

Minutes of the Houndwood Community Group Annual General Meeting

7.30 p.m. Wednesday 24th March 2021 via Zoom Call

1. Introduction

Peter Goater, in the Chair, welcomed the presence of 49 Houndwood residents on Zoom.

The relevant documents had been circulated in advance and could be consulted on the website during the Meeting, facilitated by Jay Legge.

Residents were invited to use the Zoom 'Chat' function, which proved an effective and friendly way for attendees to raise questions and comments as they arose. Sarah Bolt kindly monitored this chat to ensure all questions were raised at relevant intervals. Refer to the 2021 AGM - Question and Answer document which has recorded these exchanges.

The HWCG expresses its thanks to Jay and Sarah for their efforts in facilitating this remote AGM seamlessly.

2. Formal Business

2.1 Annual Report.

Peter Goater presented two slides giving an overview of the content of the Annual Report.

Peter Goater highlighted several activities facilitated by the HWCG and noted in the report:

- A reminder of pre-Covid events in 2019 including the Summer Fete, Games on the Green, Halloween, Wassailing and Litter picking.
- Ongoing gardening activities in the grounds noted.
- Account of dealings with various agencies and the support we receive from donors and charities.

The Annual Report was adopted:

- Proposer: Deb Goater
- Secunder: Sylvia Yemm

2.2 2018 AGM Minutes (Previous AGM dated November 2018)

Peter Goater noted that it had been the intention of the HWCG to hold the 2nd AGM in April 2020 within the time limit laid down in the Constitution. The delay to this original intent, as with similar organisations, was a consequence of Covid-19 restrictions.

The Minutes were accepted as a true record:

- Proposer: Michaela Edmunds
- Secunder: Deb Goater

2.3 Re-Election of Officers and Election of Committee Members

The following persons were elected as officers and members of the HWCG:

Role	Name
Chair	Peter Goater
Treasurer	Heather Shearer
Secretary	Susan Monahan
Member	Fiona Barnwell-Diane
Member	Sarah Bolt
Member	Michaela Edmunds
Member	Lorna Flintham
Member	Deb Goater
Member	Jay Legge
Member	Kay Poinsey
Member	Jane Reeves
Member	Adam Triggol

The officers and members were duly elected:

- Proposer: Sarah Bolt
- Secunder: Adam Triggol

2.4 Accounts

Accounts 2018 -2020 were presented in summary by Peter Goater.

It was noted that the accounts run year end to year end.

Peter Goater noted that membership of the Group is free to all residents on this inclusive development to encourage everyone to join regardless of income. Donations are sought and granted on the basis of our having no subscription income. The HWCG are particularly grateful to the Parish Council for an annual grant and to the following organisations for support and gifts in kind:

- Livewest
- Cox's Charity
- Dragon Drummers
- Les Davies
- McDonalds
- Army
- Men's Shed
- SASP
- Somerset Foundation
- Residents own donations

The accounts were adopted.

- Proposer: Sue Monaghan
 - Secunder: Gill Hooper
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3. In Conversation

3.1 Sustainability

Short discussion held regarding badger sightings in the corner of the estate near the Clarks Warehouse.

Peter Goater spoke of the abundance of green areas that were incorporated in the Houndwood development and the opportunity they gave for encouraging wildlife and biodiversity and for involving children. Pond dipping and other educational activities had taken place in earlier years but had come to a stop when the area became overgrown and Covid-19 intervened. HWCG hope to arrange workshops and environmental events in the future as part of the Eco initiatives that are planned for Street as a whole. This would be in accordance with the original design of Houndwood which was a ground-breaking departure for Clarks when they applied to develop the site.

3.2 Guest Speakers

3.2.1 Tom Clark

Our first speaker, Tom Clark, explained the Epiphany that had taken place in Clark's boardroom at the inception of the Estate and gave general positive comments about the ongoing care of the estate and endeavours to uphold the original goals.

Tom Clark used the term 'Epiphany' to describe the about-turn that took place in C and J Clark's Boardroom when the Company, supported by Tom and the Estates Manager at the time, resolved to mastermind the Houndwood development on sustainable principles rather than hand it straight over to a volume housebuilder in the usual way. It was a bold decision. Although climate emergency was starting to be recognised, energy-saving 'eco' buildings were usually one-off and in no way mainstream: the only example of a high-density community on these lines was BedZED (Beddington Zero Energy Development). It incorporated many revolutionary CO2 saving features in its design and construction, a proportion of which were adopted for Icon.

