**Minutes of the 1st Annual General Meeting**

**Monday 15th May 2023**

*Nb. These minutes are not verbatim but have been produced following attendance at the meeting, using handwritten notes as an aide memoir.*

In attendance (Acting Committee Members):

Neil Hoy, James Hardie, Clive Sharpe, Gemma Harris, Abbi Denney and Andrew Willoughby.

Apologies received from Mark Howse.

Neil Hoy, Acting Chair, opened the meeting. He welcomed those who had attended and thanked everyone for the fantastic turn out!

Neil outlined the background and intended purpose of the Residents Association.

**Agenda Items 1&2. Nominations and seconds for Officials were considered.**

Each Member had the opportunity to introduce themselves, variously explaining the skills and/or experience they have brought to the role, their reasons for wishing to be involved, and where they live on the estate.

In turn the acting Committee Members were nominated, seconded, and then duly elected as follows:

Chairman Neil Hoy

Vice Chairman James Hardie

Treasurer Clive Sharpe

Secretary Gemma Harris

Committee Members Andrew Willoughby; Abbi Denney;

Mark Howse (in his absence)

No-one present challenged or sought to stand instead of those nominated, as above. Neil confirmed that the elected members will now stand for 1 year, until the next AGM, whereby others who may wish to stand as Committee Members will have the opportunity to do so.

**Agenda item 3. Adoption of proposed Constitution and roles of Committee Members**

Dan S, in attendance, questioned how the Committee had agreed upon the content of the Constitution. It was explained that the wording has been used by other Residents’ Associations elsewhere in the Country. It was explained that Members have been through the template wording and made some small changes to reflect the aims of the Association.

Printed copies of the Constitution and Job Roles have been available for attendees to view and have also been available on the THRA website (as was advised in the agenda which had been circulated throughout the estate). There were no further comments on the suggested wording, and these were duly adopted.

**Agenda Item 4: Update following meeting with Meadfleet**

Clive explained the Phase 2 document: that this lays out everything the Developers (Bellway/Bloor) should be doing before adoption by the Management Company (Meadfleet).

A resident in attendance asked a question about the maps in the document, as the ones received from Meadfleet in their correspondence are not very clear. Clive explained there are more detailed plans on the planning website. James agreed he would upload the S106 and Phase 2 documents to the THRA website.

Another resident asked about dog waste bins. Clive explained that provision for these is included in the Phase 2 document, but it has been noticed that concrete bases in the Country Park have only been sited where the ordinary bins are due to be situated (in accordance with the plans).

Clive explained he and Neil met with the Regional Manager from Meadfleet, Tony H, on 8th March. They met at the Farm Shop and walked around the estate making observations. The yellow ‘hoggin’ paths are not fit for purpose and Bellway will need to put these right before adoption. Tony Hobbs said he would raise the issue with the Bellway site manager.

A resident in attendance asked whether these paths (and the work from Phase 1?) was approved by the Planning Department? Explained we have not contacted Wychavon yet but would be following up on this.

Clive said that on the walk-around various detritus and rubbish associated with building works was found throughout the Public Open Space (POS), such as corrugated iron, and this was pointed out to Tony. Flooding was noted throughout the POS, and this was recorded by Tony who said he would be raising these issues with the Developer. Photos, showing the extent of the problem were separately sent to Meadfleet who again agreed to raise this with the Developers.

It is important that these outstanding issues from Phase 1 are addressed – these could be consolidated into a ‘snagging list’. We want this done before Phase 2 is adopted.

It was noted with disappointment that subsequent to the meeting, Tony has now been replaced by Meadfleet, and we therefore have a new site manager - Victoria W.

THRA have written to Platform to try to establish if they are contributing to the maintenance of the POS, and if so, what. They were invited to the AGM but did not attend.

A resident in attendance who owns a Shared Equity property on the estate and introduced herself at this point in the meeting. Later, she was kind enough to explain the details of her payments – she pays a ‘Management fee’ for the ‘communal areas’ but said she had questioned this as she lives in a semi-detached property with no communal areas. The payment is £19 a month and she has paid this to Platform for the past 5 years. She has correspondence about this and says they have mistakenly stated in the past that this covers things like ‘lighting in communal areas’.

Another resident in attendance raised the point that we have been told different ‘handover’ dates in correspondence with Meadfleet such as 27th June/July/November.

A further resident in attendance asked how the contractors are monitored. Clive explained from his conversation with Tony, they come on site and log on via GPS and take photos of completed works.

A further resident enquired about grass cutting around the ‘pit area’ on Enstone Way: he has witnessed them taking 3 hours to do this.

A further resident asked why the Management Company is located in Bristol? Are we being charged for travel time?

Further comment about the fact local contractors have lost work following the appointment of Meadfleet. Stated these contractors were perceived to be doing a better job and it is a shame.

Gemma then asked those present to please hold off on further questions and comments, as we needed to try to stick to the agenda!

**Progress to date**

Neil presented the following item. We have conducted research and established that there are many estates experiencing similar issues to us and there is an established ‘Home Owners Rights Network’ – HORNETS. Things that would have traditionally been the responsibility of the Local Authority (in our case Wychavon District Council) have been passed from Developers to 3rd party Management Companies. Issues include no monitoring of charges. We are all paying full Council tax together with the maintenance fee, despite the POS on site being open to all. We as a Residents Association have reached out to HORNETS.

