

## **OAK RH19 meeting**

**16/10/2020**

### **Draft Minutes**

Attendees (All remote via Zoom / MS Teams):

Mick Shiel – Acting Chair

Roland Pickering – Website administrator

Glen Owen - Treasurer

### **Agenda**

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of previous meeting
3. End of year accounts.- use of reserve funds
4. Water ingress/ rising damp Garland Road side of block
5. Water billing - do we want meters changed to Southern Water
6. Redecoration
7. AOB

#### **1. Apologies**

Tony Browne & Chris Drake.

#### **2. Minutes**

Minutes of the previous of meeting on 22 April 2020 accepted by all 3 attendees.

#### **3. End of Year Accounts Reserve Funds**

MS asked about Reserve funds seeking clarification as to what reserve finds could be used for. Can they only be used for items they were originally reserved for or should they all go into a melting pot and used for whatever they were allocated and received for.

RJP suggested that allocating reserved funds only to what they were originally reserved for would be very difficult. On receipt for particular anticipated spend items, reserved funds should be allocated to a central pot and used for whatever was needed.

MS stated that reserved funds are receipted for a particular block and for particular items such as lifts. Was the committee happy that this was used as a block reserve fund for any item?

RJP said that if there were reserved funds held against lift repairs but the blocks needed decorating it would be sensible to use what was available irrespective of what they were originally reserved for.

GO said that reserved funds were usually used for the more unexpected costs like a badly leaking roof not usually for expected items like decorating etc. which should be budgeted for. He later stated that decorating should be budgeted like painting the fourth bridge but if they hadn't done it for a long while perhaps use of the reserved funds was ok.

MS Stated that First Port were talking about taking some of the reserve funds to pay for redecorating costs although this was a budgeted expense, so that owners were not 'hit' for too great a cost.

GO said there was a balance to be drawn were reserve funds had not been used then they could be used for something like decorating.

MS complained that in the First Port accounts they did not itemize what withdrawn reserved funds had been used for.

Everyone agreed that the accounts should be auditable but the committee was happy that some of the reserved funds should be used towards the redecorating costs and RJP added that another contractor who lived in the block thought that the estimate for the work was not unreasonable.

[Moved from Zoom, which had timed out after 45 minutes to Microsoft Teams]

Continued same discussion;

If each block has an allocated reserved fund then the amount withdrawn from each block should be related to the block.

GO stated that First Port should budget by year for each block for redecoration and we should speak with FP's finance department to ascertain how they do the allocation although he was not convinced that redecorating should come out of reserve funds because it is an expected cost but if that is how they do it then so be it.

There were further discussions about how FP budgeted next year by reference to the previous year but this was generally not enough for cases such as redecoration that occurs only once in a number of years. This committee has suggested to Dawn at FP that because it was a significant amount some of it at least should be drawn from reserved funds.

It was generally agreed that reserved funds should be used on a block by block basis as this is the manner in which the funds had been built up. They should be used for both expected items such as decorating and also for unexpected items. There were further conjectures about how FP built up reserved funds for anticipated and unanticipated expenses.

GO suggested that it might be a good idea to have a meeting with FP for them to explain how they build up reserve funds to clarify the issue.

#### **4. Water ingress/ rising damp Garland Road side of block**

MS stated that Taylor Wimpy had gone very quiet on the matter and had not accepted any responsibility for the situation. He had not heard back from them. In response to an email to them from First Port (Dawn) they had stated that it was not their responsibility. MS stated that it was not correct that they could just say that it was not their fault. The earth up against the front of Kiln House (Garland Road frontage) had always been there which had breached the Tanking and damp proof course. GO agreed that the level of earth had always been the same and that was the problem with water ingress. MS suggested that it also probably accounted for the lift shaft ingress of water and that Taylor Wimpy should be taken to task over it in relation to NHBC guarantee.

MS stated that after (Craig) from Water Course had done his investigation he had spoken to Dawn at FP saying that they should speak to FP and that she would have our backing and that he had written

a letter to TW explaining the situation. Everyone agreed that pressure should be placed on TW to rectify the situation. FP has the large company clout to bring pressure to bear on TW. RJP had previous experience of roof leaking and getting TW to rectify the situation under NHBC. This had taken 18 months to fix and there had been a lot of TW denial of responsibility.

GO stated that he had a de-humidifier installed in his flat to remove the dampness caused by the water ingress. FP were dealing with the situation, they had after all got a surveyor to examine the situation, but needed pressure to have the situation rectified. The committee was behind GO although there were only a relatively small number of flats directly affected. GO will keep the committee abreast of the situation.

[Action -> GO to continue to chase FP on the matter and keep the committee informed of any updates]

RJP suggested that the area in question between the wall and fence and the side of the building should never have been filled with earth to which all agreed. GO suggested that although he felt planting had always been envisaged they simply didn't install a gravel soak away which in any event would have been wholly inadequate to do the job. They should have built a proper drain and soak away connected to the rest of the developments rain water management. Basically the current situation is not fit for purpose. When it rains there are massive ponds of water that simply soak into the brick work. FP needs to be contacted to see how the matter is progressing and for them to bring pressure to bear on TW.

[Action -> GO to find out the situation with regard to Flat 1 and to keep the committee 'copied in' on how the matter is progressing and to chase up FP]

## **5. Water billing - do we want meters changed to Southern Water**

MS asked in connection with water billing did we want to have proper water meters installed. He warned that such installation would cost a significant amount of money for flat owners. This would alleviate the recurring problem with how FP were coming up with flat water bills. MS would rather be billed by the water company than FP.

The committee agreed getting about £200 from each flat owner might be problematic. TW had installed a pumped system which required a centralized billing system rather than flat based billing.

GO suggested that it is just presented as a fait accompli to flat owners. There was no other way of doing it.

RJP said that there was no way a flat owner / landlord could itemize a water bill for the tenant even if FP were now being more itemised with the water billing.

MS stated that (Dawn) FP were using a 2016 costing but were chasing the water company for a quote for changing every flat to an approved water meter and one for the whole complex and suggested that the cost would be about £200 per flat.

GO surmised that there would be winners and losers in the cost of installing meters based on usage and the cost of fitting a meter. There would therefore unlikely be a consensus on paying for the cost of installing the meters.

MS stated that once the meters were installed the bill would go direct to the flat tenant.

There were further discussions about the current billing by FP of the water consumption based on the flat square footage and a balancing figure at the end of the year hidden within the management fees.

It was agreed after further discussions that it would be beneficial for the water costs to be billed directly to the flat occupier whether they be a tenant or an owner / occupier by being more transparent than the way FP do the billing on bi-annual fixed price based on flat size with a balancing figure for actual usage at the end of year.

MS said that he had spoken to FP (Dawn) about getting a quote and that she would chase this up with the water company.

#### **6. Redecoration**

This item had already been covered extensively under item 3 End of year accounts.- use of reserve funds.

#### **7. AOB**

RJP was happy to look into the cost of a Zoom account or other mechanisms, preferably free, for OAK to be able to hold future meetings.

[Action -> RJP to look into the best and cheapest mechanism to enable future on-line meetings]