

Leasehold Forum – 05 March 2020

Britwell Community Centre

Minutes & Action Points

Attendees – Colin Moone – Service Lead (Chair)

Amanda Talbot - Leasehold & Right to Buy Manager

Shereen Hafeez - Leasehold Service Charges Officer (Minute Taker)

Tony Turnbull – Neighbourhood Manager

Phil Brown – Risk and Insurance Officer

2 leaseholders present

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

Building Insurance Section 20 Process

- Amanda explained that the Building Insurance is due for renewal on 1st April 2020.
- This involved a full S20 process for a long term agreement. Leaseholders have now received all the consultation documents.
- Attending leaseholders expressed their concerns over the increasing costs over the years.
- Amanda confirmed that all leaseholders had the opportunity to raise issues/concerns and observations in writing as part of the s20 process.
- Phil explained that the agreement currently in place came into effect 5 years ago and at that time only two insurance companies came forward, SBC chose the tender with the lowest price.
- This time around there were 4 bidders and SBC has chosen the bidder with the lowest the most competitive rate, and lower than the previous.
- Phil explained that insurance claims will be handled by Questgate, and the latest insurance policies and schedules will be made available to all leaseholders.
- Phil reiterated that SBC has obtained a better range of care for less premium, and appears to be a better deal from the previous one.

Service Charges

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

- Amanda explained that the Leasehold Team has successfully issued all of the estimated service charge statements and also ground rent demands.

- It was also explained that the estimated service charges are calculated by averaging the actual costs for the last three years and adding a percentage increase according to the consumer price index.
- The service charge accounts are closed down on the 31st March each year and are issued the following September. Leaseholders are also charged for the second half yearly estimate on top of this (the first half yearly amount was billed in February).
- Charges for – estate and block charges: Grounds Maintenance, Window cleaning, Caretaking, Block Cleaning, Repairs, Building Insurance, Management Fee
- Amanda confirmed that if leaseholders wish to pay their service charges on an instalment plan, leaseholders need to inform Revenues when the estimated service charges statements are issued every February within the set deadline, otherwise they will be required to pay the amount in full. The deadline for 2020 was 04.03.2020.
- Direct Debits were discussed – LH team would like to introduce this as a preferred payment method to replace standing orders etc and this is being looked into at present.

Repairs

- 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.
- Tony confirmed that the repairs management now lies with John Griffiths team.
- Tony stated that the communal areas need to be kept clear of any items, ie bikes, shoes, plants, pictures etc.
- Section 21 Notices have 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.
- Amanda confirmed that any doors which were not replaced with fire doors, but the leaseholders had paid the £250 – refunds are being processed.
- If there are any issues with locks of the fire doors etc, outside the warranty period – this is the responsibility of the leaseholder to repair and maintain.

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