



Powderhall Village Owners Association MINUTES from Committee ZOOM meeting. Wednesday 17th May 2023

Present. James Bowyer, Gordon Chrumka, Jane Garrett (Minutes), Sabine Goldhausen, Franz Kooy, William Laing, Roddy Martine (Chair and acting Secretary), Kevin Patch, John Riley, Richard Ross, Kathryn Tomlinson, Craig Williams.

Apologies received: Marie Giatsi Clarsen, Ruth Evans, Paschalis Kapsomenakis, Stuart McAlister, Karen Shewan

In attendance: Sarah Wilson from Charles White Factors

1. Approval of previous minutes 15th March 2023.

These were approved and seconded (by John)

2/3. Review of Actions by Sarah Wilson

- **Lifts:**

- There have been several issues with the lifts including an act of vandalism at 7 The Rigg where there was significant vandalism carried out to the car doors and internally in the lift car button was ripped off. Those carrying out the damage were let into the building by someone. Also damage to 2 Rigg by same youths again let into the block by a resident to the bike store door and caused £4000 worth of damage. The incident has been reported to the police.
- **Action: residents are asked not to admit people into the blocks unless they are certain who they are.**
- There have also been several large and costly repairs to the lifts at 1 The Brae and 7 The Rigg. Since Brexit there has been a struggle to get parts for the lifts, some of which come from Germany and Switzerland, and there are also distribution issues, including at Customs, where there is a backlog. All similar companies are reporting the same concerns.
- The lifts are now around 20 years old and will require partial upgrades in the next few years. The costs could be around £40,000 for 4 -level blocks and £50-£60,000 for 6 level blocks.
- The Schindler contract is due for renewal in July 2023. One issue affecting the new contract is that currently all lifts have a contact line from the lift direct to Schindler in case of entrapment, which can be unreliable. These will become obsolete in 2025. If the owners renew the contract for 3 years (currently on a gold level contract) with Schindler, they will replace the line with a GSM sim free of charge and the sim will costs £20 per month thereafter, less than the current telephone line charges, which will be cancelled. It would normally cost up to £1000 per block to fit this new system.

The Committee approved this to go ahead and gave permission to CWL to agree with Schindler the installation and 3-year contract.

- There have been more than expected callouts to various lifts in the development and when the Engineer has arrived there is no fault with the lift. This is to be monitored by CWL. However, residents should not call Schindler directly but call the CWL office or out of hours service for assistance.
- Notices via Facebook and the Powderhall Newsletter will inform residents and owners of these issues with the lifts.
- William raised the issue of those who live on the ground floor in Powderhall having to contribute to lift charges. Feelings among the committee were that lifts were part of the amenities of the development. This is written into the property deeds, put together by the developers. Property deeds can be challenged regarding instances such as this but all Powderhall owners would have to agree to any changes and these would need to go through the Scottish Lands Tribunal.

3. Costs, Insurance, Redecorating etc.

- **Contingency Funds:**

- The possibility of setting up a Powderhall contingency fund was discussed at the last AGM but could not be voted on as the group was not quorate. Sarah will write to all owners about the necessity of setting up a contingency fund to deal with the inevitable costs of replacing/ repairing large items such as the lifts, the roof, carpets etc all of which will require major work in the next few years.
- Many developments like Powderhall have such an arrangement which is successful. Proposed costs to set up a Contingency fund would be £30 per quarter for owners in Powderhall Road and £50 per quarter for those in the blocks.
- Each block would have its' own contingency fund with the Powderhall committee agreeing on spending when the need arises. Contingency funds are non-refundable but are open to all to use during their time of residence/ownership at Powderhall.
- Gordon commented that the lack of a Contingency fund could possibly affect the value of properties at Powderhall.
- **Action: Sarah Wilson to write to all owners about the proposed Contingency Fund.**

- **Internal Redecorating costs for Powderhall:**

- Seven contractors were asked for a quote re paintwork / redecorating at Powderhall. Four have declined.
- Bell Group company quoted £239,000. Two other quotes were withdrawn due to reduced workforce.
- We therefore need two new quotes before we can proceed.
- **Action: Sarah Wilson to obtain quotes and bring to next meeting**

- **Irrecoverable Debt:**

- A letter re irrecoverable debt will be distributed among owners. The total amount is £235, accrued by one individual, which will amount to 83p for

each flat on Powderhall. More information about irretrievable debt is outlined in the Powderhall deeds.

