



# Windmill Estate Maintenance Company (WEMC)

## AGM

Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2022 – 7.30pm

<u>Committee Present</u>	<u>Apologies</u>
Acting Chairman – Rob Hey Ann Hester (Secretary) Ann Noke Rosemary Pennells Michael Monk Alice Ramcharran	Helen Brown Gill Richardson Paulette Nicoll Tom Baxter Nick Morris

### Attendees

Julie Taylor	2 Haines Road
Di Martin	11 Honeysuckle Road
Russ Martin	11 Honeysuckle Road
Peter Clark	32 Campion Road
Karl Pullen	21 Honeysuckle Road
Mr Cox	27 Honeysuckle Road
Mrs Cox	27 Honeysuckle Road
L Gibbs	11 Primrose Green
M Pratt	11 Primrose Green
Jess Dippenaar	66 Georges Hill
Lynda Hayes	68 Georges Hill
Barbara Ellis	3 Snowdrop Way
Tara Walker	1 Snowdrop Way
Sharon Avery	3A Georges Hill
Emma Russell	20 Columbine Road
Rebecca Craker	12 Primrose Green
Greg Hazeltine	12 Primrose Green
Linda Derrick	Newtons Farmhouse
Clare Morris	1 Cowslip Road
Jan Peacock	4 Campion Road
M Richardson	19 Primrose Green
C Wooldridge	58 Georges Hill
Liz Evans	30 Honeysuckle Road
Fred Garcia	35 Snowdrop Way

### Introductions

Rob Hey opened the meeting by thanking the residents attending, (the largest number of attendees in 20 years!) and introduced himself and the committee members as above.

The committee members all live around the estate and offer their time on a voluntary basis to help keep the annual maintenance fees affordable whilst making the best use of the money received to maintain the areas we are responsible for. Some members have been on the committee for many years and have seen many changes in that time. We would very much welcome speaking to anyone who may be interested in joining us. Meetings take place once a month and last for around an hour and we discuss residents' queries, work required, quotes received, planning consent, account figures, and between meetings there are communications via emails between the committee members.

### **The Accounts Year End 30 June 2022**

We employ an accountancy firm who keep track of our expenditure, provide us with a monthly update and submit annual accounts to Companies House. The accounts are available on the website and Rob Hey advised that the accounts for the year ended June 2022 had been handed out to everyone attending the meeting and gave a brief overview of last years and this year's excesses (last year there was an excess of £5424.00, this year an excess of £8197.00 in anticipation of bills increasing). No questions on the accounts were asked.

The accounts were agreed, proposed by Ann Hester, seconded by Ann Noke.

### **Agreement of the Minutes from the 2021 AGM (Monday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2021)**

Rob Hey advised that the minutes from the 2021 AGM had also been handed out to everyone. The minutes were agreed, proposed by Michael Monk, seconded by Ann Hester.

### **Review of Maintenance Charge**

Rob Hey gave an update of the current maintenance charge for 22/23. Rob Hey and Ann Hester advised that the maintenance charge covers the maintenance of the Greens, grass cutting, weed killing, leaf blowing, forecourts and driveways leading to the forecourts, tree surgery and replacing of some trees, some legacy fencing, some walls, and certain footpaths on the estate. The charge for 22/23 was £80 per annum for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row. For the year 23/24 Rob Hey advised WEMC may reluctantly have to increase the maintenance charge to £90 per annum.

As this comment was obviously unwelcome, Ann Hester advised that Scott has kept his costs down to help keep the yearly maintenance costs down. Many other housing estates locally are paying between £400 - £500 per annum per property for their maintenance charge.

Potholes, roads, lights, public footpaths, and drains are not our responsibility and residents should report any problems to the FixMyStreet website.

It was also advised that the shops and surrounding land are not WEMC property and are governed by Duncan Bailey Kennedy.

**Question** – Can any of the older people on the Estate have a concession on the yearly maintenance fee if they can't afford it?

**Answer** - Unfortunately this is not possible. Everyone who has bought property on this estate will have had a deed of covenant from their solicitor and a transfer document agreeing to the yearly maintenance charge.

**Question** – If people are struggling to pay the maintenance fee, could they pay monthly?

**Answer** - Ann Hester advised that if anyone is having difficulty paying, should get in touch with Alice, the administrator for WEMC, to discuss.

**Question** – Are there any of the houses on the estate that haven't paid? And if so, what will be done about it?

**Answer** – Rob Hey advised that out of the 361 houses on the Estate, 359 households have paid. Ann Hester advised that both the non-payments will be proceeding to court case. This does not generate any more income for WEMC but generates a lot of extra work.

### **General Condition of the Estate**

We feel that considering our Estate is over 50 years old, it is kept in pretty good condition and Scott has managed to maintain this to a high level.

