

GPNA COMMITTEE MEETING 26/11/2018
19:30 Great Park Community Centre

Present:

Cathy Priestley - Chair
Gemma Nesbitt - Co-chair
Steven Meldrum - Secretary
Ian Herring - Treasurer
Christine Young
Sarah Maluila
Chris Marsden
Michael Forster
Ruth Hewitt (MWWRA)

Apologies

Claudia Birtwhisle

Minutes of last meeting

Agreed that these will be recirculated and ratified at the next meeting.

Matters arising

A - Communications Strategy.

City Council - Cathy has spoken with Anita Lower. Anita will send us general information from her meetings with the consortium.

Consortium are looking for a Project Manager/Company Agent. The Project Office has a staffing shortage, they hope to be fully staffed by end of January 2019.

Communication with the consortium seems to be difficult - they have not replied to Cathy's letter twice now. On the consortium web site it states that they DO communicate with RA's.

Steven raised the notion that we should be giving them a time scale to respond when we contact them. All agreed that this would be a good way forward and that we should ask for a response within 28 days to any communications we send.

Concerns were raised from several committee members about the lack of staffing and the potential impact this has on the communications but also the running of the estate in general.

ACTION Cathy to draft a letter to the consortium asking if the staff shortage is

impacting on residents. Also as there are less staff costs should theoretically be reduced, **Cathy to include this in the letter.**

There has been a response to our presence from a resident who sent their thanks for what we are doing. Discussion held about how we can further raise our visibility in the estate. Visited the idea of putting up posters again. All feel that this would be a good start. Chris Marsden kindly agreed to produce a poster. This will need to be printed in A4, laminated and posted in prominent places such as the school, the bus stops, the community centre etc **ACTION Chris Marsden to produce the poster.**

Other RA's have expressed the wish to be involved with GPNA when addressing larger issues as have MWWRA. Ruth Hewitt from MWWRA present at tonight's meeting. **ACTION Cathy to contact Greenside to formally invite them to our meetings.**

B - Website.

Newcastle City Council are unable to provide any support for us to develop our web site.

All agreed that we will continue with our current website until a new one can be constructed.

Discussion held about this - all agreed it will be a good idea to put a 'call out' to residents asking if anyone can assist with the web site production using WordPress. **ACTION Steven to post onto Facebook re this.**

If no response all agreed we would contact Greenside RA to ask for their advice as we understand a resident produced their site.

C - Actions update.

Cathy has been in contact with Anita Lower

Steven - still no response from Persimmon re leaflet drop into new resident packs etc.

Claudia - was to speak with Pharmacy and other businesses yo have input into GPNA. Also to look at road safety on Roseden Way.

D - Enforcement Officer. (Richard Hamilton).

Richard Hamilton works into the planning department and the consortium part fund this post. Concern raised that how can RH enforce against the consortium when he is in effect part paid by them...

He did not attend at the meeting at GPCC with Cathy and Christine.

Chris Marsden has met with him. Christine raised the point that he may possibly not have much power in his role : he passes concerns onto his line manager for action...

Chris Marsden is chasing the new play park development on Brunton Village/Grange. He was told of several dates it would be started by. 06/2018 - 08/2018 - 11/2018. The contract has been awarded but the company did not commence. Susan Cargill would not give another date of commencement.

All agreed that we should invite him to our next meeting so that he can advise

of his role on the development and who is responsible for the enforcement of the Section 106 agreement.

E - Town Centre.

? if restaurant is to open. Apparently the pipework needed for the extractors for kitchens was not built into the fabric of the town centre buildings and exterior ducting may not be permitted.

Rumours on Facebook that 8 units are poised to sign and open.

General rubbish - clearance due to be started on w/c 03/12.

Cell A is to go back through to planning. It may be held up by a legal challenge. There have apparently been some amendments made - i.e. no football pitches to be situated the greenbelt, but have not reduced the number of homes.

