



Minutes of Graven Hill Residents' Association (GHRA)

Committee Meeting with Residents present (via Zoom)

Wednesday 26th January 2022 @ 19:30 hrs

NOTE: Individual views and comments noted in these minutes and Zoom chat are applicable to the contributor and may not be representative of the views of other Residents or attendees.

Attendees:

GHRA

Karen Sims (KS) Chair, Christine Clynes (CC) Secretary, Sam Omotayo (SO) Treasurer, Damien Maguire (DM) Helen Baker (HB), Rhys Williams (RW), Simon Loo (SL) & Stephen Aggett (SA)

Cherwell DC (CDC)

Steve Jorden (SJ) & Cllr Barry Wood (BW)

Graven Hill Village Development Company (GHVDC)

Karen Curtin (KC)

In addition to the committee members, 62 Residents and additional Councillors logged into the meeting.

1. Welcome and Apologies

KS welcomed the meeting participants, advised the GHRA hold 3 of these a year and reminded everybody that the meeting was being recorded to assist with note taking. The chat box would be open for comments on wider community matters, not individual household matters.

Apologies: Nichole Dean

2. The minutes of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) held on 15.09.2021 were agreed as a true record.

3. Matters arising from 04.08.2021 meeting and not on the agenda: None

4. Committee Focus Areas/Champions

KS informed the meeting that the current committee was formed in September 2021, 50% existing and 50% new members and the committee had agreed for individuals to focus on specific areas currently under discussion and/or requiring attention by the committee to try to ensure that all matters received sufficient attention.

As a result, various sub-groups had been formed including stakeholder engagement, communication, digital engagement, fundraising etc.

Early focus was to improve communication with key stakeholders, including

- Graven Hill Village Development company
- Living City
- Bromford
- Community First Oxfordshire (CFO)

The priority here was to facilitate more frequent and direct communication with Residents and increased overall engagement/transparency. As a result, CDC and GHVDC were at the meeting to speak with Residents directly and there would be updates later re Living City, Bromford and CFO.

5. Cherwell District Council Update/Q&A

Steve Jorden (Corporate Director of Commercial Development Assets & Investment) explained that the shareholder objectives right from the onset were to create a really innovative self-build development that would be the best and largest in the country. With many challenges on the way, such as Covid, things had slowed down since the vision was first created. From a shareholders' point of view, the intention was always to promote self-build and custom build and to disrupt the usual volume-built housing market to create something quite unique.

SJ further explained that the other area of focus was to deliver on revenue and maximise return on investment. He explained that CDC was the only shareholder of GHVDC and CDC loaned money to GHVDC to build houses and develop the land. He explained that CDC had to borrow the money to do this, pay interest on it and make a margin. As a public body, CDC could not subsidise a company as that would be illegal and classed as unfair trading. Therefore, CDC had to recover their costs including cost of borrowing as set out in the Articles of Association which CDC have with GHVDC.

He further explained that CDC also needed to ensure that they would free up public land for housing in order to try and influence the housing market. They did that by purchasing land from the MOD paying the full market price. Another factor was that the development needed to contribute to economic growth, particularly in Bicester but also for the wider economy. It was important to CDC to create jobs as well as a pleasant place to live. Graven Hill also had to be a commercial opportunity with facilities people come to expect from any housing development to support a community feel and community look. This sometimes takes time to come together,

SJ touched on the original goals for the development, that Bicester was a garden town, and that there was great ambition to showcase Graven Hill in a way that others would follow.

He explained that in terms of governance, CDC was the shareholder with a shareholder committee which was chaired by Cllr Barry Wood. This shareholder committee sets the objectives for GHVDC and ask GHVDC for an annual business plan to be submitted to the committee for sign off. Every quarter, the performance of GHVDC was reviewed by the shareholder committee to ensure that GHVDC was delivering against their targets and pays its way. CDC were very keen to ensure the 30% provision of affordable homes, which also comes at a cost. CDC were constantly looking at ways to support GHVDC in the development and planning of the land that it owns. Key to that was the employment land, as the jobs and opportunity that land would create was important to CDC.

SJ then proceeded to answer questions asked by residents.

