

Committee members

VENUE: 27 Derby Road

PRESENT: Chair: Lyn Anthony-Higgins (LA)
Treasurer: Carole Kingston (CK) (confirmed appointment in meeting)
Committee: Sue Feather (SF – attended via Zoom), Jamie Harcourt (Jamie H),
Jon Lloyd (JL), Tanya Pynn (TP) Jennifer Hooper, newly elected
member, joined the meeting via zoom at the end of Item 5

Residents: One other household joined the meeting 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 also reminded Committee members to speak one at a time.

LA then stated that a nomination to join the Committee had been received from Jennifer Hooper (nominated by JL and seconded by LA). LA said Jennifer H complied with the full membership clauses of the DRFA Constitution/Code of Conduct and that she would be joining the meeting later via Zoom. Jamie H mentioned that LA had sent an email to the Committee before the meeting which suggested that Jennifer H had already been accepted as a member and this was not correct procedure. JL agreed that nominations should be presented at the next meeting before being confirmed, but said that unless there was an issue under the Constitution/Code of Conduct with a nominee's eligibility, any person who fulfilled the criteria would be accepted if there were spaces to fill. It was agreed that going forward, nominations would be presented at the next Committee meeting.

2

Apologies for absence

None.

3

Minutes of meeting of 30th January 2023

LA asked if the Committee agreed that the minutes of the Committee meeting held on 30th January be confirmed as an accurate record of the proceedings of the agenda. All members voted and agreed.

4

Appointment of Treasurer

LA confirmed that Helen Savidge (HS) had moved and so had stepped down as Treasurer. She gave the following statement: 'The Committee wishes to formally place on record their thanks to Helen for her sterling efforts in carrying out her fiduciary duties. It is reassuring that under her stewardship, accounting systems and practices have been developed which has led to being financially efficient and transparent in the monitoring, preparation and production of quarterly itemised expenditure reports to Committee and DRFA annual statement of accounts to residents and businesses. The Committee also thanks Helen for her flexible, constructive contribution to other Committee chores which she readily helped with a cheery smile.'

LA also read out a leaving statement from HS: 'I am pleased that we have got the printing etc costs down to below £100 by using a firm that is independent of committee members. Previously spending on this was around £250. I also have enjoyed setting up the treasurer's reports for each meeting so that the committee has been given itemised expenditure which is transparent as to what exactly money has been spent on during the year and that this has been provided as a matter of routine.'

Jamie H suggested sending HS a thankyou card from the Committee. LA stated that members were already aware that CK has kindly agreed to undertake the Treasurer's role and thanked

her on behalf of the Committee for doing so. She asked members to confirm that they endorsed CK's appointment as Treasurer. All members agreed.

5

Treasurer's Financial Report

CK detailed expenditure items since the last meeting. She informed the Committee that this year Queen Anne's School (QAS) would require a contribution for the hire of the hall for the 2023 AGM, although this would be at a reduced rate rather than a commercial rate. She also noted that the recent gully clearance invoice from Reading Borough Council (RBC) had been incorrect on two occasions. LA stated a credit note was expected for this, but that this invoice would now fall into the 2023/24 financial year as a result.

Jamie H noted that one of the drains on the road had been slow to drain after a period of heavy rain. TP said some of the soakaways had taken up to 48 hours to clear in the recent bad weather. LA said that it would be necessary to get information regarding positioning and where the drainage was feeding into from RBC and/or Thames Water because the system did not appear to be coping despite being cleaned and jetted out. Jamie H said he had noticed a small area of subsidence but he could not remember the exact location but would investigate.

TP asked for the number of contributions to the fund this year. CK said 174 had contributed in 2022–23. TP was concerned that some residents might only make a token contribution in order to secure a vote as a full member as the system was voluntary. SF read out the relevant clause in the Constitution and felt the wording clearly suggested a full contribution was required to be a full member. LA said the principle was voluntary but the contribution requested was based on Council Tax banding, so there was a specific requested amount given to each household. TP suggested the link between contributions and votes could be emphasised in the AGM letter.

