

**Draft Minutes**

**STEVENAGE BOROUGH COUNCIL - Leaseholder Meeting**

**18 September 2018**

**6.30pm – Council Chambers, Daneshill House**

**Present**

Stevenage Borough Council: Paul O'Donnell – Senior Project Leader,  
Sophie Gardener – Project Manager, Emma Goff – Senior Leasehold Advisor,  
Rebekah Brydon (RB) Major Works Officer, Elaine Littlechild - Senior Leasehold  
Advisor

Chair: Diane Green

Minutes: Elaine Littlechild – Leasehold and Right to Buy Advisor

Leaseholders: Mr and Mrs Abou-Shaqra, Alan Gammage, Tom Wren, Joan O'Conner,  
Paige Talliday, Dennis Lombardo, Sarah West, Jane Paul, JR Pettoelli, Paul  
Kyprianides, Steve Chapple, Rebecca Eddington, Donna Holton, Malcom Pullen, Robert  
Tregaskis, June Pease, Nick Carroll, Jean Sebastian, Rhona Lavis, Lisa Kelvey, David  
Weemys, Dave Dowding, Lindsey Howe, Karin Endersby, Steve Wilson, Les Keen,  
Louis Tsamados, Rachael Stanton, Kim Brecken, Gabriel Joe, Yacira Serrano, Sheila  
Seabook, Paul Marriott, Brad Glenister, Steve Warren.

<b><u>ITEM</u></b>	<b><u>ACTION</u></b>
<b>1. Welcome, introductions and apologies;</b>  Apologies received from: Tony Martin, Donna Holton, Nick Carroll, Linda Bennett.	
<b>2. Minutes of the last meeting</b>  As this meeting was to address the Major Works program we did not discuss the previous leaseholder meetings minutes. These will be agreed at the meeting to be held on 12 December 2018.	
<b>3. Welcome from Paul O Donnell – Capital Programme Manager. Paul gave a talk supported by a PowerPoint presentation to describe the Major Works (MRC) that are programmed to be taking place over the next five years; items included are as follows:</b>	

- **Overview of the MRC**
- **Works included under the contract**
- **Five year programme**
- **What we will achieve**
- **Approach to communication**
- **Challenges**
- **What we have done so far**
- **Quality management**

**Please see the enclosed/attached presentation for your information.**

**In addition to the slides please note the following:**

- **We had twenty six bidders for the tender which was then reduced to a short list of five.**
- **Each Tender had to provide specific information to evidence price and quality.**
- **Our Surveyors visited similar 'live' sites for each Tenderer to check that our needs can be met.**
- **Our Surveyors also met with the tenants at these developments to get their feedback and check how happy they are with the works.**
- **Two Contractors were then chosen, Wates and Mulalley, who will take half of the town each.**
- **Both contractors scored best on price and quality.**
- **Having two contractors instead of one gives us more resilience, flexibility and some healthy competition.**
- **The timetable has been apportioned geographically as the whole town is of the same age; therefore no part needs work done more than another.**
- **Pilots have been run on tenanted properties only so all learning curves will be accounted for and will not be at leaseholders expense.**
- **Paul has assured us that 100% post inspection will be carried out by an Stevenage Borough Council Surveyor.**
- **Works have a 12 month guarantee and works will be re-inspected.**

<p><b>It was requested that all questions were held until the end of Pauls talk and are shown below for your information.</b></p> <p><b>Q: Proposed work timeline: When will areas be informed of the cost implications?</b> <b>A: Estimates will be provided near to date of planned works – within a few months prior to work starting.</b></p> <p><b>Q: Scaffolding: How far in advance will it go up and how long will it stay up?</b> <b>A: Scaffolding will go up just after the estimate is provided and possibly a few weeks prior to works commencing. It will be removed when we are satisfied that works are completed to the required standards.</b></p> <p><b>Q: Estimates: How detailed will these be? Will they be itemised and how much will it change?</b> <b>A: You will be provided with a list of all the work streams and the breakdown of the costs in relation to your property. Should you wish to see a more detailed breakdown of the costs, please contact us to arrange an appointment to visit the office and review the documents. Due to the level of detail we are given by the contractor, we would not be able to print and post the documents to you without a significant charge being levied.</b></p> <p><b>Q: Will there be explanations for replacements?</b> <b>A: There will be consultation events scheduled for each area to enable these conversations prior to works going ahead.</b></p> <p><b>Q: Itemised Billing: Will I pay a % of the costs dependent on how many properties are within a block?</b> <b>A: Charges will be apportioned according to the floor space and calculated according to Government guidelines.</b></p> <p><b>Q: Estimates: Will the figures be rounded up?</b> <b>A: Costs are priced on the contractor’s schedule of rates and will be an exact cost.</b></p> <p><b>Q: A leaseholder noted concern regarding repairs issues that have been reported but not addressed and that these then may impact on the level of works/repairs required during the MRC. He specified a gutter issue that he has within his building. Why should the leaseholder then have to pay for SBC failure to repair?</b> <b>A: Each bill will be scrutinised, repair works taken into consideration and invoices will reflect this.</b></p>	
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**Q: Will bad design be recharged?**