Swish Fibre came on to the Estate to carry out works and unfortunately caused damage to some of the greens, in particular Candytuft green. WEMC have made a claim for compensation for this damage, which has now been received and the damage caused to Candytuft Green will be repaired.

Rob Hey advised that we are hopeful that some repair works will be carried out at the front of the shops, where some of the masonry has fallen from the front of the buildings, but that this is the responsibility of Duncan Bailey Kennedy and not WEMC.

**Question** – Can you share the telephone number for Duncan Bailey Kennedy so that residents can also complain?

**Answer** - Ann Hester advised that we can share the telephone number via email if people would like to contact them to raise their concerns about repairs.

**Question** – Who maintains the roads on the Estate?

**Answer** –The council maintains the roads on the Estate.

**Question** – There are a lot of tradesmen and contractors that live on the Estate, can we not reach out to these local tradesmen to quote for jobs?

**Answer** – Ann Hester advised that this has been done previously, but if tradesmen could make themselves known to WEMC then this is something that we may look into.

**Question** – If Hughenden Parish Council are proposing to decommission the streetlights, will they then come and remove them, and how much would this cost?

**Answer** – There has been no mention of this or quotes for this yet.

**Question** - Can Hughenden Parish Council make WEMC ask residents to cover the cost of the streetlights with the yearly maintenance fee?

**Answer** – Ann Hester advised that this has never been in the agreement and that streetlights are not mentioned in the deeds.

### **Future Policies, Plans and Improvements**

This is very difficult to predict considering the age of the Estate, but WEMC intend to continue monitoring and keeping the Estate in the best condition possible, with the finances available. In October Scott will be planting 3 trees on Primrose Green to replace some of the Cherry Trees that died. This is the beginning of a replanting program where money will be spent on replacing 12 Trees on the Estate where needed. This will be done in phases over the course of the next 3 - 4 years.

The tarmac on some of the garage forecourts also needs replacing. Quotes are being collected for this work and the works will then be done in order of urgency, finances permitting.

### **Streetlighting**

Rob Hey advised that WEMC were only informed about Hughenden Parish Councils plans to decommission the streetlights on the Estates via Linda Derrick (Linda is a Widmer End Councillor on Hughenden Parish Council). Nobody from the Council had been in contact with WEMC with their proposed plans. The Streetlights on the Estate have historically been paid for by Hughenden Parish Council, and the replacement of the bulbs in the lights that took place a few years ago was also carried out and paid for by Hughenden Parish Council. There are 55 streetlights on the Windmill Estate, and 80 streetlights in total in Widmer End that are currently run and maintained by Hughenden Parish council. Linda Derrick advised that the proposal by Hughenden Parish Council is that if Bucks Council or WEMC won't take over the running and costs of the streetlights, then they will be decommissioned in March 2023.

Linda Derrick attended the meeting and advised that Hughenden Parish Council has historically paid for the electricity and maintaining the streetlights. Linda Derrick advised that the budget allocated for the cost of the electricity for the running of all of the streetlights this year is in the region of £3,000. Hughenden Parish Council instructed a survey to be done on the streetlights last year by a company called Sparkex, and that survey identified 5 streetlights that were in need of urgent repair, 2 of which had been damaged by car collisions. The cost for those 5 repairs was quoted at £10,000. The survey itself cost £1,200. A phased repair program would be undertaken on less urgent lights over a 3-year period, with a proposed cost of £35,000. Linda Derrick advised that this year Hughenden Parish Council had a budget of £14,000 for the streetlights, but that none of this had yet been spent.

Ann Hester advised that if the streetlights do get decommissioned it will mean that the Windmill Estate is pitch black when it's dark. It is felt that cars, property, and us personally will be more at risk from crime.

In 2014, communication was received from Hughenden Parish Council about changing the bulbs in the streetlights to LED lighting. WEMC agreed that this would be done, and the bulbs were changed in 2015. Ann Hester said that HPC's solicitors had advised that the lights were on the Council's asset register and insured by them and they have taken responsibility for them over many years. Just to have an initial report produced by WEMC's solicitors would cost in the region of £4,000 which would have to be paid for from the maintenance fee monies, so WEMC want to avoid this as this is not what the money is designed to be used for and may be inconsequential.

**Question** – Could we change the streetlights to solar lighting?

**Answer** – Linda Derrick advised that this could be something that could be put forward to Hughenden Parish Council to help keep costs down on the running of the streetlights.

**Question** - Does our council tax not cover the cost of the running of the streetlights on the Estate?

**Answer** – Rob Hey advised that this should be covering the cost of the running of the streetlights on the Estate. The maintenance charge does not, and never has, paid for the cost of the streetlights.

**Question** - Can Hughenden Parish Council legally turn the lights off?

**Answer** - Linda Derrick advised that at present, there is some confusion over who owns the lights, so this is something that needs to be looked in to. If Hughenden Parish Council aren't taking responsibility of ownership of the lights, then they shouldn't be able to decommission the lights.