Jamie H expressed concern over the number of households not contributing. JL reminded the Committee that the number of households contributing over recent years had been fairly similar, both before and after it was deemed to be voluntary. SF suggested sending out a third final request letter for contributions in early March ahead of the end of the financial year, which should mention that there would be implications in terms of how soon the road could be resurfaced if people did not help out by contributing. It was agreed to trial this next year.

TP suggested that non-contributors attending the upcoming AGM could be asked to contribute on their arrival. JL felt this would be going too far and it was important to be inclusive; however, he said the point about the implications of not contributing on the future maintenance of the road could be emphasised to all attendees.

Jamie H asked whether the contribution rate would be changed for 2023/24. JL felt that despite inflation, the current economic situation made it hard to justify increasing the contributions this year. CK agreed. Jamie H pointed out that the fund wouldn't stretch far if contractors continued to increase their prices. JL said it would be unfair to expect current contributors to pay more and that encouraging more non-contributors to help out would be a fairer way of dealing with this situation. It was agreed that it would be proposed at the AGM that the contribution rates should stay the same for at least the coming year in view of recent cost of living increases.

Jamie H said it would be good to get a quotation for the road resurfacing so that residents would understand the amounts involved. LA said she had already asked two contractors for quotes which hopefully would be received in time to present at the AGM. White lining on the road had also been asked for within the quote and it was noted that not all items of work would need to be done at the same time. LA stated that the contractors who had visited had said the road was in good condition compared to most roads they are asked to provide quotes for.

ACTION POINTS:

- LA to Investigate the condition and siting of drains and soakaways in order to ameliorate the situation.
- Jamie H to investigate subsidence he had spotted.
- Send a third and final request letter for outstanding contributions next year.
- Resurfacing quotes to be discussed at the AGM.

Thames Valley Police Derby Road Safety Audit

LA asked if there were any points of clarity required re the report received following the Derby Road safety audit by Tony Griffiths, Roads Policing Operations, Traffic Management Officer, Thames Valley Police (TVP), on 27th March 2023. At the request of the Caversham ward councillors who attended the audit, a copy of the report was sent to them; as one of the recommendations included the land at the corner of Derby Road and Grosvenor Road, the report was also sent to QAS to seek their views, in principle.

Before moving on to the TVP report Jamie H informed the Committee that he and TP had undertaken an informal traffic survey with the assistance of John Mullaney and CK as residents and not as committee members. They were not yet ready to share the findings, but hoped these could be taken into consideration. However, JL stated that it was not official DRFA information as the whole Committee had not been involved. TP and Jamie H agreed to share their findings with the rest of the Committee when these were ready.

Jamie H said in general he thought it was very good report but many of the things the Committee was already aware of. CK remarked that it was objective. JL said the report had provided greater clarity on safety ideas discussed by the Committee in the past and that the fresh insight on things was valuable.

All committee members agreed the following recommendations: -

1. The signage at the Peppard Road gates: the signs on the left gate pillar to a speed sign and a priority arrows sign should be followed (which would then mirror the signage on the gates entering Grosvenor Road from Henley Road).
2. Putting a 'pedestrians on road ahead' and 'speed humps' sign on the first right-hand post when entering Derby Road from Peppard Road should be followed, so that any vehicles turning into the road would know what to expect when driving down it.
3. Putting an 'elderly people' sign near Mander Court.
4. Reinstating the give way markings at the junction of Grosvenor Road and Derby Road, which could include a design layout that marks a tighter curve into Derby Road and a pedestrian refuge.

Jamie H asked if Mander Court should be asked to contribute to the 'elderly people' sign. LA reminded Jamie H that Mander Court already contributed to the Fund.

