

Minutes



Leaseholder Forum

28th June 2010

17:00 – 19:00

Tenant & Leaseholder Resource Centre,

14 Hounds Gate

Present: Simon Temporal (ST), Jon Short (JS) (notes), Kate Bowley (Chair KB), Sheila Thwaites (Vice-chair ShThw), Sandra Stones (SS), Audrey Davies (AD), Billy Pollock (BP), Catherine Eaton (CE NCC City Services), Ian Perry (IP), Graydon Peacock (GP), M Whitehead (MW), Robin Stalvies (RS), Ann Gardner (AG), Iris Yu (IY), Tina Lee

Apologies: Carol Tomkiss, Jean England, Jennie Bellamy, Val Cleaves

	Items	Action
1.0	Welcome & Apologies	
	KB opened the meeting and thanked all for attending, as there were some new attendees everybody introduced themselves.	
2.0	Minutes of the Last Forum Monday 29 March 2010	
	<p>Page 1 – IP said that the meeting with City Services had been arranged.</p> <p>AG was asked to update those in attendance on the out-house door situation at Cherry Orchard Mount, AG advised that the situation was still on-going and there was nothing to report.</p> <p>Page 3 – gritting issue Catherine Eaton from City Services was in attendance she was not sure of the policy in place but would take this back to City Services and would feed back her findings through the Leaseholder & Rechargeable Repairs Team (LRRT). Catherine will also look into responsibility for the gritting of pavements as IP had mentioned at previous meetings that it was not the caretakers responsibility to do this.</p> <p>Removal of satellite dishes – GP advised that this will take place at the end of the contract, as part of the digital aerial contract there is year's warranty which includes any rectification works which includes any redundant aerials/dishes – he did point out that where these can be removed as part of the contract then this will be done but once the operatives have left a site there may still be some dishes in place although these will not be</p>	CE

connected.

Some in attendance sought clarification of when they will be invoiced for the aerals, ST said that under legislation we have 18 months from the time of charging to invoice people. ST said leaseholders should have received a letter in their April invoice pack advising them when they would be invoiced. Some will be invoiced in July and others in January. As the work is done in different areas at different times then it would not be possible to invoice every leaseholder at the same time.

GP said that if anybody wants to have their dish removed when the work is being done on their block, then this can be arranged provided Asset Management receive enough notice.

Newark Crescent residents provided good reports about the work being carried out by T.I.S on the door entry maintenance system and said they were more visible so it was easier to check when things were done.

Page 4 – Repairs Working group – ST said he was waiting for Chris Raynor to get back to him regarding this, ST met with Chris & Kate Watret regarding the logistics of texting/emailing leaseholders with details of when communal repairs are to be carried out. However the logistics of this proposal have not been finalised yet as we need to establish who needs to receive the messages whilst at the same time ensuring we comply with data protection legislation and vfm is also of paramount importance. When around 30,000 communal repairs are undertaken each year whilst we are aware that people want to know what repairs are being recorded the cost implications of informing people need to be considered. IP said that other options were being considered.

ShThw said with these new hand held devices the operatives are getting it will be easier to check what is being done. ST said that any question regarding repairs can be passed on which should result in better repairs monitoring. Other attendees said if Managers know where the operatives are it should be easier to monitor their workload and for the residents of Newark Crescent should result in less NCH vans being parked on site.

SS recounted a tale of a blocked drain at Newark Crescent and said they took every grate up at the back of her block around 7 June but there was no blocked drain. ST said any personal queries should be directed to LRRT as the Forum was not the venue for discussing personal issues.

ST said if repairs are not being done then this could potentially result in fraudulent claims so LRRT would need to know about

	<p>this but the hand-held device should give us more confidence in the service being provided.</p> <p>Page 5 – ST referred to the Institute of Residential Property Management qualification which is the only accreditation in the Leasehold sector backed by national bodies – ST recently took the level 1 exam and achieved 95% which was the highest score in the country amongst all those who took the exam with him. All congratulated ST on his success. ST said his increased knowledge will enable him to improve the service provided to leaseholders.</p> <p>Page 7 – KB and ShThw said they attended Derwent Livings Forum, and provided some feedback on their experience. Both said the meeting had no real structure, that they pay more in service charges than some NCH leaseholders and that their housing stock is of mixed tenure.</p> <p>With their leasehold review they are 18-24 months behind us and ST said there are no individual block costs in place, they all get charged a set fee, both KB & ShThw got the impression that they didn't really know what they were doing.</p> <p>SS said she was encountering problems with Pension Credit and they don't seem to understand what we do – ST advised SS to bring any information she has from them into us and we will help her provide the information they are requesting.</p> <p>ST said the clarity of what people are paying for is important and we want leaseholders to be involved to make sure they understand everything they are being charged for.</p>	
<p>3.0</p>	<p>Grounds Maintenance – Catherine Eaton (Interim Public Realm Manager)</p>	
	<p>CE addressed the forum and apologised for the lack of attendance by a representative from City Services at previous forums. There have been a lot of changes in the service and a re-structure has taken place in City Services. Seven Environmental Management Managers have been appointed , Mark Sunderland (who many of those in attendance know) now spends most of his time out and about across the City working with residents looking at priorities for grounds maintenance and street cleaning and he has 3 or 4 Supervisors who work closely with him.</p> <p>The City has been divided into smaller areas so the teams can concentrate on localised needs and make improvements. They are working on devising clean and proud ward action plans. Rather than in the past being reactive they are working on being</p>	

