



Minutes of Leaseholder Forum held at Council Chamber, SCDC, 18th May 2017

Attendees (Leaseholders)		Attendees (Leaseholders)	
Patti Hall (Chair)	Cottenham – Franklin	Adrian Prentis	Cottenham - Stevens
Anne Beavis	Over – The Doles	Lin Heaton (LHn)	Barton
Glynis Goff	Waterbeach - Chapel	Pat Day (PD)	Comberton
Jim Duffy	Longstanton	Carol Duffy (CD)	Longstanton
Janet Billton	Great Shelford	Chris Hull (CH)	Bassingbourn - Limes
Judy Carter	Sawston – Plantation	B Newman	Bassingbourn - Spring
D Lewin	Great Shelford	Carol Greensmith	Comberton
Barbara Tomes (BT)	Barton	Janet Huxley (JHx)	Willingham
Joy Churcher	Barton	Jill Maclean (JM)	Comberton
Fred Whybrow	Over – The Doles	Sheila Marriner (SM)	Papworth Everard
Jackie Whybrow	Over – The Doles	Les Rolfe (Secretary) (LR)	Bourn
Barbara Wood	Girton - Orchard		

Initials are used in the minutes to indicate those who were involved in discussions

Attendees (SCDC Representatives and Councillors)	
Julia Hovells (JHv)	Business Manager/Principal Accountant (Housing) Housing Accountant Neighbourhood Services Manager Leaseholder Services Coordinator Land and Contracts Surveyor Community Impact Team Leader Resident Involvement Team Leader
Martin Lee (ML)	
Geoff Clark (GC)	
Becky Gane (BG)	
Liam Flatters (LF)	
Shirley Stephen (SS)	
Peter Moston (PM)	
Lynda Harford (LHd)	Portfolio Holder for Housing

Agenda item	Topic	Action by -
1	<p>Welcome and introductions</p> <p>The chair welcomed all those attending and everyone present introduced themselves.</p> <p>Apologies were received from (leaseholders) Jim & Marie Beedell, Mike Massey, Brian Ross, John & Valerie Talmadge, June Flack, Margaret Jefferies, Bridget Hatherley and Janet Prentis and (SCDC representative) Eddie Spicer.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of the previous meeting</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting were taken as read and agreed as a true record.</p>	
3	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.</p>	

<p>4</p>	<p>Service charge estimates</p> <p>Martin Lee spoke about the estimated service charges which had been sent out. It was pointed out that with the restructuring of the Sheltered Housing management team there were subsequent changes to the relevant charges. With the removal of the hard-wired alarm systems, those who who accepted the Lifeline system would be invoiced separately.</p> <p>Julia Hovells explained that there was more breakdown of specific charges compared to previous years and that it was intended to expand information even further in future. It was explained that the number of properties on any particular scheme sometimes changed as some properties were decommissioned as sheltered stock. It was admitted that the number of properties on one scheme had been calculated incorrectly and that, in future, double-checking would be used to avoid this happening again. The grounds maintenance charges can vary by the number of properties on a scheme, especially where general need housing was interspersed. Such charges were not recoverable from non-sheltered properties.</p> <p>All actual charges are double-checked by September each year to get the correct figures for adjustments to be made later. New systems are being introduced to produce the relevant data more accurately.</p> <p>Leaseholders were entitled to ask for a full breakdown of charges but this can take a lot of time. If too many asked for such a breakdown then it was said that SCDC could make a charge for them. It was pointed out that only one copy for each scheme would be necessary as copies for other leaseholders could be made and it was felt that SCDC should not be charging for information that should be available to those paying the charges. Feedback was asked for on expenditure breakdown.</p> <p>SM said that her service charge had risen by £122 per quarter and wanted to know why. Was it the cost of electricity at the communal rooms? It was said that no alterations on tenanted properties were charge to leaseholders. JHv said that the more use that was made of the communal rooms, especially by the wider community, would help reduce charges. The new staff set-up would also be reviewed. SM wanted to know whether the service charges affected tenant rents and was told they did. LR asked why the grounds maintenance part of the service charge had increased so dramatically when the contract with SPLandscapes had not changed. If it shouldn't be so high then it would be two years before any adjustment could be made with the current system in place. JHv told everyone that within the Cambridge City council area service charges could be amended after just 6 months and that it was hoped that this could be introduced in SCDC.</p>	
<p>5</p>	<p>Communal Rooms – smoke alarms and fire risk assessments</p> <p>In the absence of Eddie Spicer, Geoff Clark gave a short update. It is hoped that Eddie will be able to be at the next forum.</p> <p>New hard-wired alarms will be fitted to all properties over the next twelve months replacing the battery-operated ones previously fitted as these are not satisfactory.</p> <p>SM commented that she now had three different alarms in her property. GC said that all obsolete Tunstall equipment will be removed in due course. Chair said that she had been told that only speech modules were being removed however GC said that old smoke detectors would be removed.</p> <p>BT asked what was actually being done with the Tunstall boxes as, locally, residents didn't want plastic plates covering holes in the walls. SS said there were lots of variations and that the plates did not have to be used, that the walls could be left for residents to repair themselves. BT said that she would not be happy at having to pay £20 per hour for the Handyperson scheme to finish the job and that Mears were not quoting the VAT element until the final bill was presented. LH and BT both asked what</p>	

