

FIELDEND RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION LTD

DIRECTORS' REPORT

OCTOBER 2014 – SEPTEMBER 2015

1. Chairman's introduction

Eight board meetings were held during the 2014/15 year. As you know from the three newsletters and two consultation papers issued during the year, more than usual time and thought was spent on the perennial concerns of finance and parking. Hopefully, we will see worthwhile results in 2016.

The financial challenge was linked to the repainting schedule. In June, a communal decision was made to maintain the four-year cycle and increase the maintenance charge accordingly. This was certainly wise for the long term but was a difficult decision. So, while we must build sufficient funds for 2020, we also aim to bring the maintenance charge down to a more reasonable level once this re-paint has been covered. The reports from Sarah Chudleigh (Treasurer) and Theo Williams (Maintenance) provide further detail.

Illegal parking is a growing problem and a cause of endless discussion at our AGMs. Discussion with the Council led to the plan for yellow lines on the entry road, which was supported by a clear majority of residents. The lines and associated signage are now in place. The process again demonstrated our ability to act together as a community.

Turning to day-to-day operations, management of the gardens is FRAL's major routine responsibility and, as Sally Stones reports below, the work has continued to meet a good standard.

Several other items worth noting were dealt with by the board. In order to maintain the architectural integrity of the estate, house extensions often require FRAL's attention even after the necessary permissions have been obtained from neighbours. This year work took place at nos. 3, 21, 44 & 45.

On a related theme, we have found that purchasers' solicitors sometimes neglect to spell out the scheme of management covenants – leading to difficulties when people want to modify their homes. To help deal with this a concise seller's information pack has been produced to assist buyers, vendors and solicitors.

Fieldend's potential as a film location was employed at no 31 and a £1,000 fee paid to FRAL. Due to the success of this venture and the opportunity for further income we have been in touch with the RUTC film officer.

After the initial noisy demolition phase the extension to the main building at Newland House School is progressing without serious disruption to Fieldend, nor have we been much troubled by contractors' vehicles.

Regular communication with residents is important but the production and distribution of 51 documents is costly and time-consuming so we have discussed whether or not we should be making better use of email. The board's email address is included in the newsletters as a convenient point of contact (chairfral@gmail.com). We would like to obtain as many residents'

email addresses as possible providing that people are happy with this. At the same time we are aware that there are residents who do not use email, and we must ensure that prompt paper communication is maintained so that nobody is left out.

Board membership and changes

During the year Colin Hatton-Smith, Helen Middleton-Price, Isabelle Epps, and Joanna O'Sullivan left the board. Roger Joiner and Sarah Chudleigh were elected to the board at the 2015 AGM. Sally Stones and Theo Williams continued throughout as directors; during the year Antonia Eckersley and Joy Jermy attended board meetings in an ex-officio capacity. At the end of the year Barbara Atherton and Helen Middleton-Price were invited to join the board.

In closing, I would like to personally thank everyone who took part in the board meetings. Thanks are also due to Joanna for hosting the 2014 FRAL Christmas Drinks at no 31.

Parking

Although the existing No Entry signs deter most drivers, illegal parking has long been a nuisance and has become worse with the development of St Mary's University. The parked vehicles and periodic confrontations have caused much irritation and raised blood pressure. After earlier less successful contacts we entered into very helpful discussions with the Council in 2015. These led to the view that, although there is no perfect solution, yellow lines on the entry road should deter drivers.

This was not a straightforward decision but a survey showed almost universal concern over the parking problem and 41 households signed a petition in favour of the plan. The Council's formal consultation received a massive email response from Fieldend in favour of yellow lines.

The introduction of our own parking permits was another important initiative and will help to protect the parking bays (which are entirely under our control) as well as the service road. It is also important to work with the school and university; we have re-opened a very positive dialogue with Newland House School and recently established a helpful new contact at St Mary's.

Thanks are due to everybody who participated in the consultation process: to Antonia Eckersley for designing the parking permits, to Chandy Marrs, Colin Tomlins, David London, and Mark Ashton for their help in formulating the plans to improve the parking situation and, of course, to Joyce Jacques for her tireless role in placing notices on offending drivers' windscreens.

