

2012 AM Minutes for St Paul's Court Management Company
held on Monday 13th August at All Nations Christian Centre, Reading

Attendees: 42 35 44 40 36 39
23 16 5 Neville Pedersen (Pedersen and Company)

Apologies: 46

1. **Welcome.** The 4 directors – Graeme Streets (GS), Michael Bright (MB), Paul Metcalf (PM) and Deborah Winyard (DW) - and Neville Pedersen of Pedersen & Co introduced themselves to the meeting.
2. **2011 Minutes:** No questions or comments.
3. **Matters Arising:** None
4. **Approval of the Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2012.**

GS reported that the accounts were produced later than normal due to having to find a suitable replacement for Liz Procter (LP), the due diligence prior to engaging Pedersen & Co and time for them to pick things up and resolve a few queries.

Flat 36 asked about the reserve. GS pointed out that the accounts that it currently stood at £59,188, an increase of £13,474 on the previous year's total. Since the directors believed that this provided more than enough to cover any exceptional items it had been agreed to reduce the basic maintenance fee as from 1st August. NP added that the forecast income for the next year was about £37K, which compared to the last couple of years outgoings should be more than enough.

5. Maintenance Report 2011/2012

Flat 36, expressed dissatisfaction with the costs charged by one of the contractors and he had some contact's that would provide better value for money. GS pointed out that this expenditure related to 2010/2011, not the last year and that we'd asked for these contacts at last year's meeting, but not received any details. Irrespective we believed the costs were appropriate to the work done. MB added that the work involved far more than was being suggested. Initially the scope of work had simply required repairing and re-painting the wooden surfaces, but the contractor reported back there was an issue with one of the bay windows that was potentially structural. After some follow-up work this was confirmed and it was recognised far more extensive and costly remedial work necessary on a number of bay windows. This was the reason that the costs were higher than expected. Flat 39 said they'd had dealings with this contractor whilst they weren't the cheapest, they nonetheless, provided good value compared to others.

Discussion then moved onto the difficulties of obtaining and retaining appropriately qualified contractors. GS stressed value for money was an important criterion, but so was the quality of the work, track record and reliability and appropriate credentials such as liability insurance. Also despite the "state of the economy" it was difficult finding contractors to do actually undertake work. DW quoted a recent example concerning an odd job contractor who was located, but had resigned after one job – possibly he did not have current electrical certification. NP agreed and had although he'd provided details of 2 possible contractors reported similar issues in finding good people.

The following issues were then raised:

- Flat 36 disapproved of replacing small numbers of bricks in garage walls, as he did not like the contrast between new and old bricks.
- Flat 16 welcomed the increase in the reserve account
- The maintenance charge has been reduced.
- GS said we encourage UPVC windows to be installed to reduce repair costs. Opus Windows did all installations except flat 36 which was organized by the previous owner. NP said flat 36 could contact FENSA to find out who installed his windows.

MB detailed the year's activities:

- Re-let stairwell weekly cleaning and gardening contracts.
- Replaced brickwork header course to garages by block A and the middle of block B.
- New lock to stairwell 27-32.
- Preparation work for stairwell electrical work.
- Progressing obtaining quotes for stairwell electrical work. Loft hatch installed in stairwell 1-6
- Repainted 5 garage doors that had graffiti sprayed on them.
- Replaced stairwell outside mats.
- Removed fly tipped rubbish from bin areas and ensure bins emptied.
- Website updated as required.
- Garage doors repainted.
- Most sewers transferred to Thames Water responsibility as part of private sewers transfer. This means our liability has been significantly reduced.
- Flat 36 asked why it had taken so long to clear the brambles from the riverbank. GS said that the riverbank was strictly the responsibility of the Waterways Board or the Environment Agency but that these bodies were trying to avoid incurring costs. MB added that it was better to clear brambles in the winter.
- Block A1 emergency repairs contracted by leaseholders letting agent.

6. Maintenance plans for 2012/2013

- There is no need for external redecoration this year as it was done the year before last.
- We will appoint a surveyor to determine what needs doing over the next 10 years. We will be able to programme works, plan finances and large expenditures. It is technically required by the lease. (Flat 16 supported this.) Roof spaces are the main worry – because the cost of scaffolding is extortionate. We prefer to be proactive, such as with the asbestos survey.
- (Flat 36 enquired about cavity wall installation.) We looked at that – we need permission from all leaseholders and tenants in a block before we do it. It would not take a long time to install but getting permission forms from 70 people would be onerous. We are keen to do it but have been stymied.
- A contractor is to fix the leak in block A1
- 3 CCTV cameras are to be installed. [Editor's Note: 2 cameras to block C have been installed]
- Flat 36 said 5 cars have been broken into (theft of stereos and bags) and there have been 3 attempts at burgling his property.
- GS said: there has been no interest in forming a Neighbourhood Watch scheme – and that we are a Management Company not a Residents' Association so it is not our responsibility, and that there has not been much feedback about damage. Because the Holybrook path is a public right of way we cannot block it off with barriers.
- Flat 36 complained about people hiding in the bushes at the end of block B. Flat 16 added that that mound was overgrown and dangerous. A vote to remove the mound was carried. It was asserted that nothing should be higher than 1 metre. [Editor's Note: In order to minimise disruption, directors have agreed for this to take place over the winter.]