	<p>was going to done about cable trunking that carried the wiring for the speech modules and , once again, it was said that this was up to the residents to deal with. Both described the original installation as a 'botch job'. GC said that he would take all the comments away and consider them.</p> <p>SM complained about Mears service when her patio doors would not close properly due to warping in the heat. Despite an urgent request as they couldn't be locked on A Sunday nobody arrived to deal with the problem until the Tuesday afternoon.</p>	
<p>6</p>	<p>Sheltered Housing Service update</p> <p>Shirley Stephen that the Estate Officer rotas were now displayed an all communal room noticeboards and that similar leaflets had been distributed door-to-door on all schemes. The Estate Officer, as per the rota, will not necessarily be sitting in halls but should be visible attending residents across the scheme.</p> <p>Jackie Peyton had now left the council and Sharon McIver would be moving from the West area to replace her. On the West area, Kathy Rice was now reducing her working hours to only three days per week. Until further notice temporary staff would be employed to cover vacancies.</p> <p>The Lifeline monitoring service was moving from Centra to Herefordshire Housing. There should be no change in the service as all relevant information was being transferred to the new response service.</p> <p>Letters have been sent out from Mears making appointments to remove the speech modules.</p> <p>At a meeting between SPLandscapes and Debbie Barrett it has been agreed that hard-cutting of shrubs across all schemes will begin on June 5. Any problems should be reported through your Estate Officer. PD had asked SPLandscapes when they were next cutting hedges and was told November. Opposite her property residents have removed an estimated seven feet from the top of the hedge but there is still about eight feet remaining.</p> <p>CD asked about hard-wiring systems still in loft spaces and was it going to be removed or reused. JHx asked if the new hard-wired alarms were in halls or individual properties. SS said that they were going be fitted in all properties.</p> <p>SM said she felt cleaning of the communal rooms was not being done properly or often enough especially as she had been told that there were now only two cleaners. She felt that leaseholders should be refunded some of the charges for that reason. SS said that there were eleven cleaners but that only two were full-time, the others being part-time and, in some cases, only dealing with one communal room.</p> <p>SM asked about car parking as a resident's son, who didn't live on the scheme, used a parking space all the time. Can anyone park, anywhere? SS said that there was no restriction on parking but it was accepted that is was a big issue in many area. AB said that a trailer full of bikes was being left in her area and how could she deal with it. GC said it could be reported direct to SCDC or through her Estate Officer. JM asked about 'residents only' parking signs and LHn asked if residents should complain direct to offending drivers. SS said that PCSOs and the Police say that if a vehicle is legal then such signs are not enforceable.</p>	
<p>7</p>	<p>Neighbourhood Services update</p> <p>Geoff Clark said that the tenancy audit had started in March and that nearly 300 visits had so far been made. Residents were generally grateful to be able to explain their problems etc.</p> <p>It was hoped that a new housing management system would be in place by the end of 2017. The current Orchard system was very dated and there were others more efficient. It is going out to tender for replacement with Cambridge City council who also use Orchard.</p>	