2. Gardens Report

The gardens continue to flourish thanks to the continued care from Allen Craig, nobly supported by Martin. They have, in addition to the regular tasks, planted trees, rejuvenated the beds and reseeded worn areas of grass.

We have had several successful tidy days; many thanks to the stalwarts who turn out come rain or shine. We have swept, pruned, weeded and generally tidied the estate. A new initiative this year – thanks to Alison Dietz – was the wildflower planting. Alison supplied us with packets of seeds, and mini-meadows have popped up around Fieldend; we hope to make further progress with this project in 2016.

A big thank you to everyone who cares for and helps with the gardens.

3. Maintenance Report

The pressing need to rapidly build up FRALs bank balance to pay for the 2016 repaint meant all non-essential maintenance was carried over until all the costs of the repaint were understood. Thankfully, last year, there were almost no instances where emergency maintenance was required by FRAL.

While no fences or bollards fell over it is acknowledged that a fairly large number of paving slabs need either replacing or re-seating. Having been delayed, a programme of paving slab repair is scheduled for early 2016 now that finances are in check. It is also acknowledged that the garage gutters have been in need of a thorough overhaul, and the plan is to tackle this issue during 2016.

Maintenance of garage doors is an increasingly common necessity for garage owners. Because it is no longer possible to purchase garage doors in the original Fieldend style a number of more or less appropriate doors have been installed and, despite being repainted accordingly, the uniformity of the garage blocks has suffered. Acceptable, though not identical replacements can be found but residents are urged to first find out from FRAL (who will refer them to a specialist) whether their door can be mended – typically this is a quick and inexpensive job and preferable to replacement.

The new more efficient garden and pathway lighting was once again much more reliable only requiring the occasional bulb change, facilitated as ever by Ian McCann; many thanks to Ian for this support. The only other electrical maintenance being two main meters being updated in each garage block, work that was undertaken entirely by the energy company.

Preparing the ground for the 2016 repaint has been the main task of the year. Quotes were secured from four potential contractors and having presented the best prospect both in terms of references, customer service and, by some margin, price, Mark Tullett Decorating Services was awarded the contract.

The task of undertaking surveys of property paint and wood condition and the creation of advisory reports was also put out to tender. The board agreed Mark was also best positioned to undertake this task, not least because he would then be able to meet many residents early in the process, discuss concerns and have a detailed knowledge of the condition of each house.

4. Financial Report

At the start of our financial year, 1 October 2014, the accumulated fund for the provision for the repainting stood at £15,000, with a target of reaching £100,000 by the summer of 2016.

During 2014/15 the board focussed on minimising non-essential expenditure to increase the painting provision. The opinions of the residents were sought on whether or not to delay the painting by a year or to increase the maintenance charges for 2015/16, in order to keep to the existing cycle. By a narrow majority (56%) votes were in favour of keeping to repainting in the summer of 2016.

With no emergency maintenance issues and some additional funds which were generated, we have been able to increase the provision for repainting by £27,500, to £42,500 as at 30 September 2015. Together with the increased maintenance charges for 2015/16 we are now on target for accumulating sufficient for the 2016 repainting project.

There was a huge variation between the costs of the four painters which quoted for the repaint; the most expensive being well over double the selected contractor. This variation means that we need to be sure we set a realistic budget for the 2020 repainting project in order to have some choice as to which painter carries out the project. It is our hope to reduce the maintenance charges to £125/month (£375/quarter) from 1 October 2016 for the next financial year. However, we have agreed to review this once the summer 2016 painting project has been completed.

Many thanks to Colin Hatton-Smith for his continued support and advice in the preparation of the accounts.

In Conclusion

The Board is extremely grateful to residents who have aided and supported its work over the past year. Residents' continued support of Fieldend is essential for the smooth running of the estate and maintaining its special community feel.

The Board is always keen to improve how it serves the Fieldend community and would welcome any suggestions from residents. Board member details are available on the newsletter and on the Fieldend website. We would also encourage residents to use the chairfral@gmail.com email address for correspondence.

The Board submits its report and the accompanying Financial statement to shareholders for approval, and hopes to see as many residents as possible at the AGM.



Roger Joiner
Acting Chair
Fieldend Residents' Association Ltd
February 2016