

Draft Minutes (to be agreed next meeting)

STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL - Leaseholder Meeting

Wednesday 23 October 2019

6.30pm – Council Chamber, Daneshill House

Present

Stevenage Borough Council: Emma Goff (EG), Interim Leasehold Manager; Richard Gould (RG), Contracts Manager for Repairs Service; Dean Stevens (DS), Electrical Consultant; Lisa Ellis-Timbery (LET), Neighbourhood Warden for South Stevenage; Dave Armitage (DA), Community Development Officer & Stacey Gibbons (SG), Leasehold Income Officer

Chair: Diane Green (DG) Leaseholder

Leaseholders: R. Stanton, N. Yasmin, C. Hadley, K. Hadley, A. Gammage, L. Gammage, D. Gammage, P. Kyprianides, L. Meunier, L. Bennett, K. Rowe, D. Band, C. Stappard, R. Hannan, J. Simon, K. Elliott, B. Glenister, L. Element, S. Breakey, I. Breakey, C. Wright, D. Dowding, J. Mclellan, M. Worssdale, P. Page, A. Gold, N. Lewis, R. Davenport, J. Riley, T. Martin, F. Beaumont, J. Pease, J. Paul, S. West, J. Boyden, S. Albone, E. Oyetunde, G. Nye, P. Barber, M. Jin, D. Loo, T. Loo, J. Olivia, D. Gibson, R. Lavis, J. Sebastian, R. Tregaskis, N. Yerrell, M. Rothwell, M. Rothwell, S. Billings. 50 Leaseholders signed the attendance sheet however not everyone did (approximately 60 were present at the start of the meeting).

	<u>ITEM</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
1.	Welcome, introductions and apologies; Stevenage Borough Council staff introduced themselves. There was a large number of leasehold attendees and the Council Chamber was used instead of the original room. Apologies received from; Les Keen, Sandra & Harm Pietens, Carol Borrill, J Pettorelli, Jamie Edwards, Salima Sharif, David Weemys, Katarzyna Kuciel, Mrs Prowle.	
2.	Neighbourhood Wardens – New ways of working - Lisa Ellis-Timbery LET and Dave Armitage (DA) (Lisa was in attendance instead of Sue Amey) explained who they are, what they do and how they can help residents. There are 4 wardens across town: North; South; Central & Town Centre. They work closely with Community Safety Team and Community Development Officer and deal with all issues in their area, not just housing. They have a number of volunteers within the area who are eyes and ears within the	

community.

Historically role was enforcement based i.e. fining for fly tipping. Now they could be involved in anything including projects in the area. An example of this would be working with the Community Payback Scheme (Probation Service) to revamp an alley that is used as a walk through.

Fix My Street website was promoted and it was explained how issues can be reported. DA has written a guide on how to use this website this will be available on our web site with meeting minutes

- In order to report Faults or issues on Fix My Street to Stevenage Borough Council you will need to go to the following web address.
- <http://www.stevenage.gov.uk/>

LET confirmed if there is an issue that is ongoing as opposed to a one off, the neighbourhood wardens would prefer this is reported to them as opposed to Fix My Street so they can monitor and involve other departments if necessary.

Questions raised - Can leaseholders volunteer for their flat block only? - Yes and it is informal, the level of involvement is up to each individual. Leaseholders to contact Neighbourhood Wardens if they would like to do this.

Leaseholder reported issue at the back of the block Torquay Crescent 240 To 250, with lots of glass being repeatedly smashed on the path leading to the park, appears to be malicious rather than accidental. Feedback from LET - I have investigated and reported the incident of broken glass behind Torquay and colleagues at Cavendish assured me that it is on a regular schedule for street cleansing. I would encourage the resident to utilise fix my street if the occurrences are more regular.

