



The Committee of Management of
Hanover Crescent Enclosure

Minutes of the Special General Meeting of the Committee of Management of Hanover Crescent Enclosure Thursday 28 November 2024

Opening

The Special General Meeting of the Committee of Management of Hanover Crescent Enclosure was called to order at 19:35. Sally Hunt, a non-resident, was the independent Chair and opened the meeting.

Present

There were 14 attendees.

SGM Agenda

1. Proposal to make a temporary change to Section 7 of the Constitution to allow for a "postal ballot" rather than a show of hands. - VOTE BY OWNERS

This was unanimously approved.

2. Summary of EV Proposal

The installation of electrical power and required infrastructure for dual 22kW chargers. Costs are estimated at between £20,000 and £22,000 with £12,000 coming from a group of six residents (investors/investor group) and the balance of up to £10,000 from the Infrastructure Account. The £12,000 from the investor group is a fixed amount so the loan from the Committee will be between £8,000 and £10,000.

3. Q&A including comments/questions received prior to the meeting
See summary below.

4. Proposal by the Committee
"Installation of power and a dual EV charger including use of up to £10,000 from the Infrastructure Account"

It was noted that the £10,000 was a loan to be repaid over time by the EV users and that approval of the Proposal was also an approval of the use of the funds.

It was also noted that if the Proposal was approved then the Committee would have to apply for Planning Approval and so would give the owners an opportunity to make further comment on the Proposal.

5. Next Steps

- i) Compile and circulate all questions and comments received and responses from the Committee - this document
- ii) Circulate ballot by hard copy to residents and by post or email to non-residents - to be circulated the following week and returned to John at No 18 by 11th December either by hard copy or as an email attachment.

There being no other business the meeting was closed at 9.00.

SGM - Q&A Below is an accurate record, to the best of the minute takers ability, of the Q&A that followed.

The meeting opened with one household (opposing EV charging in the Crescent) reading out a prepared statement. The statement echoed comments they have made in earlier letters circulated to residents before the AGM in May and again before this meeting. If you would like to see the statement in full please contact the Secretary.

Q) This proposal was voted down at the AGM in 2022 so why is it coming up again?

A) This is a different proposal. In 2022 all of the costs were to come from the Infrastructure Account whereas now a group of six residents (investors/investor group) have offered to pay £12,000 (55%) of the costs of installation with a total estimated cost of £22,000. In addition the other £10,000 is considered a loan that will be repaid over time by the EV users.

Q) The Crescent reserve seems to be called both a Contingency fund and an Infrastructure Fund. Which is it?

A) The Crescent Levy was introduced to supplement the Garden Rate, to build a contingency fund and to allow for capital/infrastructure projects. It was agreed to set the contingency fund at around £30k and the Crescent Levy has subsequently topped up the garden rate and funded infrastructure projects as agreed at each AGM. The fund has been around £30k for some years now, originally supplemented by the successful insurance claim for a large part of the wall repairs. The loan to the EV project leaves short-term contingency fund of around £20k which will subsequently be topped up by income generated from the project. So the fund is both Contingency and Infrastructure.

Q) Why can't public on-street chargers be used instead?

A) Many of the on-street chargers in Brighton are restricted to residents in zone restricted parking bays to which Hanover Crescent residents have no access. In general, the fast public chargers in Brighton (ie not zone restricted) are poorly maintained and often not working. Home charging is central to industry system design for EV's and is encouraged by government policy on the grounds of cost and convenience.

Q) Why can't public super-fast chargers be used instead?

A) Super-fast chargers use DC power. Most EV car manufacturers recommend using AC power, such as proposed here, rather than regularly using DC power. DC charging is considered uneconomic for regular charging.

Q) Will there be a reduction in the number of parking spaces and will non-EV cars have access to park in the EV bays?

A) There will be no reduction in the number of parking spaces available, no increase in the numbers of vehicles able to park and no restriction on residents parking in the EV bays. There will need to be neighbourly co-operation to make the system run smoothly.

Q) The East Sussex Act (ESA) prohibits any buildings in the garden except for garden sheds?

A) The kiosk and the charging post are not considered as buildings but structures similar to lampposts, railings, walls, etc. The kiosk, which is about the size of the BT box just outside the north end entrance, will be tucked into the shrubbery at the north end of the garden and will be screened from houses by planting.

Q) How do we prevent non-residents from using the chargers?

A) Any car will need to have a valid parking permit and access to the chargers will be by App or RFID card so access can be restricted to residents and their visitors only.

Q) With only two EV cars currently in the Crescent is this project only for the benefit of a limited number of residents?

A) Government policy will ban the sale of new petrol/diesel cars in a few years and so the use of EV cars will grow. This is a project for the future and with the availability of chargers in the Crescent residents will likely switch earlier. Any resident in future who has permission to park here will have access to this scheme upon request.