**A: Our surveyor will investigate each particular area as we are unable to answer individual incidents at this meeting.**

**Regarding repairs; Paul O Donnell highlighted that all planned non-essential works are currently on hold as it makes financial sense to get these works done at the lower price we have been able to secure within the major works contracts. All essential repairs will still be carried out as usual by our repairs team.**

**Q: Rewiring: will this be done within my property?**

**A: Rewiring is to be done in communal areas only.**

**This will be from the distribution board to the residents meter within their property. This will mean that contractors will need to be given access to the meter within a resident's property to enable wiring from the communal areas to be connected to the resident's property. Letters will be sent requesting this access once works are due to commence. If your meter is in an external cupboard by your front door, we do not anticipate requiring the same access.**

**Q: What if we run out of money?**

**A: We have the option to extend our contract to 7 years. This contract is going ahead. We have good estimates but we do have a contingency available should we need it.**

**Q: Leaseholders are concerned that those having works done in the later years of the contract will be faced with greater costs due to inflation; is this likely?**

**A: Contractors are index linked so yes, works could cost further down the line. Being index linked means that they are in line with inflation. We will be working very hard to ensure that these works offer value for money.**

**Q: Quality management: How will we ensure that the quality of works is good enough, unlike some other works that SBC has done?**

**A: We have lots of fails safes in place for quality management to ensure the contractors works are up to scratch.**

- We will implement daily inspections**
- We have a 12 months defects guarantee**

**Q: 1<sup>st</sup> meeting for leaseholders regarding MRC – speaker stated that we have neglected the flats and so how can they be sure that once the MRC is completed this won't happen again?**

**A: A repairs review is underway to ensure that we have a maintenance contract in place.**

**Q: Will there be works in place to ensure that things like gutters are maintained regularly.**

**A: Yes**

**Q: Affordability: A leaseholder said they had been told an estimate of £14,000 per flat. How are we planning to work this, is this a typical cost and how can they pay?**

**A: This may be a reasonable estimate. There are details on our website explaining the payment options. Our major works officer, Rebekah Brydon will be able to organise appointments to discuss individual, bespoke payment plans once invoices have been raised.**

**It was mentioned that according to our payment options it means that those who can afford to pay get it cheaper than those who can't.**

**Q: How will we address this?**

**A: We have significantly benchmarked other Local Authority payment options and we are confident that we will be able to offer a broad range of options to suit all Leaseholders. We will continue to offer this incentive as it allows us to make prompt payment to our contractors and to keep the programme running more effectively. This is to the benefit of all flat block residents.**

**Q: Can we share the costings of the pilot schemes to give leaseholders at least an idea of what they may have to pay?**

**A: The pilot scheme is not yet finished so we do not have a final figure to share, also the final costs for the pilot will not be a true reflection on what the rechargeable costs may be for each development. This is because not all of the costs will be recharged to leaseholders.**

**Q: Leaseholders biggest worry is quality and costs, the unknown costs are scary and so they would like to know an approximate cost so they can at least begin to plan?**

**A: We are unable to give any estimates until we have surveyed the properties. It is our intention to change our process as we move into the second year with a larger number of properties being surveyed in a batch which will allow us to progress a larger number of Section 20 Notices. We therefore anticipate having a longer period between the Notice of Estimates being**

sent to you and the works beginning. Your invoice will be sent once works are fully complete and checked so you should have a substantial amount of time to consider your options.

**Q: How long will the works last once it is complete?**

**A: Different building components have different lifespans.**

**Q: Estimated costs: £45 Million, we must have a much more detailed list of expected costs – do we have this for our own purposes – are we reluctant to share the details because of the lifespan of this project?**

**A: The estimate was over £45 million as it was originally based on the National Schedule of Rates. We are unable to supply a detailed list as not all blocks have been surveyed because as time goes on this may change what works are required. The Section 20 process will be followed by the book.**

**Q: How will the leaseholders go about contacting the surveyor – would like to know how we will accommodate that?**

**A: This will be according to the consultation process.**

**Q: How many days from SBC survey to Leaseholder getting 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion?**

**A: We will be holding centralised events for each area. Individuals can also request to see the surveyor to discuss the works. It will be a couple of weeks until they reach the final scope of works. The Section 20 Notice will then be sent and thereafter it will be a couple of months to prepare prior to the works going ahead.**

**Q: A leaseholder asked if the tower blocks are included in the works that are scheduled or are separate works planned?**

**A: There are no current plans to carry out major works to high rise blocks. However we are currently embarking on installation of a water sprinkler system in each of these blocks. All tower block residents will be consulted on separately and can discuss this with our Fire Safety Team should they have any further questions.**