues only and as such, is proving a useful way of bringing the Powderhall Village community together.
 - The site should NOT be used for reporting problems to Sarah Wilson.

- For information, complaints, and major issues concerning the Development, residents should email or telephone Charles White direct.
- With regard to recent Facebook postings, Sarah made the point that nothing is deleted on Facebook unless it is considered inappropriate, and certainly nothing has recently been deleted by the Facebook management team..

- **Powderhall Village Owners Association Accounts**

- It was reported that Sabine has taken over the Powderhall Village Owners Association Bank Account following Karen Shewan's retirement as Treasurer. Sabine has been added to the PVOA bank account as signatory and contact and Karen has been removed from the account.
- Going forward, Roddy Martine and Sabine will be the Authorised Signatories for the Powderhall Village Owners Association account.

- **Powderhall Village Owners Limited**

- As Karen has also resigned as a director of Powderhall Village Owners Ltd. Companies House has been notified and the process to remove her from the bank account has started. Awaiting confirmation from the bank that she has been removed.

A new Director from the Committee is required - a representative from The Brae would be useful!

- Gordon reported that Annual Accounts and Corporation Tax Returns for Powderhall Village Owners Ltd were produced and submitted on time. Unfortunately, there was a requirement to pay tax on the sale of the piece of land to Artisan.
- The end of year Annual Tax Returns for Powderhall Village Owners Ltd will be published.

- **Arrears**

- Kathryn brought up the issue of Factoring Fee arrears for Powderhall Village.. Sarah reported that debt recovery procedures are in place but that there are currently no problems with funds.

- **Electric vehicle charging points**

- Gordon has contacted the Energy Saving Trust about the possibility of providing charging points for electric vehicles at Powderhall. There are grants, schemes and advice available but so far grants are only available for individuals. Sarah said that this could change in 2023.

- **Bike storage**

- There remain issues around bike storage at Powderhall with the PVOA Committee still looking at options around this. Powderhall Road residents have no storage as such.
- Bikes which have been stored inside one of the blocks were stolen.
- Bikes should not be stored in communal areas for Fire safety reasons.
- Some people have several bikes and it may be that some bikes in the bike storage facilities are no longer in use or the owners have moved. Therefore Sarah proposed a bike tagging exercise where owners can show if a bike belongs to them. Letters and notices will be sent to all residents before this takes place.
- It may be possible to install more hanging racks.

- **Mice**

- Holes have been filled in within the bin stores and at the moment the mouse problem seems to have decreased.

- **Plants**

- Japanese knotweed on the site has been dealt with. There is giant hogweed near the townhouses. **Sarah will deal with this.**

- **Litter**

- There are reports of cigarette ends being dumped in the flowerbeds and drains at the Rigg. **Sarah will look into this.** A suggestion was made by Roddy to put some sort of container outside back/ front doors for smokers to use.

NEXT PVOA MEETING (By Zoom): Wednesday 1st September at 7.00