- Clare Lowe asked: The Council checks what GHVDC is delivering for the Council but what about the residents? SJ confirmed that GHVDC was responsible for what it delivers for the residents, but he confirmed that CDC was also keen to talk to the residents to understand residents' concerns and how CDC can address those.
- Paul Troop thanked SJ and the other Councillors for attending. He expressed the view that GH was a very wonderful, diverse, creative and ambitious community. He felt that the Council was underestimating the concerns of residents that were currently in the community about what is happening with Graven Hill. The development was initially set up to provide an alternative vision in housing. However, this was not just about making profit, but was also about creating communities. He felt that the project was turning into a "cash cow" and many residents felt that they were losing out. The lack of community facilities was a big concern. It was difficult to live on a building site and community facilities were very much needed. The two key facilities were the pub and the community centre. For economic reasons, the pub had been taken away completely and was now planned to be replaced by a boutique hotel. The community centre was originally centrally located with land allocated close to the school and the village green. The land was now being sold for profit and the community centre was being mashed together with sports pitches at the site allocated for sports facilities.

Furthermore, there appeared to be very little concern about the experience of residents. Residents of Phase 0 had been cut off from the main site despite being told when they purchased that a connection would be provided in 2016. This hadn't happened. Instead, the residents were provided with a mile-long track, often flooded, with no pavement. Children couldn't go and play with their friends on the main site, even though they could see their houses.

Another concern was the quality of the house designs. Whilst homes built by self-builders were generally interesting, well designed and thoughtful, houses built by GHVDC tended to be poorly designed and generic mass-built housing and looked awful. There had been no learning from the affordable housing built early on. There was very little focus on design. The plan seemed to be to build them cheap and throw them out and that this was not what they signed up for or thought the vision was when they purchased their plots.

Finally, Graven Hill was supposed to be a self-build development, but land prices were now hugely inflated to the point that a piece of land combined with "golden brick" foundation costs were near to £400,000 before a house was built. This was enough to put off just about any purchaser unless they were practically a millionaire. This didn't contribute to a diverse community and didn't provide accessibility for self-builders. The concern was that GHVDC was going down the financial route and was not being held to account by either the Councillors on the committee or by CDC.

SJ responded by saying that GHVDC was not a "cash cow". CDC had been trying to ensure that GHVDC operated as a traditional developer, but they actually took a lot less money out of the development than most developers would. In terms of the community facilities, the pace of house building was linked to planning and section 106 agreements.

Karen Curtin (GHVDC) added that the pub had not been taken away from the development. As explained at the Masterplan consultation, there had not been any commercial interest in the pub which prompted a desire to change the location, but even with the new location, there was only minimal interest in the pub. GHVDC was committed to have this kind of facility on Graven Hill. The reference to the boutique hotel refers to GHVDC exploring other opportunities. KC referred to other developments such as Heyford Park where they had just opened up a bar and bowling alley which was part of their hotel because a bar alone was not viable. At Kingsmere, they had a Premier Inn and Bicester Village to provide additional footfall. In relation to the Community Centre, GHVDC were not looking to sell that land for a profit but extend the Extra Care facility. They were not planning to take the Community Centre away; they are merely looking to relocate it with the sports pitches as covered in the Masterplan consultation where they got a 50/50 feedback that this was what people wanted. In terms of the timing, KC explained that there needed to be a certain number of occupations on site to be able to deliver those community facilities. If Graven Hill were continuing to be self-build only, there would be no community facilities for many, many years.

In relation to access from phase 0 to the main site, the access was always going to be made available in 2022/23. She was aware that there were plans for an access route to be provided earlier and that this was still their intention. The access route to the pioneer land in phase C was via the adjoining land operator and GHVDC was trying to make some changes to provide a pedestrian and cycle access.

In terms of design, which was subjective, GHVDC were delivering according to the design code for Graven Hill. Whilst the self-build and custom designed houses were unique. GHVDC were in the process of looking for a new partner for the construction of the next phase of affordable housing and they would be looking at design again once that partner was appointed.