As promised LET provided the following contact details:

North
Neighbourhood Warden- Sue Amey sue.amey@stevenage.gov.uk
07702916859

Community Development Officer
Sharon Wood (temporarily this will be Sue Amey)
Sharon.wood@stevenage.gov.uk
07718122756

	<p>Central Neighbourhood Warden- Paul Batterbee Paul.batterbee@stevenage.gov.uk 07803409016</p> <p>Community Development Officer Oonagh Sherlock Oonagh.sherlock@stevenage.gov.uk 07702916883</p> <p>Town Centre Neighbourhood Warden- Aldon Patience Aldon.patience@stevenage.gov.uk 07702916861</p> <p>Community Development Officer Oonagh Sherlock Oonagh.sherlock@stevenage.gov.uk 07702916883</p> <p>South Neighbourhood Warden- Lisa Ellis-Timbery Lisa.ellis-timbery@stevenage.gov.uk 07702916898</p> <p>Community Development Officer - Dave Armitage Dave.armitage@stevenage.gov.uk 07702916863</p> <p>Alternatively, anyone can email the joint wardens inbox at: Neighbourhood.wardens@stevenage.gov.uk</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Repairs Service update – DS attended in place of Charlie Fitzgerald) and Richard Gould (RG) also attended. RG provided the update from their service. He advised some window cleaning has not been undertaken this year and therefore these customers won't be charged. Advised of an ongoing project regarding bin chutes and they are looking at the cost of shutting them but will consult with residents regarding this. Also showed slides to demonstrate the new customer portal for repairs and how issues can be reported. RG pointed out that it was a prototype and we only had the council tenants view, not the leaseholders view to show at this stage but it</p>	

would show how the system works. Also showed slides demonstrating their Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) which were predominantly green and indicated they had all been achieved.

Leaseholders stated that they don't want to hear about repairs performance they were there to talk about the repairs to the flat blocks as part of MRC. RG said he is from the repairs service and has no input to MRC. EG stated that the Repairs service is not the same as the Investment team, who are managing the MRC and MRC would not be discussed, as the MRC team were not present and it was not part of tonight's agenda. Many Leaseholders demonstrated their frustration verbally and some physically by walking out of the chamber. This conversation about wanting to talk about MRC went on for a long period of time and kept resurfacing throughout the meeting.

Leaseholders commented on the amount of times they have to report a repair before it is resolved and that they do not believe our communication has improved. RG advised that this shouldn't be happening and asked for examples to be written down to be investigated he also stated the idea of patch working was a project being launch so tenants and Leaseholders would have a point of contact they knew and would be able to coordinate an areas service.

Leaseholders were reminded of our 'Key Leaseholder scheme' whereby a breakdown of all repairs to a leaseholders flat block is provided via email and all leaseholders who want a list of repairs carried out at their block can provide their emails at the end of the meeting to SG. Nobody did this at the end.

Leaseholders queried who sets KPI's - DS advised these are decided by a proportion of tenants, councillors and the council.

Leaseholders queried what the council is doing with regards to tenants that damage the block and/ or surrounding areas. Why isn't enforcement action being taken? EG advised that processes are being followed and where it is know who has caused a problem then it will be addressed with the individual. We do want issues reported. **A leaseholder said that when an issue is an urgent Health & Safety concern it does get dealt with straight away.**

Leaseholders expressed dissatisfaction with both past and current repairs service. Leaseholders referred to the KPI slide to advise that this indicated Repairs were hitting their targets but the commentary in the room does not reflect this. Leaseholders felt that at times it took coming to these meetings to resolve issues with managers.-RG asked if they had gone through the

