



Windmill Estate Maintenance Company (WEMC)

AGM

Monday 9th October 2023 – 7.15pm

<u>Committee Present</u>	<u>Apologies</u>
Acting Chairman – Rob Hey Ann Hester (Secretary) Ann Noke Alice Ramcharran Gill Richardson	Helen Brown Paulette Nicoll Tom Baxter Nick Morris Rosemary Pennells Michael Monk

12 attendees at the meeting from the following roads:

Georges Hill – 4 attendees
Cowslip Road – 1 attendee
Haines Road – 1 attendee
Honeysuckle Road – 3 attendees
Primrose Green – 3 attendees

Introductions

The Agenda, WEMC Accounts and the Minutes of 2022 AGM were made available to those attending the meeting. Rob Hey opened the meeting by thanking the residents attending and introduced himself and the committee members as above.

The committee members all live around the estate and offer their time on a voluntary basis to help keep the annual maintenance fees affordable whilst making the best use of the money received to maintain the areas we are responsible for. Some members have been on the committee for many years and have seen many changes in that time. We would very much welcome speaking to anyone who may be interested in joining us. Meetings take place once a month and last for around an hour and we discuss residents' queries, work required, quotes received, planning consent, account figures, and between meetings there are communications via emails between the committee members.

The Accounts Year End 30 June 2023

We employ an accountancy firm who keep track of our expenditure, provide us with a monthly update and submit annual accounts to Companies House. The accounts are available on the website and Rob Hey advised that the accounts for the year ended June 2022 had been handed out to everyone attending the meeting, along with a bar chart of expenditures, and gave a brief overview of last years and this year's excesses (last year there was an excess of £8197.00, this year an excess of £4948.00 in anticipation of bills increasing/works required). One question was asked regarding the accounts, which was a query regarding the amount of money required for the tarmac work, and if residents would need to pay more money towards this. Rob Hey advised that there would not be an extra charge for this work and that it

would be covered by the maintenance charge but may have to be split into 2 separate jobs over 2 financial years rather than all done in one go.

The accounts were agreed, proposed by Ann Hester, seconded by Ann Noke.

Review of Maintenance Charge

Rob Hey gave an update of the current maintenance charge for 23/24. Rob Hey and Ann Hester advised that the maintenance charge covers the maintenance of the Greens, grass cutting, weed killing, leaf blowing, forecourts and driveways leading to the forecourts, tree surgery and replacing of some trees, some legacy fencing, some walls, and certain footpaths on the estate, and some one-off larger jobs like tarmac work, repairs or replacing brick walls. The charge for 22/23 was £80 per annum for the 3rd year in a row. For the year 23/24 Rob Hey advised that the maintenance fee had increased by £5 to £85, and that we will be reviewing the charge for 24/25 – it will likely increase by £5 or £10. Many other housing estates locally are paying over £500 per annum per property for their maintenance charge.

Potholes, roads, lights, public footpaths, and drains are not our responsibility and residents should report any problems to the FixMyStreet website.

It was also advised that the shops and surrounding land are not WEMC property and are governed by Duncan Bailey Kennedy, and the flats located above the shops pay a monthly maintenance charge to them.

Tree planting on the Estate

Alice Ramcharran advised that 3 Cherry trees were planted on Primrose Green earlier in the year and are doing well, and that Scott and his team had planted 3 trees on the green at Georges Hill at the start of October. Alice Ramcharran advised that bulbs will be planted around the base of the trees on Georges Hill and that these will eventually be replaced by wildflowers around the base.

Question – Will there be any more trees planted on the top Green on Cowslip Road and Georges Hill?

Answer – No, there are no plans to plant any more trees on that green.

Question – If there are telephone lines running through one of the trees on the green, who is responsible for it?

Answer - Ann Hester advised that it would be our responsibility and that we would need to contact a tree surgeon to carry out any necessary work. Paul Hester will investigate and report back to be discussed at our next meeting.

Question – If trees are growing too tall, who is responsible for this?

Answer – Rob Hey advised that some of the Oak trees have preservation orders on them, so we are not allowed to touch these. But if residents have any concerns about trees on the greens or in neighbours' gardens blocking out light or causing problems then please contact us.

Tarmac work

Alice Ramcharran advised that we had received 3 quotes so far for the tarmac work – 1 verbal quote, 1 quote based on the written report that Scott had produced but they are yet to visit the sites, and 1 quote from a local company that came out to the Estate and walked around to the different areas with her. Quotes will be reviewed and then a decision made as to whether the job can be done in one go or will need to be split down over several jobs.

Estate Inspector

Alice Ramcharran advised that we had recently taken on a new 'Estate Inspector'. This is a role that was previously in existence, but that no-one had been doing for a while now. Alice Ramcharran introduced our new Inspector, Paul Hester, who explained more about the job and what he will be doing. He advised that he will be doing regular litter picking, unblocking of drains where the drain covers belong to us rather than the local council, inspecting for graffiti, looking out for any jobs that may need doing around the Estate and are the responsibility of WEMC. One resident commented that the title of 'Estate Inspector' didn't sound very friendly, so we advised we will discuss this and see if we can think of an alternative title.