Pathway outside the Pharmacy is in progress. It has been reported that facilities for drainage and street lighting were not built into the development. Christine had spoken to the pharmacy team who told her this.

F - Formation of a Co-op

Pros and Cons of a cooperative being formed.

Andy Harrison and Cathy met 3/12 ago to look at how a Cooperative is formed. Andy is a GP resident so he knows and shares our frustrations. He gave a short presentation outlining the issues for the GP and the advantages of an incorporated body of residents. In summary:

There is no control of charges, the amount, how they are formulated, how they are collected or spent. There is no accountability from the consortium.

There is a huge area of open space with the potential for costly remedial work in the future. A liability residents are obliged to fund via the charges.

Andy has spoken with solicitors about GP and advised that he is involved with several coops and different trusts. We need to be organised as a community to oppose the charges we pay. All agreed that the consortium do not act for the benefit of residents and that there is a distinct lack of transparency.

There are no independent inspections of the infrastructure to ensure that it is for for purpose. The local authority can enforce planning obligations under the 106 agreement, but does not do so. Also noted that there is no control over future charges being raised.

There is no practical method to enforce the TP1 on behalf of residents. If challenged in court, win or loose, the management company can recover its legal costs via the estate charge.

AH told the meeting he did ask to see the accounts (as have previous RA members).

He was asked to sign a non disclosure agreement. He challenged this but got no-where. The consortium advised that if he challenged them legally that they would then take legal advice. The TP1 document does state that residents are permitted to see the accounts so no reason why the consortium do not allow us to see them.

AH advised that there is no justifiable reason why we couldn't take over the running of the estate - we could employ our own agent. However the consortium have not set the management company up that way.

Although many residents wish the local authority would "take over" the estate, it was agreed that this seems unlikely.

A cooperative would be a legal entity (it is a type of company) and have more clout potentially. It would be legally set up and constituted. Residents would have to contribute a small sum (about £10) to become a member. By asking for a payment it would show who is serious. It would still require a management committee democratically elected from those members.

Andy suggested a couple of nuisance measures residents as a group could do.

There followed a wide ranging discussion including the following points:

Discussion about the charges, the town centre and the schools situation - there may be a case for misrepresentation.

Should we try to take control or should the consortium allow us a place on the consortium/management board.

Feeling that the only serious way to make them change would be to somehow affect the sales of new houses.

The charges - we have no way of knowing if all they do is legitimate!

Discussion about why TW and Persimmon want to manage the estate - all agreed it is to ensure that they make money and profit!

Further discussion needed around cooperatives to be incorporated into future development work.

In the mean time - we need to promote ourselves as a serious constituted body. Felt that we need to document our approach on the web site so that all can see it.

However we will focus on continuing to be an unincorporated body at present. We will continue to engage with residents and ask them what they want from us. We need to show residents what we can do as well as find out what residents issues are. All have a personal story - how do we share these?

Thanks given to Andy Harrison for his time and information presented to us.

Potential Legal Case.

There are a few initiatives nationally attempting to challenge issues over private estates in court.

1) The government are trialling access for freehold home owners to the first tier tribunal as a means of challenging estate charges.

2) Edwin Coe (Solicitors) are working with Home Owners Rights Network to develop a legal challenge which may set a precedent for all other private estates.

3) The government are aware that new estate charges are a huge problem. Helen Goodman MP (Bishop Auckland) tabled a ten minute rule bill on 14th November 2018 on the subject of estate charges.

AOB.

Sunday Politics show : BBC Tees interested in doing an estate charges feature in their programme.

It was raised that Anita Lower gets the updates from the consortium which she then posts on Facebook and now shares with us - why are we not getting the updates directly when they have stated that they are engaging with RA's.

Steven to email the directors about this.

Weekly updates on Twitter - Why are these not happening? ***Steven to email Susan Cargill about this.***

Next meeting.

January 2019 to focus on development work - possibly the second week. -

Steven to send out a Doodle Poll .