

**~ Minutes ~**  
**Dunton Park Residents Association**  
**AGM**  
**14 March 2024 @ 19:30**  
**Dunton Park Clubhouse**

**1. Opening:**

The chair opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming.

He also thanked committee members for all their hard work over the last year. A special mention was given to Lynda for continuing to run the Helping Hands scheme and also to Laurie for assisting.

The chair thanked the entertainment team (Mick and Julie) for all the fabulous acts over the last year but also informed members that Mick Hilton wasn't standing again this year because he has too many commitments so can't dedicate the time needed. However, Mick confirmed he'll still be around and will still attend events and will be happy to help out whenever we need him.

The chair presented Mick with an Amazon voucher and card in appreciation for everything he's done and reiterated we'd welcome him back anytime.

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**2. Nominations for Committee:**

We advertised on our social media, website and newsletter for any members to come forward if they wanted to join the committee (or rejoin). The following members put themselves forward by the deadline of 7 March 2024 and have been proposed and seconded.

Gary Peckham (Chair)  
James Hailes (Secretary)  
Sheila Hobman (Treasurer)

Patrick Stapleton, Julie Raby, Pat Moore, Lynda Gould, Denise Rayner.

We also welcomed Sheila Mead who is standing on the committee for the first time.

Members decided to vote on-block.

**~ All 9 were elected unanimously ~**

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#### **4. Motions in regard to our constitution:**

The chair explained to members that there were a couple of motions to put forward as below.

- a) *“This Association has rules in place to limit committee places to 1 per household but in the event that one household covers more than one of the 3 statutory roles of Chair, Secretary or Treasurer it’s agreed they are granted full committee voting rights”.*

The chair explained that normally with committees it’s good practice that if there are two committee members from the same household, only one gets to vote at committee meetings. This stops one or two houses being dominant. Up until now, because the chair and secretary are from the same household, the secretary has never been allowed to vote at committee meetings but the committee feels the secretary plays such a vital role that it’s only fair to allow him to vote.

**~ This motion was agreed unanimously ~**

b) *“This Association agrees that the committee should not exceed 10 members in total”.*

The chair explained that when we set the association up, we omitted to include a maximum number of committee members on our constitution. We want to add this now but this requires members to vote.

**~ This motion was agreed unanimously ~**

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## **5. Pitch Fee update:**

### **a) The chair updated members who disputed last year’s (2023) pitch fee.**

The current position is, around 100 residents disputed the pitch fee increase because of deterioration of the site and reduction of services.

This will now go to tribunal and the secretary and chair agreed to represent all those in dispute.

We prepared a statement with evidence to support our claims and the landlord’s solicitor put forward their statement to say why they felt the full pitch fee should be due.

The next step is the judge in our case will visit the site accompanied by the chair and secretary and also the landlord’s legal team. Following a tour of the site we all go off to a hearing at a local court (normally same day).

Normally within a few weeks the judge will notify all parties of his/her decision.

They can decide that last year’s increase was fair - and we’ll all have 30 days to pay the difference backdated to April 2023.

They can decide last year’s increase isn’t reasonable and reduce it.

Finally, they can also decide that our case is so compelling that the increase is totally written off.

The chair said that if any member wants to look at the court files we can let you borrow the folder. Because it's several hundred pages long we can't print copies off, but people are welcome to read our copy.

#### **b) The chair went on to explain about the new 2024 pitch fee review.**

Over the last few weeks the 2024 pitch fee review forms have been dropping on some people's doormats. However, the landlord used the wrong calculation which increased the pitch fee by 4.2% instead of 4% so the form was invalid.

The association was looking into whether this error could invalidate the whole 2024 increase for everyone on site. However, somebody alerted the company to the error so the company was able to quickly reissue the form within the timeframe.

New review forms are on their way out telling residents to disregard the first one. However, the knock on effect of their mistake is - because they have to give residents 28 days notice of an increase, this year's increase can no longer start in April and will take effect from May instead.

The chair took lots of questions from members and for most he was able to refer people to the advice sheet the secretary had prepared. He also said if people have individual questions we would be available at the end of the meeting to talk to.

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#### **6. Secretary Report:**

The secretary updated residents on some of the main topics over the last year.

**a) The secretary talked about the sale of the site.**

Royale Life sites have been sold to Ambassador Group - a family-owned business based in Scotland.

Ambassador mainly deal with business real estate so they've created a new park homes brand called Regency Living and these will be the people running our site as we move forward.

As things stand, Dunton Park is in transition between being run by the administrators and being fully handed over to Regency Living and this could take several months to complete. Administrators remain overall in charge until the site licence is transferred to Regency Living.

It was confirmed that the chair and secretary will be meeting senior management from Regency Living on 26 March 2024.

A member asked why Regency Living seemed to be employing EX Royale senior management and whether this was a good thing.

The chair and secretary were both able to explain that this is common when companies go into administration because the administrators still need to keep the sites running.

There was a lot of scepticism amongst members that it's just the same old Royale but with a new name. However, the chair explained that the new owners were likely to have a different ethos which staff (even ex-Royale) would need to adopt.

**b) The secretary discussed gas tanks.**

Because lots of people still contact the association to say they'd prefer to have bulk gas tanks back, the secretary explained that we had spoken to Calor and they confirmed they will not be offering anyone on this site a private tank arrangement so we would need to get used to bottled gas.

