

Committee members

PRESENT: Chair: Lyn Anthony-Higgins (LA)
Treasurer: Carole Kingston (CK)
Secretary: Sue Feather (SF – attended via Zoom)
Committee: Jamie Harcourt (JamieH), Jennifer Hooper (JH), Jon Lloyd (JL)
(When referencing the above, first and second name abbreviations will be used throughout.)

THIS MEETING WAS HELD AT QUEEN ANNE'S SCHOOL.

1

Welcome and introductions

LA welcomed everyone to the third constituted DRFA AGM and stated she would be chairing the meeting. She noted that the meeting was quorate. She noted the meeting would be recorded to aid the minutes.

She thanked Queen Anne's School (QAS) for their continued support in the hire of their facilities. She also thanked Andrew Lawson for loaning his new microphones for the meeting. She introduced Adnan Chaundry from Southern Housing for Mander Court.

VOTING: LA introduced Richard Stainthorp (RS), the independent Adjudicator, who had performed this role at last year's AGM and would be responsible for the adjudicating and counting of proxy votes, votes in the room and declaration of votes cast. She reminded attendees that there is only one vote per household. Only full members as set out in para 3.2 of the DRFA Constitution would be eligible to vote. LA thanked RS for once again undertaking this role.

RS reminded the room of the Code of Conduct and said all members at the meeting were responsible for conducting themselves in a way that does not cause offence or limits the ability of others to participate in the meeting. They must speak in a polite and respectful manner and not use rude or abusive language. He said that if everyone abided by those rules, it would be a positive meeting,

LA said comments on each of the agenda items would be welcomed and would be taken from as many people as time allowed for. She said that disruptions would drown out valid points that could be made.

The DRFA Committee members then introduced themselves. JamieH stated that he would be retiring from the Committee at item 6 on the agenda.

2

Apologies for absence

Nine households had sent their apologies.

3

Minutes of meetings the AGM held on 11 July 2023

LA asked members to vote on approving the 2023 AGM minutes. She reminded members that the minutes are a factual record of the meeting.

VOTING For: 77 Against: 0 APPROVED

The 2023 minutes were agreed and accepted with no amendments.

4

Treasurer's report and Summary of accounts for period ended 31 March 2024

CK said the accounts had been circulated on the reverse side of the agenda for this meeting but offered paper copies to those who wished to have them. She said that although the number of contributions was down a little on last year, the income was up slightly and that expenditure had been fairly low this year.

She recalled that at last year's AGM she reported that a couple of surveyors had inspected the road in 2023 and didn't feel there was an urgent need for re-surfacing. At the moment there are only small areas of degradations that might need to be repaired.

Tanya Pynn queried why the signage costs were not included in the accounts. CK clarified that this work had been carried out after the end of the 2023/24 financial year, so these would appear on next year's accounts.

CK stated the Committee's recommendation that the contribution level for 2024/25 should be frozen for the third consecutive year. She also said she would be sending out the contribution letter at the end of July. Attendees were asked if they approved the Treasurer's report and Summary of Accounts for the 2023/24 period.

Treasurer's report

VOTING: For: 74 Against: 0 APPROVED

LA asked attendees to approve freezing the 2024/25 contribution levels for the third consecutive year.

Contribution level frozen for 2024/25 (same as 2022/23 and 2023/24)

VOTING: For: 77 Against: 0 APPROVED

5 Appointment of accountant/book-keeper to 31 March 2025

LA asked attendees to approve the Appointment of Michael Wallace Associates Ltd T/A Rosemary Bookkeeping as DRFA Independent Examiner for the period to 31 March 2025.

VOTING: For: 77 Against: 0 APPROVED

6 Election of Committee members

LA noted that Tanya Pynn had recently resigned from the Committee and JamieH was stepping down at this meeting. She thanked them both for their contributions to the work of the DRFA Committee and they were given a round of applause.

LA said no new nominations had been received following the AGM invitation sent to residents. She stated that a resident had put themselves forward a few months ago, but the status of the application was uncertain as not all the documentation for the nomination had been returned. Helen Lambert asked if residents could put themselves forward to join the Committee outside of the AGM. LA confirmed that nominations from eligible residents could be processed at any time and asked anyone who might be interested to make contact with the Committee.

LA stated that she, CK, SF, JH and JL had put themselves forward for re-election. Attendees were asked to approve the re-election of these members

VOTING For: 72 Against: 0 APPROVED

7 Thames Valley Police road safety audit – update

LA referred to the recommendations in the report by Tony Griffiths (Traffic Management Officer, TVP) and agreed at the 2023 AGM.

LA said she thought it important to note that the TVP DR road safety audit was a very detailed and precise report at no cost to the Fund. She stated the report's recommendations clearly added value in terms of ensuring current guidance and regulations were adhered to in planning what would be done to the road.

She said the first stage of work, updating the signage on the road, had now been completed. Five new signs had been installed and further details were available on the DRFA website.

She said the second stage of work would commence on the following recommendations:

- a. Refresh and re-instate road markings to highlight the hazards.
- b. Re-instate the road/give-way markings at the Grosvenor Road/Derby Road junction, including a design layout to mark a tighter curve entering Derby Road and including a marked pedestrian refuge.