	<p>proactive and are also working on seasonal plans for different types of work. They have drafted the first plans and some of these took effect from May.</p> <p>CE said the neat teams they had in the past didn't really work so the new neighbourhood teams will be better placed to identify what people want done in their respective areas e.g. clean the pavements and will come along and blitz those areas.</p> <p>NCC are aiming for England's cleanest City award – there will be a big Summer clean up and CE said some of us may have seen the signs around the City regarding this, and there will be other initiatives such as 'My Street' so all can get involved and improve their area..</p> <p>KB mentioned that some of the guttering is not done on one side because of all the cars that are parked there, so parts of Newark Crescent are missed and there are bird droppings on the pavement which aren't cleared up. KB said she has spoken to Mark Sunderland about this and CE said she will see if its possible for his teams to come out more often.</p> <p>AD said that there weren't enough bins around the City centre or near bus stops, she made particular reference to Fletcher Gate where there are lots of flats and the bins aren't big enough. KB talked about bins needing to be re-designed.</p> <p>CE mentioned the dog excrement campaign and SS talked about the Pigeon excrement on Newark Crescent. It was suggested that if it was not possible to get bigger bins that they be emptied more often. Another attendee said that there was no bin at Victoria Bus Station – CE said that she would talk to Andy Crofts regarding this as this falls within his remit.</p> <p>CE took all these comments on board and would investigate them.</p> <p>AG asked about Garden Waste bins, CE said she would see what she can do as some tenants do their own gardens so need to dispose of garden refuse somewhere.</p> <p>ST said that the main problem seems to be that leaseholders don't know what they are paying for with the grounds maintenance service so an SLA needs to be agreed with NCC as there is currently nothing in place.</p> <p>SS said she doesn't think some of the gardeners are properly trained as they cut down plants and leave weeds, there followed some discussion about residents of Newark Street throwing rubbish over the fence onto Newark Crescent which makes the</p>	<p>CE</p> <p>CE</p> <p>CE</p>
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	<p>area look unsightly. SS and other Newark Crescent attendees throw branches over as the trees on Newark Street need pruning as they overhang their gardens and there is little natural light. CE said a tree expert needs to be involved as there are particular rules regarding tree pruning and the necessity of this so she will pass this information on to them.</p> <p>ShThw asked if re-grassing of areas was on the agenda? CE was not sure but would look into this, ShThw advised that she has had 2 windows broken as some of the grass outside her flat is barely evident so when they mow they are picking stones up.</p> <p>BP referred to the tree in the centre of Brightmoor Court he says the gutters are often blocked due to the branches overhanging them, ST said LRRT were aware of this and would pass the details on to CE. CE said NCC had a tree management policy and she would pass the details on to the relevant section.</p> <p>Those in attendance thanked CE for coming and she left the meeting.</p>	<p>CE</p> <p>CE</p>
4.0	Asset Management Update – Graydon Peacock	
	<p>GP addressed the Forum and talked about the digital aerial works, he advised that CTS who are the contractors for this work had been provided with a list of 10,528 properties to work on. Of these 8,386 had been cabled and 7,027 had already had the outlet plate fitted.</p> <p>Due to finish installations of new system by end of October 2010, the current contract ceases in December 2010, and the analogue service in the Nottingham area is due to take place on the second week of April 2011.</p> <p>GP is to provide the costs invoiced as part of the installation, the following areas have been done St Anns, Clifton North & South, Bestwood, Bulwell Forest and Bulwell and these will be invoiced in July, the remaining areas will be invoiced in January 2011.</p> <p>BP asked about his area Brightmoor Court, GP advised that Bridge Ward would be last this is because parts of The Meadows area are being re-developed.</p> <p>IY referred to her property 6-16 Victoria Centre and wanted to know whether this had been done yet.</p> <p>After the meeting GP looked into this and advised that this property had the work completed in October 2009.</p> <p>People asked about the new door entry service and wanted to</p>	

