

# Minutes

Leaseholder Forum

18<sup>th</sup> May 2009

17:00 – 19:00

Boardroom, 14 Hounds Gate



**Present:** Sam Else (SE), Jon Short (notes), Ann Gardner (AG), Martin Gardner (MG), Jennie Bellamy (JB), Eddie Johnson-Flint (EJF), Jim Allarbarton, Robin Stalvies, Billy Pollock (BP), Audrey Davies (AD), Sandra Stones (SS), Kate Bowley – Chair (KB), S A Holmes (SH), D Banner, Sheila Thwaites (ShThw), Carol Tomkiss (CT), Iris Yu, Alan Crawford (AC)(NCH), Graydon Peacock (GP) (NCH), Matt Whittaker (MW) (NCH), Paul West (Commercial Television Systems), Richard Holland (RH) (NCH), Paul Flowers (PF) (NCC)

**Apologies:** Simon Temporal, Sue Taylor, Carol Brown, Maria Hemphill, Jean England, Ennis Peck, Alison Roberts, Val Cleaves, Anna Rogers

	Items	Action
<b>1.0</b>	<b>Welcome</b>	
	KB opened the meeting, thanked all for coming and all attendees introduced themselves.	
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Minutes of the Last Forum Thursday 12 March 2009</b>	
	<p>Page 1 – JS had already amended the previous minutes to show correct attendance and has ensured page numbers are included on all future minutes for ease of reference.</p> <p>Page 2 – Chris Bailey from Streetscene took all the queries away for investigation. SE asked whether Chris had directly contacted anybody with a response to their queries – this had not happened. SE advised that LRRT would chase these responses up.</p> <p>AG asked about communal bins for garden rubbish and wanted to know who she needed to contact to get hold of another one. SE asked AG to speak to her after the Forum.</p> <p>JS rang AG 19.05.09 to advise you can contact the Waste Management team on 0115 915 2000 (Contact Centre) or the Waste Management team on 0115 915 2107. AG also enquired about the Garden Assistance scheme for one of her neighbours. JS contacted Street Scene who advised in the first instance the neighbour needs to contact the local Housing Office. The Patch</p>	<b>SE</b>

	<p>Manager will then visit the customer to complete the necessary paperwork.</p> <p>Page 10 – Gas booklet – SE said she had spoken to MW regarding this and neither of them was aware of a new Gas Booklet being produced. SE asked ShThw if she could recall at which meeting she received the booklet. ShThw could not recall but said she would check her papers.</p>	
<b>3.0</b>	<b>Internal Painting Contract</b>	
	<p>AC addressed the Forum and advised that he was the Programme Surveyor for the painting contract which was currently underway at Newark Crescent. He said that the original price had significantly reduced.</p> <p>AC said that the painting work had been completed but the Leaseholders had not yet been invoiced. He advised that outhouse and electric doors were included in the price but pvc doors were not as these would not need painting. Tenants doors were originally included in the price but after consultation with Leaseholders, these charges were removed which reduced the likely overall cost.</p> <p>SS - £2 has been taken off for doorframes – she said that the paint is already cracking in the chute room of her block (1 – 17 Newark Crescent) its behind the pipes and its also cracking down the side of her door (number 3) – AC made a note and will go and investigate.</p> <p>ShThw said one of her neighbours at 14 Newark Crescent had written in to AC – AC advised he was aware of the letter and had already responded.</p> <p>AC said that the rates referred to in the original tender document were those which were being used as a basis for any charges and these were agreed upon when the tender was awarded.</p> <p>The painting teams are following the window replacement teams.</p> <p>CT said that Leaseholders were being ripped off by these painting costs as she thought they were excessive – she was aware that they had to use specialist paint but didn't think a good quality job was being done so it was a botch job.</p> <p>AC said that the paint manufacturers had been going around and checking the work afterwards.</p> <p>AD said that last time the painting was done both internal and</p>	

