

Committee members

Zoom meeting

PRESENT: Chair: Lyn Anthony-Higgins (LA)
Committee: Sue Feather (SF: Secretary), Carole Kingston (CK: Treasurer),
Jamie Harcourt (Jamie H), Jennifer Hooper (JH), Jon Lloyd (JL),
Tanya Pynn (TP)

(When referencing the above, first and second name abbreviations will be used throughout)

Welcome and introductions

LA, SF, JH, JL and TP were in attendance. Jamie H joined but then dropped out until halfway through item 2. CK joined during item 2.

LA welcomed everyone. She noted that a new volunteer was in the process of applying to join the DRFA Committee and had been sent the link to watch the meeting, but was not in attendance at present.

1 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

2 Approval of minutes of meeting held on 10th October 2023

LA asked if the Committee agreed that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 10th October 2023 be confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings. All those present voted in favour.

LA addressed an issue that had arisen from the previous meeting and the minutes. Two members (Jamie H and TP) were on record as stating they had paid their 2023/24 contribution at the 10th October meeting when they had not. In fact, both had only paid a few weeks ago. This was a requirement of membership of the Committee under the DRFA Constitution. Only TP was present at this point so LA asked her if there was a reason for this.

TP said she thought the requirement was to pay the contribution by 1st March. LA clarified that members of the Committee must have contributed before the first meeting after the AGM so that they could fulfil the membership requirement and take part as full members in the meeting. TP apologised and said it was a misunderstanding on her part.

JL noted that all attendees at the 10th October meeting had been asked if they had paid the latest contribution and everyone had confirmed they had done so. He struggled to understand why someone who had not contributed would claim that they had done so when asked the question directly. TP said she had misunderstood when the contribution needed to be paid by. JL asked TP why she had not made this point when asked about her contribution status at the previous meeting. TP could not explain why she had indicated at the meeting she had contributed when in fact she had not. She said it would be necessary for her to go away and do research to come up with an answer to this.

JL pointed out that the Constitution were clear that only full members who had paid their contribution for that year could be Committee members. As such, he noted that TP and Jamie H had participated in the last meeting despite being ineligible to do so under the conditions of membership. This raised a question mark over whether they were still Committee members or not as there was no provision for lapses in membership. TP agreed that her status was uncertain.

LA said it was important to know what had happened as this situation created a lack of clarity and it would be necessary to work out how to proceed. SF felt that members should realise that if they hadn't paid, they could not act as Committee members. LA stated this was why she had specifically asked if everyone had paid in full at the 10th October meeting and it was a question asked each year during the first meeting after the AGM to confirm the status of members.

LA asked TP how she thought the situation should be dealt with going forward. TP said the Committee should decide what the ramifications should be and what should happen next. JH felt the Committee needed to hear from Jamie H (who wasn't present at that point) before a decision could be made.

Jamie H rejoined the meeting after his laptop had crashed. LA gave Jamie H a recap on the discussion and asked him why he had not contributed before the 10th October meeting and why he had stated at that meeting that he had. Jamie H replied that his wife dealt with these matters, but she had been busy and paying the DRFA contribution had not been a priority. He said his wife had received the recent reminder from CK about outstanding contributions and had now done so. He didn't feel this was an important point as nothing significant had taken place at the previous meeting. LA again asked how the situation should be dealt with.

JL asked Jamie H the same question he had asked TP in terms of explaining why Jamie H had told other Committee members he had contributed at the last meeting when he had not. Jamie H said he thought he had paid and that his wife was in charge of this area. JL noted that in 2021 Jamie H had attended the first meeting after the AGM without contributing and had been told by LA he would need to contribute first before he could participate in that meeting, so he was already aware of the correct procedure. JL suggested Jamie H should not have given a definite answer at the meeting if he was unsure of his status. Jamie H conceded that he should have checked, but felt the issue was not a serious problem.

