

17th Oct 2020

Dear Helen

With regard to your emails dated 22 Sep 2020 and 10 Oct 2020 which specifically relate to the way the committee organised and actioned the construction of the new path round the pinch point, I wish to respond thus:.

Firstly, you mention the committee needs to be seen to be following procedure and due process.

Can you please point me in the direction where the committee may find the procedure and due process to which you refer?

You also mention there are strict rules around the procurement process in schools. This may very well be, but we are not a school or indeed any type of large organisation to which you seem to be making a comparison.

We are a small team of residents giving up our free time to carry forward the continuous upkeep of the road in whatever way the majority wish. Please show me the rules to which you refer which guide the Derby Road Fund Committee. They are certainly not in the Constitution because we did not have one in place at the time the decision was taken. Nor are they in the proposed Constitution drawn up by you and Simon. However, I would now suggest it is essential a clause is added to cover future Committee decisions with regard to expenditure. And, as you have mentioned, that all work must be tendered for, thereby excluding offers from members to carry out work to save the DRF unnecessary costs.

This is not to say you do not have a valid point. The committee have on other occasions taken projects to tender such as the road repairs and manufacture of the timber pinch points. But taking projects to tender is no guarantee of value for money or good workmanship if you do not have knowledge of what it is you are purchasing. If you do not have that knowledge then you employ someone who does, but this all costs money and your £65.00 does not go a long way in professional fees, I can assure you.

So how did the committee go about the procurement process? Common sense! Yes. We sat down round a table and weighed up the pros and cons.

Follow “due procedure” and waste an inordinate amount of time and money: as anyone will know trying to find three contractors to even come out and give a quotation and commit to a date in six months’ time if you’re lucky for a project of this size is almost impossible. I’m sorry to say that is the harsh reality and while you say “you find it quite frankly ridiculous.” it is not your time wasted making endless phone calls and waiting round for missed appointments.

Two members of the Committee volunteered to work on the footpath. They spent 30 hours preparing and installing it and the timber posts. The total labour cost amounted to £450. This was in line with the average rate paid to ground workers of £14.88 per hour. This is not the hourly rate we would be charged, you could be double this. A third member of the work party from FV volunteered his time for free to gain experience. He was paid in kind by the other two members.

In addition, this excludes a similar number of hours spent, and not charged for, in pre-installation work such as obtaining approvals and ordering of materials which would have been undertaken by a Technical person.

The Treasurer has always had in mind the need to obtain value for money in any project the Committee has authorised. When agreeing to this project it recognised the experience, both professional and practical, that the two members would bring to the work and it agreed to have it done in house. It was also felt that by carrying out the work in this way by members of the Committee, who were 100% committed to the project, the results would be better than employing outside contractors who would have been on a much longer lead-in period taking us into the winter.

You also mention the outcome of the work is of little consequence in favour of following due process. The committee would disagree, so you would advocate a poor job of greater expense following due process than a good cheaper job undertaken in house?

Your third point relates to payment of committee members for undertaking non committee duties in which you say *“There is clearly the implication of financial impropriety here when the committee decides to pay itself without following due process.”*

The whole committee resents the accusation of financial impropriety, where is your proof? The committee have nothing to hide, the expenditure is clearly detailed above and will be shown in the audited accounts for this year. The three volunteers worked from 8.00am until 8.00pm on one occasion installing the posts and the path a 12 hour day. As mentioned before the third member did not wish to be paid for his contribution and is happy to state as much should this be required. There was certainly no great financial benefit to the committee members and it was well earned.

The only ones to gain from this are the people of Derby Road.

One final thing, you mention in your email about working a 50 + hour week.

Now imagine not being paid for that work: the chairman, secretary and treasurer have easily exceeded those hours undertaking committee work this year for the benefit of the road. This does not include non committee work undertaken to assist residents of Moss Close and Ellesmere Close.

FAB of DRF Committee.