	<p>Several other services were now being shared with Cambridge City and Huntingdonshire. Anita Goddard now splits her duties between SCDC and Cambridge City. Scoping on joint working was happening on lots of subjects whilst each was learning from the other.</p> <p>The latest scrutiny project was coming to an end and the next subject had been chosen. This was to be about the 'new customer experience' from the time they apply for social housing to the 6-week visit after they have moved in.</p> <p>King Street Housing have, in the past, taken on private housing for use as temporary or emergency housing in conjunction with SCDC. They have now withdrawn from this so SCDC are setting up a new housing company to take on similar problem families.</p> <p>AB asked who was paying for the new IT system and whether the King Street Housing replacement was a government initiative. GC said that a budget had been set aside for the new IT. JHv said that the costs of training, etc for the new IT system was being shared, pro rata, by SCDC and City council. Maintenance costs of the new system could affect management charges within service charges, but that charges could come down because of the combining of services.</p> <p>GC said that residents can become homeless for many reasons and that councils are duty-bound to provide emergency accommodation. SCDC prefer not to use bed & breakfast wherever possible, preferring to use private landlords properties instead.</p> <p>LHd said that SCDC had a statutory duty to provide for homeless people and that it was the biggest value problem for SCDC and that they had to find an alternative to King Street Housing. She said that she was very proud of SCDC's homeless team who compare very favourably to other councils. She reported that only very short-term bed & breakfast up to three weeks was being used but often it was only over one weekend. The council was trying to sort out their housing supply.</p> <p>SM spoke about the new housing at Papworth Ridgeway. Why was there only 40% social or affordable housing? Just 90 houses out of a planned 450. LHd said that 40% was considerably better than many other councils managed to get. With the devolution deal for Cambridge and Peterborough there was £100million available for housing and that SCDC were already planning for new social housing. SM suggested that the council could purchase mobile homes comparatively cheaply to use as temporary accommodation. LHd said that mobile homes were somewhat substandard and that most spare land in the district was owned by county council, not SCDC. The council were now looking at modular homes.</p> <p>PD complained that the refuse collection by City Council vehicles was not as efficient as before. Assisted collection was not happening, bins were being left anywhere rather than being returned and that the paper caddies were being thrown in with the refuse with the staff saying that were no longer needed. LHd said that this should be dealt with by, and would be passed to, Mark Howell, the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services.</p>	
<p>8</p>	<p>Resident involvement update</p> <p>Peter Moston said that the elected TPG representatives met monthly and that the lead team of TPG meet with SCDC Heads of Service every two months. At the recent meeting, and on the subject of devolution, it was said that SCDC's Director of Housing, Stephen Hills, was taking the lead on housing which should be good for us but takes up a lot of his time. Along with CCC we have secured grant funding to look into developing Community Land Trusts to see if this model will work in our area. Parish Councils and local community groups may be able to benefit from these as it could involve building housing for those with a strong local connection and there would be no right-to-buy as with current social housing. On the subject of housing the SCDC's stock has increased</p>	

	<p>for the first time in many years with new-builds or purchases overtaking those lost through RTB sales.</p> <p>With regard to the scrutiny review of the communal rooms, questionnaires were sent out to all sheltered residents and the results are currently being compiled which may affect the outcome of the report and recommendations already made. It is hoped to present the report to the Portfolio Holder for Housing in the next few weeks.</p> <p>The latest edition of Tenant & Leaseholder News should be delivered to all SCDC properties at the end of May.</p> <p>A new CEO for SCDC has finally been appointed to replace Jean Hunter. Beverley Agass is due to take up her position in the Summer.</p> <p>CH, on the subject of the scrutiny review, said that on his scheme, Bassingbourn Limes, only one resident attended the over-60s club and few used the laundry facility. PM said that over 500 responses had been received to the questionnaires which will all be taken into account in the report.</p> <p>Liam Flatters gave an update to parking problems that he was working on. A meeting with residents at Cottenham Franklin Gardens was planned for the near future. He had a meeting arranged with architects next week regarding Melbourn Vicarage Close. The Gamlingay Avenells Way scheme has now been approved through the planning department and several others were currently with architects.</p> <p>The footpath at Comberton Hines Lane was currently out for consultation and tender. Streetlighting was now with Eddie Spicer and a new contractor.</p>	
<p>9</p>	<p>Any other business</p> <p>LHn said she was worried about security of her property because of the easy access to the rear. Recently a local councillor had appeared at her back door without warning.</p> <p>GC said he would get the relevant housing officer to contact her to do an estate inspection. It was possible that a grant might be available to solve the problem.</p>	
<p>10</p>	<p>Next meeting</p> <p>Thursday 7 September 2017, 10:00 – 12:00 Council Chamber, South Cambs Council, CB23 6EA</p>	