

Committee members

VENUE: 27 Derby Road

PRESENT: Chair: Lyn Anthony-Higgins (LA)

Treasurer: Helen Savidge (HS)

Committee: Sue Feather (SF), Jamie Harcourt (JH), Carole Kingston (CK),
Jon Lloyd (JL), Tanya Pynn (TP) – SF attended via Zoom.

Residents: One household joined the meeting at about halfway through via Zoom
(When referencing the above, first and second name abbreviations will be used throughout)

1

Welcome and introductions

LA welcomed everyone. She noted that the meeting was quorate and reminded members of meeting procedures. She reminded committee members to speak one at a time and not to stray from the items on the agenda or introduce any side issues.

2

Apologies for absence

None.

3

Minutes of meeting of 23rd September 2022

LA asked if the Committee agreed that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 23rd September be confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings of the agenda. All members voted and agreed.

4

Treasurer's Financial Report 23rd January 2023

HS had circulated the report by email prior to the meeting and asked if there were any questions. TP queried what she felt was a lack of detail on expenditure; HS confirmed that all expenditure had been itemised that there hadn't been a great deal of expenditure since the last meeting.

LA thanked HS for her report.

5

Annual general maintenance activities

The 2022 leaf sweep had taken place in two stages by committee members with the help of residents. This meant there was a saving of around £400 versus the previous cost of an outside contractor. TP said one resident had commented to her that Reading Borough Council (RBC) had done a better job in the past. JL said he had heard the opposite from residents who were very happy with the result. It was noted that when the previous committee had employed RBC to do this, the work was often done in January, by which time the leaves had mulched, with the end result being less tidy. It was felt that as it was quite a large project it was probably better done over two dates. JH felt doing the work ourselves was a good thing to get people involved. TP suggested that perhaps residents could do it for 2 years and on the third year to employ a contractor. It was decided to ask residents at the AGM whether the cost saving was worth it.

LA said gully clearance would be undertaken by RBC on Monday 6 February as they have the special equipment required for the 23 drains involved.

ACTION POINTS: Ask residents at the AGM whether to continue with doing the leaf sweep ourselves rather than paying a contractor.

Road safety ideas sessions

LA added this item to recap on the two informal brainstorming sessions undertaken by committee members in November and December. JH said he had been in contact with John Mullaney about various ideas. John Mullaney had proposed forming a group with JH to look into the issue. TP said she would be happy to join this. JH was mindful that any actions taken would have to be lawful and that it was about trying to restrict unauthorised traffic.

JH outlined some of his suggestions from the brainstorming sessions about a locked barrier in the road, although it was felt this would be unlawful or a legal nuisance based on the solicitor's legal advice received by the previous Committee.

JL asked TP her thoughts on signage, which she had looked into following the first brainstorming meeting. TP had come to the conclusion that there were those who took notice of signs and those that didn't, so was unsure of how beneficial new signs would be when we were unable to police the road and had no authority to do so. She mentioned 'elderly people' and 'pedestrians have priority' road signs as possible options. JL noted that the Highway Code appeared to state that pedestrians did not have priority if they are walking in the road except at road junctions. LA felt there were too many signs on Derby Road and an audit of these signs would be beneficial in order to remove any ineffective ones as well as considering adding signs. SF pointed out that it was difficult to get a majority view on this because the AGM meetings were not generally well attended. HS said we should start the conversation at the AGM.

JH handed round hard copies of research he and his wife had come up with, but this was not discussed as it had not been presented to members in advance and appeared to cover old ground. HS felt a list of possible ideas could be emailed to John Mullaney which could then be taken forward rather than revisiting old points.

CK reminded members that it was necessary to concentrate on the physical aspects of the road in relation to which something could be done legally. She said that a Grosvenor Road resident avoided Derby Road wherever possible because of the speed bumps, which suggested they were having the desired effect.

JH had also provided some mock-ups of an idea to reduce the width of the Derby Road/Grosvenor Road junction that had been first mooted by JL at one of the brainstorming sessions to make it more of a T-junction and slow down traffic turning left from Grosvenor Road into Derby Road. HS asked if there were any examples locally of what JH had in mind; JH did not know of any. There were questions as to the width of the road being sufficient for two vehicles to pass as well as the ability for trucks to pass through. CK said we would need to get professional advice before embarking on this and that it would also be necessary to contact Queen Anne's School because it was on their side of the road. The previous contact person at QA had recently left and DRFA had not yet been given details of the present incumbent. JL said that whatever was done would have to be visible in all weather conditions so as not to create a problem of liability. LA said the safety officer could advise on any proposals. Planning permission would also be necessary. JH said there would probably need to be a sign saying new junction layout. Further research was therefore needed.

JH raised the suggestion of a lockable gate again but accepted that it could be a 'nuisance' in the legal sense. John Mullaney had previously advised that any closure of any kind on the road would have to be manned to allow residents through. JL said that this would render unmanned options off the table.

