



**OTTERSHAW PARK ESTATE COMPANY LTD  
& OTTERSHAW PARK WOODLAND LTD**

**Minutes of the OPEC & OPM AGM  
26<sup>th</sup> November 2020**

**Held by Zoom and attended by management committee members  
only.**

The chairman thanked the Committee Members for attending and thanked the total of 19 estate members (including committee) who sent in Proxy Votes to support the proceedings.

As previously reported, OPEC has paid the 2020 hall hire charge to Christchurch to support their continuing work in the area and we have booked the hall for 2021 in the anticipation of a resumption of a 'face to face' AGM next year.

**1 - Minutes**

Resolution: *To approve the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2019 (Previously circulated)*

Proposed: Margaret McHugh      Seconded: John Athersuch  
For: 19      Against: 0      Abstain: 0

**2 - Chairman's Report**

The chairman gave a brief overview of the contents of his Annual Report which had been previously circulated to all members and is available on the company's website.

**Covid Times**

It is worth restating how lucky we have been, during these restricted times, to be able to enjoy living on our 'parkland' estate. It prompts me to re-emphasise that we must all do our best to preserve it and improve it for the benefit of members and wildlife. We are only temporary custodians of our properties and our actions, such as removing trees that cause 'inconvenience' will have significant impact on future generations of Ottershaw Park residents.

### **NEW COMPANY TREASURER.**

The chairman repeated his thanks to Robbie Sampson for volunteering as OPEC treasurer. His attention to our finances is much appreciated.

**The Bridge:** Major works were finally completed and the bridge should be safe, secure and fit for its restricted use for the future.

**Bothy Wall:** The work on this is still outstanding, to be completed in 2021.

**Estate Roads:** Over £6,000 was spent in 2021 on resurfacing areas where potholes were developing. Resurfacing larger sections of road will become a major expense and members must anticipate some increase in service charges in future years.

**Woodland:** Our Ottershaw Park Woodland continues to be a delight, protecting us from the A319 and supporting our wildlife. Please continue to enjoy its walkways and hopefully we can organise some working parties for 2021.

**Oak Processionary Moth (OPM);** Barbara and Robbie Samson are not only our resident horticultural and arboricultural advisers, they also mastermind our response to the moth – their input is greatly appreciated.

OPEC organised the removal of nests in 2020 and can continue to help and inform members of the situation with OPM but ultimately everyone has responsibility for the oak trees on their own land and must take the measures they consider appropriate to protect their families and neighbours.

The company website has a map showing the location of the nests removed and useful links for information.

**Security and CCTV:** Will be discussed later in AoB.

**Local planning:** The long running local issues remain, they are:

The Ottershaw Roundabout and wider A320/M25 development.

The potential for either a 'Garden Village' and business park at Fair Oaks Airport or expansion of the current airport operation.

Willow Farm Travellers' Site, (opposite, on the A319).

### **Covenants:**

The chairman reminded members of the need to apply for formal OPEC approval before any building work or exterior modifications are made – and particularly all work on trees MUST be approved by OPEC – quite apart from any necessary permissions from RBC. The 'Guide to Ottershaw Park', which includes a summary of the covenants and OPEC policy, is available on the company website

## **3. Report on Financial Accounts**

Robbie Sampson reviewed the Company's financial position:

In 2020 we spent £6,600 on road repairs but the planned expenditure of £4,500 on the Bothy Wall has been carried over to 2021. Also the absence of a Tree Officer for RBC meant there was no approval for the surveyed tree works. The costs of those works are also deferred.

So, rather than the anticipated budget overspend, the net result is an increase in OPEC reserves of £7,253. At the end of 2020 reserves will stand at £53,300

Company finances remain sound and we will be able to respond to any urgent issues arising from the OPEC responsibilities of estate roads, sewerage, lighting and woodland.

We are proposing an unchanged annual maintenance charge of £275.

Members were cautioned that while the level of charge will cover OPEC's regular maintenance budget and provide a small surplus for 2021 it may not be sufficient to restore OPEC Reserves to over £80,000, which will be required to provide enough funds for significant road resurfacing in the future.