**c) The secretary explained the position with the site licence.**

Last year we wanted to ask Basildon Council to help us get the landlord to maintain the site as per their site licence obligations because we were hitting brick walls with Royale. However, when we requested a copy of the licence to inspect the conditions, we discovered it was over 40 years old.

Site licences are supposed to be updated regularly to comply with new legislation and at the very least should have been updated when Royale took over the site to reflect new ownership. However, this was never done. I think it's fair to say that Basildon Council were equally to blame for this state of affairs.

The council promised us they would work on updating the licence to reflect new legislation and in the meantime the old licence would remain valid. However, the secretary said that unfortunately Royale went into administration before the new licence was issued so now the process starts again.

The council have confirmed to us that they are going to work with the new owners to get the licence issued but this process can take many months.

The council have also confirmed that they are listening to our concerns about street lighting and the condition of the roads and signage and they have already conducted site visits. The most recent inspection was February 2024 when the officer carried out a short notice visit to look at street lighting at dusk. They have since confirmed they would raise the need for remedial action with the new owner.

**d) The secretary talked about the club.**

He explained that in this interim period the office is unable to commit to replacing the bar manager until the new owners are officially in place.

He also said that the office is finding it difficult keeping the club open for evening events like bingo, pool, quiz nights and monthly music events. So, the

residents association has agreed to step in to help for an initial two-month period and act as keyholders and to maintain the hall (cleaning etc).

The secretary thanked committee members for all mucking in and volunteering to keep these events and activities running - especially Julie for offering to clean the men's toilets.

The secretary also confirmed that we are looking to get a table tennis table in the hall which can be left out during the week and folded away when we have events.

**e) The secretary moved on to talk about the flood in the underpass and fly tipping.**

Residents have asked us to help resolve the flood and constant fly tipping which made the underpass inaccessible since 22 February 2024.

The secretary explained that he'd asked the office about this but they had said it's not their land so there was little they could do. So, we contacted Essex County Council and Basildon Council ourselves to try and get it resolved.

Nearly three weeks passed and nothing was done so we contacted the local press who interviewed us and published an article. The reporter contacted the council about all this to get their side of the story and this seemed to do the trick and the underpass is now back to normal, apart from a little bit of debris which we have reported.

The secretary also explained that we'd asked Basildon Council if they could look at preventative measures to try and stop the regular fly tipping in this area. We suggested placing bollards along Durham Way to stop vehicles getting on to this land or installing CCTV.

We understand CCTV has been agreed and the secretary also thanked resident Joy Darch for putting in a good word for us which helped our case. Joy works for the council and is always very supportive.

**f) The secretary discussed electricity prices.**

He said that when the site went into administration the contract for electricity had expired and needed renegotiating. In the meantime we were all continuing to pay last year's fixed rate which was relatively high.

The secretary made a complaint to the administrator about this and they expedited negotiations for a new rate for this year (it's around 26.5p/kWh) which is about 33% cheaper than last year.

A member asked a question -

“If the landlord isn't allowed to make a profit on reselling electricity, if they charge us VAT then claim VAT back, surely their overall outlay is less than ours”.

The secretary wasn't able to answer that, but committed to get an answer.

**g) The secretary confirmed that current membership of the association is as follows.**

187 homes on site

169 are members

11 have said they don't want to be members

7 homes are empty or for sale.

This means around 90% of Dunton homes belong to the residents association which is a fantastic achievement.

**h) The secretary updated members about the pumphouse.**

This had suffered a major breakdown and waste was now being taken away manually on a daily basis to avoid flooding.



The company has obtained quotes to get this rectified.

The cost is 17k to repair or 55k to have a brand new system and the company has decided on a brand new system. The job has been signed off and the contractors are just waiting for new equipment.

## **7. Treasurer's report and adoption of accounts.**

The chair explained that up until now we'd done most of our bookkeeping on paper and whilst we had full records of everything available to be inspected if members wanted to look, the system needed improving so we invested in some software to digitalise our accounts.

The chair shared printouts with members and confirmed that the association currently has £3,181.88 in the bank and £622.74 cash so a grand total of £3,804.62.

The chair thanked Shelia for her continued work as treasurer.

The chair also reminded members that we're here to answer any questions on finances.

## **8. Entertainment report.**

Julie spoke about entertainment which has been booked for the whole of 2024.

She also asked if there were any volunteers to present a quiz night because we rely on the same two quiz-setters who often needed a break.

Julie spoke about how the membership cards will soon get members discounted tickets for our events and we were planning special member treats like a coach trip which would be subsidised with money we already have in the pot.

Julie thanked everyone for their continued support coming to events. The association doesn't charge a membership fee so all money to run the association comes from profit from events.

Finally, Julie said she's always available to speak to if people have any ideas for events.

## **9. Any Other Business**

This is normally an opportunity for members to ask questions but we had allowed people to intervene as we went along to ask questions so there were no other questions.

However, at the close, a number of residents came forward to say how disappointed they were with members chatting whilst committee members were making important points.

**The meeting was closed at 9pm and the chair invited members to stay for refreshments and to chat about anything that was raised in the meeting.**

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