LA noted that on 22 May, a vehicle had collided during daylight hours with the same planter that had been hit twice before. She noted that the 2023 TVP report stated that there had been no cases of reported injury collisions on Derby Road in the previous 10 years. Given the severity of the damage (the wooden structure had suffered damage and had split into two separate parts), for safety reasons the planter had been removed from the road. The incident had been reported to the police and a crime number issued, an appeal for witnesses had been published and the DRFA insurers had been notified.

LA stated that although Derby Road is an unadopted road, it is in the interests of residents and users of the road that any works done in relation to the road were carried out in line with current guidance and regulations. The TVP road safety audit had given a clear indication of the importance of particular issues and problems raised. She said this provided an opportunity to explore new and smarter road safety traffic measures to assist the community in having a clear vision and to make balanced and reasonable decisions. She noted that the TVP report recommended that any planning or scheme of work should be carried out by a qualified road engineer/company expert. This would allow options to be explored, consultation to be undertaken, detailed costs for options and maintenance to be considered without creating any extra liability.

Gillian Vooght said 60 residents had originally voted in the pinch point, so all residents would need to approve the removal of the planters and that the Secretary of State would also need to be involved. LA thanked her for her comments, but recalled these had already been made during the 2023 TVP road safety audit walk of the road attended by residents and councillors from Reading Borough Council. LA felt a road traffic engineer expert could provide new and smarter alternative road safety traffic calming measures. Gillian Vooght said there was no need to spend money on other options when she felt the pinch point had worked well. JL noted that the TVP safety report had recommended that the pinch point planters be moved because of their proximity to the Field View junction and the potential hazard this created.

Simon Scaddan said the proposal to look at other options was a good idea and it was worth having an open mind as there might be better options. Andrew Taylor also felt that seeking a range of options was a reasonable approach to take. JamieH said he had offered to repair the planter, but agreed that it wasn't in the best position at present. He said any change would take time to implement.

Gillian Vooght claimed that the planter had been damaged because a pole and reflectors had been removed and so it wasn't visible to drivers. She said the other planter still had these and hadn't been hit. JL said that the recent collision had happened in broad daylight so visibility was very unlikely to have been the cause. He stated that the undamaged planter was often surrounded by parked cars and also was not next to a road junction like the damaged planter was. He also noted that no one had witnessed the incident so comments on the cause of the collision were assumptions. Andrew Taylor agreed that any theories as to why the collision had happened were just speculation.

CK said that there had been a long-standing and sometimes heated debate about how best to ensure safety on the road. She said she would like to seek the approval of the attendees to submit the relevant legal documents to the DRFA insurers to seek clarification about any proposed actions that might affect the indemnity and report these findings to residents. As treasurer she has a particular interest because it was her duty to protect the fund against any sort of liability or adverse events.

JL felt bringing in a third party with expertise to offer options would be useful as the residents and the Committee were amateurs in this field, and giving this to someone else might take the heat out of the arguments on the subject. He said an expert would also present ideas that would be lawful and would not create liability, both of which were crucial as the current Committee and any future committee would be obliged to work within this legal framework.

JamieH asked if there had ever been a serious discussion with Grosvenor Road on this issue. JL said he had been told by an attendee of a Grosvenor Road AGM that the Grosvenor Road Committee had been asked to comment on the legal advice Derby Road had received re blocking the road and had declined to do so, other than to say they were aware they were operating in a legal grey area.

Helen Lambert asked whether LA's proposal to engage an expert to advise on options for the road and CK's wish to seek comments from the DRFA insurers on the legal advice re the liability issue were separate points or part of the same one. JL said the two were different stages in the same process, because the insurers' answers to the liability questions CK was planning to put to them might affect what options would be viable for the expert proposed by LA to consider. So the insurers would be approached first.

CK said the aim would be to consult with all residents and businesses as part of this process, but the time collecting together all the documents to send to the insurers would take meant she was unable to give an exact timeframe for this.

Andrew Taylor expressed concern that a frontager might veto a road safety measure outside their property. LA said she hoped this scenario could be avoided. She also noted that the costs would need to be explored and if these went above the £600+VAT limit in the DRFA Constitution, the Committee would seek approval from residents and businesses for this.

LA said she was seeking a vote of approval from the meeting on the road expert proposal being the way the road safety/traffic calming issue would be taken forward by the Committee. It was clarified that the proposal is that CK would first provide the insurers with the legal advice and legal documentation to get their opinion on the public liability element of whether the insurance would be affected by certain measures happening or not happening on the road. When that comes back and it will be clearer what options were then possible (or not), an expert will then be approached to consult with residents, compile a report and present recommendations.

Tanya Pynn asked whether people who are not DRFA members would be included in this process. JL clarified that all residents were treated as either full or associate DRFA members under the Constitution and would be included for the purposes of consultation. LA added that consultation and voting were separate issues. She said that businesses would be involved too. Chris Latto asked if the pinch point would be considered as an option. LA said all options that would be possible would be considered.

RS asked for a Proposer and Seconder for the vote: Andrew Taylor proposed and JamieH seconded. RS said it was also possible to abstain on this vote.

VOTING: For: 74 Against: 0 Abstentions: 0 APPROVED

Meeting ended at 8.20pm