

Minutes

Leaseholder Forum
 21st September 2009
 17:00 – 19:00

Boardroom, 14 Hounds Gate



Present: Sam Else (SE), Jon Short (notes), Simon Temporal (ST), Richard Holland (RH), Janet Storar, Ann & Martin Gardner, Jennie Bellamy, Kate Bowley (KB), Sandra Stones (SS), Audrey Davies (AD), Carol Tomkiss (CT), Robin Stalvies, Carol Brown (CB), Jim Allabarton, M Whitehead

Apologies: Anna Rogers, Val Cleaves, Eddie Johnson-Flint, Sheila Thwaites,

	Items	Action
1.0	Welcome	
	KB opened the meeting and thanked all for attending.	
2.0	Minutes of the Last Forum Thursday 9th July 200	
	<p>Page 1 – Alan Crawford has spoken to SS regarding the Newark Crescent painting work.</p> <p>Page 2 – Graydon Peacock (GP) said he could provide details of when the Door Entry mechanisms were checked – SE said this information would be included in the service charge pack.</p> <p>ST is to check with GP regarding AG’s comments about being told they could opt out.</p> <p>ST went through the scheme and how it works i.e. Leaseholders can opt out of having the internal work done in their flats but they would be charged their share for any work done in communal areas. ST said that in Nottingham if you haven’t got a digital ready aerial or platform for receiving digital tv you will not be able to receive any tv signal after 2011. ST said that currently 25% of the UK can only receive Channels 1 – 4 through their tv so the UK are getting involved in the digital revolution to ensure the whole population receive a better television service.</p> <p>RH suggested GP be invited back to a future meeting and all agreed this would be a good idea.</p>	<p>ST</p> <p>LRRT</p>

	<p>Page 3 – Insurance – SE passed around copies of the policy details for the NCC Leaseholders Insurance scheme for attendees to peruse at their leisure. SE directed attendees to contact the Insurance Section at NCC directly should they have any queries.</p> <p>Page 4 – Weekend Caretaking – KB attended the Area 6 Panel Meeting last week and announced that Newark Crescent and some other areas were to be part of a pilot scheme whereby they would not be receiving a weekend Caretaking service which would hopefully result in a reduction in charges. The pilot scheme would begin from 1 October.</p> <p>Page 8 – Eddie Johnson-Flint has received a response to his queries so no further action is required.</p>																
3.0	Some news on Caretaking																
	<p>KB addressed the forum and advised that an article regarding a reduction in some Caretaking Charges will be in the next edition of 'New Lease' which will be sent out with the Service Charges.</p> <p>KB advised that changing the way NCH calculate the caretaking and cleaning element of the service charges has led to a majority decrease in the cost of Caretaking and Cleaning citywide. This decrease has arisen as the overall standard of Caretaking has increased which KB said was good news for all Leaseholders who receive the service</p> <p>KB then gave examples of some of these reductions. The costs outlined were for the period of 1/4/08 to 31/3/09 and will be shown in September's service charge. The costs have been calculated by the number of contracted hours the caretakers spend at each block instead of a standard city-wide cost which has been used in the past.</p> <p>For Example:</p> <table data-bbox="347 1554 1257 1809"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>07/08 Charge</th> <th>08/09</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Charge</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Newark Crescent</td> <td>£212.35</td> <td>£170.08</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Winchester Court</td> <td>£212.35</td> <td>£153.16</td> </tr> <tr> <td>The Meadows Area</td> <td>£212.35</td> <td>£184.13</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>KB urged all to read the article in the next edition of 'New Lease' and look out for the reduction on their next service charge invoice.</p>		07/08 Charge	08/09	Charge			Newark Crescent	£212.35	£170.08	Winchester Court	£212.35	£153.16	The Meadows Area	£212.35	£184.13	
	07/08 Charge	08/09															
Charge																	
Newark Crescent	£212.35	£170.08															
Winchester Court	£212.35	£153.16															
The Meadows Area	£212.35	£184.13															

4.0	Tenant Services Inspectors	
	<p>ST addressed the Forum and advised he was presenting information on behalf of Louise Painter who was unable to attend the meeting herself.</p> <p>The following information was conveyed to all those in attendance.</p> <p>The Tenant Services Inspectors undertake Estate Assessments every three months. This involves visiting all 39 estates that Nottingham City Homes manages.</p> <p>The Tenant Services Inspectors developed an Estates manual in order to help them identify how to star rate an estate. The manual was developed alongside staff and tenants, and is used by the Housing Patch Managers when they undertake their assessments of the streets.</p> <p>The Estates Manual is a photographic library, which identifies what a 0 star all the way through to a 3 star estate should look like. This ensures consistency across all 39 estates visited every quarter.</p> <p>We would like to highlight that the Tenant Services Inspectors only scrutinise a snap shot of a particular area. For example in Top Valley the Tenant Services Inspectors visit 14 streets. The streets visited were originally chosen based on the high proportion of NCH managed homes. The role of the Tenant Services Inspectors is one that supports the Housing Patch Manager; after all it is their responsibility to ensure that all of the streets in their area are visited.</p> <p>The main areas that the Tenant Services Inspectors look at when out and about on the streets are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Fencing - Looking at the condition of the fencing. Is it in good condition? Does it need replacing? Is it causing a hazard to pedestrians walking by? Is the fence missing? * Illegal Parking - Looking into properties where a drop down kerb has not been laid. We find that a lot of properties do not have this function, and therefore, are parking on their front garden, making a mess of the garden itself. * Overgrown gardens & Hedges - Making sure that the gardens and any hedges belonging to the property are well maintained. We are looking for any hedges or gardens, which may cause a hazard to pedestrians, and ones which look unsightly. 	