Tom referred to the happy coachloads of councillors, officers and local people who were taken at the design stage to see BedZED as well as to co-housing in Stroud and a combined heat and power plant in Bristol with the object of bringing people onside for this extraordinary proposal for Street.

In the end, few of the more outlandish features were adopted – no composting toilets, shared car ownership, allotments, co-housing, green roofs, water recycling, ground heat pumps, wind turbines were to be included in the final plans, nor even, to Tom's disappointment, a simple Hub where residents could meet informally. What does remain at ICON are our solar panels, the insulation, the natural light, the heat recovery, and the sustainable wood panelling. Tom had himself been less concerned with the technical details than others in the Company, but he had been glad to hear that our heating bills were modest. His greater concern was with the concept of 'neighbourliness' and the way it was to be built into the design we have inherited: the shared spaces where we come across our neighbours and children play, the priority for pedestrians, the walkways and footpaths to town, the combination of privacy and supervision, the opportunities for mutual support. By attending our AGM, Tom was pleased to see our community spirit and skills in action. We were glad he had come and hoped that he was too.

Tom commented on the aspirations for creating a revolutionary estate from an environmental and social standpoint.

To origins of the Shoe Tree were queried with a view to its repair and Tom kindly offered to enquire.

The Chair and attendees thanked Tom for joining the call and for his comments and contribution.

3.2.2 Matthew Tute – Premier Estates (Maintenance company)

Our second speaker Matthew Tute, Line Manager for the Estates Team of Premier Estates explained in detail how the maintenance schedules on individual properties were calculated and how the company cared for the Public Realm. Additionally, Matthew explained how Premier Estates views the two Developments (Houndwood and Icon) and the breakdown of properties within those domains.

Introduction & Overview

Premier Estates Ltd (PEL) are the Managing Agent recognised in the apartment leases / house TP1 transfer agreements as “The Company” or “Estate Management Company”.

This party has duties to manage and maintain the common areas of the development(s), referred to as the “Public Realm” in the legal documents mentioned above, further to handover from the transferring developer “Transferor”.

PEL currently recognise the area as x 2 developments (Houndwood & Icon).

Between February 2010 and March 2011 PEL took on the management of x 42 apartments in Lime Tree Square, with an anticipated x 98 houses to be brought into management for the **Icon Development** to be taken on from **Crest Nicholson (South West) Ltd**.

Between January 2016 and January 2018 PEL took on the management of x 15 privately owned apartments, x 15 HA apartments, and x 197 houses on estate charge collection only. This is for the **Houndwood Development** from **Barratt Homes**.

Financial Information

PEL produce a Service Charge Estimate (SCE) each financial year (1st July to 30th June) which combines the developments and shows an estimate of funds required for the Public Realm areas which the Company have a responsibility to manage and maintain.

The current SCE allows for income from x 400 properties, with a Total Estimated Expenditure of £141,583 for the year.

The SCE is split into x 4 schedules, enabling property owners who only benefit from services towards a certain area of the development to only pay for that. The Schedules and the cost provision applied to them are:

A – Estate – Open Spaces & Unadopted Infrastructure = £90,924.

B – Crest Block A02 Apartments – Structure, Fabric & Communal Areas = £5,879

C – Crest Block A03 Apartments – Structure, Fabric & Communal Areas = £32,751

D – Barratt Homes Apartments – Structure, Fabric & Communal Areas = £12,028.

Cost Headings associated with the SCE include: Gardening & Landscape Maintenance / Cleaning / Window Cleaning / Water / Electricity / Repairs & Maintenance / Reserve Fund / Audit & Accountancy / Bank Charges / Health & Safety / Out of Hours Cover / Buildings & Public Liability Insurance / Management Fees.

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PEL produce Service Charge Accounts following each financial year. These are currently separated between the two developments, however, will eventually be incorporated as one.

The latest **Icon Development** accounts for the 30.06.2020 YE showed income of £47,974 and expenditure of £50,457, so a deficit balance of £2,483. The balance of the Reserves (Cyclical & Sinking Funds) at the year-end was £23,950.

The latest **Houndwood Development** accounts for the 30.06.2020 YE showed income of £69,114 and expenditure of £68,893, so a surplus balance of £221. The balance of the Reserves (Cyclical & Sinking Funds) at the year-end was £28,115.