6. Graven Hill Village Development Update/Q&A

- **RESIDENTIAL SITE PROGRESS:** KC reminded participants that the first step of the development was to construct the infrastructure of the site which came at a cost which now was in the balance sheet and needed to be repaid as the development grows.
- **EMPLOYMENT LAND:** There had been some positive engagement on the employment land, but the cash would only materialise once completion was reached. The work required to enable the employment land to be opened up, including the construction of the Pioneer Roundabout, had now commenced and a number of buildings had been demolished. The opening up of the employment land also met the Council's objective to bring new jobs to the area.
- **CUSTOM BUILD:** There was a number of custom build houses that had exchanged in the last few months and the Block C apartments were now progressing. This, together with the self-build houses, brought variety to the development.
- **COMMUNITY FACILITIES:** The community centre was a planning obligation which had to be provided at a set number of occupations. This worked differently at Graven Hill compared with other developments, as self-build homes could take 9 to 24 months to get to a "golden brick" and a further period to build. Occupation was not counted until practical completion. It was recognised that it would therefore take longer to get to the required 500/600 occupations which would enable GHVDC to build the Community Centre and it was therefore agreed to make a Community House available in the interim. GHVDC had also provided another planning obligation early, which was the provision of a Community Development Officer to work with the residents. The play areas provided were very different in nature compared to neighbouring developments as they were of much higher quality with plenty of green space surrounding them. The bus route had also been opened up.
- **SITE PROGRESS:** See attached slide shown at the meeting for details of homes built. KC explained that when the site was purchased in 2015, the plan was for Graven Hill to be a self-build development. It became apparent in early 2018 that there would not be enough sales going through on an annual basis to deliver the development in a reasonable time frame and that there would also be a lag in building community facilities. It was also explored if the service plot concept could be aligned to additional funding from the Government. It was decided to lobby the Government for a help-to-build fund to attract the younger demographic into smaller plots that GHVDC had been struggling to sell. These were the plots that were converted to custom build homes. KC felt that with the exception of the initial phase of affordable housing, GH was still very different from what traditional housing would provide. KC also explained that when GHVDC sold a self-build plot, they received a third of a house price but got 100% of the planning obligation. Up to March 2022, as many custom build homes were sold as self-build plots. This ensured that the development could move forward and had enabled 443 legal completions and delivered some amenities.
- **LEARNINGS:** KC touched on the following:
 - Self & Custom Build at scale was not being replicated by other developers. Disrupting takes time – manage challenges/infrastructure/supply chain
 - Self-Build – 4/5 beds in green locations preferred
 - Help to Buy had been a factor – positive Build It Live event on new phase – larger plots
 - Pandemic, Brexit, finances, inflation and material/labour availability had impacted – Golden Brick exchanges & completions – behind timeframes
 - Strong market demand for custom build – ~50% of purchasers aged 31-50; 2-3 bed terraced, and 3 bed detached homes were most built/purchased – sales rates similar to other developments – NACSBA - customers would like to design house interior not necessarily self-build themselves – RISK/TIME

- Modern Methods Construction: ~25% of self builds; 10% of custom builds
 - Design is subjective /flexible design code/Custom/Bespoke USP
 - Repeat customers, case studies, investors & “refer a friend”
- PROMOTING SELF & CUSTOMS BUILD: KC referred to the 2019 Grand Designs TV programme and explained that although it was an excellent programme, GHVDC were not inundated with self-build interest because self-build was difficult and challenging. It was hoped that the soon to be broadcast new programme would help to sell more self-build plots as well as custom-build homes.
- EMPLOYMENT LAND
 - 100% Commercial Land Exchanged – one million square feet of storage, commercial and office space
 - One exchange conditional on planning & access
 - Employment Access Road under construction
 - Completions expected Q3/4
 - Health Hub – planning consent in Jan 22 – additional to Masterplan
 - Pharmacy to be included – also additional to Masterplan
- RETAIL CENTRE & COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES
 - ~ 50 inspections - Unit 3 & 4 at Heads of Terms – Dentist & Unit 4 would bring a fresh approach to personal care with a ‘barber, beauty, coffee, cocktail and refreshment’ delivering a social space.
 - Reviewing options for 1 & 2 “Retail market changed, footfall, size, financial standing, click & collect, office space reduction”
 - Nursery Heads of Terms signed – pending discussions regarding location s73
 - Significant interest remained in Convenience Store – Block A
 - Pub – limited interest/viability concerns/location under s73. White Commercial had met with a number of parties regarding the pub site e.g. Red Cat Breweries but most larger pub organisations were not looking to expand their chains especially in the light of the pandemic and were restructuring their bricks and mortar offerings – which was happening pre-pandemic due to an overexpansion in the sector. GHVDC were currently engaged in discussions with one new start up operator.
- MASTERPLAN FEEDBACK