### **Election of Officers**

The existing committee stood down as a whole and all stood again for re-election. This was proposed by Claire Morris and seconded.

### **Meeting open for question and comments**

**Comment** – Some people on the Estate have commented that they don't feel they know where their yearly maintenance money goes. Perhaps this could be communicated to people so that they feel they know what it is the money is being spent on.

**Answer** – Ann Hester advised that this information is available at the AGM where accounts for the previous year are handed out to everyone. Previous years accounts are also available to view on the website. Ann also advised that we will look at the possibility of distributing a newsletter type communication to households on the Estate so residents can see on a more regular basis where money is being spent.

**Comment** – Some residents raised concerns about a tree root in one of the alleyways in Honeysuckle Drive, and leaves along the alleyway falling from the tree.

**Answer** – Ann Hester advised she will ask Scott to look at the alleyways and ensure leaves are being properly removed. Ann Hester advised that although WEMC is responsible for the alleyways, we are not responsible for hedges or trees that are within the boundaries of properties are the responsibility of the homeowner.

**Comment** – One resident commented that she had looked at Hughenden Parish Councils accounts and had discovered that the running costs of the streetlights only accounts for around 3% of the money that has been spent in the last accounting year.

**Answer** – Linda Derrick commented that the money is available to do the repairs

**Comment** – Is the Bucks Free Press aware of what Hughenden Parish Council are planning to do with the streetlights?

**Answer** – We aren't sure. Around 50 emails have been sent to the Parish Council by concerned residents and urge people to write to both the Parish Council and the Bucks Free Press with their concerns.

**Comment** – Ann Hester advised that at local meetings that have been attended, it's felt that no-one cares about the Estate as people don't attend meetings or voice their concerns over what's happening on the Estate.

**Answer** – Ann Hester urges people to get involved with both the WEMC and WERA (Widmer End Residents Association) and to attend meetings to show their concern and support. The Parish Council has no councillors from our Estate represented either and vacancies often come up.

**Comment** – Linda Derrick urged people to attend both the WERA and Hughenden Parish Council meetings, to raise concerns over the streetlights. Doing this face to face at the meetings shows that residents are concerned and do care about the area that they live in, and what happens.

**Answer** - The next meeting is 11<sup>th</sup> October at North Dean Village Hall, and streetlights will be on the agenda, and people are urged to attend this meeting.

**Comment** - Can we communicate the dates of the meeting to everyone on the Estate?

**Answer** - Unfortunately this is quite difficult at the moment, as dates of meetings have changed so it's made it difficult to print out information of the meetings and get them distributed. The details of meetings have been posted on the noticeboards on the Estate and distributed to the shops to place in their windows.

**Comment** – A resident has filled out a survey for Bucks Council on the Nextdoor App, as they were conducting a survey on safety and security in the area and how they can make the area safer. She

has specifically mentioned the streetlights and how turning them off or decommissioning them would make the area much less safe.

**Answer** – Ann Hester advised that an email was sent to Hughenden Parish Council by a Police Sergeant with Thames Valley Police. He raised his concerns around increased crime in the area and increased road traffic collisions if the estate has no streetlighting. If the survey on Nextdoor is still open, residents could complete the survey and raise their concerns.

**Comment** – Is there any way that a poster could be displayed at the school advertising dates for the meetings?

**Answer** – Alice Ramcharran advised that she would ask if information could be sent via email to parents, and that she had also shared information on the 2 class WhatsApp groups that she is in and asked parents to share to the other class WhatsApp groups so that the information can reach local parents more quickly.

**Comment** – One resident has made a formal complaint about the lack of consultation regarding the proposed decommissioning of the streetlights.

**Answer** – Linda Derrick has advised that if residents can call the clerk at Hughenden Parish Council and put in a formal complaint, this will help and will also mean that the Parish Council must go through the process of dealing with this complaint.

**Comment** – Can I ask what Alice's role will be within WEMC?

**Answer** – Alice Ramcharran advised that she will be taking over the administrator role from Helen and will be dealing with any queries that residents may have as well as all the administration duties.

**Comment** – I have heard that there is going to be a new helpline set up that we can call and ask any questions or raise any concerns?

**Answer** - Ann Hester advised that there is an email address for WEMC that residents can use to raise any concerns or questions they have regarding issues on the Estate, and that Alice will also have a mobile phone that residents will be able to call and speak to Alice or leave a message for a call back\*

**Comment** – I would just like to say you do a brilliant job, when I walk past the greens and wait for the bus, I always feel very lucky to live here.

**Answer** – Thank you!

**Chairman closed the meeting at 21.01pm**

**\* For information : WEMC Telephone number 07394 332262 wemc67@yahoo.co.uk**