<p>complaints process, some leaseholders responded with they shouldn't have to. RG asked if they had asked to speak with a manager when they were unhappy again the leaseholders said it shouldn't get to that stage. RG stated that it shouldn't but there is little that can be done about a poor performance issue unless it is reported. Leaseholders wanted to know what was the next step after complaints process, EG advised that if they have completed the complaints process the next step is Housing Ombudsman.</p> <p>EG asked for a vote on who had ever experienced an issue with the repairs service and 21 leaseholders out of approx. 52 voted to confirm this.</p> <p>Leaseholders are unhappy with the price of jobs and that they feel they are charged too much for lightbulb changes etc. Also unhappy with the fact that they have to pay someone to attend to a job to investigate before the job can be undertaken. EG & DS confirmed charges are based on a national schedule of rates.</p> <p><i>Questions raised included - When will the repairs portal be available for leaseholders? to be confirmed</i></p> <p>Will there be an option in the new portal for leaseholders to confirm whether or not a repair reported had actually been resolved? Leaseholders commented that the contractors should not be the sole person responsible for confirming a job has been done to a satisfactory standard.</p> <p><i>RG confirmed this would be available.</i></p> <p>Leaseholder advised he was unable to previously report a leak that was impacting on his property emanating from a council property and was told that the tenant had to do this themselves, this was totally unsatisfactory. Subsequently the leak went on for 4 weeks. RG confirmed this is not an acceptable level of service and will investigate further. Leaseholder to locate email and provide to EG.</p> <p>3 Leaseholders from one property have advised of an ongoing drain issue across 2 years and that they have exhausted the complaints process.- full details not known leaseholders can please contact RG to investigate</p> <p>Leaseholder advised that they have had a leaking roof for 3</p>	<p>RG</p>
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	<p>years, repairs have attended several times to resolve this and Goldsmiths are now involved. Leaseholder questioned RG on who she can send her invoice to for damage to her property, EG advised to contact insurance in the first instance. RG advised to contact him and stayed behind at the end to take information from this leaseholder. RG to resolve.</p>	<p>RG</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Updates to leasehold questions (from previous meeting) – Lots of discussion ensued and following the agenda became impossible. The majority feedback in the room was that leaseholders wanted to discuss the major refurbishment contract (MRC). EG advised this was not on tonight's agenda, there was no one in attendance to discuss MRC tonight.</p> <p>EG advised everyone that feedback to previous questions raised at previous meetings was included on the handout provided, including a faq questions sheet (including a list of frequently asked questions which can be found on leasehold pages of our web site FAQs). Lots of leaseholders present were not happy with this and were frustrated they could not have their questions answered on the night. Some leaseholders said they would prefer to hear everyone's opinions and issues about the MRC as they believe that there are themes that will apply to all. EG advised that a large meeting is not always the best to answer questions as there are many issues that will only apply to individuals and individual blocks.</p> <p>Some of the Leaseholders suggested that leaseholders who attended could provide SBC with their questions in advance, as they believe there are themes that could be addressed at the next meeting.</p> <p>Majority present requested a joint MRC meeting.</p> <p>SG volunteered to collate questions and provided the Leasehold Income email (leaseholdincome@stevenage.gov.uk), however at the end of the meeting another leaseholder stepped forward to gather and send in questions. Timelines discussed were as follows: Questions from leaseholders to be submitted by 23rd November; Questions to be collated into common themes and reissued to the leaseholders by 30th November; Leaseholders to confirm they are happy for those to be submitted to the council by 7th December. Leaseholders requested those responsible for the MRC are at the next meeting with answers to their questions.</p> <p>Some leaseholders commented that since MRC works, they cannot get their post delivered as the tradesmen buttons are all programmed to midday. Leaseholders have investigated with Royal Mail who has</p>	

	<p>advised they are waiting for the council to instruct them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update for leaseholders – this has been resolved with direct communications with the Royal Mail/Post office and this will be ongoing as they are being update with each block as it goes live. <p>One leaseholder commented on the fact that MRC works are not going ahead in one block as leaseholders have vetoed this. SG advised this is a rumour from a salesperson and is not the case. Another leaseholder advised that this could be relating to their block and is not true.</p> <p>EG to feedback to management and the MRC Project team, the feeling in the room and the request to have an MRC meeting. (see update for leaseholders below)</p>	EG
5.	<p>Housing Management Advice Board Feedback – Jon Thurlow</p> <p>This was not covered as meeting did not follow the agenda and lots of individual discussions ensued, this meant the meeting overran.</p>	
6.	<p>Customer Scrutiny Panel, Jean Sebastian – this was not covered same as above.</p>	
7.	<p>Ideas for next meeting – This topic was not fully discussed, although many leaseholders want an MRC meeting * see update below</p> <p>The regular leasehold meeting / focus group, is scheduled for 19 February 2020, leaseholders are asked to send in any suggestions for this meeting and future meetings, the February meeting is not intended to be an MRC meeting.</p>	

***Update for leaseholders re MRC**

Given the strength of feeling and to acknowledge that we are listening to requests to have further meetings about MRC, we are arranging one for January, the exact date will follow along with any future dates and opportunities for meetings to discuss MRC.

In advance of each meeting we ask you all to please submit any questions, so that we can ensure the right staff can attend the meetings.

You can do this by email leasehold@stevenage.gov.uk

Once we have questions submitted in advance, we can set an agenda on themes based around them and after each meeting we can publish a Questions and Answer sheet, for your reference.