Resolution: *To approve the Management Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2020 and the budget for 2021.*

Proposed: John Athersuch                      Seconded: Graham Hughes  
For: 19      Against: 0      Abstain: 0

#### **4 - Accountants and Remuneration**

Resolution: *To renew the appointment of Crick Heitman as accountants to the Company and to authorise the Management Committee to agree their remuneration.*

Proposed: John Athersuch                      Seconded: Mick Roche  
For: 19      Against: 0      Abstain: 0

#### **5 - Budget 2021**

To consider and approve the following resolution: *"That a general service charge be agreed for 2021 in the sum of £275 payable on the 1st January 2021."*

Proposed: Robbie Sampson                      Seconded: Margaret McHugh  
For: 19      Against: 0      Abstain: 0

#### **6 - Appointment of Management Committee**

The Chairman thanked the current committee members, who are prepared to stand for another year. They are:

Margaret McHugh (Minutes Secretary) - Tulk House  
Graham Hughes - Mansion  
John Athersuch - (Web Master) Paul Stopps, Bothy Freeholders  
Nigel Eastment (Chairman) & Mick Roche, Freeholders  
Robbie Sampson (Treasurer)

Resolution: **a) For members to approve the OPEC Management Committee for 2021.**

Proposed: Nigel Eastment      Seconded: Graham Hughes  
For: 19      Against: 0      Abstain: 0

Resolution: *b) For members to approve the current arrangement that the OPEC Management Committee act as the Directors for OPW for 2021.*

Proposed: Nigel Eastment      Seconded: Graham Hughes  
For: 19      Against: 0      Abstain: 0

## **7 - Any Other Relevant Business**

The chairman said that he hoped the relatively few suggestions for AoB was an indication that most members were content with how the estate was being managed and financed. He introduced topics for wider discussion.

### **Security, Covid and Access to the Park.**

John Athersuch (JA) asked how did members view the access of the general public to the park which had increased during the lockdowns? Park residents may be vulnerable and will be at increased risk when the public access the estate.

In discussion it was agreed there is a general increase in footfall and it was noted that there are no genuine public rights of way in the park. We live on a 'private estate' which is maintained by charges on the membership.

The fundamental question is: are uninvited 'outsiders' all to be welcomed or not? The answer from the committee members was 'no' – and that was assumed to be the likely view of a majority of the members.

The issue is how can public access be prevented or controlled? It is not easy to confront people we do not recognise.

There are 3 points of access, Bothy Lane, Main Entrance and Ottershaw Chase. It was assumed the Chase was the most used point of entry but it was noted that dog walkers used the road entrances and there was talk of professional dog walkers driving onto the estate – but that was not confirmed or quantified.

A range of options were suggested and considered.

- Stiff note to residents of Home Farm Close, who visit the estate.
- Reinststate a combination padlock on the gate to Ottershaw Chase.
- 'Challenge' incomers
- Increase signage.

Margaret McHugh (MM) suggested there is greater risk of virus transmission with greater public footfall on the estate. Nigel Eastment said the consequence of taking a relaxed attitude usually lead to things being taken advantage of. Mick Roche said his contacts on the estate generally did not want a padlock on the access to the Chase. It was agreed that medical opinion was that virus transmission was largely by airborne droplet and that the limited risk from using a padlock could be mitigated. MM asked if more signs could be installed? JA said such signs were routinely removed by members of the public.

It was agreed that all members have an interest in and responsibility to maintain the integrity of the park, not just in Covid times but also long term to help ensure our security.

There was no unanimous agreement by the committee on the installation of a padlock at the Chase Gate. It was suggested that the 'silent majority' might well be in favour of such a measure, the only way we had of consulting the membership was by resolution at the AGM or at an EGM. MM suggested an on-line 'Survey Monkey' could be a practical means of getting the view of the membership.

It was agreed to implement all measures short of the padlock and if that was ineffective to seek an on-line vote of the wider membership.

- Enhanced signs will be installed.
- A note will be delivered to residents in Home Farm Close
- Members are to be encouraged to engage with walkers and point out that they are trespassing.

A number of committee members said they routinely spoke with walkers and it was quite possible to introduce yourself and greet a walker who could be assumed to be a new resident to enquire how long they had lived on the estate. It is obviously essential that this be done in a non-confrontational manner to avoid any possibility of personal abuse or worse.

### **OPEC and 'Public Access' to OPM Meadow and Tulk Gardens.**

This had been raised again by both the Mansion and Tulk.

The chairman said the position on the Mansion Meadow is clear and had been repeatedly stated in his Annual Reports to OPEC members. The Meadow is privately owned and maintained by the Mansion solely for the use of Mansion residents. It is exactly the same as everyone else's garden, the general membership would be put out if other members made free in their back garden or walked their dog there!

OPEC members do have a legal right of access BUT that is restricted solely to get to the OPEC tennis courts. The signs are clear, there is no access to use the Meadow, or to cross the Meadow to access the track and Fair Oaks Land – which is of course also private.

The situation is currently exacerbated with wider access by Home Farm Close residents, the wider 'general' access onto the estate.

The report of 'incomers' in Tulk House Gardens, whether OPEC members or the wider public has not been notified to OPEC before. The situation is similar to that of the Mansion Meadow, Tulk Gardens are a private space for the enjoyment of Tulk residents and their guests only.

