

Leasehold Forum – 26th March 2019
Britwell Community Centre

Minutes & Action Points

Attendees –

Amanda Talbot - Leasehold & Right to Buy Manager (Chair)
Shereen Hafeez - Leasehold Service Charges Officer (Minute Taker)
Mark Reynolds – Savills
Tony Turnbull – Neighbourhood Manager
Stuart Aislabie – Principal Asset Manager
Anita Herbert – Osborne Investments Manager

9 leaseholders present

Amanda chaired the forum and commenced with welcome and introductions. All agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were a true record.

Buy Backs

Stuart Aislabie gave an overview of the buy back procedure, following points raised:-

- James Elliman Homes are currently buying back ex SBC properties and are interested in 2/3 bedroom properties.
- We carry out a valuation free of charge, and this is based on current market value.
- The 10 year covenant applies if property brought under the Right to Buy. This is called the Right Of First Refusal.
- If you require further information, refer to the Leasehold Team in the first instance.

Lease Extensions

Stuart Aislabie gave an overview of the lease extension process, following points raised:-

- Leasehold Reform Housing and Urban Development Act 1993 amended by the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002
- lease extension of 90 years (which is added to the remaining term/years on your current lease)
 - a minimum residency period of 2 years.
 - serve the appropriate notice on the Council as freeholder.
- voluntary surrender and renewal whereby you would surrender the residue of your existing lease and simultaneously be granted a new lease of 99 years.
- Either option to extend your lease is granted by way of a payment of a premium which is calculated on the basis set down in the aforementioned legislation.

Leaseholder also raised the point of buying the freehold of his block. Collective Enfranchisement was discussed briefly. If this process is to be initiated – the Leasehold Team will need to be first point of call.

Osborne Update

Osborne Investment Manager, Anita Herbert, introduced her role to the forum as one of being a bridge between Osborne and Neighbourhoods in terms of regeneration and how best to utilise communal areas. She also mentioned that Osborne are creating apprenticeships for local residents to encourage engagement and involvement.

A questionnaire was then handed out by Anita to the group for completion.

Repairs

Tony Turnbull explained that he is currently liaising between SBC and Osborne in regards to day to day repairs and any outstanding jobs.

- Communal properties/ void properties/ caretaking/ planned works currently sits with the Repairs Maintenance and Investments Team.
- As of 1st April a Repairs Manager will be appointed to take over serious cases of (potential) disrepair. Void properties and caretaking will be with Housing People Services.
- Caretaking will take time to put a comprehensive process in place but SBC is working closely with Osborne.

The issue of timescales for dealing with urgent leaks was raised, Osborne are not pro-active and the delays are causing extensive damage to properties. The general consensus was to have an Osborne representative at every leasehold forum meeting.

Fire Risk

- Tony confirmed that SBC has now completed all of the Fire Risk Assessments. These were completed by Osborne and Savills.
- Tony confirmed that key staff will be trained on what issues to look for on site visits and what needs to be rectified in relation to potential fire hazards.
- Tony stated that the communal areas need to be kept clear of any items, ie bikes, shoes, plants, pictures etc.
- S21 Notice has been issued to remove personal items from the communal area within 24/48 hours. If not removed, items will go into 7 day storage- and then will be disposed off without further notice.
- Tony highlighted that the FRA is geared towards safety and ease of escape.

Mark Reynolds went through the summary of major works program; main points raised were:

- Majority of works are on the on tenanted properties/ blocks.
- Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) have been carried out– all communal areas of low rise flats have new FRAs and statutory compliance works identified.
- Leaseholders will be consulted upon via Section 20 process as and when this is required.
- Roof replacement programme – looking at roof's that are more than 85 years old to reduce the risk of leaks and future maintenance costs. Leaseholder raised the question, what about roofs that are less than 85 years old and are in disrepair. Noted as an action point to investigate further.

- Mark explained that there are sub groups to provide certain services, task and review groups to measure performance. There is also ongoing change as the contract moves forward.
- Mark also stated that operatives are to be provided with PDAs in order to capture evidence of work.

A leaseholder asked a question, regarding the timescale of his porch roof leak repair. He was told that the works were due to be carried out the previous financial year. Mark stated that he would look into this and took the leaseholders details.

Service Charges

Amanda explained the billing process of service charges and the current stage, this included:

- Estimated service charges are issued each February for payment on the 1st April. The estimated charges are for the year 2019/20 and are based on a 3 year average of the previous actual accounts with an uplift of 3% (this is based on the Consumer Price Index).
- Under the lease agreement the estimated charges are to be paid in two instalments – 1st April and 1st October.
- If you want to pay your service charges on an instalment plan, you need to inform Revenues when the estimated service charges statements are issued every February within the set deadline, otherwise you will required to pay the amount in full.
- Amanda explained that the Leasehold Team will shortly start working on finalising the accounts for the period 01.04.18 to 31.03.19. These will be issued in September 2019 for payment on or by the 1st October 2019.
- The invoice to be issued in September 2019 will include the above amount and also the second instalment for the Estimated Service Charges 2019/20.
- We are in the process of reviewing the statement of accounts to simplify the way the data is presented; Amanda stated that we are open to any feedback.

AOB

Amanda closed the forum with thanking all for attending and reminding all of how to contact the leasehold team by emailing the generic email inbox (leaseholdservices@slough.gov.uk)

It was also stated that all correspondence has the direct lines of the leasehold officer working on the case, in order to avoid going through main switchboard.

Meeting closed