* Voids - We are monitoring the amount of empty properties on the estates. These can make an estate look untidy and tenants feel it lets the look of the estate down.

* Rubbish/Litter - Looking into the amount of litter on the streets, and identifying any fly tipping such as dumped sofas, TV's, mattresses etc.

*Other - This could be a multitude of issues ranging from burnt out cars, graffiti, damaged street signs, damaged garage doors etc.

Once the Tenant Services Inspectors have walked the streets and assessed the area based on the above, they then decide from looking at the manual whether or not it should be awarded a 0, 1, 2 or 3 stars.

The Tenant Services Inspectors undertake their assessments accompanied by a Senior Quality Officer. They usually take a maximum of 2 Tenant Services Inspectors. They are there purely as a facilitator and do not have any input to the final star rating decision. The final decision is made by the tenants.

After the assessment has taken place the Senior Quality Officer types up a report for each area, and then this is sent to the Area Housing Manager for them to discuss with the Housing Patch manager responsible for the particular streets visited.

It is then, their role to ensure that the issues raised are rectified for the next round of assessments.

Once all of the estates have been visited and assessed, the Senior Quality Officer then produces a final star rating performance sheet, which all managers receive, so that they themselves are aware of the star ratings for other areas of the City.

ST handed around the pictorial guide books which the Tenant Inspectors use when assessing Estates for all to see and advised that the last Inspection took place in June 2009 and 24 Estates were deemed to be of 3 * standard, 11 of 2* standard and 1 was 1*.

ST also asked that if anybody was interested in becoming a Tenant Services Inspector then LRRT would be able to forward an application form to them. Louise has said she would be willing to attend a future forum should this be required.

ST then asked for any comments and advised that if applicable

	<p>these would be passed on to Louise Painter.</p> <p>KB said that she used to be a Tenant Services Inspector and in her opinion 3* ratings were given out recklessly. ST advised that an independent body are responsible for doing the Inspections but we would feed their comments back to the relevant department.</p> <p>The ongoing car parking issues at Newark Crescent were brought up – it was suggested that these issues be taken up with the local Housing Office as these matters fall under Tenancy & Estate Management which is part of their remit.</p> <p>CB mentioned a number of grounds maintenance issues around Wickens Walk – it was suggested these be reported directly to Street Scene.</p> <p>RH suggested all in attendance take a record of when Street Scene visit their areas and what tasks are undertaken and any queries can be passed directly to Street Scene.</p> <p>AD & SS both said that the back yard of their blocks was like a ‘ploughed field’.</p> <p>RH suggested we get Chris Bailey to attend a future Forum.</p> <p>AG and others mentioned that grass cuttings are not always cleared away properly and in wet weather when the grass cuttings are on the pathways it can be particularly treacherous.</p> <p>RH said it was his understanding that any cuttings should at least be blown off the pathways.</p> <p>It was suggested that a list of grounds maintenance queries be compiled between the Leaseholders and sent to LRRT to be passed on to Chris Bailey/Street Scene to investigate and feedback.</p> <p>Other comments made were that the yellow containers used for the gritting salt were never used when need arose. It was not clear whose responsibility it was to spread the grit.</p> <p>Janet Storar (Board Member) said it would appear that NCH were not getting value for money from Street Scene which is something that needs to be looked into.</p>	<p>LRRT</p>
<p>5.0</p>	<p>2009 Leasehold Survey Results</p>	
	<p>SE handed around a document ‘Nottingham City Homes’ Leaseholders Survey June 2009’.</p>	