There has been a report on BBC H&W on a similar estate in Bromsgrove. We have reached out to the residents of the other estate in Bromsgrove to offer ourselves as another example of an estate having problems with their 3rd party maintenance company, should the BBC wish to cover the story in more depth.

Neil has written to our local MP, Nigel Huddlestone. Nigel has responded to explain that there is proposed legislation to help protect homeowners interests which would give freeholders more power to challenge these charges. They are struggling to find Parliamentary time to consider this legislation at present though. He has offered to write to the CEO of Meadfleet on behalf of THRA. The Committee needs to decide how best to utilise the support of Nigel, which may be better directed at all the interested 3rd parties. The correspondence will be added to the website for residents’ information .

Confirmed that we have written to George P, the Housing Officer from Platform Housing Association who has responsibility for this estate, but we have not yet heard back.

Bell Contracting are responsible for the work to the roads. We do not have a date for the completion of the works but it is rumoured to be in July. (All in attendance had a collective laugh at this point!).

A resident in attendance raised the issue of incorrect road signage. E.g., Ypres Road sign does not state it is a ‘dead end’ on the correct side of the road; so drivers do not see it as they drive past. They have met with Bellway and Bloor officials at Smith Fields regarding planting which does not appear to have been done.

Another resident in attendance raised an issue about boundaries and who is responsible for what. E.g. lighting – this is thought to be the District Council but there is an online search facility which outlines “whether the lighting is maintained by the Highways Agency, District Councils or private landlords”: [Report a street lighting issue | Worcestershire County Council](https://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/tell-us-about-road-highway-or-travel-route-issue/report-street-lighting-issue)

Neil explained that we will be contacting Local Councillors now the elections have taken place.

**Any Other Business**

Neil addressed the email questions we have received.

1st email question from Steve N – when is the handover date likely to be (from Developers to Management Company) we think July but we do not know definitively. We will endeavour to find the answer to this by contacting Meadfleet and Bellway. ACTION - Committee to follow up.

Further questions and general discussion from those present:

What will the cost be once they take over the whole site?

We were advised £170pa, but this has already risen to £235pa. The Management Charge is 15-20% and there is a further Service Charge of 10%. Issues: this is unregulated, there is no transparency, and we are not able to see management accounts.

Their charges must only be ‘reasonable’: legal definition of ‘reasonable’ not entirely helpful!

2nd emailed question from Dan S in relation to ongoing highways works and footpaths. Issues with how this is being done – does not appear to be done with the appropriate skill and tools – for example no dust suppression equipment. Dan states this should be reported to the Health and Safety Executive. Road has been constructed through rain and snow so is unlikely to last. Dan has experience in this area and can support and advise THRA. (ACTION Committee to discuss how best to follow this up).

Further question from Dan S. He was aware that land along Pershore Road next to our estate has been purchased for the purpose of a Solar Farm. We could form a Community Energy Partnership in order to benefit from lower unit rates and standing charges. This to be considered as the site develops.

Issue of traffic management (again raised a large laugh from those present). Legislation has been passed in Wales to introduce 20mph limits in residential areas. Comment that the current situation with the road and raised drainage is an effective traffic calming measure…!

Play area at the Farm Shop: Meadfleet has refused to take this on in its present state.

Consideration to residents outside the estate: Peewit Road – volume of school run traffic. Bus gate not going to happen.

Issue to do with payments and not having received evidence of works undertaken in 2022. Asked Committee to advise. We cannot tell residents whether or not to pay – they must seek their own independent legal advice. Those present discussed the issues they have experience with this – non-payment can prevent re-mortgage or sale of properties.

**Final round up**

Neil said we do not want to be focused on just the negative issues; the Residents Association has great potential to benefit us all. It would be good in the longer term to have community projects such as a Children’s veg patch and an annual Fete.

Neil thanked the Committee Members for their work to date and those present for attending and for their contributions.

We still need to ensure that 60% of the eligible properties are signed up and the sign-up sheets will go back to the Farm Shop for a further period of time. We may need to go door to door to seek the final sign ups to those who have not seen the Facebook site or paperwork in Farm Shop. Without 60% support, Meadfleet state they will not recognise us!

**Points for further action:**

* Further documentation to be loaded onto the Website.
* Sign-up sheets to be returned to the Farm Shop. Need to agree a cut-off date and publicise this and then possibly do some ‘door knocking’.
* ‘Snagging list’: outstanding works to be compiled.
* Contact newly elected Local Councillors.
* Wychavon: Has a planning officer or parks officer approved the works of the developers before it was adopted by the Management Company? We could make an FOI request if answers are not forthcoming.
* Platform Housing: try to find out if and what they are paying to Meadfleet.
* Gemma to further liaise with local resident in shared equity property – there may be other Shared Equity owners and Social Housing tenants on the estate who are unsure what their payments are covering.
* Committee to further liaise with Dan S about highways issues as he has expertise in this area.
* Query raised by resident following AGM: who owns the POS? We know we have a legal interest in it as per the Deed of Covenant. Further research required into this as it is not straightforward. May need to request Office Copies from the Land Registry to establish this (there will be a small charge involved).
* ‘Timeline’: the dates of adoption referred to by MF seem to change in the correspondence received by residents. If this can be emailed to THRA we can put together a timeline to highlight inconsistencies.

**AGM Debrief and minutes sign off meeting to be held on Wednesday 24th May at 7:30, Hampton Social Club**