	<p>external paintwork was done – only internal work was being done this time which would lead to more expense and more bills for the Leaseholders to pay.</p> <p>SE said that savings would be made as by using the scaffolding when the external painting was done this would reduce overall costs for the work.</p> <p>SS said there was no air ventilation in the chute room which could explain some of the problems with the paint cracking.</p> <p>SS and AD both said they had heard different amounts quoted regarding the overall cost for the work. AC said they should not take too much notice as no actual costs had been determined yet – the only given fact was that there had been a significant reduction in the original amount quoted.</p> <p>AC then left the meeting</p>	
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Digital Switchover</b>	
	<p>MW addressed the Forum and went through a power point presentation 'Digital TV – Why change?' – He advised that digital switchover for the Central area will take place in 2011.</p> <p>Winchester &amp; Woodthorpe Courts have already been done. MW showed all attendees the socket which will be fitted in all properties. This will allow them to get Freeview, Freesat, Sky Plus and DAB Radio so customers will have more choice.</p> <p>MW advised that low-rise blocks are only allowed a maximum of 2 satellite dishes, and high-rise blocks are allowed a maximum of 4 dishes per block – any additional dishes will require planning permission.</p> <p>Vfm – Commercial Television Systems (UK) Ltd (CTS) the chosen contractor are part of the Fusion 21 business group for specialist services and was one of 11 companies on the list for tender and the Members Procurement Team which includes ShThw were involved in choosing the preferred provider. The arrangement promotes working relationships as NCH have been added to signage on CTS vans as indication that they work with us.</p> <p>Virgin connections will remain in all the properties, the new connection will be fitted alongside the Virgin connection which will give customers more choice – customers will be able to continue their contract with Virgin if they want to.</p> <p>MW said that no final indication of cost until all the blocks have</p>	

	<p>been surveyed but it will be below £250. As example low-rise blocks will be approx £178.25 per flat+ any additional costs (electrics and planning) and high rise blocks will be around £200 plus the additional costs.</p> <p>There will be payment options available and individual circumstances will be taken into account to help customers pay.</p> <p>AD said that if the Government are bringing the digital switchover in then they should pay for it. MW replied that there were various schemes in place for different age groups which may assist with payment.</p> <p>SH said that she had contacted the company installing the apparatus and was told that as she had a Virgin box she would not need upgrading – MW and GP reiterated that the new system would be fitted alongside the Virgin box but in any event you would always need a connection to the aerial to access the signal whether you have a Freeview enabled system or a Virgin box.</p> <p>EJF said that people had complained about the standard of work carried out in Winchester Court. GP said that he had spoken to the Wardens at both Winchester &amp; Woodthorpe Courts and no complaints had been received. Any problems should be fed back to GP and MW directly so these can be taken up with CTS.</p> <p>It was mentioned that once the installations have been completed, Sky dishes will become redundant and will be taken down.</p> <p>CT said that she has Sky and since she pays for the dish, this will result in a reduction in the amount she pays which is a good thing in the current economic climate.</p> <p>JB asked whether you need to have a free-sat box indoors in order to benefit from the service – MW confirmed that this was the case. He also advised that the current service charge to Virgin will cease.</p> <p>SH said that the work being done looks a mess – MW said that contractors should be clearing up after themselves.</p>	
<b>5.0</b>	<b>Nottingham Warm Zone project</b>	
	<p>PF from NCC private sector housing scheme addressed the forum. He said they had been represented at the Money Matters roadshow with a view to showing customers how they could reduce their fuel bills – the scheme is aimed at</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. owners</li> <li>2. tenants; and</li> </ol>	

	<p>3. private landlords</p> <p>The free cavity wall insulation service was started in 2000 but there was a limited response from Leaseholders. Four different letters were sent out to gauge interest; PF stated that some Leaseholder properties still need to be completed.</p> <p>The problem lies in the narrowness of the cavity – the insulation can only go down to 50mm and there are 3 estates around the City which aren't eligible for cavity wall insulation.</p> <p>Loft insulation – all customer were written to in 2003 regarding this but the problem remains that some residents want to empty their lofts to enable the insulation to be laid. However it was mentioned that access to the roof space is not included in the Lease of any Leaseholders who live on the top floor.</p> <p>If you are over 65 then cavity wall insulation can be done for free – otherwise the price is £49 and there are schemes in place for those on Benefit.</p> <p>The Warm Zone Project is a 2 year project currently operating in Aspley/ Leen Valley &amp; Beechdale – operatives went door-knocking to make customers aware of the scheme. However anybody can ring up and arrange for a Surveyor to come out to their property for free. The target is 10" insulation.</p> <p>PF left a series of leaflets about the various schemes available at the back of the room for attendees to help themselves to.</p> <p>He mentioned that solid wall homes like Newark Crescent are not eligible for the cavity wall insulation so they have to make sure they are on the best energy tariff. PF mentioned the Boiler scheme and said that people should make sure they have the best boiler as the correct boiler can result in a 30% saving in energy efficiency. He said it takes a long time to recoup money on double glazing. Age Concern offer an Equity Release scheme which some Leaseholders may want to take up. PF mentioned that there were very few grants being offered for draft-proofing.</p> <p>He mentioned that external cladding would be a way of increasing energy efficiency but this is highly unlikely at Newark Crescent because of the cost.</p> <p>He also mentioned the Age Concern handyman scheme as an option for Leaseholders to consider. PF reiterated that all the options discussed were available to Leaseholders.</p>	
<b>6.0</b>	<b>Update from Leasehold Manager</b>	
	SE went through all the latest developments in LRRT	