Jamie H suggested box junction markings could be put on the road around the gates, but this was thought to be problematic and so would not be pursued.

Jamie H asked what the report said about the humps in the road. JL quoted the report saying there are a series of well-spaced road humps along the entire length of the road and so the current set-up seemed sufficient.

JL felt the road markings recommendation should be followed as new clear markings could change driver behaviour and it would be easier than any of the other ideas previously suggested to tackle this issue. Jamie H felt asking QAS to install a better footpath in the verge around the corner would be a good idea. He also suggested raising part of the newly lined area marked in the report to deter cars from driving over it. JL felt this would create a new potential hazard in poor light conditions. TP suggested to Jamie H that they should defer to the report's advice on what to do here as it had come from an expert in the field.

SF made the point that people are used to obeying road markings so they could be very effective. She also reminded everyone that the TVP report noted that Derby Road had had no reported injury collisions in the last 10 years, so while safety was obviously very important, it appeared to be a very safe road as it stood.

LA moved on to the damaged planter and noted the report recommended that consideration should be given to moving the planters outside the confines of a junction.

Jamie H said the previous Committee made the original position decision because of the light and speed humps. He couldn't recall if he had been a member of the Committee when this was done. He suggested moving the planter back slightly, but this would mean the footpath would also need to be extended. CK asked if professional advice had been sought regarding the footpath. Jamie H was unsure on this.

TP thought permission for the path had been given in the Certificate of Lawfulness, but it was pointed out that the footpath was put in 18 months after the barrier had been in operation. CK said the footpath was not fit for purpose. JL noted that residents had not been informed that the footpath was going to be put in. Jamie H felt it had been put in to solve the access problem created by the barrier for wheelchair users, which was a safety issue. CK said if planters were to be retained, then the footpath would need to be improved. JL said the footpath was now an extra rather than an essential feature as the planters were no longer being blocked, so there was no longer any obstruction for all users of the road with mobility issues.

Jamie H felt the planters were quite low, thus impeding visibility, that the reflectors are not very effective and that they are quite close to the FV entrance. He suggested inserting a white post to each planter vertically to improve visibility. JL felt this could become a new hazard and/or distraction for drivers. SF said that if anything was added to the planter in this way, it would likely need planning permission.

JL noted the report said following the Highway Code was best advice, which said nothing should be within 10 metres of a road junction. CK agreed it was advisable to follow the Highway Code. TP noted that the report said 'Planters within the swept path required by vehicles turning into or out of Field View due to the slow speed of vehicles and the sporadic nature of traffic on Derby Road, vehicles should be able to make use of all available space to manoeuvre, however the planter's proximity to the junction and their lack of visibility could be a potential for collisions. As illustrated by the damage already cause by collision to one of the planters.' JL said cars parking directly next to the planter on the Ellesmere Close/Fry Court side of the road reduced room for manoeuvre for vehicles turning out of Field View into the gap between the planters in their current position. He also noted that the planters were overgrown, which caused sight-line issues for drivers.

SF suggested turning the area into a chicane by moving one planter back from the junction, which would slow traffic, remove the sight-line issue, the wide-turn issue and be a cheaper option. JL said it would be necessary to get some advice on that to see if there would be enough room to do so.

Jamie H then suggested that he would repair the planter and reinstate it in its original position. JL said that the Committee now knew the planter was a likely future hazard following two collisions with it in its current position. This would have to be addressed to prevent any repeat collisions, and that repairing but not moving it did not deal with this adequately.

LA said the original informatives on the Certificate of Lawfulness from 2019 had not been complied with. She added that a decision needed to be made on the planter and that planning permission would likely need to be sought. She also said simply repairing a damaged planter might affect the applicability of the Certificate of Lawfulness and she was not in favour of a non-professional repair.

Jamie H and TP disagreed. LA stated she was unhappy with the idea of simply repairing the planter and not addressing the other guidance flagged up in the report re the planter. TP suggested asking RBC for advice. LA said RBC would need to be given an idea of how the Committee wished to address the situation first and would email the information to them.

