



Hebble Wharf Residents and Owners Association

Minutes of Annual General Meeting – 12 November 2020

Present:

Committee : Imran Chouglay (Chair), Norah Keany-Corr (Vice Chair), Andrew Wright (Treasurer), John Hodgkins (Secretary), Yvonne Berns, Howard Dodgson, Russ Moran

Members : John Corr, Brian & Maria Cammack, Freddie Coupe, Edward Gulc, Ann Lea & David Lumb, Oliver Quarmby, Julie Winham

Apologies:

Paul Hope, Martin Winham, Andrew Booth, Carol & Fergus Dodds.

1 Welcome and introductions

IC welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced members of the committee. Restrictions imposed by the Covid-19 Pandemic meant that an AGM could not take place in the summer and the AGM was therefore arranged as a Zoom meeting to bring members and residents up to date.

2 Chair's Report for 2019/20

IC presented his report for the year, describing the challenges faced by Plymouth Block Management (PBM) in addressing the complex issues they had inherited since being appointed by the new freeholder (G&O Investments Ltd) as Managing Agents for Hebble Wharf – especially the backlog in routine maintenance and the problems of water ingress into the building.

Throughout the year, the Association has worked with PBM to establish more robust maintenance arrangements and the appointment of AT Developments (Yorkshire) Ltd as a local contractor for reactive maintenance. A full survey of the building fabric was carried out by William Ossitt, Chartered Building Surveyor in August his report has identified a five-year maintenance plan to address the outstanding defects in the building.

IC described the positive impact of introducing cctv to the undercroft area and thanked committee members for their contributions to the work of the Association during the year, including taking on the provision of meter readings for residents and building a relationship with the neighbourhood policing team through Neighbourhood Watch.

After much effort on the Association's part, the formula for calculation of ground rent increases has been agreed with G&O's financial agent Urbanpoint Properties Ltd, who over many months were seeking to impose a higher level of increase from that indicated in our leases.

The Association's focus had now turned to establishing a clear picture of the status of the Hebble Wharf Reserve Fund, seeking clarification on the increased Estate Charges being levied by Waterfront Wakefield Management Ltd and understanding the financial implications for leaseholders of the works proposed in the five year maintenance plan.

A full copy of the Chair's report is available on the HWROA website at <https://hebblewharf.files.wordpress.com/2020/11/hwroa-chair-report-2020.pdf>

3 Treasurer's Report

AW reported that the balance in the bank account was currently £238.89 with some outstanding costs associated with web hosting. The Association's membership is 33 (representing owners of 36 apartments).

4 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 22 May 2019

JCH reviewed the minutes of the last AGM, describing the developments that had led to PBM taking over the managing agent role for the 14 apartments for which the Grey GR Partnership were primary leaseholders.

Establishing the true status of the Reserve Fund was still unresolved from last year, with only limited progress having been made in reconciling monies transferred from LiV Group in 2019.

Car Parking - it was established during the year that the previous head leaseholder had sold a lease on the designated Disabled Parking Bay to the Grey Partnership and it was now allocated as a parking bay for one of their apartments. Attempts to establish whether this contravened a planning obligation had so far drawn a blank. JCH has now written again to Wakefield Council for information.

Water meter cupboards - With the need to ensure security of the fire doors to the water meter service cupboards, the Association has obtained key access to these cupboards with key safes on each floor for emergency use.

Council Tax banding – This had been taken up by HD last year, but Wakefield Council indicated that they would not consider a review as there were no directly comparable properties within the surrounding area. Individual leaseholders have a right to appeal.

5 Managing Agent and Block Maintenance

Plymouth Block Management ended their contractual relationship with LiV to commission building repairs in January 2020. Since then, AT Developments (Yorkshire) Ltd have been retained on an "as required" callout basis which has proved more responsive and seems to offer better value. ATD also maintains another block in Wakefield.

The relationship between PBM and the Estate Managing Agents (Grant Fieldhouse) appears to be under some strain and PBM has been unable to so far establish the reasons for the overspend on Estate Charges in 2019 or the increase in 2020. It had been suggested that an unpaid bill from 2016 had contributed to this breakdown but there was no previous knowledge of this. Meanwhile, urgent progress is needed to address the drainage problem outside Hebble Wharf where the level of the surface drain is higher than the surrounding roadway and surface water is entering Hebble Wharf. Members encouraged the Association to consolidate communication with PBM and GF to reach a solution.

Ownership of the footbridge across the flood lock remains in question and it was confirmed that the original responsibility of the developer had passed to Spectrum Health CIC and would therefore now fall under the aegis of their subsidiary, Waterfront Wakefield Management Ltd. Questions about reopening the bridge should therefore be directed to Spectrum or WWML.

PBM had commissioned a structural survey of Hebble Wharf from William Ossitt whose report has now been sent to the head leaseholder and will form the basis of a five year maintenance plan. Further discussion of this followed under Item 7.

6 Block Finances

As already reported, the Reserve Funds (which the Accounts indicated to be £46,992 at 31 March 2020) were severely depleted by a combination of service charge arrears and refunds of Section 20 contributions and the balance at bank at the year end was just £8,392. JCH has written on several occasions to PBM asking for a reconciliation and is still awaiting a full explanation, though recent communication from PBM suggests that the balance currently stands at £17,029, with a further £9,372 in arrears yet to be recovered. With the current year transfer to reserves this suggests a potential balance of £33k at year end.

[Note: It now appears that a recent payment of circa £11k from LiV to PBM may also be due for payment into the Reserve Fund.]

7 Five-Year Maintenance Plan

Members discussed the outline 5-year maintenance plan prepared by William Ossitt and questioned to what extent the scale of work represented poor workmanship, inadequate materials used in the building or a failure to complete preventative maintenance over the past 10 years. The original building contractor is no longer in business and any potential recovery through NHBC should have been pursued by the previous freeholder (U&I) as it is likely now to be time expired. It is unclear where any liabilities now lie.

Members also asked how much influence the Association (and individual leaseholders) would have over the programming of works. The five year plan will be directed by the head leaseholder but the Association will write formally to PBM with comments and recommendations from its members.

It was suggested that the Association should seek information from PBM on which items are considered by the surveyor to be most urgent with a view to reducing the financial pressure (especially in Year 1) by extending the maintenance plan to 7 years. Members took the view that some items should be considered cosmetic (eg carpets and internal decoration) and deferred to later years. It was also felt that apartment owners should not be responsible for maintenance costs associated with the commercial unit.

8 Election of Committee and Officers

IC again expressed his thanks to committee members for their support during his term as Chair. Norah Keany-Corr indicated she would be standing down from committee ahead of a planned move from Hebble Wharf. All other committee members present were prepared to continue for the coming year.

The new committee is therefore:

Imran Chouglay (Chair) (IC)
Andrew Wright (Treasurer) (AW)
John Hodgkins (Secretary) (JCH)
Yvonne Berns (Committee member) (YB)
Howard Dodgson (Committee member) (HD)
Russ Moran (RM)
Paul Hope (PH)
Lukasz Nowakowski (LN)

(PH and LN will be contacted to confirm their willingness to serve)

9 Any other Business

A member asked for an update on what was happening around the Rutland Mills site. There was little to report other than what had been communicated via local media. The Association will circulate more information as it is received.

A suggestion was also made that the 'Home Owner Manual' for Hebble Wharf was now out-of-date in many respects and it would be useful for leaseholders and tenants if the Association were to prepare a 'Living at Hebble Wharf' guide. Information on many aspects was already available via the HWROA website and the Secretary would look at restructuring the website to make this information more readily accessible.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at approximately 10pm.