4. Gardens, Tree Replacement

- **Replacement Trees behind Townhouses.**
 - Frans continues to take a lead in trying to resolve the issues of the mature trees and shrubs that were cut down in error by the Hatters' Lane development adjacent to Powderhall.
 - The Insurers for Hatters' Lane, in responding to the claim from Powderhall residents, had made a poor offer, considerably less than was originally considered, and insufficient to cover the amount of damage caused.
 - Frans put in a further claim of £20,000 on behalf of the PVOA/Powderhall Village Owners' Ltd (PVOL) with the help of a loss adjustor. The claim included the cost of loss of amenities.
 - The insurers Lane originally offered around £5000 but following further discussions with the loss adjuster, they have offered £ 7,500, with £500 of that coming from the owners.
 - This will not cover the damage done but seems to be the most that can be obtained from the company. It will be paid into the PVOA account. Frans will approach the committee in the future re obtaining further financial support to help with this issue.
 - Gordon has confirmed that the full £7,500 has been received in the PVOL bank account.
 - Frans has indicated that he has received advise on the best time to do any planting and this will need to be taken into account.
 - **Action: Frans to stay in touch with Sarah Wilson re this issue**
- **Cherry Tree**
 - A mature cherry tree which was causing damage to the pathway near 7 The Rigg has had to be removed sadly. Sarah Wilson agreed that a replacement tree could be planted somewhere else on the development. PVOA Committee to decide where.
- **Giant Hogweed**
 - This must be removed in 3 areas of the development as it is an invasive species. The hogweed will be removed over a 3-year period.
 - This process could affect the replanting plan for the townhouses.
 - Frans has been trying to communicate with Arran Hunter about the process and has also been in touch with another company.
- **Ivy**
 - Sabine mentioned possible excess ivy growing from an adjacent car park at the top of the development. This is council owned land and therefore their concern. Frans suggested that the ivy may be providing some cover and is therefore useful.
- **Gardens**

- The Spring bulbs have greatly improved the general areas of the grounds and the committee expressed their thanks to Sabine and volunteers re the bulb planting around Powderhall.
- The committee discussed the condition of the central grassed area which is accessed by many people and dogs from Powderhall and neighbourhood and is getting the worse for wear. (This links to the next item re: dogs)

5) Dog Fouling

- Richard started the discussion re dogs by reminding the committee that the central grassy area should be child- friendly.
- It is the only designated play area for young children on the development.
- The rules for dogs on Powderhall are clearly stated: they should be on leads and should not soil the grounds.
- Apparently, some of the original signs are missing and the sign on the Dunedin Street entrance may not be visible.
- There should also be a sign near the underground car park.
- Richard contends that there is a misuse of this central area by dogs, and this presents a hazard to children's health. The hazard is corroborated by toxicology reports. The committee has previously considered fencing off this central area, but this was considered to be too expensive.
- Richard suggested pricing some new beech/hornbeam hedging around the area- such as they are using at the new Canonmills development. The committee agreed that something should be done to make that area safer for children and more pleasant for residents.
- We will continue to work on improving the gardens for everyone in Powderhall.
- **Action: Quotes re Hornbeam/beech hedging to be obtained from Hunters.**

6) Canonmills Gardens:

- Sarah reported that the Director of Artisan, David Westwater, was ignoring her calls/emails for the replacement of the boundary fencing that the developers had removed in error and had promised to replace.
- About the mechanical/ humming noises heard a few months ago emanating from the development, these appear to have improved generally although one resident has complained about noise from the new development.
- John has previously raised the issue of the damaged pavement on Powderhall Road and has contacted the council. There is a council remit to inspect the damage. It would be helpful if other residents from Powderhall contacted the council about the issue.

7) Meeting with city planners regarding access to Powderhall/Dunedin Street

- Frans, Gordon, Roddy, Kevin, and Sarah have met previously with representatives from the Council regarding the proposed development on the old waste management site on Broughton Road re access onto Dunedin Street.
- Issues were raised regarding the proposed construction of an access ramp and the possible effects on Powderhall. Sarah now feels that the issue will not be pursued further

by the developers as no revised drawings have been received but will let the Committee know if she hears from them further.

8) **AOB:**

- Jane asked a question on behalf of several residents at The Brae about the use of weed killer by Hunters. Defra recommendations are that pest control should be kept to the lowest possible levels to protect people's health and promote bio-diversity. Sarah Wilson assured the committee that the control Hunters used was minimal and as pet and child friendly as possible.
- Some owners would like CWL to communicate issues to tenants rather than just the owners. Sabine suggested that letters etc. could be attached via the Powderhall Facebook page. Sarah stated that the agreement CWL has is with owners and not tenants as per the Deed and Written Statement of Service and it is the responsibility of the landlords to pass information onto their tenants.
- John Riley raised the issue of builders and other tradespeople accessing buildings and perhaps causing a security risk by wedging doors open. Sarah pointed out that the door closers can be damaged if the doors are wedged open. Roddy will post this reminder on Facebook.
- At Powderhall Rigg, items previously blocking the fire window have been removed.
- A resident wanted to know if French windows could be fitted to her flat at the Rigg as she wants to open the window wider. Sarah said she would need planning permission as this could change the facade of the building. This request could also require agreement from all other residents in the block. The resident will be informed of this.
- John reported that the entrance door at The Rigg was not closing and there was some damage to the bike store. There was a possible reported sighting of some youths who may have caused damage on Powderhall.
Action: Roddy will post information on Facebook.
- Sabine suggested putting together a welcome pack for new owners including details re the tenant's association committee. Gordon and Roddy agreed.
Action: Sabine will start a draft which will be taken to committee, and Sarah Wilson will put it in the Powderhall documents.
- Gordon said that the PVOA Ltd accounts are prepared and need to be approved by the directors (Roddy, Gordon and Frans).

Date of next meeting: Wednesday August 2nd, 2023, at 7pm (via Zoom)