Q) Does the Committee have the legal right to install chargers?

A) The Committee is tasked with managing the whole enclosure including the gardens, boundary wall, entrance pillars and road and has the sole right to do so.

The use of EV cars rather than petrol/diesel is a new technology in response to climate change. New technologies have been introduced into the Crescent over time such as electricity, street lighting, telephone lines, water and sewage etc. One household feels strongly that the committee does not have the legal powers to install chargers.

Significant time was given to this discussion with a close reading of the East Sussex Act and the definitions contained within it. The meeting concluded with other attendees agreeing that this proposal is in all likelihood within the remit of the committee and the Act. It was offered by one attendee that any lingering disagreements about the permission to proceed vis a vis the East Sussex Act will be resolved as a result of the planning application process.

Q) Should the Committee apply for Planning Approval before the vote?

A) Planning Approval applications are expensive and time consuming. On other projects, such as the railings, we have always in the first instance had approval from owners/residents to proceed and then we apply for Planning Approval. All residents will have the chance to comment during the process. If the Planning Application is turned down then the project will not proceed.

Q) What is my share of the £10,000?

A) Allocation to the Crescent Levy is proportional to Council Tax bands. For £10,000 owners will have contributed on average £210 within a range of £140-£350. However, with this proposal there is no collection of additional money as it has already been paid into the Infrastructure Account.

Q) How long will it take to repay the £10,000?

A) This is difficult to estimate as it depends on the take up of new EV cars in the Crescent. Making some reasonable assumptions of 1 to 2 new cars per year the loan will be recovered in 7 to 10 years with about 20 EV cars in the Crescent by 2040 or about half the total number of cars. After the loan is recovered this will be a future income source for Committee funds. It is anticipated that no further charging posts will be needed until there are 30 EVs with residents' permits permanently 'living' in the Crescent.

Q) Is the Committee biased?

A) As with any project there is always a range of views. In this case the Committee discussed the Proposal over several meetings and in the end all of the Committee except one member agreed that the Proposal should go ahead for owners/occupiers approval.

Q) As the land of the Enclosure is owned by the Council could they take over the chargers and make them available to the public?

A) In the ESA the Committee "shall, to the exclusion of any other person or authority, be charged with the duty of such maintenance, management and improvement, (Para 64)". As part of the Planning Application the Committee will confirm with the Council to ensure there is no doubt on the Committee's legal position.

Q) Who will manage this project: the Committee or the investor group?

A) The investor group are passive investors only and the whole project, now and for the future, will be managed by the Committee as part of its responsibilities. Any expansion of the project will require additional approvals from owners at future AGMs.

Q) Who are the investors?

A) The six households who comprise the investor group include; the two current owners of EV's Neil & Pat No 20 and Jas & Chris No 12. In addition, the other four households are Phil & Kim No 2, David & Jake No 19, Sian & Tim No 1, Martha & Keith No 3. Other investors are welcome.

Q) Why are some residents contributing funds (investor group) whilst others are not?

A) Some residents were unhappy with the funding model of a previous proposal - that all the costs were to be borne from Crescent funds (Infrastructure/Contingency). Conversely, other residents would be unhappy if all the funding were to come solely from the investor group theoretically leaving the Crescent without an interest in the project. The current proposal seeks to balance both positions by including funds from both the Crescent AND the investor group.

Q) Who will pay the cost of the Planning Application?

A) Neil has offered to pay for this on condition that when and if, and only then, the application is successful the cost will be reimbursed from Crescent funds. If the application fails there will be no cost to the Crescent fund.

Q) Why will the chargers be located at the north end? Is this just for the convenience of one of the investor group?

A) No. The location of the charging post was arrived at following site surveys by UK Power Networks (UKPN) together with the installation contractors who have quoted. In brief, either of the two 'ends' of the Crescent will be cheaper than cabling further into the Crescent. It also means that the kiosk, which needs to be located close to the UKPN spur in order to limit cabling costs, will not impede the lawn and can be tucked away into shrubbery. Cabling will run underground from the kiosk to the charging post and, again, the bigger the distance the higher the cost. The size and density of the mature trees at south end makes that end an unattractive prospect for UKPN in terms of hazards and therefore cost. As such, the north end emerged as the best location for the purposes of both aesthetics and cost efficiency.

Q) Why would residents want to impede this project?

A) This rhetorical question was asked by a committee member, who is not currently planning to have an EV, to encourage this proposal to be supported in order to enable residents who choose to run EV's to be unimpeded in doing so. Also, that the proposal will be of benefit to others in future and that the investor group are making a generous and not insignificant contribution in order to get the project off the ground.