KC explained that the feedback to the changes to the Masterplan were 50% for and 50% against, but only a small number of residents commented. One major issue was around the Community Centre and GHVDC were engaging with CDC in terms of understanding what the issues were and what GHVDC could do to address them in a new location, if that was agreed. The other major issue was the Extra Care facility and the height of the building. Another issue was the pub which was not a planning obligation, nor was the nursery. However, GHVDC was committed to delivering both on the site, but they had to be commercially viable.
- 2022 FOCUS
 - Strategy
 - Business Planning with Shareholder
 - Masterplan – S73
 - New Application & associated S106
 - Design Code
 - Future Homes Standard
 - Infrastructure
 - Supply Chain engagement
 - Partner for Affordable Homes on new Phase
 - School – enabling works commenced – handover May 2023

- Extra Care – subject to S73 and securing a provider
- Community Centre design & planning – S73 & CDC dependent
- Employment Land & Retail
 - Land Completions for 2 exchanges (1 STP)
 - Trinity Units - promote 1&2 and open 3&4 (subject to contract)
 - Nursery & Pub Promotion
- Residential
 - 2/3 bed terraces – UNDER CONSTRUCTION
 - Block C Apartments –UNDER CONSTRUCTION
 - Phase 1 Infill Plots
 - Phase 1c – 12 PLOTS
 - Phase 1 residual plots - STP
 - Phase 3a – custom & affordable – 43 PLOTS – STP & contract
 - Block A – STP
 - Phase 3b Serviced Plots
- Customer Service/Relations
 - Increase customer satisfaction
 - Contractual relationships
 - Contractor Quality Assurance Defect/Snagging
 - Review processes & escalation
 - Warranty Process
- Communications/Resident Engagement
 - Review channels
 - Newsletters / Planning Bulletin / Q&A
 - GHRA & SBVLG
 - Community Centre
 - Bi - Annual Stakeholder Event(s) – Sep/Mar

GHVDC Q&A

KC was asked to clarify the number of occupations. KC confirmed that by the end of the current financial year in March 2022 the estimate was 443 occupations. She also confirmed that the planning obligation was to have the Community Centre “construction ready” at 500 occupations with an expected hand-over to CDC at 700 occupations.

SJ commented that questions were being asked in the chat whether CDC should be doing more in terms of social value and subsidising more. His response was that CDC was not in a position to subsidise. GHVDC had to be treated as a company which was held to account in terms of delivery and performance. From a shareholder’s point of view, CDC needed to ensure that the products were right and CDC got the return on investment that they expected. What they wouldn’t be able to do was to influence the development to the degree that people wanted as that was not the role of the shareholder.

BW responded to questions on oversight. As Leader of the Council and the Chair of the Shareholder Committee at CDC it was important to him to attend the meeting which he found constructive. He asked for a transcript of the chat which the Secretary of the GHRA agreed to provide. He explained that CDC had three discrete roles.

- 1) shareholder of an arms-length company that gave people choices in the way in which homes were provided.
- 2) local planning authority with a “Chinese wall” between CDC as a company owner and CDC as a planning authority.
- 3) CDC had a responsibility to build communities and provide community facilities. BW stated that he would like to have an active role in finding solutions to concerns that residents of relatively new developments such as Graven Hill were bound to have.

Claire El Mouden voiced concern about BW's statement about an effective "Chinese wall". She stated that there were five directors at GHVDC and last year between them they were paid £533,000, two of those directors were CDC Councillors, one of them was Cllr Dan Sames who was the elected representative of Graven Hill residents. How was it possible that he was able to represent our interests while also being a paid Director of Graven Hill?

