

Minutes

Chester Square Residents' Association - Annual General Meeting

Date: 26 May 2010 - 5.30pm

Venue: St Michael's Church, Chester Square

Chair: Mrs T Sackler

Present: Mrs T Sackler (TS) Mr H Sassoon (HS) Mr C Lawrence
 Mrs R Middleton Mrs S Pignatelli (SP) Lady Henrietta St George
 Mr Tarling Mrs Tarling Mrs S Burns
 Mrs Y Goldman Mrs H David
 Mr D Pullan (DP) (Met Police) Sgt Gary Herrett (Met Police)

Grosvenor:
 Mr N Hughes (NAH) Miss F Giles (sec) Mr M Curry (MC)
 Mr A McGowan (AMM)

Apologies: Mr J Herrman Mr and Mrs Pathak Mr R Conway
 Mrs A Colt Mr & Mrs Leech Mr R Michael
 Ms M de Haan Mr and Mrs Daniels Inputkey Ltd
 Rev and Mrs Marnham Mr G Short - Eccleston Properties Inc

Grosvenor:
 Kathryn Samuels (KS) Stephen Smith (SS)

		Action
1.0	Minutes of previous AGM - 16 April 2009	
1.1	The minutes of the 2009 AGM were accepted without alteration.	
1.2	(2.1) Noise from bus commentaries. NAH asked if this problem had improved, following discussions with TfL. TS advised that there had not been much improvement. NAH to raise this again with TfL.	NAH
2.0	Traffic	
2.1	CL asked if the speed bump half way down Eccleston Street could be moved by Westminster City Council (WCC). NAH said that they were unlikely to move it as it is a traffic calming measure.	
2.2	NAH advised that Wilton Road will be closed during the Victoria Station upgrade and that this is likely to increase the volume of traffic down Eccleston Street toward Chester Square.	
2.3	NAH commented that Victoria Coach Station is approaching maximum capacity in numbers and due to the size of the coaches (which have increased from 12m to 15m in length). There is nothing in the TfL business plan to undertake any improvement works. As the site is a safeguarded one for the Chelsea / Hackney line for Crossrail 2 it can't be redeveloped.	



		Action
	Possibilities are, however, being discussed to relocate the coach station, to eg Euston or Heathrow, with strong support from Kit Malthouse.	
2.4	CL asked if a "no entry" to heavy vehicles sign could be installed during the works. NAH said it was possible, but as it is shown as a principal distribution road, it is not likely. When the congestion charge western extension zone is removed from Belgravia, this could also increase the levels of traffic.	
3.0	Security	
3.1	DP provided a summary of crime in the Chester Square area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Crime figures are almost the same as last year. There are have been eight crimes in Chester Square and these are mostly thefts from motor vehicles (all BMWs), with no sign of forced entry. DP reminded the meeting to check the doors on the car are locked after using the remote locking key. ■ There is a scam currently occurring mostly in Mayfair, where when a person is distracted looking for the phone number to phone to pay for parking, someone walks past and puts a door or the boot ajar. The owner then locks the car and walks away, leaving the thief with easy access to the car and its contents. ■ There has been one arrest for a weapon - this was a homeless man with self-harm issues who was released without charge. ■ There has been one residential burglary. Access was gained through the letter box and DP reminded the meeting to ensure the back of the letter box has a cowl or cover over it, so thieves cannot slip their hand in and open the latch. ■ Over Westminster as a whole there has been a 12% reduction in residential burglaries, 8% reduction in street robberies and 25% reduction in thefts from motor vehicles. 	
3.2	Sgt Gary Herrett from the Safety Neighbourhood Team spoke to the meeting regarding squatters and this is summarised below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Squatters have been a big problem over the last eight months. ■ The last property was in Montpelier Street - it took four months to evict the squatters, costing the owner £9k in legal fees and £9k in repairs to the property. ■ Sgt Herrett asked the meeting to keep an eye on any properties they knew were empty and report anything suspicious to the police. Also padlock or secure ladders, alarm scaffolding etc and keep windows closed when not at home, even on the first floor. ■ The latest ruse for gaining entry without damaging the property is for the potential squatters to view the property with a letting agent and whilst looking around, open a back door or window. They then return to the property later and can gain access without forcing entry. ■ Sgt Herrett advised that for forcible entry to be proved, someone has to witness the damage being done, otherwise it will only be a civil court matter, not a criminal one. 	
3.3	SP raised the issue of 53 Chester Square. The squatters have now been removed and the door is padlocked and SP asked what Grosvenor's position was over the state the building has been left in and what Grosvenor could do to fix it. Several members of the meeting felt that Grosvenor should have taken action sooner.	

	Action
	<p>NAH commented that the building had changed hands several times, which increased this problem, as proceedings had to be started fresh each time there was a new owner. NAH also advised that in order to gain entry and do the works, authority has to be gained from the court and this is hard to obtain.</p> <p>NAH also advised that works were due to restart to No 54 next month.</p> <p>SP suggested that if the rules that Grosvenor follow with regard to absentee landlords were outdated, a review and upgrade of them should be considered. CL suggested that Grosvenor start forfeiture proceedings and NAH advised that another option that could be considered is compulsory purchase orders.</p> <p>NAH then advised that he had just received an email advising that, with regard to No 53, planning consent has been given, Grosvenor's consent for works is about to be given, and that the property has been taken over by Finchattons with works expected to start in June / July. NAH asked SP to contact him if there was no sign of the works happening then.</p>
4.0	Elizabeth Street Public Realm Works
4.1	<p>NAH introduced MC and AMM, who are both working closely with retailers and residents with regard to Grosvenor's public realm works.</p> <p>MC advised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The public realm works are being delivered in partnership with WCC ■ The pavement and road surfaces are being changed back to a more traditional finish ■ This is not a short term project, but a long term investment ■ A new sub-base is being laid in the road, and the digging out has caused some dust and noise for residents and retailers, though every effort has been made to minimise this ■ The works are programmed to complete in August and Skanska, the contractor who is carrying out the works, report that the work is on programme. The 1st phase is complete, the 2nd phase is underway and the 3rd phase should be starting in mid to late June ■ MC confirmed that three of the four trees had been planted but one had to be removed from the plan as an EDF cable was found to be only 40cms deep instead of the usual 1.5m under the proposed tree site. Three more trees are proposed in the next phase of the works <p>Meeting members asked for contact details of who they speak to with regard to these works.</p> <p>MC advised that he can be contacted by email on mark.curry@grosvenor.com.</p> <p>There is also a website with information about the public realm works and this can be found at http://www.grosvenorpublicrealm.co.uk/</p>
5.0	Any other business
5.1	<p>Mr Tarling introduced himself as a member of the church and a churchwarden and that he had come to the meeting to raise the issue of the refurbished church bells, on behalf of Rev Marnham.</p>

	Action
<p>Mr Tarling advised that due to the residents' letters received when it was proposed that the bells would chime the quarter hours, this would not now be considered. However, the suggestion was for the bells to peal for approximately five minutes, for weddings (approx 6 a year) and on Festivals (Whitsun, Christmas and Easter).</p> <p>Meeting members asked for a copy of the proposal in writing, so they could consider it, as not all residents were in favour of this idea.</p> <p>However, a show of hands indicated that 10 people at the meeting were in favour of considering this proposal.</p> <p>Mr Tarling agreed to provide a copy of the proposal in writing.</p> <p>The meeting members generally agreed that they would not want the bells chiming on the hour.</p>	<p>Mr Tarling</p>
<p>The meeting closed at 18.40</p>	