Matthew Tute noted that Ed Llewellyn would no longer be the point of contact for the estate and that his replacement was due to start Monday 29th March 2021. It was noted that the new manager would visit the estate monthly and attend to the detailed works. It was suggested that the Gardening team should be included in these regular walkabouts.

The subject of the Shoe Tree was revisited, and it was noted that this should be on Crest Nicholson's snagging list.

A query was raised about cladding laws for the estate following Grenfell Tower, noting that current sellers on the estate are being asked to produce a report prior to sale. Matthew Tute noted that new legislation is in force since Grenfell and that ESW1 forms may be required. However new guidance has been issued that may now lead a surveyor to be more pragmatic in relation to the need for an ESW1, noting that stacked balconies and the number of floors is now a factor in this decision. For further information refer to the AGM Q&A Report.

Matthew Tute's concern was with the Estate in its present form and Premier's areas of responsibility as they now stand i.e. the apartment blocks and Barratt's grounds. He was prepared to tackle 'Legacy Issues' which he had inherited.

Premier Estates awaits the handover from Crest Nicholson to unify the development with some impatience, but it is not in his remit to take part in any negotiations. In the meantime, Premier acts as the collection point for charges on the apartments and engages contractors for Barratts areas.

Matthew Tute responded to residents' queries in a helpful manner and undertook to look into the issues they raised. For further information refer to the AGM Q&A Report. Topics covered and actions arising include:

- Clearance of Swales
 - o Premier agreed to investigate and noted the need for periodic maintenance.
 - o HWCG to forward report to Premier Estates.
- Life Preservers by Swales
 - o Premier Estates will conduct a Risk Assessment to determine if life preservers need to be reinstated by the Swales.
- Dead Trees
 - o Gardening Group are surveying the dead trees and Premier will be advised to replace and advise on after care. *A suggestion from attendees was for each willing resident to 'adopt a tree' to ensure good care is administered.*
- Tree Preservation

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- There are no preservation orders in place however Premier stated that they have, and will, survey the trees annually with a tree surgeon to form a tree plan (provided they are within the Public Realm).
- Access at rear of Cranhill Road
 - Premier to check ownership and any Deed of Easement with Land Registry and if this extends to commercial use as it was noted that a Taxi firm is using this access.
- Originally Planned Path at the end of California Parade.
 - Premier will look into this but believed to be a Crest area of responsibility.
 - Peter Goater to confirm if this remains on the Crest snag list.
- Road Adoption
 - Crest Nicholson are currently blocking estate adoption.
 - It was acknowledged that, with great frustration, that most work on the Crest portion of the estate will not be repaired until immediately prior to adoption as Crest will want to avoid doing the work more than once.

The Chair and attendees thanked Matthew for joining the call and for his comments and contribution.

4. Additional Matters Arising

The majority of matters arising are covered in the 2021 AGM Q&A Report. A synopsis of topic covered and any actions arising as a result are noted below:

- Housing Development on Cranhill Carpark
 - Noted that due to dependencies on Wessex water treatment capabilities, most developments in Mendip are likely to be blocked at this time.
- Parking on the Estate entrance (West End)
 - Extension of the double yellow lines has been requested with Somerset County Highways.
 - Peter Goater will pursue this further.
- Responsibility for Street Lighting
 - Premier Estates are responsible for the Barratts side, and Crest Nicholson are responsible for their side. Action for any residents identifying a faulty streetlight to report it to the HWCG to be passed to the responsible agent.

5. Additional Remarks and Closing

Residents repeated huge dissatisfaction with Crest. A mere fifth of the snagging list has been completed.

Outstanding issues are care of trees and other green areas/adoption of roads/lighting/pond clearance and consequently the fact that the Estate still hasn't been signed off. There has been no regular point of contact since the retirement of Bill Heaney.

It was agreed noted that Crest has appointed a new customer care director and as such indicates they may have appetite for improvement. It has been agreed that the HWCG will identify a high-level

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contact at Crest and point out the effect of poor estate care on their reputation. Furthermore, it was suggested that Crest owners write individually to strengthen the hand of Committee.

The chair called the 2021 AGM to a close, noting that the HWCG looks forward to hopefully holding a 2021 Halloween Event (subject to Lockdown easing as expected) and the Summer Fete 2022. The chair thanked all for their attendance and contributions.

Meeting Closed.