

OSNEY ISLAND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION
MINUTES OF MEETING 16 JUNE 2010

Present: Kate Stewart (Chair)
Bianca Elgar
Suzanne Jeffrey
Steve Lynam
Fiona McFarlane
Elizabeth Newbery

Apologies: Anna Truelove

In attendance : Alan Goodwin (webmaster)
Barbara Hammond (Chair, Low Carbon West Oxford)
Susanna Pressel

Item 15 Trees was dealt with first and Barbara was thanked for coming. Details of discussion however have been placed at point 15 below to keep the official record of the meeting in line with the Agenda. Barbara left the meeting immediately after item 15 was discussed.

1. Apologies/Welcomes

Anna sent her apologies. Suzanne was welcomed to the Committee. Alan was thanked for attending and all his work on the website commended.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting (14 April)

Were approved.

3. Minutes of AGM 22 April

Were approved. Steve noted that the minutes did not show that Anna had been appointed as an additional Vice-Chair although the last Newsletter mentioned that she had. This was his clear recollection, which was also that of Richard, Kate and Fiona. Anna was he believed happy to be simply a Committee member but it was a pity that she could not attend tonight. Since the Committee had the power to appoint officers between members' meetings she could be appointed as Vice-Chair if that was her wish and if the Committee agreed. Subject to Anna's view, members indicated that they would be happy for Anna to be appointed as joint Vice-Chair. This issue would need to be deferred until the next meeting. In the meantime, Kate would check with Anna as to her preference¹.

Steve mentioned that the minutes of both the AGM and the last Committee meeting were rather long, but that he felt that we needed a good and detailed record and that once we had become a Company Limited by Guarantee (CLBG) that would be even more important. However, this posed a problem with the notice board. He would therefore prepare a brief summary of each for the notice board. Those versions would

¹ Note however that the OIRA constitution does not seem to allow for two Vice-Chairs

contain a note indicating that the full version was available on the website. For the benefit of those members with no web access, a limited number of hard copies would be left with Suzanne and Steve and the notice board version would say that hard copies could be obtained on request from either 11 or 13 South Street. This approach was agreed.

4 . Tea on the Towpath:

Steve confirmed that we now had all necessary permissions and referred to the list he had prepared setting out the rules we needed to follow. This included: (i) the formal conditions imposed on the event by Oxford City Council and which were mandatory; (ii) “best practice” suggestions from the Environment Agency which Steve strongly suggested we followed; and (iii) a condition – relating to the collection of rubbish - which was imposed by the terms of the insurance policy. There were fourteen in all and none were particularly onerous. Condition 10 was being complied with: Kate had put up the required notice from the Council on the “road closure” last Saturday 12 June. Bianca confirmed that she had the first aid kit ready and available. We have the strong swimmers available if someone falls in the water. Steve drew everyone’s attention to condition 14, which requires that gloves are worn when picking up litter. The insurance cost £78.75. Elizabeth drew attention to the fact that the City Council no longer requires event insurance as a condition of granting permission, but Steve said he was aware of this and reminded the Committee that it had previously decided that it wanted event insurance in any case as this provides greater protection for officers.

Bianca reported that the organisational aspects were proceeding apace. Cakes are being made. Pasting tables would be brought from the allotment to form stalls and sufficient chairs were available. Bob Summers would demonstrate basket making. Jude had made a quilt which would be sold at the event. She had also made bunting. Richard Lewis would bring along his saxophone to play some jazz. Steve reported that an off Island friend of his (Greg Mayston) would be singing and playing blues guitar.

Richard Bradley of “Oxstreets” had asked if they could send a photographer along and had mentioned to the Oxford Mail. The event was now also registered with “Oxstreets”. Alan asked that any photographs from “Oxstreets” be shared with us so that they could appear on the OIRA website.

Good weather was predicted!

5 . AGM – Chair’s debrief.

Kate reported that in her view the AGM went well, and the visitors presentations were excellent and very informative. Everyone agreed. The constitutional change to permit incorporation was agreed unanimously and the OIRA constitution needed to be updated to reflect this. Steve agreed to do and to circulate the revised version to Committee members.

6 . Planning for Incorporation

Now that the Committee had the powers, Steve and Fiona agreed to take the work forward and would report back at the next Committee meeting.

7. Flooding updates/ insurance

Richard Thurston had provided a flooding update (one of the documents included in the pack provided for Committee members). The Halifax approach to offering insurance in flood risk areas was welcomed and would be publicised on the OIRA website. RT and the Oxford Flood Alliance were working with Thames Water on the sump. Fiona mentioned the National Flood Forum questionnaire, which in her view OIRA should publicise. The questionnaire was designed to help the NFF assess whether that Association of British Insurers (ABI) and its members was abiding by the agreement reached with the previous Government to continue to provide insurance, at reasonable rates, for areas affected by flood risk; anecdotal evidence suggested that the answer was “no”. Steve said that in his view this issue was one of the most important ones that a body such as OIRA could face, as problems with flood risk insurance could affect property prices.

8. New MP maiden speech (attached to agenda) & establishing contact.

Kate drew Committee members’ attention to the fact that following a meeting with the Oxford Flood Alliance, our new MP in her maiden speech made a passing reference to Osney as one of the areas impacted by flood risk, which was a welcome move. It was agreed that OIRA would get in touch with her and raise the community’s concerns about this issue.

9 Bridge Street Parking Survey.

Elizabeth confirmed that she had given Richard the responses which had been delivered to her. It was agreed that OIRA would try to help resolve the problem impacting Bridge Street. Kate and Steve would meet up to consider how best to do this.