The other point she wanted to raise was an issue which mainly concerned the residents in the affordable homes. This concerns Living City. Claire stated that the GHVDC website stated that "amenity spaces, such as open space landscaped areas, the woodlands and play area are transferred to CDC. However, this leaves certain roads and amenity areas which are not either subject to adoption or transfer which are maintained and managed as mini estates by the Graven Hill Village Management Company Limited. All owners of properties within these areas become "members" of the management company." She said this clearly implied that as members, they would have to have some level of input and/or feedback on how this was managed. This was inaccurate. She said she had received an invoice from Living City for £583 – none of her neighbours had done. She realised that as somebody who had been charged by Living City, she had the right to become a member. She emailed Adrian Unitt as the Director of the Graven Hill Management Company and asked to become a member. His reply was that Living City was the appointed agent and he referred her to Living City. Their reply was that they had no intention of holding an AGM and that there had never been one and therefore there was no way she could become a member and had her views heard. Also, she was told that she couldn't become a member if she was in arrears to Living City which given that she had no idea why she was being charged, was impossible. She basically would have to pay to get her views heard. She explained that she had repeatedly emailed and asked what was going on and never got a reply, just more bills. She was sure that she was not the only resident who could speak about the appalling level of fees that Living City were charging. She didn't understand for what she was being charged. She explained that residents were still living on an active building site, but apparently they are being charged for landscaping, electricity and approx. £2,500/year for management fees. This was an appalling lack of accountability that this company was now registered at Companies House as a dormant company because the two Directors, Adrian Unitt and Ian Corkin, were doing no oversight. For her, this was an example of the shareholder not doing their job in giving the correct oversight. It's causing residents real upset as they were charging residents hundreds of pounds, although some residents who live on streets that were managed by Living City were not being charged at all. She asked how she could be sure that she was not paying their share as well.

KS invited KC of GHVDC to comment. KC said that that she would be happy to take this query from Claire El Mouden and get back to her in writing as she was concerned about the responses from Living City. KC made it clear that any residents who lived in an area managed by Living City should be told what they were being charged for and why.

KC also said that she would be prepared to meet with people in smaller groups to discuss specific concerns and challenges that residents had. KS said that there may be a series of sessions that GHRA/GHVDC would like to arrange. There was also a reference in the chat to organise a wider survey to pick up those residents who were not in this meeting and give them a more private forum to express their thoughts.

- Lynn Pratt emphasised that she loved living on Graven Hill. She explained that when she embarked on her self-build journey as one of the pioneers, she was encouraged to build an innovative, very different, modern home with certain eco credentials. She felt that it was very disappointing that this was not happening now. The plot prices for self-builders had rocketed. She said that if she was wanting to build now, she could not afford it. She also said that she could understand that custom-build was a good idea. What she was objecting to was that the custom build houses were becoming "identikit". The 12 houses approved in a parallel road to hers only included three designs. Lynn asked why the custom-build houses couldn't be more varied. Furthermore, she was not convinced that the houses now being built by GHVDC are of the same specification that her house had to be.

She felt that she built her dream house on what she thought was a dream development which is now changing out of all recognition.

KC responded that she had picked up the views from the residents that they did not disagree with custom build homes but would like to see more variety and assurances in terms of the performance of these houses. She added that she understood these concerns but added that GHVDC had no problems selling these houses. In terms of the prices of the plots, she felt that they were being sold at market values and that buyers had no problems in obtaining mortgages for the plots.

- Paul Troop followed up on the issue that residents felt that CDC as the shareholder was not properly supervising GHVDC. He added that it had been very difficult communicating so many issues in such a compressed evening meeting, some of which were appropriate to be directed to GHVDC and some to CDC. He was wondering if as a next step it would be possible to move forward with CDC in a more structured way to determine which issues they could look at, take forward and could do something about and which issues needed to be directed to GHVDC. He also suggested that a hold was put on issues that could do permanent damage such as the proposed sales of the Community Centre land whilst these issues were being ironed out.

SJ responded that he would be happy to meet with Paul Troop in a smaller group to discuss what GHVDC could do and what CDC could do. He mentioned an upcoming strategy day when CDC and the company were going to look at the future vision and objectives of CDC and he felt that it would be helpful for the residents' comments to feed into this process. He said that he would reach out to Paul Troop to set this up.

- SJ also responded to the comments surrounding Graven Hill Management Company and their members. He wanted to make it clear that the two Directors of the Board legally had to act in the interest of the company and any conflict of interest was being watched very carefully. He said that any conflict of interest did not happen and was not allowed to happen. He also said that he understood that people were concerned about planning, but the planning process must follow due process and any planning applications concerning GHVDC must go to planning committee.
- BW made the final comment by saying that he would be happy to attend a meeting as suggested by SJ. He added that all residents were also welcome to email him if they had any comments or concerns.
- KC, SJ & BW left the meeting.