	<p>know what this entailed, GP advised that there was an annual maintenance contract , GP has all the dates of when scheduled maintenance should take place and these will be provided to the local Housing Offices. Those in attendance who receive this service reiterated that they never used to see anybody come out before but advised that the new people were more visible which was a good thing.</p>	
5.0	Caretaking Update – Ian Perry	
	<p>IP addressed the forum and referred the weekend caretaking service and the pilot scheme to remove this which was tried at Newark Crescent – he said that the pilot had been successful and that the removal of the weekend service would be reflected in the next service charges and there would be a small reduction.</p> <p>IP advised that window cleaning was not included in this charge but the aim was not to increase the overall charge. IP is looking to roll out the removal of the weekend service across other areas but he was awaiting confirmation from the various Area Panels.</p> <p>IP said that in order to improve the service and reduce the overall charge some sites would be doubled-up and the service would be reduced in some areas with the aim to make further savings in the future. IP said that the reduction in weekend working would not affect the high-rise blocks as they still require some intensive weekend work.</p> <p>Attendees asked about what happens in times of absence, IP said that we don't have caretakers on call to cover absence so the idea would be to move existing caretakers around and IP said a discount of approximately 1% had been built into the service charge calculation to account for annual leave. The aim is to ensure the service is maintained but staff reductions would result in there being 1 less block caretaker and 2 less mobile caretakers at any one time. IP said residents were not charged for bulk rubbish removal. IP said he is looking to get a schedule for window cleaning out to leaseholder so they have some idea when they will be cleaning the external communal windows – they aim to do this twice a year.</p> <p>IP said leaseholders should notice a small reduction in their actual charges for 2009/ 2010 and a larger reduction should show in the 2010/2011 actuals.</p> <p>ShThw said that Newark Crescent caretaker was off this week and that there were 2 people covering his work and she wondered whether they needed two, IP said 7 hours caretaking a day is provided to Newark Crescent, there are 26 block caretakers and 5 are off at any one time with Annual Leave so its</p>	

	<p>possible that the level of service will drop when staff are on leave.</p> <p>IP said he would like to be informed if leaseholders are not getting the service they are paying for.</p> <p>AD asked why caretakers need to work together in the same block as surely they would get more done if they split up – IP said he would take that on board and discuss with the caretakers.</p>	
6.0	Buildings Insurance	
	<p>KB said that all forum members received an invitation to attend the meeting on 21 June and both ShThw and KB were disappointed at the turnout. BP said that some people work so the timing of the meeting was not convenient.</p> <p>ST said that the time and date for the meeting was determined by NCC as they approached ST and LRRT to take over the day to day administration of the leaseholder building insurance scheme.</p> <p>ST advised that any queries or claims would still be sent direct to the Insurance company as before but we would take over responsibility for the charging. The insurance would be included on service charge invoices rather than being invoiced separately.</p> <p>It was agreed by NCC that it would make sense for LRRT to take over the administration as leaseholders would be able to phone one central point rather than phoning the insurance section for one query and then having to be transferred to LRRT for any service charge queries. KB and ShThw said they were in agreement with the proposals but were concerned that LRRT would be taking on too much and would not have enough knowledge in order to administer the scheme effectively. BP was also concerned that LRRT would not have the technical knowledge that Jackie Handley and the rest of the Insurance team have.</p> <p>ST we would not be dealing with insurance queries as we were not registered with the Financial Services Authority nor were we able to advice on policies already agreed as these would be directed to Zurich directly.</p> <p>ST said he had sent an 18 point agreement to NCC which they had to agree to before LRRT took over the scheme, part of the agreement was we would get extra admin support from them during busy periods and Jackie Handley is in the process of devising a frequently asked questions guide so LRRT would know how to deal with queries and both Jackie and her Manager have agreed that we can ask them any questions. The period of consultation ends on 16 July 2010 and the proposal is referred to</p>	ST