SF said she felt the problem was that everyone on the Committee is expected to follow the same rules in the Constitution and Code of Conduct that they had signed up to, but Jamie H appeared to have ignored these. Jamie H denied doing so. JL said there was a process and set of criteria for being a Committee member: all members had signed up to these and so all were expected to abide by those terms. If members were not prepared to abide by those terms, then that would raise further questions.

TP felt Committee members should have been reminded to contribute if they hadn't done so before the first meeting after the AGM. LA said it was up to individual members to ensure they fulfilled the terms of membership they had signed up to. She felt the Committee would be failing residents if its members did not abide by the rules in the Constitution and Code of Conduct. She said the issue would need to be resolved but this should be left for a later discussion so as not to delay the rest of the meeting.

Action: SF to upload minutes to the website.

Committee to decide on status of Committee members with lapses in their membership status.

3

Treasurer's financial report

LA said the report had been circulated prior to the meeting and asked CK how contributions were looking. CK said so far she had received 97 contributions from households, plus the block contributions from Queen Anne's School and Mander Court (74). She stated that more of the larger contributions had been paid this year compared to last year. She noted that in terms of voting rights at the forthcoming AGM, a cut-off date of 31st March (the end of the DRFA financial year) for contributions had only been given in the reminder letter recently sent out in February, but this point had been made explicit in the letter sent out to avoid any confusion.

CK raised a question about an issue regarding a new property owner, who had requested a pro rata contribution rate be applied as they had only lived on the road for part of the year. LA expressed concern that doing so would have administrative implications, but CK felt this would help build bridges and start things off on the right foot with new residents. JL said that while he understood that pre-Constitution Committees had not offered pro rata payments, Helen Savidge had been in favour of doing so when she was Treasurer. TP confirmed that Helen had allowed her to make a part-payment when she first moved in and the previous owner had not contributed. JL said this would only be an issue for the first year of ownership, so would involve a fairly small number of cases each year. LA agreed that the pro rata rate should be allowed for the first year. All members concurred.

Action: CK to go back to the new resident confirming that a pro rata payment could be made for the first year.

4 Annual gully cleaning: condition update

LA reported on the condition of drains and gullies. She noted that the gully outside 3–4 Moss Close flows slowly and the gully joint with Ellesmere Close outside 6–7 does not flow. Reading Borough Council had been notified and had confirmed that both Council-owned gullies had been added to their inspection list of works to be carried out.

LA also noted that there were quite a few privately owned drain lids that were broken.

5 Road Signage update

LA had received three quotes in regard to the new and replacement traffic signs agreed at previous meetings following the TVP safety report:

- Royal British Legion Industries had quoted £353.38 (inc VAT), but this did not include any removal and installation services.
- Thames Valley Signs had quoted £630.80 (inc VAT) which included removal and installation.
- Signway had quoted £1,209.71 (inc VAT) which included removal and installation, as well as a traffic management scheme while installation was taking place.

LA felt that as Royal British Legion Industries was not offering the full service and the Signway quote was nearly double the Thames Valley Signs quote, she recommended going with Thames Valley Signs as it fulfilled the requirements of the Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2016 (TSRGD). JL said it would help to see the wording of the quotes before making a decision. LA agreed to circulate the quotes after the meeting. She confirmed that Thames Valley Signs had dealt with unadopted roads. CK asked if there was a need to get permission from frontagers. LA confirmed that Mander Court had agreed and that no one else was affected.

TP asked if there was a financial limit that the Committee could agree to without needing approval from residents. LA confirmed the limit given in the Constitution is £600 + VAT, so the Thames Valley Signs quote would fall below that threshold. JL asked if the signs could be installed before the AGM. LA said yes as she wanted to deliver what had been discussed and agreed at last year's AGM.

Action: LA to circulate the three quotes for road signage. Email response required from Committee members to agree on a contractor to undertake the work.

Meeting ended at 7.20pm