

Minutes GPNA Committee Meeting 25th September 2018 7.30pm at GPCC

Present: Cathy Priestley, Claudia Birtwisle, Christine Young, Paul Cross, Gemma Nesbitt, Michael Forster

- 1) Apologies, Ruth Hewitt, Steven Meldrum
- 2) Minutes of last meeting were approved as a true record
- 3) Matters arising:

- a) Communications Strategy:

With the consortium – Cathy reported a letter requesting details of the new management structure and how the consortium planned to engage with residents had been sent and shared with the group nearly a month ago. Chased last week and both company directors denied previous receipt, although one had sent a read receipt at the time. Still awaiting a response. It was noted that Persimmon appear to be currently advertising a job which almost exactly represents the role of the previous Project Director. We had previously been informed that the role was to be split up. ACTION Cathy to continue to chase.

The web reporting form now does return a copy of each submission to the sender.

It was noted that the consortium web site often refers to working with residents groups, yet we have not been receiving anything from them directly. ACTION Cathy to ask Anita Lower to bring this to her regular meeting with the consortium.

With Anita Lower, ward councillor – It was agreed that the idea doing a joint drop in session with Anita is an excellent one but that at the moment we would struggle to get enough reps. to cover the sessions. Definitely something for the future. In the meantime, it was agreed to ask Anita to report to GPNA the issues discussed at her monthly meetings with the consortium. ACTION Cathy to write to Anita.

- b) Web site

We haven't had a response to our request for graphic design help from the council communities team, so assume we will have to look elsewhere. The meeting agreed to continue with the current hosting provider and utilise WordPress as the basis for a site which would replace the EMVRA one. ACTION Cathy to set this up and put out a call to residents for some graphic design input.

- c) Actions update – covered under other items.

- d) Enforcement officer – Steven to update us when he is available.

- e) Town centre update – it was noted some work has started. There was speculation that this is for the offices rather than the landscaping.

- 4) Recruitment and engaging other GP residents

This was a wide ranging discussion touching on a number of challenges and opportunities.

The challenges noted included frustration for residents and committee members over lack of recognition and response, particularly from the consortium. It was noted that we are not alone in this respect! The complexities of the legal set up and lack of clear lines of accountability create difficulties in driving forward any initiative to improve the estate for residents. Residents' lack of awareness of what we do and lack of education/information.

It was felt that the major concern of many residents now is the way the management company is operating, triggered by their latest letter chasing for payment and threatening a late payment fee, but not giving residents an up to date invoice and no quick way of resolving inaccuracies within the 7 day time scale. It is believed overcharging and inaccurate charging is the norm, and members gave some examples of this. We only know what people are saying from social media, and there is no other central point for people to share information or gain support. With holding payment exposes the individual to the risk of debt collection, even if they have good evidence of wrong charging and the risk of the management company recovering their legal costs via the service charge should they loose.

In the light of this it was proposed and agreed to set up an open meeting about the management company and service charge. It was felt that there would be considerable interest. The purpose would be to find out more about what residents feel are the main issues and what they would like us to do, having been given some options to consider.

These could include:

Wait until the government meets it promise to allow estate charges to be challenged in the First Tier Lands Tribunal (like leaseholders can do for their block service charges) and then challenge the charges as a group. This is a relatively low cost option, especially if done as a group.

Utilise the model being developed by Home Owners Rights Network with a prominent London law firm to challenge the way the management company is forcing payment of charges it is unwilling to justify mainly under Competition Law. Costs of loosing to be covered by insurance and crowd funded. ACTION Cathy to contact the legal firm to see if they would be able to attend and/or provide some input.

Consider if residents would support creating another model to represent them, such as a Neighbourhood Forum, Parish or Town Council or a co-op. The feeling was that this may not be necessary, if everyone works together and supports GPNA.

It was proposed and agreed to talk to the owners of the pharmacy about GPNA to see how we could work together. ACTION Claudia will raise with them.

5) Formation of a co-op

A resident who runs a company which supports setting up co-operatives, has suggested that this model might work well for the Great Park, giving members more legal standing and influence. It was proposed and agreed to invite him to a committee meeting to present the

arguments. ACTION Cathy to invite him to the next meeting.

6) AOB

i) The recent Traffic Census has been a city wide exercise gathering data to inform the council on traffic movements with a view to improving air quality.

ii) Claudia informed the meeting of ongoing work she has been doing regarding speeding on Roseden Way. Both she and another resident have involved our MP who has added pressure on their behalf. The council have indicated that they will not do further monitoring until the Pegasus Crossing is operational. ACTION Claudia will follow up

iii) Bus stop near Brunton Bridge. Claudia has found out from Nexus that the temporary stop has been removed. They have said they could provide a bus shelter to reinstate it, but this needs a Traffic Regulation Order because of the cycle path. It appears neither the council nor the consortium are willing to fund this. ACTION Cathy to write to Anita Lower requesting some pressure is brought to bear to sort this out. ***UPDATE*** since the meeting the bus stop appears to have been reinstated.

iv) Melbury and Warkworth Woods RA were unable to decide upon merging with GPNA due to lack of support for their AGM. This item to be carried forward due to lack of time.

v) Gemma asked if GPNA could support the work being done by residents on cell C who have a lack of broadband capacity due to the area being originally designated for commercial use. A resident is trying to co-ordinate expressions of interest in fibre broadband to trigger BT to upgrade cabinets, he is using existing FaceBook groups to publicise. Could GPNA fund a leaflet drop for all cell C residents? Due to lack of time this item to be carried over for consideration at another meeting.

7) Next meeting

In November, to be arranged by Doodle calendar.