	<p>in the latest edition of 'New Lease' which leaseholders should receive soon. ST advised that any comments have to be in writing so we can respond directly to whoever raises them. ST said he would send any feedback out to leaseholders once the consultation period has ended.</p> <p>BP said there had been problems with the calculation of service charges and was concerned that similar errors would arise once LRRT take over the administration of the insurance. ST apologised and admitted there had been problems but said that whenever a new invoicing system is introduced problems will arise and LRRT aim to get these problems resolved as soon as possible to make sure they don't occur again.</p> <p>BP referred to the management fee which is put on to insurance by NCC and wondered whether NCH would add management fee on top of this.</p> <p>ST said the management fee would take over any admin fee applied by them and would be applied to the overall invoice. ST advised that the 15% currently applied will remain in place until the review is complete, the proposals have gone to NCH/NCC Directors but due to personnel changes in their teams no decision has been made as yet.</p> <p>Any decision regarding amendments to the management fee is still under review and we are awaiting a decision from Senior Managers at both NCH & NCC.</p>	
7.0	Service Charge Collection	
	<p>ST advised that LRRT are having a success in collecting service charges but there are still problems. ST referred to an article in the latest edition of 'New Lease' and reiterated that this was not aimed at good payers. ST said that we had already beaten our 'year end' collection rate of 75% for service charges issued in September 2009. 46% of the invoices issued in April 2010 had also been paid. ST said the idea was to get people used to paying a small amount each month towards their service charges as they are a priority.</p> <p>KB said that unless LRRT know how people are going to pay whether it be DD, SO or regular cash payments a letter will be sent out chasing them for payment.</p> <p>ST said that there was £160,000 outstanding in service charges 3 years ago and this has now reduced to £20,000. ST said we are bringing out tighter controls and there are rules and regulations we and our leaseholders have to abide by and we are bound by legislation.</p>	

	KB said leaseholders who do pay are not subsidising those that don't.	
8.0	Leasehold Management Update	
	<p>ST reminded those in attendance that some the housing offices are closing over for cash payments over the next month so people would no longer be able to pay their service charges there.</p> <p>ST advised that Richard Holland had been appointed to the role of Assistant Director of Housing Services but would still be attending Leaseholder Forums when time permits. ST said RH would still be happy to talk to leaseholders and is still covering work from his former role as no successor has been appointed yet.</p>	
9.0	Future Forums and increasing attendance	
	<p>KB said that the leaseholder forum have a budget which is not being fully utilised and the idea is to open the Forum up to a queries surgery for half an hour before the meeting and a finger buffet would be laid on. The surgery idea would allow leaseholders to bring up personal queries with LRRT rather than taking up time in the Forum.</p> <p>This was another way of increasing attendance.</p> <p>AD & ShThw mentioned the Elders Forum which are based on Friar Lane – they have a publication so the forum could be mentioned in that – ShThw advised she would provide LRRT with their details.</p> <p>The day after the Forum ShThw contacted JS with the contact number for the Elders Forum which has been recorded for future reference.</p>	
10.0	Value for Money	
	<p>ST referred to the business apprentice trainee Muhammad Waqas-Alam (MWA) who spent 4 months with LRRT. During his time he created a database which contains all the leases we have on record and allows us to check leases and get information to people straight away which cuts down any delay in people waiting for information and allows us to improve the service we offer.</p> <p>MWA is currently spending 3 days a week with the Business Improvement & Development Team and 2 days with LRRT and has proved very useful in helping us collate service charges etc.</p>	

	<p>ST did state that we can only provide a photocopy of leases which we cannot guarantee would be acceptable when re-negotiating a Mortgage etc. NCH are managing agents of the freeholder (NCC) so all requests for proper copies of the leases should be directed to the Legal conveyancing section at NCC and there would be a fee involved.</p> <p>ST advised that we have applied to Nottingham University for their talent builder scheme for new graduates. This is a 3 month internship scheme and 12 departments within NCH submitted proposals for projects they wanted people to work on and 5 of these were accepted by the university (including LRRT). The project we wanted them to work on was Equality & Diversity and research additional methods of increasing the profiling data we hold. ST had interviewed a couple of candidates but these had accepted other offers so were now waiting for the second round of applications to take place which would be September.</p> <p>ST advised that the Rents team had secured 2 people.</p>	
	<p>Any other Business</p>	
	<p>KB referred to the Repairs Handbook which was referred to in the latest edition of News from NCH – it mentioned that this had been sent to all tenants but not leaseholders and she had asked LRRT to find out why this was.</p> <p>JS advised he had spoken to Communications & Marketing who advised the booklet had not been sent to leaseholders and was informed that the article in the newsletter was specific to tenants only as leaseholders don't use all our repairs services.</p> <p>ST said he would take this up with Martin Valentine from Communications & Marketing.</p> <p>The booklet was only supplied to tenants as the majority of the booklet contains internal repairs. As leaseholders are aware internal repairs are their own responsibility and it would be wrong to give leaseholders the impression they could report these repairs without paying or a cost. The Repairs service currently run an ad-hoc rechargeable internal repairs service but signed authority is required from a leaseholder before the works commence. The LRRT and Repairs Manager are looking into a scheme that leaseholders can pay to access. Once this has been designed literature would be provided.</p>	<p>ST</p>
	<p>Date of next meeting: Monday 11 October 2010 Surgery: 4.30 pm Leaseholder Forum: 5.00 pm</p>	

	Venue: 14 Hounds Gate	
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