7. **Community Centre**

It was agreed that there were no other issues relating to the Community Centre that had not been covered on the agenda or in the meeting.

8. **Finance and Fundraising**

SO (Treasurer) gave a summary on GHRA finances. Year to date revenue was £4,200 with a net profit of £2,900, giving a total in our reserves of £4,100. In terms of fundraising, the committee was looking at various initiatives to find innovative ways to increase the revenue coming into GHRA.

9. **Living City & Bromford Update**

RW (GHRA) explained that the GHRA stakeholder sub-group had an explorative meeting with Living City (to discuss the managed areas and the apartment blocks) as well as Bromford. The objective of the meetings was to open lines of communications to enable GHRA to set up further meetings with residents who had connections with Living City and Bromford. Living City were receptive to setting up a direct meeting with residents who live in the apartments. In terms of the managed areas, Eleanor Smith, who left the committee after the last AGM, used to liaise with Living City and did a great job in establishing links with Living City and forming a residents' group with those living in the managed areas.

The GHRA stakeholder sub-group would now build on the work that Eleanor had done and hopefully also arrange a meeting with Living City for those residents.

RW said he would update residents once meeting dates had been agreed with Bromford and Living City.

10. Community House Update

KS told the meeting that she had met with Rosie Philips who was the Community Developer Officer from the Community First Oxfordshire Development Charity, which supports and funds volunteers in their communities. Rosie Philips had recently come to Graven Hill. She was usually based at the Community House one day a week on Wednesdays and was keen to help residents set up and resource activities benefiting the community. She also coordinates access to the Community House and was happy to use her connections with other organisations to help. She had been a Community Development Officer for many years in the local areas. Her contact details would shortly be posted on the GHRA Facebook page.

11. GHRA Events Group Update

Alex Sweeney (Chair, GHRA Events Group) introduced herself. She moved into Graven Hill two years ago and had recently been elected Chair of the GHRA Events Group. Alex explained that the Events Group was a voluntary group and operated as part of the RA. The aim of the group was to make Graven Hill a wonderful place to live and be a part of. She proceeded by having a look back at 2021 when the following events were held:

- Quiz Night
- Twisted Wine Tasting
- Easter Trail and Seed Swap
- Summer BBQ
- Halloween
- Winter Trail & Carols on the Green

Alex explained that most of these events were quite challenging as they were organised under Covid restrictions and she thanked everybody who helped to organise events and everybody in the community who supported them.

Alex then gave an overview of events so far planned for 2022:

- Easter Egg Trail
- Jubilee Event
- Summer BBQ/Party
- Halloween
- Remembrance Service
- Winter/Christmas Event

Alex encouraged residents to give feedback and make suggestions by reaching out to her. She also invited residents to get involved by:

- Volunteering at an event
- Telling neighbours about events
- Letting the group know about contacts in the local area that might be useful
- Help with baking
- Ideas for an event they would like to see

Alex let the meeting know that Events Group meetings were advertised in the Graven Hill Residents Facebook Group and all residents were welcome to attend. The Group could be contacted by emailing gravenhillevents@gmail.com

12. GH Community Minister Update

HB (Community Minister) introduced herself and explained that her aim was to be a Christian presence at Graven Hill however, she was by no means the only Minister on Graven Hill. Her role was to be aware of, and respond to, needs in the community (community wide or individual) and to be available to anyone who wanted a safe place to go and chat. She explained that she organised groups and events such as

- Remembrance Sunday Service
- Toddler Group which had been running for some time now and took place on most Wednesdays
- Pop Choir which was open to all residents whether they were good singers or not. The choir meets on Wednesday evenings and new members were very welcome, in particular men who had no presence at the moment.
- Gardening Group which was for residents who were interested in swapping ideas for their gardens. It also has a public element like the planters which are dotted around the greens. At the moment, the planters were already sprouting daffodils which were planted by the group in the autumn, and the plan was to plant vegetables as well as flowers later in the spring for the community to enjoy
- Café 103, a new mental health wellbeing café opened its doors on the 4th February. Located in the Community House, the Café would be open every Friday from 10am to 12 noon and then from 1pm to 3pm. HB explained that this was a safe place where it was ok not to be okay, a place to come for support, an excellent cup of coffee and some beautiful home-made cakes. If anybody felt that this was a place they would like to come to and have a coffee and a chat with people, it was the place for them. Once established, HB said she would be looking for volunteers from the community to train up to become volunteers and hosts for the Café.