1. **Service Charge Review – Management Charge** – A report has been given to the Management Team for their approval for the proposed 3 options. This will also need the agreement of NCC/NCH Finance departments. Once agreement has been sought a second review will be arranged with the Leasehold Forum and then city-wide consultation will then be carried out to all Leaseholders.
2. **Service Charge Module** – Currently reviewing the process and are working to implement a new module on the existing Housing System where all leaseholder details will be stored and the service charges will be generated from this new module from September 2009. As part of this new process NCH are proposing to change the frequency of service charge billing. Furthermore once the system is up and running we will then be in a position to be able to issue quarterly repairs statements in due course.
3. **Leaseholder Handbook** – This has now been distributed to all Leaseholders via post and a copy of this should now have reached all our Leaseholders. This will also be published on the website this month.
4. **Leaseholder Training** – is due to be held again for staff and sessions will be arranged where there is expressed interest from Leaseholders/Tenants. A training day on Leaseholder Awareness has been booked through the T&L involvement team and takes place on 25<sup>th</sup> August.
5. We are continuing to keep leaseholders up to date with the quarterly newsletter. The next edition is due out in June 2009.
6. We are increasing the data we hold on leaseholders and are actively carrying out profiling to increase this information so we can continue to ensure that we meet all the needs of our leaseholders.
7. The annual Vision Management Survey is due to be issued within the next few weeks to all leaseholders.
8. The LRRT has re-established the Nottinghamshire Benchmarking Group now known as the 'Midlands Benchmarking Group'. The purpose of this group is to share best practice with other local authorities (currently there are around 12 members) and to benchmark our services against one another to compare performance.

BP said he was not happy about the profiling questionnaire, RH

said that it was good practice across the industry to obtain this information but if people did not want to complete the questionnaires they don't have to. RH also pointed out that we deliver the service to individuals in a way which best suits their needs. Although Leaseholders are a group, the needs of each are different hence the need to obtain this information.

SE said with regards to the Benchmarking group that it was good for NCH that we were chairing this every 4 months and that we had re-established the group.

SE then handed around a document entitled 'Leaseholder Service Charge billing' and explained the background. The idea is that all Leasehold information will be stored in a central database which will be used to produce service charge bills. September 2009 is the proposed go live date.

SE told all attendees to read the document in their own time and raise any queries with LRRT after the Forum.

The proposed changes to the billing will take effect from April 2010. NCH will issue leaseholders an estimated bill for 2010-2011. This will be estimated service charge bill for the forthcoming year and will replace the estimated cost that is included in the service charge issued every September.

In September 2010 leaseholders will receive an actual service charge invoice for 2009-2010 but will not be expected to pay an estimate within this invoice as this would have previously been issued in April 2009. Any adjustment may result in a debit or credit on the account.

SE said that additional payment options e.g. Direct Debit will be introduced as well as alternative ways of spreading the cost. An article on the proposed changes to the billing cycle will appear in the next edition of 'New Lease'

There was some confusion amongst Leaseholders as to whether they would be paying twice as some of them already have payment plans set up which they would like to continue with. SE advised that they could continue to have the ability to pay their charges over an instalment plan but the frequency would change as explained previously.

SE then closed the meeting, thanked all for attending and informed them of the date of the next Forum.

Following the Forum, KB contacted JS to clarify whether receiving two invoices had been mentioned previously. JS checked Minutes of previous Forums and Service Charge Review

	<p>meetings and found reference to this in Minutes from the Repairs Review which took place on 28 April 2008, ShThw, SS and KB were in attendance and Ben Chilvers had raised the importance of the proposed new 6 monthly service charging system which would be delivered once the new Leaseholder Northgate system was in place and working. September 2009 is the Target Date.</p> <p>Repairs will be able to be queried before they are invoiced to the leaseholders following implementation of quarterly repairs statements which will follow in due course.</p>	
	<p><b>Date of next meeting: Thursday 9 July 2009</b>  <b>Time: 5.00 pm</b>  <b>Venue: 14 Hounds Gate</b></p>	