- MB said: Stairwell lighting – it is hard finding electricians to comply with the fire risk assessment. DW said that only 1 lux of illumination was required at night in the stairwells. Security lights on the back of block B are also being updated in the electrical work. We are looking at lighting options which are cheaper to run, not necessarily the cheapest to install.
- Flat 36 said we should paint all bricks in the stairwell not odd ones. Flat 16 replied that we now paint all bricks less often than we used and patch up as needed, and this was a better use of money. MB said the next full paint would be following the electrical work.

7. Maintenance Charge 2012/2013

- GS said the Maintenance Charge has gone down and been simplified; that because the reserve fund has been built up we can reduce the Maintenance Charge this year. MB added we should not need to dip into our reserves this year, but this depends on the cost of the electrical work.
- MB said there is no need for external redecoration this year as it was done the year before last.
- GS said we will look to appoint a surveyor to determine what needs doing over the next 10 years. We will be able to programme works, plan finances and large expenditures. It is technically required by the lease. (Flat 16 supported this.) We prefer to be proactive, such as with the asbestos survey.

8. Appointment of directors

DW was formally recognised as a new director.

9. AOB

- (Flat 36 enquired about cavity wall installation.) We looked at that – we need permission from all leaseholders and tenants in a block before we do it to obtain the grants. It would not take a long time to install but getting permission forms from 70 people would be onerous. We are keen to do it but have been stymied.
- Flat 5 asked if there was a phone number for emergency enquiries, such as regarding the incident of blood in their stairwell. GS replied that directors do not have the means or the right to enter residents' flats. If there is a need to enter the property directors can email or phone the leaseholder, or possibly the flat's managing agent. If there is a dispute between 2 leaseholders then Heritage should be contacted rather than directors.
- The car parking signs were put up by Heritage. It is okay to park if it is in a bay. It is illegal to clamp now – firms must now issue a penalty notice instead. Flat 16 regained a clamping charge because firms cannot enforce parking on double yellow lines that are the council's responsibility.
- Directors do not know who owns every garage.
- What is the monthly cost of using Neville Pedersen - for keeping the accounts? £2,688 pa including VAT, which is £48 pa per flat or £4 per month per flat.
- What is the role of Treasurer if a company is being used to keep the accounts? This was covered in the newsletter: “**New Director** - Following a request to all leaseholders for assistance we are pleased to announce that Debbie Winyard has agreed to become a director from the 1st July. She will take on the formal role of treasurer (after the AM), primarily concerned with monitoring the budget and, query resolution, but also assisting us with the day to day smoothing running of the company.” The key issue is that Debbie will not be doing this in the same way as Liz and will do other things as well.
- What will be the cost of employing a surveyor to assess the maintenance needs? This was also covered in the newsletter: “**Surveyor** - In order to ensure that the maintenance of the court is managed in the most effective way we are looking to engage a surveyor in the next few months to complete a report on the court. The report will highlight short and medium term requirements and help us to better forecast the requirement for funding.”
We will not be employing a surveyor they will be engaged for one off piece of work to complete

a survey the court. The exact costs of the survey have not been confirmed yet, but it may be a significant. However it should be noted that the survey will cover 56 flats and the common areas. Also it will be valid for the next 10 years, when we would review the appropriateness of undertaking a new survey. It will cover (and hopefully not uncover too many) structural type issues. This is important as these have not been checked since the flats were built in the mid 80's. The survey will also allow us to be far more proactive in maintenance tasks rather than patching and mending. This will allow a strategic approach which could actually save money.

- Why is Pedersen being employed to do the accounts and chase the management charge? See previous answers. The directors were concerned that this specialist piece of work was creating too much of an overhead on one director. Having looked at a number of options such as employing a book keeper we decided to enter into an agreement with Neville and his company as they are a specialist in block management, so familiar with what is required and they are local. The current directors have no plans to handover overall control to Neville or anyone else, but if any other work areas fit with this type arrangement then consideration would be given to further delegation. Whilst it is early days the relationship has been a positive one with both parties sharing knowledge on issues of common interest.
- Why have a Treasurer who is not keeping the accounts? See previous answer. A book keeper may have been cheaper, but they would be less accountable and it is more likely with an individual that we'd have to find someone else in a year or two and a handover may be difficult and cause concern.
- NP said his spreadsheet made it easy to see what was spent where, ready for the accountants, so a saving on accountants' time was possible. He said accounts were necessary, and that we need a third party should audit to avoid being slack in controlling money. Flat 39 added that security of directors from liability resulting from fraud was also important. GS said if we can find a cheaper accountant we will consider using them.
- Flat 39 thanked directors for their work and welcomed the new director