## Draft Minutes

### STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL - Leaseholder Meeting

**14 June 2017**

**6.30pm - Shimkent Room, Daneshill House**

Present: Stevenage Borough Council, Laura Hodgskin (LH) – Service Manager Leasehold & Lettings, Anne Hensley (AH) – Senior Leasehold Advisor, Paul Seaby (PS) - Services Manager - Street Scene & Amenities, Neil Wilson-Prior (NWP) – Head of Asset Management, Councillor Carol Latif (CL)

Chair: Diane Green (DG)
Minutes: Anne Hensley (AH) – Senior Leasehold Advisor

Leaseholders: Salima Sharif, David Weemys, Alan Dean, Jean Sebastian, Vickie Large, Robert Tregaskis, Brad Glenister, Leslie Howie, Paul Harris, June Pease, Ross Colwell, Yacira Blanco, John Coyle

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ITEM</th>
<th>ACTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Welcome, introductions and apologies;</strong>&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;Apologies received from: Jon Thurlow and Ms C Prowle.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The meeting was advised of a slight change to the agenda in that Neil Wilson-Prior had come to talk to the meeting following the London tower block fire at Grenfell tower.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NWP advised that SBC have fully up-to-date fire risk assessments for our tower blocks and that all our safety checks were up-to-date. NWP explained that all our flat blocks are subject to the Stay-Put policy in line with national guidance. Q. Why have some leaseholders not got fire doors. A. This is being addressed separately.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG explained that some leaseholders had to put intumescent strips on their existing doors to make them compliant with the fire regulations. JP suggested that information regarding front doors should be put on the flat block inspection report.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Minutes of the last meeting</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DG went through the previous meeting minutes. Jon Thurlow is unable to attend tonights meeting so Councillor Latif,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
who is vice-chair, is taking his place.
Page 5 – LH did feed this information back to tenancy and hopes that
the leaseholder has heard from them since then.

Minutes were agreed.

### 3. Update from HMB

Councillor Latif advised that she has been on the board since the
inception of HMB and that its’ purpose was to keep an eye on
everything to do with housing. The board consists of 5 councillors
and 5 tenants one of which is a leaseholder. The chair alternates
from year to year in that it is a councillor one year, then a resident the
next.
The board looks at the councils performance and has a direct route to
the executive team.
Clrr Latif advised that HMB had recently been updated on the void
situation, had been looking at the decant policy, looking at our repairs
performance and customer satisfaction.
She advised that HMB were going to Hampson Park on Saturday to
review what’s been done over the past year and also review for next
year. She said that value for money was another concern for HMB.

It was agreed at the previous meeting by the group that an update
from HMB should be a standard agenda item each meeting.

### 4. Update on the Caretaking Review

Paul Seaby advised that it is nearly one year since he has been
responsible for the caretaking service. Previously this service had
been reviewed by Housemark and the Customer Scrutiny Panel. He
has now met with some of our customers and taken on board their
comments.
We have commissioned HQN (Housing Quality Network) to assist
with our review and we are currently analysing data and reviewing
service costs. We are aiming to be in a position to instigate changes
from 2018 onwards.

Q. With the major refurbishment contract (MRC) being undertaken will
this not impact on the caretaking service?
A. After investment taking place to our flat blocks the caretaking
charges and service provided to the blocks will be reviewed.
LH added that the procurement of the MRC is a 12 month process,
then the major refurbishment contract is a 5 year programme across
town, we don’t want to wait potentially 6 years to make changes to the
caretaking service. We will consult with blocks now to see what service customers want. Then following any major refurbishment work we will review the service again.

Q. Do you respond to customer feedback forms?
A. PS replied, “yes I do get sight of them”. The leaseholder made comment specifically regarding flat block 206-222 Durham Road. PS said he will look into this. 
RT advised that his block was done again within 2 weeks of submitting his feedback form and JP said she was satisfied with the service.
Q. DG queried that in 2008 she received a S20 consultation advising that a contractor had been appointed for a job but that nothing happened.
A. LH said she would address this in the next agenda item.

5. **Update on the Major Refurbishment Contract**

LH explained that at the end of March leaseholders were issued with Stage 1 S20 Notices. She gave a quick refresh on the process as new people were at the meeting. She advised that the consultation period closed early May. We have feedback from the consultation – we had 30 logged phone calls and 30 written observations within the consultation period.

Typical questions were:
- What’s going to be covered?
- What’s being done to my block?
- When is the work being carried out?
- Will this make it difficult to sell my flat?
- How much is the work going to cost?

A leaseholder commented that he had only got 5 years more working life, and he doesn’t want more debt, what is he supposed to do? Can he opt out?
Another leaseholder stated that he is trying to sell his flat but feels that he can’t get a buyer because of the major refurbishment contract. There followed a conversation between leaseholders regarding the saleability of their flats as others were in the same position but had found that the prospect of major works had not put potential buyers off.

