

Committee members

PRESENT: Chair: Lyn Anthony-Higgins (LA)
Committee: Sue Feather (SF: Secretary – attended via Zoom),
Carole Kingston (CK: Treasurer), Jennifer Hooper (JH), Jon Lloyd (JL)

(When referencing the above, first and second name abbreviations will be used throughout)
The meeting was quorate.

1

Apologies for absence

None.

2

Approval of minutes of meeting held on 25 July 2024

With a one word minor change, the minutes were approved by all. CK confirmed all committee members had paid their voluntary contribution for 2024-25.

Action: SF to upload minutes to the website.

3

Treasurer's Financial Report 2024-25

CK gave an update on contributions and noted there had been a misunderstanding with one contributor which she was in the process of resolving. She noted she was still in the process of updating the database with correct details following recent house moves and dealing with tenanted properties. It was agreed that some text would be added to forthcoming contribution reminder letters to try and address the issue of tenanted properties and getting communications re contributions passed on to the owners.

JL queried whether the final contributor numbers for 2022/23 and 2023/24 were up to date as he believed there had been several last-minute payments in both years. He offered to help CK with checking this info for the next AGM.

Action: JL to help Carol check the past contribution numbers.

4

TVP Road Safety Audit report recommendations: quotes to refresh and re-instate existing road markings: implementation

Since the last meeting, three quotes for the road markings had been requested and two had responded:

1. Wilson & Scott (Highways) Ltd. Quote £1,988.41 plus VAT – Total £2,386.09.
2. Reading Borough Council Highways Commercial Services £1,463.90 + VAT – Total £1,756.68. The Council will instruct WJ South to carry out these works.

Committee members had all voted in favour of Reading Borough Council Commercial Services' quote of £1,463.90 + VAT (total £1,756.68). As the quote exceeded the £600 + VAT limit set out in Clause 12.7 of the DRFA Constitution for expenditure that can be authorised by the Committee, a communication had been sent to residents and businesses to seek their approval to the recommended quote, with a minimum of 50 votes cast by DRFA full members and a threshold of 70% of those votes in favour being required for the work to be approved. LA noted that the closing date for responses had not yet passed, but the responses so far had been overwhelmingly in favour. She noted that if approved, the work should be carried out as quickly as possible after the closing date before the weather turns.

Action: Total votes to be counted after closing date and work to be actioned ASAP if the voting threshold is met.

5

Planned annual inspections and maintenance of Derby Road infrastructure assets

Quotes for visual inspection of street lights

There are 10 street lights on Derby Road, 2 of which are in the ownership of the Council. LA had informed the Committee that there appeared to be no record of maintenance or inspections since 2018 when the LED lights were installed. The Committee agreed to seek quotes for a visual inspection. Three quotes were received and the Committee approved the quote of £585 + VAT (£702 total) by Carter Electricals to undertake these works.

The inspection had been carried out on 27 August and noted one replacement bulb required (£42.75 + VAT = £52.50 total). However, it had also flagged up a broken lamp cover on streetlight no 8 outside 17/19 Derby Road. Attempts had been made to find a replacement but because the lamp was over 40 years old and the manufacturer had ceased trading years ago, this had not been possible and a new lamp and cover were now required. Because of the need to have a functioning light due to the darker evenings, the Committee agreed for this work to be carried out at a cost of £324.99 + £65.00 VAT (total £389.99).

The inspection report also highlighted some potential safety concerns about the old streetlights due to their age. JL recalled that the 2018 AGM minutes had mentioned that an option to replace all the streetlights had been raised but had been rejected. He also noted potential safety concerns about the lights being mentioned in the 2019 AGM minutes, so this appeared to be a long-running issue. LA felt it was very likely that the streetlights would need replacing in the not too distant future. She had written to the distributor, Scottish & Southern Electricity Network (SEN) and would also write to Reading Borough Council (RBC).

Action: LA to contact RBC re the findings of the streetlights report and SEN's response.

6

Update TVP Road Safety Audit 2023 Report Recommendations Brief for Qualified Highway Engineer: Traffic Calming Measures

Brief for the appointment of a qualified Highway Engineer expert to:

1. explore new and smarter potential road safety traffic measures;
2. explore options that might discourage vehicles from passing through without originating or stopping on the road, but without affecting the rights of way of residents, businesses and their visitors;
3. design options and, following a consultation with residents and businesses, provide detailed final drawings and a report for the Committee to approve;

The DRFA Committee is in the process of providing its insurers with DRFA and private 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. The insurer's response will inform what options are then possible.

Three quotes had been submitted for this work. LA asked Committee members to submit any supplementary questions if they had any so that these could be sent on to the companies. It was agreed that one of the quotes received did not seem to meet the brief.

All three companies strongly recommended that the Committee should commission a measured survey of the road (a topographical survey) as this would provide an accurate basis on which traffic calming drawings could be created. However, before making a decision for recommendation to residents and businesses, further information would be sought as to the benefits and costs of such a survey.

CK agreed to revert back to [REDACTED] to move forward with the information being collated for the insurers as that will inform residents on which traffic calming options would be feasible.

Action: Committee members to submit any further questions re quotes received.
CK to make progress re contacting the insurers.

7

SSEN Response

In response to LA's enquiries, SSEN made a site visit to Derby Road on 13 September, during which they had made streetlight no. 8 safe by removing the fuse so that the wire was no longer live in advance of the bulb/cover replacement. A written response from SSRN had just been received and was circulated.

8

Other updates

Planter collision: It was noted that since the last meeting, there had been another collision on 1 August, this time with the remaining planter in the road next to Ellesmere Close allegedly by a vehicle turning left out of Field View. This had rotated the planter round in the road and caused significant structural damage to it. A resident had provided a photo of the side of a vehicle (although unfortunately not the number plate) and another resident had handed in a fog lamp cover found in the road afterwards to LA. LA made contact with the company owning the vehicle. However, the company claimed the colour of the fog lamp cover did not match their vehicles and their drivers had not reported any damaged vehicles, which they were obliged to do. Because of the lack of number plate details, the matter could not be pursued further.

LA noted that the extent of the structural damage to both planters and the degradation of the wood from years of water ingress meant a repair would not be possible. The planters were not insured and the repeated collisions now involving both planters also reinforced the continuing liability risk their positioning on the road posed going forward. As such, on the grounds of safety, it was agreed that they would have to be taken away completely. Quotes would be sought for this.

Correspondence: In the absence of any updates since the last meeting on the letter discussed then, it was decided that nothing more could be done on this at this time.

Contribution reminder letters: It was agreed that two reminder letters for contributions would be sent out – one at the end of October and another in February 2025. It was noted that care needed to be taken not to overload residents/businesses with communications. Email permissions would continue to be sought and the database updated accordingly.

Meeting ended at 6.45pm