

# St Edward's Park Residents' Association AGM

## Minutes

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2009, 8pm  
Held at Leek Rugby Club

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

The Chairman of the Residents Association Committee, Chris Wheeler, welcomed residents to the Annual General Meeting. The main committee and social group members in attendance were:

#### Main Committee

Graham Churton  
Andrew Cope  
Anouke Hinkley-Schoop  
Stuart Nicholls  
Mike Stonard  
Stephen Wales  
Chris Wheeler

#### Social Group

Maria Nicholls  
Heather Stokes  
Val Stonard  
Julie Wales  
Janet Wheeler

The chairman also welcomed Charlotte Atkins (MP) and PC Clive Cooper to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Andrew Purcell.

A total of 39 residents attended the meeting.

In his introduction, the chairman set out the framework for the meeting which was in three parts: part I – a review of the previous 12 months; part II – the future management of St Edward's Park (STEP); and part III – an open forum discussion on local issues.

### 2. Part I Agenda

Part 1 was a brief review of the achievements, social scene, statement of accounts, revisions to the constitution, and appointment of members to the main committee.

#### Achievements

The achievements to date have included a website (which had been refreshed recently), newsletters, grit bins, road signage (which could still be improved), maintaining pressure on Redrow and CPM/RMG, site snagging (but more to do), re-cycling and bin stores. The most recent achievement had been the installation of a notice board (in front of St Edward's Hall). Low energy light bulbs, which had been donated to the Residents' Association, had been

distributed to all households, with a request for a small donation to be made to our funds. A total of £99.10 had been donated to date.

### Social Events

The social programme of events to date have included bingo and quiz nights, carol evenings and Easter egg hunts. It was not possible to hold an Easter egg hunt this year due to the lack of volunteers to support the event. The most recent event had been the 'His Worship and the Pig' evening which included music, humour and a supper. The chairman asked for more people to become involved in the organisation of events, as more people meant more events.

### Statement of Accounts

A statement of accounts from the social group was presented for the period March 2008 - 2009. This showed that all events had produced a surplus for the Residents' Association funds. The 'His Worship and the Pig' event was the most successful and had produced a surplus of £539. The notice board had cost £540. A donation of £200 had been made to the Salvation Army, Leek. A surplus of £959 was retained on account.

### Revisions to Constitution

Prior to the AGM, the main committee had identified that some management statements in the constitution were open to interpretation and some re-wording was considered appropriate. The essential purpose of the changes was to i) maintain a group of people with experience on the main committee, ii) ensure that committee members serve a 2-year term, after which they must resign and offer themselves for re-election, iii) raise the profile and clarify the role of the Social Group. Revised versions of the constitution had been prepared and circulated to committee members for comments and a final version endorsed by the committee. A copy of this latest version of the constitution had been placed on the STEP website, and paper copies were available at the AGM.

### Main Committee Appointments

Four existing committee members had resigned and were not seeking re-election (David Balmford, Lynne Bottomley, Graham Churton and Stuart Nicholls). Three existing committee members had resigned and were standing for re-election (Andrew Purcell, Mike Stonard and Chris Wheeler). One resident had been co-opted to the committee and was now standing for election (Anouke Hinkley-Schoop). Four existing committee members were not required to stand for re-election as their period of service was less than two years (Nigel Binns, Andy Cope, Dave Kelsall and Stephen Wales). A request for new committee members had been made in the Spring 2009 newsletter. Four nominations had been received by the closing date of 10<sup>th</sup> April (Dave Crew, Keith Hambleton, Peter Stokes and Trevor Turner). The revised constitution stated that there should be a maximum of 12 committee

members and there were eight candidates to fill eight vacancies. The chairman proposed, in line with the revised constitution, that a ballot was unnecessary and that the eight candidates should be appointed to the main committee. The proposal was agreed without exception.

The Chairman thanked David Balmford, Lynne Bottomley, Graham Churton and Stuart Nicholls for their contributions to the committee.

### **3. Part II Agenda**

#### Management of STEP

The chairman reminded residents of the scale of the task and the services required in managing STEP. He showed a simple guide to running St Edward's Park, including the role of the St Edward's Park Management Company Limited (STEPMCL) and the use of a managing agent (CPM/RMG). The latter was appointed by Redrow to manage and deliver services to residents, which included cleaning, block insurance, collection of service charge and grounds maintenance.

#### Debtors

The chairman presented the residents with the most recent service charge debt statement (31st March 2009). The overall amount of debt owed by residents was £33k which was 43% lower than that reported 12 months previously. Almost 80% of the debt was owed by 10% of household units, these figures being similar to those reported 12 months previously. These residents were not paying, being subsidised by the majority, and being supplied with services. The chairman informed the meeting that the managing agent was chasing the debtors for the arrears. He could not disclose the names of the debtors for data protection reasons.

#### Management Handover

The chairman outlined the transitional arrangements when Redrow leave the site. CPM/RMG, instructed by Redrow, will give 28 days notice of an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM), at which existing STEPMCL Directors (Redrow appointees) will resign. Following this, Resident Directors will need to be appointed, with all households having one vote. Once elected, Resident Directors will then consider the options for the future management of STEP.

#### STEPMCL Finances

The chairman informed the meeting of recent correspondence that had been received from Matthew Pratt (Redrow Midlands MD) regarding STEP. Redrow has committed to finishing the site, including roads and footpaths, and had issued a timetable after much pressure from our chairman and local representatives. An EGM is expected to be called by Redrow in late 2009 or early 2010.

The chairman emphasised that residents should not agree to an EGM until we have been presented with unequivocal evidence of the state of STEP MCL finances and we were sure the finances were on a sound footing. This action was essential as the latest published statutory accounts of STEP MCL from Company House showed a significant deficit between income and expenses of £27k (the majority of the extra money had been spent on grounds maintenance), and almost £48k owed by debtors (1<sup>st</sup> January 2007 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2008).