LH asked for any questions.
Q. Leaseholders would like more notice of when the work will be carried out.
A. We don’t have more information at present. Once the contract has been procured, a programme showing which year each block will
have work done will be decided, and will be made available to residents.
Q. Are all flats in Stevenage going to have their roof done?
A. No, only if it needs to be done. All blocks will receive a specific survey. We are acting in everyone’s interest.
Q. Florrie’s Law – does it apply?
A. Eric Pickles raised concerns regarding a bill for £50,000 for major works from a London Borough. A £10,000 mandatory cap was put in place but it only applies if there is government funding towards the works. Our major refurbishment contract isn’t government funded.
Q. When do the surveys start?
A. We have sample surveyed 25% of our blocks. Once the contractors have been procured, at the beginning of each year, those blocks in the programme for that year will be surveyed. Residents will be invited to attend the walkabout/survey.
Q. Is this prioritised by what needs doing most?
A. Contractors will look at best value for money. The programme will be based on many factors, including the urgency of the works and the most cost effective way of planning and carrying out the works. Q. When will the leaseholder in Lonsdale Road find out about his potential works?
A. We don’t know that yet.
Q. It’s very odd that you have gone out to tender when you don’t know what’s going to be done.
A. We have gone over and above what is required for us to go out to tender. The work will be priced on a ‘Schedule of Rates’ which will cover every type of work.
Q. Is £50,000 the maximum cost?
A. We do not know at this stage.
Q. How do you collect the tenants share?
A. This comes from the rent that tenants pay. Leaseholders do not subsidise the tenants cost – they pay their proportion as per the terms of their lease.
Q. When rent is paid for by benefits – how is it paid?
A. Housing benefits comes from central government so we still get that income either from tenants or from central government.
A. What if we don’t agree with the works that SBC want to carry out?
A. We want to involve leaseholders at every step of the process and we have a detailed communications plan on how we will/are involving customers. Following this it was suggested that lots of leaseholders will want to be involved.
Q. A leaseholder wants to know if he can’t pay, will he be told to remortgage to cover all costs.
A. Leaseholders will only have to pay for their share of the works. There is a repayment options policy in place which is available on our
website. Leaseholders should also be exploring other options from commercial lenders, not just SBC.

Q. Do the shops in my block pay a share towards the roof (this leaseholders flat is over shops)?
A. Leaseholders do not pay for the shops share – the costs are apportioned to include the shops.

Q. Aren’t replacement roofs down to the council?
A. Under the terms of your lease the council are responsible for the structure and fabric of the building, but leaseholders have to pay their proportion towards this.

Q. A leaseholder asked for a ball-park figure for a new roof.
A. Another leaseholder suggested between £7,000 to £11,000 each.

Q. Will we be able to get replacement windows cheaper, the same as for the fire doors?
A. Leaseholders will be given the option to opt in to take advantage of our contractor.

Q. What if SBC want to change the window specification?
A. We will offer an opt-in to replacement windows.

Q. Repairs will be done to the block but flats have different number of windows.
A. Windows are flat specific. Communal windows are shared between all flats.

Q. Which blocks are starting first?
A. As previously stated, the contractors will devise a programme and leaseholders will be advised.

Q. If something (a repair) is urgent will it be put off until the major refurbishment contract kicks in?
A. It’s dependant on how urgent. All such cases will be assessed on an individual basis and if it needs to be done, it will be done.

Q. The door at Harrow Court is in a very bad condition, why hasn’t it been replaced?
A. If it’s still functioning it is cost effective to wait.

### 6. Any other business

JP asked when she will receive information regarding key leaseholders. LH advised that leaseholders will shortly be getting the whole years repairs listing. She stated that the homeownership team were currently doing a cleansing exercise on the data.

A leaseholder asked about flat block security and homelessness. She said that a man was sleeping in her block. She had phoned the police and the man had been moved on. She asked if there was anything to be done for blocks with open access. LH advised that we will be consulting with residents about this as part of the MRC. She
said that there has been a noticeable increase in homelessness and it has a very high profile at the moment. LH took leaseholders details and advised she will get back to the leaseholder.

JS advised that the Scrutiny Panel has just completed a review of gas contractors (Liberty Gas) and at a recent meeting in Enfield she asked whether Liberty Gas would do gas servicing for leaseholders. They said they are willing to do this. LH agreed to feed this information back to our Investment team.

DW advised the meeting that he had had problems with the insurance loss adjusters, Davies Managed Systems, in that they had tried to make him pay a £25 excess on his insurance claim for a broken window caused by the grass cutters. They agreed that there was no excess on this policy but still deducted it from his cheque. He had to contact them again and resolve the issue. They eventually paid him back the £25. AH to advise SBC insurance services of this.

| 5. | Date of next meeting – 6 September 2017 – Autun Room 6.30 to 8.00pm  
Then subsequent meetings – 13 December 2017 and 28 March 2018 in the Civic Suite. | }