	<p>SE went through the results – 944 surveys were sent out and 180 completed surveys were returned (return rate of 19.07%) SE mentioned that a reminder was sent out in August to increase the response rate.</p> <p>SE briefly went through the results which will be published in a future edition of ‘New Lease’. SE had compared the average scores from 2008 with this year (as the same questions were used) and there had been an improvement in the average score given to every question. SE did say that question 10 ‘<i>Overall how do you rate our service to you?</i>’ is the only question used for Benchmarking purposes which will be compared with other ALMO’s/ Registered Social Landlords – in 2008 the average score for this question was 5.49 and this year the average score was 5.95 so a slight improvement had been made.</p> <p>SE said overall the results were positive as the scores had all increased so Leaseholders could see that the service was improving.</p> <p>SE said that LRRT had received some rectification notices and she and JS would be working through these and would respond directly to Leaseholders who had raised queries.</p> <p>KB asked about Staff Training for the Repairs Contact Centre – SE advised that all staff had been trained and further training sessions were scheduled for the Customer Relations Staff. KB recounted a recent experience she had with the Repairs Contact Centre where the operative upon learning KB was a Leaseholder knew how to deal with her which KB thought was good.</p>	
6.0	Visit to another Local Authority	
	<p>SE mentioned in previous meetings about attending a Leaseholder Forum at another ALMO/RSL – Derby Homes was originally mentioned as SE used to work there.</p> <p>Derby Homes no longer have a Leaseholder Forum as the Chair stood down and neither the Vice Chair nor anybody else wanted to take on the role so they no longer have an association.</p> <p>SE then took the opportunity to announce she is leaving NCH to take on a role with Derwent Living in Derby and she hopes to work with the Leaseholder Forum there so would keep in touch and invite anybody interested to attend their meetings.</p> <p>The question was asked whether SE would be replaced, RH said that this was being looked at – it was envisaged that the role</p>	

	<p>would be filled but no time scales had been determined yet. RH said that in the interim the rest of LRRT would be taking on additional duties.</p>	
7.0	Update from Leasehold Manager	
	<p>SE handed around a sheet which she went through with the attendees.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Service Review – Management Charge – A report is currently being considered by the Director of Finance with the proposed options. This also needs the agreement of NCC Finance Department. Once agreement has been sought a second review will be arranged with the Leasehold Forum and then the City-wide consultation will then be carried out to all leaseholders. 2. Service Charge Module – A new module has been implemented from September in the existing Housing System where all leaseholder details will be stored and the service charges will be generated from this new module. Leaseholders will receive their service charges through the new module for 2008/2009 and the estimate for 2009/10 by the 1 October 2009. 3. Leaseholder Training has been held for staff at the Repairs Contact Centre last week and is being held in September for the Customer Relations Team. A training day on Leaseholder Awareness also took place on 25 August through the T&L Involvement Team. 4. We are continuing to keep Leaseholders up to date with the quarterly newsletter. The next edition is due out in September 2009 and will be sent to leaseholders with their service charges. 5. 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. Alongside this we recently asked you to complete financial survey. The purpose of this was to assist the LRRT in ensuring that we can offer enhanced payment options to leaseholders for service charges and major works. These results have been analysed and a report is being compiled to NCH Management for their consideration to improve assistance financially for leaseholders in the future. 6. The annual Vision Management Survey has been issued to all leaseholders. The results will be shared and 	

<p>discussed with the Forum at the September meeting and will be published in the next issue of New Lease.</p> <p>7. Sam Else will be leaving NCH on 16 October 2009. Please refer any day to day queries to the Leasehold Team on 0115 915 7385.</p> <p>It was mentioned that the service charge information was being collated and LRRT aim to get the service charges out at the end of the week.</p> <p>KB asked about Direct Debit SE said that these would be administered by LRRT. SE said that we would not actively be promoting Standing Order but Leaseholders could continue using this method if they wanted to. All the available payment options would be listed on the Invoice.</p> <p>SE said that 3 people turned up to the Leasehold Awareness training in August which was disappointing.</p> <p>CT asked when they would be invoiced for the aerial work – ST advised this would be within 18 months of the work being completed.</p> <p>CT also asked if they are already paying off one Invoice when they receive another how can they be expected to pay them all at the same time. SE advised that each Leaseholder will get a unique account number and all Invoices will be raised against that account so they will pay against that account so whatever they pay will go towards the outstanding balance.</p> <p>CB asked if the cost for the aerial work will be less than £250? – SE/ST advised that we don't have the final figures at the moment; they will be invoiced at a later date but as no formal consultation process was carried out the likely cost would be under the £250 threshold.</p> <p>AG mentioned that with all the Decent Homes window work being done – other paintwork is being neglected.</p> <p>ST suggested we get somebody from Planned Maintenance to attend a future forum to discuss the various schemes.</p> <p>SE mentioned that Nationwide Windows had formally agreed to help Leaseholders and their details were published in a previous edition of 'New Lease'.</p> <p>It was stated that there were 2 benefits to using Nationwide directly.</p>	<p>LRRT</p>
---	--------------------

	<p>1. NCH were cut out of the equation so there would be no additional administration fee added on to the cost and the Leaseholders would get the windows/doors at cost price direct from the contractor.</p> <p>2. It had been agreed as policy that by using them directly Leaseholders would not have to seek written approval from LRRT to get their windows replaced.</p> <p>KB mentioned there was a representative from Nationwide Windows at the Area 6 Panel meeting and she didn't realize that Leaseholders could access the service – so there appears to be a lack of internal communication.</p> <p>AG said they had contacted Nationwide Windows for a quote several weeks ago and had heard nothing. LRRT will look into this for them.</p> <p>SE then thanked all for attending said she had enjoyed working with them all and wished them all the best for the future.</p>	LRRT
	<p>Date of next meeting: Thursday 5 November 2009 Time: 5.00 pm Venue: 14 Hounds Gate</p>	