Jamie H repeated his suggestion of repairing the planter in situ and giving it a three-month trial to see if any further collisions happened in that timeframe. SF said it would not be appropriate to have a trial period on a feature on the road that had already proved to be a hazard. JL asked Jamie H if he had received the quotes for moving the planters that he said he would seek following the collision in February. Jamie H said he hadn't been successful on obtaining any. JL thought it would be useful to have an idea of the cost of moving it. Jamie H and TP were concerned that the planter was an eyesore. CK felt ensuring safety on the road was more important than addressing the aesthetics and that ignoring the advice to move the planter might affect the DRFA's insurance. Jamie H agreed that if planning permission were not given, then we would have to comply with that.

Jamie H then suggested cleaning the planters up and painting the corners to aid visibility. He also felt that the reflectors on the planter were ineffective and should be replaced. JL agreed with adding reflectors, but said nothing else should be done physically to the planter until a decision had been reached on its future.

It was agreed that Jamie H would only add reflectors to the damaged planter and would do nothing else to it for the time being. Clarity from RBC on the points raised by LA would also be required. LA said she would need to find out if there would be insurance ramifications if the planter were to be reinstated to its original position. She reminded committee members that the insurers had been notified of the collision in February because it was the second collision.

ACTION POINTS:

- The signage at the Peppard Road gates: the signs on the left gate pillar to a speed sign and a priority arrows sign should be followed (which would then mirror the signage on the gates entering Grosvenor Road from Henley Road).
- Put a 'pedestrians on road ahead' and 'speed humps' sign on the first right-hand post when entering Derby Road from Peppard Road should be followed, so that any vehicles turning into the road would know what to expect when driving down it.
- Putting an 'elderly people' sign near Mander Court.
- Reinstating the give way markings at the junction of Grosvenor Road and Derby Road, this could include a design layout that marks a tighter curve into Derby Road and includes a pedestrian refuge.
- LA to send information about Certificate of Lawfulness to Committee members.
- JH to research the cost of moving the planters.

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Painting of Peppard Road gates

Jamie H suggested that the gates on Peppard Road should be painted and should be closed to facilitate this for safety reasons. He said this could also act as the annual day to close the road to protect its 'private' status. He felt volunteers from the road could be sought for this. Any masonry repairs could be done at any time as this would require a professional for the job. LA confirmed there had been no response from one of the contractors recommended to her re the masonry, while another was unable to do the job due to a lack of electrical equipment.

Jamie H said it would be useful to have power at the site and that perhaps the closest house to the gates could be asked to supply this.

JL reminded the Committee that it was not necessary to close the gates every year as legally this was required only once every 20 years, so this claim was not relevant to the current discussion. He said that Grosvenor Road managed to paint their gates without closing them.

JL was also concerned that the gates had become a flashpoint over the last year. There had been three incidents in 2022 where the gates have been interfered with/obstructed by one household. The pretext originally used for one of these in August 2022 in the anonymous notes sent to residents and put up round the road was that the gates would be painted, which never happened. He did not wish to see a repeat or further escalation of this situation. He said ideally it would be nice if the work could be done within the community, but given the recent history of obstructions of the gates, at present he didn't think this could be done safely. Jamie H was reminded by TP of the unlawful closure in August 2022.

TP suggested using a contractor instead. CK said that any contractor would be responsible for their own safety. LA asked whether the work would involve only the gates or the masonry as well. CK said the whole thing. LA thought the condition of the masonry was not too bad and agreed to seek quotes.

LA confirmed that the recommendations of the TVP report would be presented at the AGM. JL said the report would be uploaded to the website so that residents could read it in advance of the AGM.

ACTION POINTS:

- LA to get three quotes for painting the gates and repairing the stonework.

Meeting ended at 9:15pm