

General meeting date: 2/3/2023

Location: Royale Dunton Court Clubhouse

Start time. 20:00.

Finish time. 22:00

Present.

Chair: Gary Peckham

Secretary/vice chair: Pat Stapleton

Treasurer: Sheila Hobman

Council Members: Lynda Gould, Mick Hilton, July Raby, Pat Moore, Denise Rayner, James Hailes

Members signed in to ensure we had the minimum of 20% of homes that are required in order for votes to be binding.

1. Apologies for absence

None

2. Chair's Opening Remarks

Since the main reason for calling today's meeting was because of residents' questions about the anticipated 1 April pitch fee increase, the chair used his opening remarks to explain how pitch fee increases work.

Site owners are entitled to increase our pitch fee by the Retail Prices Index (RPI) rate each year. Unfortunately, because of how the economy is at the moment, this year's increase could be 13.4%.

Pitch fees can't be imposed on residents. We have to agree with them. If we don't agree, Royale can ask a tribunal to decide.

A tribunal will always assume the site owner is entitled to raise the pitch fee by RPI. However, there are grounds in which they might reduce it.

The grounds that a tribunal could consider are -

- deterioration in the condition, decrease in the amenity, of the site or any adjoining land which is occupied or controlled by the owner
- reduction in the services that the owner supplies to the site, pitch or mobile home, and any deterioration in the quality of those services

The meeting agreed unanimously that there has been a deterioration on the site's roads, paths and signage.

The residents' association offered to try and negotiate a lower pitch fee increase to save people having to deal with tribunals and members voted unanimously on the following motion.

"This Association instructs the committee to negotiate with Royale regarding the pitch fee review as an increase based on RPI of 13.4% is not justified due to the poor maintenance of the site infrastructure and facilities being withdrawn."

3 Polling Station update including motion

The Chair reported that, earlier this year, Basildon Council contacted the association to tell us that Royale had withdrawn the use of the clubhouse as a place to vote.

The association wrote to Royale to ask them to reconsider. Initially they told us they would not reconsider. However, some weeks later we learnt from the council that Royale had reversed its decision and was in negotiation to use the clubhouse as a polling station in May 2023.

Whilst members appreciated this reversed decision, they felt strongly that the clubhouse should remain a voting venue after May 2023 so they gave instructions to the committee to speak to Royale to try and retain this facility going forward.

4. Site Licence/Fit and Proper Person Test update

The Chair reported that Basildon Council is carrying out an update of Royale's site licence to bring it into line with current laws.

The association is aware that the council can remove things from the licence it no longer feels are appropriate.

One licence condition we're concerned about is the fact 10% of the site should be available for recreation space. So far as the association is concerned, the only recreation space Royale provides is the clubhouse. Since the new planning application for the caravan storage site doesn't include any recreation space at all, we felt it important to make a case to Basildon about how vitally important the clubhouse is so it's important to keep this in the licence.

Members voted on the unanimously for the committee to speak to Royale with a view to underscoring the importance of these site licensing obligations and to ensure 10% of the site is made available for unrestricted recreation space including any new developments. This is vitally important for members as no suitable space is available away from the park.

5. Planning Application update

The planning officer in charge of Royale's application for new homes on the old caravan site has said she hopes to be able to make a recommendation this spring (2023). Her recommendation will then go to be debated at a planning committee meeting.

Whilst people are not against new homes in principle. Residents have real concerns over access to and from the new site which will use the already crumbling infrastructure of narrow roads and limited paths. Residents have also expressed concerns about lack of consultation.

The residents association will raise these points with the committee when we're invited to do so.

6. Future AMGs

It was felt that March was a better time for the AGM because it coincided with a pitch fee review. So, the committee asked members if we could change the date of AGM to coincide with the pitch fee review date. Members voted unanimously to change the constitution to move the month of the Annual General Meeting from October to March.

6. Obtaining legal advice for Royale's non response to Residents' Association.

The Chair explained to members how challenging Royale is as a company to work with. It's not the kind of relationship we wanted or expected but unfortunately it's the way it is. He went on to say that the association might, in future, have to seek legal advice to protect our rights as a qualifying residents association.

Members voted unanimously that the committee should, if necessary, instruct and pay reasonable fees for legal work to protect our rights as a qualifying Residents' Association"

7. Any Other Business.

James (communications) said that he is trying to streamline the way we communicate with members to try and encourage more people to use our website or Facebook group.

Delivering paper newsletters is expensive, extremely time consuming and, often, the news is weeks old by the time we've published, printed, delivered etc.

Since the vast majority of people get their updates in a digital format, we are also doubling up by sending paper newsletters to every home.

A question was also raised about non-members of the association who are currently benefiting from site news/newsletters.

Over 100 people now get their association updates on our Facebook page or website. This means they get up-to-date news. One problem is, because some people don't use the website or Facebook to get their news, the only way we can communicate with them is via a paper newsletter which is slow, costly and time consuming.

It was decided that we need to only deliver newsletters to those who need them and also we should stop delivering to non-members who might not necessarily want them anyway.

8. Members Questions

a) A member asked how the new Green Bin charges being introduced at Basildon Council would affect us on site. James agreed to take this away and contact Basildon.

b) A member asked if moving the AGM to next March 2024 would mean members don't get to see the association's account until then.

It is true that traditionally, associations like ours present the year's accounts at the AGM so changing the AGM means full accounts wouldn't be available until March 2024. However, every time we have a committee meeting (normally around 8 a year) we receive the treasurers up-to-date report. So, members are welcome and have always been welcome to sit in at any of our committee meetings to oversee and hear these reports..

Also, members are welcome to book an appointment at any time if they wish to study the accounts and they are welcome to submit a question via email or through our postbox on the clubhouse wall regarding any financial matters.

c) A member asked what's being done about the mess in the field adjacent to Sycamore and the committee agreed to look into this and report back.

d) A member asked what's happening to pink sacks.

James explained that the association managed to get a bulk delivery of pink sacks delivered to the site but Royale had refused to take them saying it's not their responsibility.

Resident Joy kindly stepped in to take delivery and committee members went round giving them out to homes. However, Basildon Council didn't deliver enough for everyone so some people went without.

Joy has since secured another small batch so if anyone needs a roll please ask the residents association.

Meeting concluded at 22:00