A meeting for all residents would be arranged immediately prior to the EGM.

#### **4. Open Forum**

Those present were given the opportunity to raise local issues with PC Cooper.

##### Vehicle Parking

Inappropriate/illegal parking of cars remains an issue on Willow Drive. Notes of advice had been placed on offending vehicles. Illegal parking of vehicles adjacent to the church was reported by one resident.

The maximum road speed on STEP is considered by PC Cooper to be 30mph; the 15mph signs, which were no longer applicable, needed to be removed by Staffs Highways Department. The chairman informed those present that more speed ramps and humps were yet to be installed. This prompted a request from one resident for the speed limit to be reduced to 20mph on STEP.

Concern was expressed about car parking on Wall Lane Terrace when it will be the only access/exit road for traffic during the 20 week period for roadworks at the A520/East Drive intersection. It was suggested that Staffs Highways Department should consider restricting car parking along Wall Lane Terrace. A leaflet drop would be needed to inform local residents. The earliest start date for the roadworks is considered to be end of May 2009.

##### Communal Areas

The chairman showed various recent photographs that he had taken of communal areas, to illustrate those areas which did not require remedial work and those which did. The latter included examples of poor soil drainage and preparation, dead and/or dangerous trees which needed urgent removal, poor state of summer houses, none of which should have been handed over by Redrow to CPM/RMG in such a poor state. These examples illustrated the need for the remedial work to be done and paid for by Redrow (not by residents) before they exit the site.

## Woodlands

There was evidence over the Easter weekend of bikes and scramblers being used in the woodland area off East Drive. This 'activity' emphasised the need for signs to be placed at various points to inform the public at large that the woodlands are private property. Signs have been ordered stating either 'please respect our woodlands' or 'private property'. Some (but not enough) residents had helped in litter picking on the Sunday prior to Easter, and had removed unwelcome rubbish from woodland areas. A request was made for a litter bin and dog refuse bin to be sited at the East Drive/A520 junction when the roadworks had been completed (**ACTION:** Charlotte Atkins offered to write to Staffs Moorlands District Council [SMDC] to support our request).

## Summer Houses

The roof of one of the summer houses had been stripped of lead. An insurance claim had been lodged by CPM/RMG. The condition of the summerhouses at handover from Redrow to CPM/RMG was also a cause for concern.

## Grit Bins

SMDC had agreed to provide a grit bin for the bottom of Willow Drive. However, Staffs Highways Department had not agreed to date to provide grit for the two existing grit bins donated by Redrow as the roads had not been adopted (**ACTION:** Charlotte Atkins offered to write to Staffs Highways Department to support our request for grit supplies).

## Covenants

The chairman expressed the concerns of the main committee regarding abuse of covenants by some residents. These covenants were set out in the legal documentation from Redrow when purchasing our properties. Examples included throwing garden refuse over a fence on to communal areas, installation of an illegal pathway across communal ground, and planting of shrubs on communal areas. The chairman reminded those present that planting in communal areas by residents, however good their intentions, was not permitted. These areas were the responsibility of CPM/RMG to manage. Apart from the roads, footpaths and lights which would be adopted by Staffs County Council in due course, everything else was private property including the woodland areas.

One of the main issues for the new committee would be to agree the process for dealing with, and preventing further abuse of covenants. In the first instance, the chairman will write to those residents who have not abided by a particular covenant. Photographic evidence of abuse of covenants is being compiled by the committee.

### External Brickwork

The chairman spoke of his concerns about crumbling of external walls/brickwork on chimneys on STEP. There was clear evidence of frost damage due to the standard of the bricks used. Both Redrow and the supplier were aware of the problem, but it is not clear where the responsibility lies on this matter. Residents were encouraged to contact Redrow after sales service as soon as possible if they had evidence of crumbling brickwork.

### Right of Way

Concern was expressed about the railings which had been erected at the bottom of the path leading to the crossing over the Churnet Valley Railway. The committee was collecting evidence regarding the status of this path, which had previously been the tram route up to the hospital. It had been used as a right of way for several years but had now been blocked off to the dismay of residents.

### Mortuary

The chairman and vice-chairman had spoken to Jim Lockett who has purchased the mortuary and surrounding land. Planning consent was given by SMDC for commercial use for storage, not on residential grounds. A path has been laid by the owner between Birchtree Drive and the approach to Villa Road. A letter had been sent to Mike Bowen (who sits on the SMDC Planning Committee) to clarify the planning consent and boundaries of the purchased land.

### Security Codes

A request for security codes for access to communal areas in apartment blocks to be changed after an agreed period was raised as an issue to be discussed with CPM/RMG.

### Purchase of Freeholds

The freeholds had been purchased by residents living in several blocks, including Kirkham Lodge, Malloy House and Wrottesley House.

### Service Charges

The estate charge for grounds maintenance on STEP (122 acres) was discussed. The committee consider this to be set far too low. There is a need to improve communal areas, particularly woodland areas, and the estate charge has to be increased to meet this need. Block insurance was considered excessive and could be obtained at a much cheaper rate if competitive tendering was used. There appears to be a cosy relationship between developer and managing agent for which there is no governance, no independent regulation, and no transparent handover from developer to managing agent.

## Communication

It was suggested by one resident that the frequency of meetings between residents and the committee should be increased to facilitate a 2-way process for information exchange (**ACTION:** Chairman to place on agenda for May committee meeting). Charlotte Atkins encouraged residents to use their collective power to influence developments on STEP before the developer leaves the site.

The chairman was thanked for all of his efforts on behalf of St Edward's Park residents.

**The meeting closed at 22.10**