TP said that ultimately she felt the legal issue would need to go in front of a judge. She stated that she was in the process of getting a court judgment starting from scratch, at her own cost. She said this was because otherwise there would be no resolution to the issue due to residents' differing views. JL noted the solicitor's legal advice already received on this issue. JH asked if DRFA had paid for any solicitors on this. He was reminded that the

treasurer and chairman of the previous Committee (of which he was also a member) had employed a solicitor on DRFA's behalf in early 2020, who had given a legal opinion on this. JH asked how much this had cost. HS said it was around £600. There was discussion that a court judgment could cost a lot more and could be a bottomless pit. CK said the DRFA couldn't undertake to spend funds on that.

ACTION POINTS:

- Audit the signage in Derby Road.
- Ask residents at the AGM what (if any) signage they thought would be appropriate.

7

CityFibre build – Statutory undertakers

LA updated the Committee on CityFibre who had sent apologies re earlier miscommunication issues on Derby Road (this had been put on the website). She updated the Committee on the status of the works, with the final making good of damage to the road expected to be completed shortly. A damaged bollard near Derby Villas which JL photographed was to be passed on to CityFibre re reparations and LA also said CityFibre had agreed to re-do the white markings on the Grosvenor Road/Derby Road entrance. LA had already walked the road with a member of CityFibre in December and said if there is any issue at any time they will come back and deal with any problems and the 2 year guarantee will start from that point. She said it was important that if anyone has any issues, they should report it to the DRFA.

LA also noted that there had been some confusion at CityFibre's end re Derby Road because a member of the road had already been in contact with them earlier in 2022 purporting to represent the residents. This might explain why City Fibre were under the impression that Grosvenor Road and Derby Road were under one management rather than separate. CityFibre now understood the situation and who to contact, both re Derby Road and the privately maintained side roads. She said it would be important that DRFA tries to stop something like this happening in the future insofar as that is possible. TP asked if RBC had contact information for Derby Road that they could pass on. LA said this work was nothing to do with RBC, as it was classified as a statutory undertaking and CityFibre had a legal right to do what they are doing. Unfortunately nothing can be put in place for any future cases involving any future statutory undertakings until they happen. LA reported to the committee that City Fibre had updated their systems to reflect the correct position, that the two side roads off of Derby Road, Field View and Michaels Chase are under different management.

8

Communications

a) Committee members' access to DR gmail account: TP was concerned that the management of the DRFA gmail account could be an onerous job that should be shared by all and felt that all Committee members should have access to the account. LA said there was an assumption that we are inundated with emails but this was not the case. HS said she also had a treasurer's gmail account. LA confirmed that any emails received are forwarded to the whole committee. TP asked if there was a timeframe for response. LA said that there wasn't as it depended on the issue, but noted that an acknowledgement of receipt is sent out. TP said she was told a resident had sent an email and had not received a response soon after the AGM. LA apologised if that was the case. HS said that she did not know whether there had been a reply, but that the issue in question had been addressed in a committee meeting.

JL raised concerns regarding GDPR as his email address had been misused by ex-committee members on several occasions and as such it would be best to restrict the number of people who had access to residents' personal information. LA said there was a time in the past when the DRFA gmail account was linked to a committee member's personal account and it was a few months before it was unlinked, which could have been problematic. LA noted that the previous DRFA committees had been reported a couple of times to the Information

Commissioner's Office, so it was important to be cautious re sharing personal information. In terms of the DRFA gmail address, the Chair and Treasurer have access. HS confirmed she did not send replies from the DRFA gmail account herself. TP felt this mechanism did provide an opportunity for transparency. LA said if the situation should change, then this would be revisited.

b) Residents' correspondence: TP raised the issue of how residents should be communicated with. JL mentioned that the idea of residents' correspondence being recorded in meeting minutes had been suggested at the 2022 AGM, but there were issues of confidentiality and whether the correspondent being named was happy to be named or not. TP and JL agreed that such a process may have been a hangover from an earlier era when meeting minutes were not made available to residents.

TP said she was also trying to find as many ways as possible to get information to residents, be it via post, email, texting, Facebook or any other means. JL said that the recurrent DRFA communications with residents were relatively few – the annual request for contributions (and any reminders) and details of the AGM – which were sent to all residents either via hard copy or email. Discussion took place on the viability of contacting all residents to inform them about future committee meetings. JL said there had been a big drive to get people involved in early 2021 and to attend meetings when the Constitution was being drawn up, but only a few residents had done so. LA noted that the DRFA is not a residents' association.

TP suggested that the two Facebook pages could be combined. There had been misconceptions in relation to one of the Facebook pages being an official DRFA Committee page. JL said he had addressed this point in detail at the 2022 AGM. He said he posted updates re the DRFA on the original Facebook page as a means of reaching as many residents as possible following discussion of this at the 2021 AGM. HS said that as such, the DRFA had no control over either Facebook page and so this was not the DRFA's decision to make. TP said she would contact the admins of both Facebook pages in a personal capacity to discuss her idea.

TP queried whether all leaseholders had voting rights under the Constitution. JL clarified the difference between leaseholders and tenants. There is only one vote per household, which would normally be the named freeholder or leaseholder. A tenant can, with the permission of the owner, be given a proxy vote if the owner is a full member.

SF noted that the DRFA website address and contact details were put on all correspondence sent to residents, but that the website did not experience much traffic as a result.

Part 1 of the meeting ended at 7:45pm