It seems that the increase in 'incomers' onto the estate has increased the problems for both locations. The OPEC management committee's ability to control that is clearly limited and has been detailed earlier.

The meeting agreed that the monitoring and control of access to the Mansion and Tulk's private areas was primarily the responsibility of the respective committees.

The meeting agreed to look at the website and see if 'ownership' issues could be made clearer, perhaps on the title page. JA and GH are to meet (virtually) to explore what maps are available. Any improvements will be circulated by email to the membership – and will of course have no effect on the wider public access any areas of the estate.

### **CCTV:**

The chairman reported on the CCTV scheme that had previously outlined to members. The proposal allowed for vehicles entering via the main entrance to be recorded and so that in the event of any 'event' traffic could be examined with some potential of identification. Also providing an enhanced deterrence benefit. **As OPEC does not own communal land or facilities so the only way** this could be implemented would be if equipment was installed in a common area within Tulk House. That option has again been presented to the Tulk AGM but was again not supported.

In the absence of any wider system being possible the meeting could only suggest that members' look after themselves' and take whatever steps they consider appropriate to protect their individual properties.

### **Woodland & New Plantings:**

Robbie Sampson told the meeting that some 150 trees had been planted in many sections areas of the OPW woodland; mainly beech, cherry, oak hazel and hawthorn. He thanked the several members who assisted with watering and urged all members to walk the new routes to keep the paths open and deter deer. This has been achieved at no cost to OPEC. – although plastic tree guards and proper tree protection may be required at a later date.

The chairman congratulated Robbie for this efforts.

### **Support your Woodland Birds, Sponsor a Bird Box!**

Jean Aishe asked if she could locate some bird boxes in OPEC woodland, which the committee thought was an excellent idea. Jean has a few on order from the RSPB – the cost rounds off to £15 per unit (with packaging, discount etc.). All members are welcome to join the scheme and 'buy a bird box' or two? Please email Robbie Sampson at [sampsonrds@aol.com](mailto:sampsonrds@aol.com) to pledge your contribution. Early in the New Year, when we are allowed outside again, we will organise a working party with a ladder and a box of screws. It is a good to be actively supporting our birdlife.

**Broadband.** JA is making further enquiries into a government sponsored scheme to get wider access to superfast broadband across the estate. More will be reported in due course.

### **Estate parking**

We received comment about contractors parking on the estate road opposite the Mansion's Lower Garage Block, being unsightly and damaging the Mansion's grassland area. Parking both here and on the old Bothy Lane (by the bridge) has been problematic for many months while extensive works have been going on at the Mansion. The contractors do not work directly for the Mansion and 'white van men' are notoriously 'independently' minded!! The good news (particularly for Mansion residents?) is that the vast majority of work on the Mansion has been completed and parking should soon revert to normal levels.

### **OPEC and Mansion Tree Works.**

Members may know that OPEC have regularly had the woodland trees surveyed to minimise risk in areas adjacent to roads and footpaths. In the absence of any Tree Officer at RBC, for the first time our application has been publicised through the regular planning system. This has led to long delays on implementing essential works.

The Mansion is in a similar situation. They have for the first time had a survey on their trees, many of which are either adjacent too or visible from estate roads. All OPEC members can be reassured on two counts – Firstly, the surveys are conducted by a highly reputable Tree Officer from a neighbouring borough, so the surveys are professional and constructive, intended to remove unsafe trees and preserve wherever possible and practical. Secondly that OPM and OPEC have consulted on the works and are mindful of the need to maintain wooded areas of the estate. Appropriate additional planting will be considered at a later date.

### **Ottershaw Neighbourhood Plan.**

The chairman outlined the creation of an Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum. This is an equivalent body to a Parish Council for the specific purpose of creating a Neighbourhood Plan. That is seen as the best vehicle for consulting with local residents and exerting some influence over planning policy for our area – which as we all know is threatened by local development and the need to deal with increasing traffic on the A320. Ottershaw is increasingly becoming part of the London suburbs and we must all do what we can to protect what used to be regarded as a rural environment. He urged OPEC members to join the forum to be able to 'have their say'. [Ottershaw Neighbourhood Forum \(ottershawforum.com\)](http://ottershawforum.com)

### **Timing of Minutes and Invoices.**

It was agreed that minutes should be circulated ASAP, with an invoice for the service charge attached.

The Chairman thanked the various OPEC members who had contributed to tidying up the estate and also thanked the hedge owners who are generally doing a good job 'keeping up appearances'. He repeated his thanks to the committee for their efforts throughout the year and he urged members to do their best to **keep well, please pay their OPEC** invoice in a timely manner and to prepare for an AGM followed by our usual 'social' in 2021.

The meeting was formally closed at 9:50pm