General Condition of the Estate

We feel that considering our Estate is over 50 years old, it has been kept in good condition and Scott has managed to maintain this to a high level. WEMC keep their running costs as low as possible so that as much of the yearly maintenance money can be spent on the estate itself.

Anne Hester advised that we are hopeful that some repair works will be carried out at the front of the shops, where some of the masonry has fallen from the front of the buildings, but that this is the responsibility of Duncan Bailey Kennedy and not WEMC.

Question – Are all of the footpaths on the Estate the responsibility of WEMC?

Answer – Rob Hey and Ann Hester advised that not all of the footpaths are owned by us and that if residents have any concerns about any of the footpaths they should contact us in the first instance and if it isn't the responsibility of WEMC then please report to FixMyStreet.

Future Policies, Plans and Improvements

This is very difficult to predict considering the age of the Estate, but WEMC intend to continue monitoring and keeping the Estate in the best condition possible, with the finances available.

The tarmac on some of the garage forecourts and footpaths also needs replacing, and the works will then be done in order of urgency, finances permitting.

Monthly Expenditure

Alice Ramcharran advised that all the information on monthly expenditure is available in the accounts that were handed out and a copy will be available on the website soon. Alice Ramcharran advised that there are things that people don't necessarily see that have to be paid for on a monthly or yearly basis. As well as our monthly payments to Scott's Elite Landscapes for the gardening and maintenance work on the Estate, there are also admin and secretarial costs, accountants, monthly bank account fee, printing and stationery, insurance costs, newsletter and maintenance charge letter delivery, website costs, computer software charges, hall hire for our monthly meetings as well as payments for the one off work such as tree surgery, tree planting, and repair work not included in Scott's monthly contract.

Streetlighting

Rob Hey gave an overview on the Street Lights and advised that Hughenden Parish Council were considering replacing the 16 Watt bulbs that are currently in our streetlights with 9 Watt bulbs as and when the existing bulbs expire. A straw poll showed almost everyone present thought the current wattage was the minimum we need on the Estate, in fact many would prefer a higher wattage. Rob Hey advised that he and Paul Hester are on the streetlights working group for the council so will continue to keep the committee and residents updated. Councillor Linda Derrick advised that we could ask the council to provide reflectors for the streetlights to make them brighter. Paul Hester will be attending a meeting on 10th October and will raise some of the comments then.

Question – Could we change the streetlights to solar lighting?

Answer – Paul Hester advised that the only solar lights locally are in Naphill and Walters Ash and that it may not be economically viable for local councils to install them, and it was unlikely to be considered by the parish council.

Question – How much does it cost to run the current streetlights?

Answer - Councillor Linda Derrick advised that residents could write to the parish council and request to see the breakdown of costs and monitoring of the budget, and it should show how much has been spent on electricity for the streetlights so far this year.

Administrators update

Alice Ramcharran advised that she may have to step down from the role of administrator due to personal reasons. Alice Ramcharran has spoken to some people who might be interested in the role, and asked if anyone at the meeting may be interested or if they know of anyone who may be interested in taking over the role. Alice Ramcharran advised that if she does step down then she would like to stay on as a voluntary committee member. This will be discussed in full at our November meeting.

Election of Officers

The existing committee stood down as a whole and all stood again for re-election. This was proposed by Clive Wooldridge and seconded by Lesley Gibbs.

Meeting open for question and comments

Comment – Some residents raised concerns about a tree roots in some of the alleyways and also hedges that are growing over on to the footpath and pavement areas, and asked who would be responsible for this.

Answer – Ann Hester advised that although WEMC is responsible for the alleyways, we are not responsible for hedges or trees that are within the boundaries of properties as these are the responsibility of the homeowner. We will discuss at the next meeting in November to see if Paul Hester can identify where this is an issue and then it can maybe be mentioned in the next newsletter to remind people or a letter sent to properties where this may be an issue. Linda Derrick advised that if a hedge is encroaching on a pavement then it should be reported to the clerk at Hughenden parish council.

Comment – Is there anything that can be done about some of the garages on the forecourts on the Estate as they are in urgent need of repair? Resident commented that many of them belong to properties that are currently rented out and not owner occupied.

Answer – Ann Hester advised that it was quite a difficult situation as garages are the responsibility of the owners and many of the garages don't have numbers on them, but also aren't being used by the owners of the properties. It was suggested that maybe a letter could be sent out to the properties that own the garages either for the owners to inspect, or for occupiers to pass the letter on to the owners of the garages. Ann Hester advised that newsletters have previously been sent out to residents to suggest that owners of the garages could liaise with each other to get them done at the same time to keep costs down for the repairs.

Comment – Are there any plans to install any more dog waste bins on the Estate?

Answer – This is the responsibility of the Parish Council, but there are already a good number of bins on the Estate. It is more of a problem on the main roads such as Windmill Lane and Primrose Hill, although there is a dog waste bin situated where Windmill Lane and Primrose Hill cross.

Comment – Thank you very much for all you do (WEMC), thank you to Paul Hester for taking on his new role and thank you to our Widmer End Councillor, Linda Derrick for all the work she does.

Paula Murphy expressed an interest in joining the Committee and may attend the November Meeting.

Chairman thanked those attending and closed the meeting at 20.50pm

** For information : WEMC Telephone number 07394 332262 wemc67@yahoo.co.uk*