

Leasehold Forum – Tuesday 3rd March 2020

**Enceladus Suite 2, Slough Borough Council, Observatory House,
25 Windsor Road, Slough, SL1 2EL**

Minutes & Action Points

Attendees – **Colin Moone (CM)** - Service Lead - Strategic Housing Services (Chair)

Amanda Talbot (AT) - Leasehold & Right to Buy Manager

Alison Lane (AL), Leasehold Service Charge Officer (Minute Taker)

Tony Turnbull (TT) – Neighbourhood Manager

Ray Evans (RE), Client Manager, Housing

Phil Brown (PB), Senior Risk & Insurance Manager

11 leaseholders present.

The forum was chaired by Colin who welcomed and thanks for those for coming, introductions were then made. CM went through the minutes of the last meeting and the agenda for this one. The following points were raised:-

- Amanda confirmed that refunds are being issued for the fire doors that were not fitted to leaseholder properties, who paid.
- Ray Evans updated on the work the RMI had been doing and what future plans which include fire stopping works, looking at completion by the end of March 2020.

Asbestos checks and removal in communal areas of blocks. Store door replacements and residents rubbish in communal areas being removed. He also stipulated that resident personal belongings should not be kept in electric cupboards in the communal areas, if items found they will be removed. Works on the electric cupboards is a rolling programme with the aim of completion by November 2020.

- One leaseholder advised that he was not happy with the quality of the fire door that was fitted to his flat, Ray confirmed that doors are being checked including the architraves on a number of blocks. Leaseholder also mentioned quality of cleaning/caretaking works. Amanda advised that these issues need to be reported to Osborne & Neighbourhood Services.
- Amanda confirmed that all action points on last minutes were raised to the Neighbourhood Teams and leaseholders written to as necessary.

Building Insurance

Phil Brown gave an overview of the tender process and explained that four responses were received and the contract has been awarded to Avid Insurance Services Ltd. The Section 20 process ends on the 7th March 2020. Phil also advised that the tender was cheaper than the previous one which as a result reduced the premium rate of the sums insured, which is calculated by the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. The claims would be managed by Quest Gate

Chartered Loss Adjusters; the information will be available on the SBC website under leaseholders on the 1st April 2020.

One Leaseholder raised concerns if the policy would be fit for purpose. The Section 20 consultation process with Rights of Observations is an opportunity for leaseholders to raise any questions/concerns. L/Holder raised issue with a claim with current provider because he is non resident in the property. Phil explained the current policy and reasons why.

L/Holder asked about rights of observations that were made and it was confirmed that all rights and observations received were discussed with the new company and all had written responses.

Amanda also confirmed that of the four insurance companies shortlisted Avid had the most competitive price.

Phil informed everybody that as close to the 1st April 2020 he is hoping that a handbook would be available for all leaseholders.

Service Charges

Amanda confirmed that all estimated service charges were sent to leaseholders on the 14th February 2020 and if leaseholders wish to take up the offer of paying by monthly instalments they must contact the Revenues Team by the 5th March 2020. If there has been no contact L/Holder's will be invoiced twice yearly and payments due on the 1st April and 1st October and ground rent would be due for payment on the 1st April 2020.

Amanda further advised of the frequently asked questions page that was sent with the estimates and advised the estimates were calculated (using the last 3 years actual costs with the RPI uplift). In September 2020 the Leasehold Team will be closing down the actual accounts covering the 1st April 2019 until 31st March 2020. Leaseholders will see an adjustment in their October and later billings (with a credit or debit).

Amanda advised that leasehold are improving the statements each time to try to simplify them, the Local Authority are also working on a new module and is hoping to implement a direct debit payment scheme in the future.

L/Holder would like to see a break down of the repairs costings sent with the actual service charge statement. The system does not allow for this to be automatically done, Leaseholders can however request a breakdown of repair costings once they have received their statements. L/Holder said that the wrong handle was fitted to the rear communal door (Barchester Road) and he was concerned it was affecting the fabric of the building.

All leaseholders advised to report repairs to Osborne direct via the telephone contact centre - 0800 915 1215

Action Points

- L/Holder Clarendon Court raised concerns that caretakers are not attending on a regular basis and using the same bucket of dirty water to

clean all blocks. Alison Lane to email Neighbourhoods to investigate further

- L/Holder Chichester Court raised concern about damage to the roof of the building and where one tile was loose on the corner – job reported a few months ago – Alison Lane to email Osborne and Neighbourhood Team
- L/Holder Chichester Court also raised the fact that ivy growing up the blocks which was removed recently would cause damage and black mould to the balconies. He was concerned that the same thing would happen if it grew back - Alison Lane to email Neighbourhood Housing Team.
- L/Holder – Barchester Road concerned that the outside walls of the block – render /DPC levels he feels are breached which in turn are causing damp and there is a hole in the plaster inside of the building, a resident is using a dehumidifier as a result – Alison Lane to report to Osborne and Neighbourhood Housing Team
- L/holder – Chichester Court – asked if it was possible that the Council install an intercom system in the block of 18 to which 12 flats would need it. Alison Lane to email Ray Evans to consider for future planned maintenance programme(s).
- L/Holder – Chichester Court – asked about the future of the garage site following the demolition of the garages. Ray Evans to find out future development proposals. L/Holder went on to say a fantastic job was done of the removal and demolition of the garages and residents would like to see more parking spaces available if possible.

Any Other Business

- L/holder – Clarendon Court raised concern about the costings following Section 20 consultation for improvement works to the blocks and how leaseholders were going to pay due to affordability and retirement (limited income etc.) and why all works were required. Amanda confirmed that the observations raised were currently with Osborne to respond. Amanda confirmed she had responded regarding payments/billing.
- Tony Turnbull advised all that Leasehold involvement would be welcomed at the Residents Board which consists of 12 members (mixture of residents from leasehold and council tenures). If any leaseholders wish to volunteer and be considered for the board Tony said there are currently two vacancies. He explained what was involved including board meetings, training, information sharing, Councillor Involvement, scrutiny processes to drive service improvement and discuss any general concerns.
- L/holder – Eden Close raised that square stickers are starting to appear within the communal areas of the block where she resides. Tony Turnbull advised that these are to evidence that fire stopping inspections have been completed. The store cupboards had also been numbered – Tony confirmed that was to identify which cupboard belonged to which flat.

Colin suggested an article is placed in the next Housing Highlights magazine which can explain the stickers and numberings in the blocks. Alison Lane to email: Information and Participation Manager.

- L/Holder – Clarendon Court raised concern that non residents are using the Service Road which runs along the front and around the back of the building to park their vehicles. Some residents are having problems getting in and out, the school bus is unable to collect children, there is a potential

fire risk issue and the dustbin lorry cannot access. Alison Lane to email Housing Officer.

- L/Holder – Chichester Court queried why there are different insurance premiums on two identical properties and would like an explanation. Alison Lane to email Phil Brown

L/Holder – Coniston Crescent queried why residents without dropped kerbs are using gardens as driveways? Colin advised they should report this to Highways.

Colin thanked everybody for attending and the date of next meeting to be agreed.