10. Newsletter

The deadline for this was mid July. Elizabeth asked Steve if he would be prepared to start working on the suggested “Island People” fixture now that Roy Hoare was unable to carry on with the local history articles. Steve said that, unfortunately, with the joint Vice-Chair and Secretarial role as well as the work now about to commence on incorporation he felt that this was too heavy a load. It was agreed that Bianca would speak to Joyce Chalmers, a former OIRA Chair, to see if she would be prepared to take on this role. Susanna offered to speak to Joyce and to suggest possible candidates for interview.

Steve mentioned that he and Kate were a little concerned that no-one other than Elizabeth had the knowledge to produce the Newsletter if for some reason Elizabeth was unable to proceed. Elizabeth said that the process was not complex and that she did not think there would be a problem. Barbara Hammond would be asked to write an article on the work of WOCR and LCWO.

11. Website update

Alan reported that Ollie had fixed the picture problem and up to nine could now be accessed on the site. Reciprocal links were now set up with WOCA, Pearce Alder and the Osney Boat Club but we still lacked a photograph for the Boat Club. The allotment was proposing to set up a website too, and when that was up and running we should have a reciprocal link.

It was decided that “An Island in Oxford” should be uploaded. Elizabeth thought she could source a PDF version and would pass it to Alan for uploading. Steve mentioned the decision made a few meetings ago to also include some photos from the Oxford Mail archive. Bianca would contact her friend Susan Lloyd who held some useful historic information on Doyley Road.

12. OIRA “job description”

Discussion to be deferred to next meeting on grounds of time.

13. Islanders’ email list /skills inventory

It was agreed that residents should be asked invited? via the website to provide email addresses. In addition residents would be asked to provide email addresses during “Tea on the Towpath”. Once OIRA had a good number of these, they could/would be used for a range of purposes, including updates and perhaps a skills database.

14. Finances

Fiona had not had time to update, but reported that the position was very similar to that reported at the AGM, apart from the £78.75 event insurance fee paid. Envelopes asking for this year’s subscription had been posted to everyone (except “off Island” members) last Sunday and a good number had already been returned. She asked were the list of “off Island” members was kept. Elizabeth said that Anna had these details and Fiona agreed to drop the extra envelopes at Anna’s address.

15. South Street Trees

As everyone at the meeting had attended the presentation which Barbara had given at the AGM it was suggested that there was no need for her to provide a general briefing on the work of West Oxford Community Renewables (WOCR) and Low Carbon West Oxford. (LCWO).

WOCR is undertaking the work in placing solar panels of the type known as photovoltaic (PV) cells on the roof of buildings in Osney Mead industrial estate. The generous grant it has received (in excess of £800,000) combined with the dramatic drop in the price of PVs, has enabled them to carry out more projects than they anticipated. One of these, which had particularly enthused Barbara, had been the project to install PVs on the south-facing social housing units in South Street. These will provide electricity free of charge to tenants. This project will also benefit the community because WOCR will get the new Feed-in Tariff for all the electricity generated by the

panels. Most of this money will be donated to LCWO to support its work within the community.

At their present heights, the trees would however interfere with (by restricting light), and possibly damage, the PVs and therefore prevent them from doing their job properly. Both trees had already been surveyed and identified by the Council as being diseased and needing to be removed over the next couple of years anyway. For the purposes of the PV project, it had originally been thought that reducing their crowns would do the trick, but closer examination had revealed that in the case of the taller of the two (the one towards West street), all that would be left after its crown had been reduced would be an unsightly stick. The most obvious and administratively convenient solution then appeared to be to remove both trees altogether and replant with suitable replacements.

Bev and Michael Lear have also inspected the trees (their note had been circulated to Committee members by Steve) and had confirmed the City Council diagnosis. Bev and Michael had agreed to help Oxford City Homes, WOCR and the tenants to identify suitable options for the new trees. They had suggested that trees and bushes which produced berries for birds should be considered, as the loss of the rowans will deprive them of an important food source, and possibly a bird table too. Barbara was enthusiastic about these possibilities, which she felt the LCWO wildlife and conservation group might be happy to work on.

WOCR and Oxford City Council would be issuing three letters: one to the tenants, one to the other residents of South Street and one to other Islanders. WOCR was proposing to set up a stall at Tea on the Towpath to answer questions on the project and the problem with the trees and asked the OIRA Committee permission to do so. This was given. Kate, and Steve and Suzanne would meet up with Barbara after Tea on the Towpath for a debrief on the issues raised at the WOCR stall and to consider how to move these forward.

Kate drew Committee members' attention to the note she had circulated to Committee members explaining the position.

Steve asked, given the financial pressure which the City Council will face, how residents could have confidence that any commitments made would be kept. Barbara said that in the event that there was a problem, then WOCR would underwrite the cost. Susanna thought that any commitment by the Council would be honoured.

16. Council Business

None

17. AOB

Kate referred to a letter she had received from the EA about the planned work on the weir at the junction of North Street and East Street. It will now commence on 16 August and will take ten weeks. She would be contacting the project manager in due course for more details

Susanna mentioned that the EA hoped to reduce noise problems by introducing some sort of silent pump; she had no further details.

Alan mentioned that the main Bridge on Botley Road appeared to be crumbling in places and looked like it needed inspecting on safety grounds. Susanna mentioned that this was the responsibility of the County Council, but she would raise.

Alan also mentioned that one of the trees on East Street had suffered some serious damage. After the meeting Susanna would inspect and would report to the City Council officials.

18. Date of Next Meeting

Was planned for Wednesday 15 September. This was changed to 22 September as a number of Committee members were away on the 15. The meeting after that was scheduled for 17 November.