

Annual General Meeting – 12 November 2020

Chair's Report

Thank you to everyone here for joining us this evening for our first ever virtual AGM. The way we'll structure is that at each agenda item there'll be an opportunity for questions and discussion on that point. As mentioned, to try and make sure everyone's heard it'll be best to try and speak 1 at a time using the raise hand function on the call and we'll keep an eye out.

Welcome

I am very happy to welcome everyone to the 3rd, albeit slightly delayed, AGM of the Hebble Wharf Residents' and Owners' Association. My name is Imran Chouglay, Chair of the Association, and with me the following committee members:

Vice-Chair - Norah Keany-Corr

Treasurer - Andrew Wright

Secretary - John Hodgkins

Members - Yvonne Berns, Howard Dodgson, Paul Hope, Russ Moran and Lukasz Nowakowski

And I would like to give my thanks to all for their contributions;

Norah has shown such a great passion for Hebble Wharf and the surrounding area where we live and this is reflected in her work establishing key partnerships such as setting up the neighbourhood watch - opening up communication with our local PCSO, as well as communications with the Facilities manager at Spectrum Health, to try and establish a better working partnership with the wider estate.

John our secretary has been instrumental in managing communications, not only to members via the association email and website, but also with the managing agents, often dedicating time to provide detailed analysis, breakdowns and queries. His broad understanding of matters relating to the management and running of Hebble Wharf are invaluable and something we can all be grateful for.

Our treasurer Andrew, as well as managing the extensive accounts for the Association, contributes great analysis and input to help drive the association's efforts, alongside Yvonne and Howard who also play an integral 'hands-on' role within the block; whether that be assisting with contractors on site, or taking meter readings for apartments and general observations to ensure the upkeep and security here at Hebble Wharf.

Paul, Russ and Lukasz were all new members to the committee, joining in 2019, growing the management committee, which is a really encouraging sign to see more people getting involved and contributing where they can, leading to some key developments over the last year, and I really hope that can continue moving forward.

Updates

The committee's focus over the last 12-18 months has centred around trying to establish a working relationship with PBM to help with their transition in taking over as managing agent for the block, as well key challenges around block security and financial management.

Last year saw the appointment of PBM as the block managing agent under the new Freeholder and Head Leaseholder, G&O Investments Ltd. The complexities of Hebble Wharf were soon apparent to PBM; inheriting outstanding section 20 works, which were subsequently deemed incomplete and followed up by the Association to ensure the return of monies after the Order had effectively expired.

Alongside rectifying the water ingress issues associated with the Section 20 order, there were a number of key maintenance issues highlighted that had been previously neglected. PBM did initially use their contractors, NDF Civils, to carry out some works, and although seemingly a positive step, the practical and cost concerns (with them being based in Plymouth) were raised. Since early 2020, a local agent, AT Developments, were introduced through the Association and have helped carry out maintenance and emergency work, which has been a positive relationship to establish.

In August 2019 PBM proposed the use of a surveyor to identify a 5 year maintenance plan. For the committee, this was key to establishing a schedule of work and a better forecast of financial implications. After apparent issues finding a local surveyor who would be able to carry out the required work, Bill Ossitt – a local Chartered Building Consultant - was subsequently commissioned in August 2020. The resulting report has been shared as part of the AGM material and will be picked up later in the Agenda for discussion.

Security at Hebble Wharf was and is a key concern of the Association and the proposal of CCTV was pushed as a priority.

Since it's installation in April this year, we have seen a significant drop in damage and issues caused within the garage and bins areas. Frequent damage to the electricity meter room door has also dropped, with a new lock and subsequent system implemented through the help of the committee, John and Howard in particular, allowing meter reading requests submitted via the Association.

Alongside this, Norah's work with our local Police liaison officer Diana Winder as part of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, has helped to circulate useful information to residents and provides an additional point of contact with the Police to report suspicions and concerns.

Financial management and transparency remain a key focus for the Association.

In August 2019, invoices issued for ground rent by Urbanpoint management with retrospective increases were challenged and resulted in a letter being sent on behalf of the Association in January 2020 to the MD of the Freeholder highlighting the incompetence shown in rectifying the issue. The miscalculations were eventually acknowledged and corrected.

This focus also applies to the managing agents as we continue to try and fully understand inherited financial complications PBM were passed on by LIV Group, and the plans to resolve these moving forward. We'll discuss in more detail points around this as part of the agenda.

One area outstanding from financial transparency, remains around the estate costs.

Prompted by rises in estate budgets and deficit demands associated to unknown estate charges, the Committee has sought clarification on this. However, in a meeting with PBM in July, they said they themselves were not receiving any response from Grant Fieldhouse (managing agent for the estate). In a recent email from PBM, it was indicated they were speaking with the head lessee before instructing solicitor involvement.

Finally, we've seen a number of internal issues and complaints raised with the managing agent recently, in regards to a lack of respect for the building and fellow residents. Damage to common areas and hallways from animals, external doors being left unsecured and noise disturbances from dogs and loud music, all compromise the comfort and security everyone deserves to have in their own home. And I think it's important not only the managing agent addresses concerns, but that we remember it's everyone's responsibility, whether it be as a landlord speaking to tenants or as owner occupiers, to be mindful of this... as a wise old Australian soap opera told us 'everybody needs good neighbours'!

Summary & Looking forward

There have been some really positive steps looking back over the year, but I think it's fair to say these have been made alongside frustrations. There are big outstanding issues; most notably revisiting the water ingress issues which have gone unresolved for another year now; and I say that not only out of concern for the potential extended damage this may be causing, but also for the continual impact it has had for a fellow resident Yvonne and her living conditions. This does now seem to be moving forward following the building survey, with it being suggested that a new Section 20 order will likely be issued again for these works.

With a feeling of a slightly bumpy road ahead, I'm hopeful that the survey and a longer-term maintenance plan sets a good base to work from that we've not had before. And my hope is once we're able to have more of these internal issues resolved, the association's time can be spent looking more at developing links and communication with the wider estate and potentially the new Rutland Mills development in the future.

As our constitution dictates all current members will stand down but can of course put themselves forward for re-election along with any new nominations.

It seems a bit of a tough sell as it's not the most glamorous thing to be a part of, but the simple requirement, which everyone has shown by being here this evening, is that you care about Hebble Wharf; whether that's as a home or an investment.

In terms of commitments, we have a committee meeting every 1-2 months, and we've managed to get that working well on Zoom so can potentially see that continuing.