KS thanked HB for her contributions to the community.

13. Infrastructure Related Matters

- Cycle routes: KS had been chasing CDC and ODC for updates.

KS informed the meeting that according to the Environmental and Place Team of CDC, the cycle route to Tesco and Bicester Avenue was currently only at the feasibility stage and as such on hold pending a review to include it in a future work programme. The outcome of the review would be known at the end of April to be put forward for consideration for the 22/23 work programme.

With reference to the London Road cycle route, the Transport Planner of OCC had told GHRA that they had been progressing design talks to ensure the London Road cycle scheme more closely reflected LTN 1/20. The design was being carried out by OCC engineers and was nearing completion. They undertook to share the design with the RA in due course for our comments.

Paul Troop added that he was also the Secretary of Bicester Bike Users Group and he suggested that one thing worth considering in relation to the Tesco / Bicester Avenue cycle path, which passes under the railway line, was to raise with East/West Rail that this was an important access route from Graven Hill for pedestrians and cyclists and that this path could also possibly be combined with an access point to the station.

- KS then referred to a separate consultation by OCC and the outcomes so far in 3 areas:
 - 1 Concerning the time limit for the retail parking bays and it was increased to extend the time limit to 2 hours.
 - 2 The 20mph speed limit had been approved.
KS additionally explained that GHRA received periodic speed camera data from GHVDC which showed that some individuals significantly exceeded the speed limit. However, the data also showed that 20mph was the average speed with half the cars driving at an average of 23mph.
 - 3 The application for “no waiting/no loading” was deferred following feedback from the residents and awaiting further engagement with GHRA and GHVDC.
KS said she was awaiting dates for this engagement and was regularly chasing.
KS noticed that Cllr Miller commented in relation to the cycleways and said that she would refer back to him to see if he would be able to add or contribute to our voices.

14. AOB

KS said that there were questions in the chat about defibrillators. She explained that one of the committee sub-groups was looking into this. DM said that he had been liaising with Cllr Wing, but unfortunately she had already left the meeting. KS said that GHRA had been looking at other obvious funding sources and would give an update as soon as there was any progress.

Sarah Willacy raised the issue about the sewage that we consistently have on Graven Hill Road with sewage sometimes backing up to individuals' houses. Earlier in the year there seemed to be a constant issue of overflowing sewage. She raised the concern that as the infrastructure got bigger and this issue wasn't resolved, these problems would increase.

KS thanked Sarah for the question. She explained that GHVDC's position was that the sewers had been inspected and adopted by Thames Water, but because of the number of problems, GHVDC had committed to stay closer and chase / follow up. The RA would go back to GHVDC to find out what this leverage would look like. She agreed that the frequency was troubling and assured Sarah that her views had been heard and taken on board.

Clare Lowe also commented on the sewage issue and felt that there could be a serious infrastructure problem with the drains and that she was wondering how long it would take until somebody was seriously investigating the cause of the problem. The frequency of sewage leaks appeared to be more than just wet wipes being flushed down toilets.

HB raised the problem of some Bromford residents who had third bedrooms on the top floor of their houses and despite a massive amount of asking and trying to get things sorted, they were still having issues two years down the line. She asked for this to be logged and recorded on their behalf to see if something can be done.

KS thanked everybody for their comments and feedback. She said the committee would categorise the issues raised and discuss what GHRA could do to support and address matters raised in the meeting and in the chat. The RA may also reach out to other residents who were not able to attend this evening and have their voices heard.

Finally, KS mentioned that GHRA had been contacted by GHVDC to remind residents of an article in their recent newsletter relating to the sponsorship of a charity in the sum of £1,500. GHVDC invited residents to suggest charities they would like to put forward for this sponsorship. No suggestions had been received so far and they would like to repeat this invitation.

15. Date of next Committee Meeting with Residents – April 2022 – Date to be confirmed.

The meeting finished @ 21.30 hrs

Signed as a true record

Karen Sims (Chair)

Date

Minutes to be officially approved at next committee meeting with residents present.