

RIVERMEAD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Minutes of Annual General Meeting 7:30pm, 2nd November 2009, Bridgford Suite, Beeches Hotel

1. Minutes from the Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

Chair of the RRA Rachel Goodinson (flat 68) welcomed the attendees to the meeting. There were about 20 present. The minutes of the previous AGM were accepted. [Note added subsequently: Rachel has since got married and is now known as Rachel Gama].

2. Chairman's Report

Rachel reported on the activities of the RRA over the past year. The Association has been active in examining the possibility of launching a group action to either buy the freehold or negotiate lease extensions for flats at Rivermead. This included holding a general meeting in September 2009 which was addressed by a solicitor specialising in property law.

Rachel had secured £250 funding from a local councillor in support of the Association's activities.

The Association has investigated what is covered by Freshwater's insurance at Rivermead. Rachel reported that the contents of flats are the occupier's responsibility. Bathrooms and kitchens are the responsibility of Freshwater, although repair works have to be done by approved builders. Pipes within each flat are the responsibility of the leaseholder, while pipes immediately outside each flat are the responsibility of Freshwater.

3. Treasurer's Report and Presentation of the Accounts

Treasurer Colin Troy (flat 26) reported that the Association had 45 members. The Association had been able to make a donation of £81.66 to the Nottinghamshire Hospice from selling raffle tickets for the Summer Garden Party. The current Association account, with some petty cash still to be entered, stood at £750.01.

4. Election of Committee

Seven existing members of the Committee wished to remain on it: Cat Coombes (flat 6), Rachel Goodinson (flat 68), Phil Luckett (flat 90), Tim McCormick (flat 14), Jean Minshall (58), Peter Walsh (flat 2), and Marina Webster (flat 135).

In addition four residents wished to join the Committee: Marilyn Ash (flat 137), Jill Catchpole (flat 112), Tim Gregory (flat 19), and Nicki Puckey (flat 10).

5. Election of Officers

The following people were elected to be officers of the Association:

Chairman: Rachel Goodinson, flat 68 (nominated Marina Webster, seconded Cat Coombes) elected *nem. con.*

Vice-Chair: Tim McCormick, flat 14 (nom. Rachel Goodinson, sec. Marina Webster) elected *nem. con.*

Treasurer: Peter Walsh, flat 2 (nom. Rachel Goodinson, sec. Colin Troy) elected *nem. con.*

Secretary: Nicki Puckey, flat 10 (nom. Tim McCormick, sec. Cat Coombes) elected *nem. con.*

6. Leases

Rachel went on to discuss the possibility of launching a group action to negotiate lease extensions for flats at Rivermead. She said that currently 21 leaseholders have expressed interest in being involved. She mentioned that informal discussions are already underway with a solicitor who could represent us. The solicitor would prefer a single main contact at Rivermead for purposes of providing advice. For this reason, Rachel suggested setting up a Leases Sub-Committee. She requested a volunteer to chair this sub-committee, but none was forthcoming at the meeting.

A resident asked at what point residents would need to make the decision to be involved or not. Rachel replied that no deadline had been set yet.

Rachel said that it had been decided at the general leases meeting held in September that applying for a lease extension should be a two-stage process:

1. We would first write a letter to Freshwater requesting terms for a lease extension. Any leaseholder could be involved at this stage.
2. If residents do not consider the conditions offered by Freshwater to be acceptable, the second stage would be to formally serve notice of a request for a lease extension under the Leasehold Reform, Housing & Urban Development Act 1993. Under the provisions of this Act, only leaseholders who have owned their property for at least two years can take part.

Costs for each leaseholder are likely to be approximately:

- £300 plus VAT for a valuation of their property;
- £750 plus VAT for solicitor's costs;
- The cost of the premium for the lease extension, to be negotiated by the solicitor and Freshwater;
- Freshwater's reasonable legal costs, as yet unknown.

A resident asked how long is left on the leases. Rachel replied between 65 and 70 years depending on the particular flat. A resident asked by how much a lease would be extended if a successful application were made. There was a little confusion about this and Rachel said the Committee would clarify this. [Note added subsequently: 90 years would be added to the time left on the existing lease].

A resident asked if it was likely that Freshwater would need to be taken to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal to determine terms for a lease extension. Rachel replied that Freshwater's track record suggested this was likely.

A resident asked if leaseholders could be involved in stage 1 of the process (the letter to Freshwater requesting terms for a lease extension) and decline to be involved in stage 2 (serving notice under the 1993 Act). Rachel replied yes.

A resident asked if there is a cheaper option. Rachel replied that she did not believe so.

In further discussion, the feeling was that the cost of the premium for a lease extension was likely to be in the region of £6000 - £9000, with legal costs totalling £750 - £2000.

A resident asked if we could buy the freehold. Rachel replied that this would require that at least 2/3 of the flats are held on long leases, and at least ½ of the tenants must participate. We know that Freshwater own about 17 flats.

7. Leases Sub-Committee

Rachel said that the Committee would be in contact with those who are interested in being involved to organise membership of the Leases Sub-Committee.

8. Any Other Business Previously Notified to the Chairman

Rachel noted that new flood defences are being constructed on Victoria Embankment. She said the Association does not have a position on this. Residents could contact Nottingham City Council if they have concerns.

A resident said that the major works had still not been properly finished. There was still mess left behind.

A resident pointed out that the information on the Association notice boards was out of date. Rachel replied that perhaps the Committee should produce a bulletin after each Committee meeting and put it on the notice boards.

A resident asked if we would have any say on the colours chosen for the forthcoming redecoration of the communal areas. Rachel said that we have heard nothing about this. Freshwater may ask us for our views, but will probably not consult us on price. Another resident asked if we could redecorate the communal areas ourselves. Rachel thought Freshwater would probably not allow that. There were comments from the floor that before redecorating the inside, Freshwater should make sure the work to the outside was properly finished.

A resident asked if the email addresses and other contact details of the Committee would be put on the notice boards. Rachel replied they would be.

The meeting closed at 8:30pm.