

Leaseholder Focus Group Meeting
12th February 2019

Committee Room 6, Civic Centre, Southend-on-Sea

NOTES OF MEETING

Present

Jan Tate	JT	Leasehold Officer
Patricia Allen	PA	Leaseholder
Stephanie Frost	SF	Leaseholder
Mike Smith	MS	Leaseholder
Ian Ward	IW	Leaseholder
James Apps	JA	Leaseholder
Linda Elliott	LE	Leaseholder

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Welcome

JT Welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs Apps

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Minutes of last meeting & Matters Arising

-Members agreed the Minutes of the last meeting were a true record

-JT confirmed the Lease Extension Fees had been added to the website. In addition the new Leasehold email had also been updated and the Leaseholders Handbook would be reviewed this year

Allocations Policy for Social Housing

Further to the last meeting JT provided an overview of the Allocations Policy and advised the full policy is available on the Council's website. A number of members were supplied with the link. To sum:

Applicants are placed in various bands (A-D) based on their housing needs

This can be for a variety of different factors including:

- Overcrowding & lack of bedrooms
- fleeing from harassment violence/abuse
- medical needs
- disrepair in current property
- homelessness
- support e.g. moving closer to relatives or facilities
- multiple needs (combination of 2+ of the above)

Applicants are placed in a set band taking into account the varying levels of their housing needs e.g. some with severe health conditions may be in a higher band compared to someone with moderate health conditions. An applicant in band A would be of a higher priority to house than an applicant in band D

There are a number of property types South Essex Homes manages. This includes:

Part 1 Sheltered (over 50) used to be 60

Part 2 (over 60, support of a sheltered housing officer)

General Needs (Houses, flats, maisonettes etc.)

Extra Care (30 flats inside part 2 schemes) offering a high level of care for residents

-FENSA covering misted windows

After researching JT noted that it was unlikely misted windows would be covered under the scheme. The FENSA scheme ensures cover to ensure windows are building regulation compliant. Having misted windows may not necessarily cause the windows to be non-compliant

JT noted many installers do however offer lengthy guarantees and misted windows may be covered through the contractors guarantee

IW requested if a maintenance technician could inspect his windows. JT to arrange

JT

-Resident Board Member

JT noted Keith Ducker had unfortunately resigned from the post but noted we would request the incoming board member undertake similar duties for leaseholders

Paul Longman noted he was happy for an agenda item to be included for major works and repairs in the Leasehold Focus Group

JT thanked SF for preparing an update for the Southend Tenants and Residents Federation

The article in Insight was amended in light of Keith Ducker no longer undertaking Resident Board Member updates

JT noted two drop-in events will be taking place on the 19th & 20th February for leaseholders should they wish to raise any enquiries. Two more events are planned in December.

Communications, Policy and Procedures

Reserve Fund

-JT noted that the Reserve Fund statements will be sent in the coming weeks

-JT confirmed how the interest for the fund is accrued:

The leaseholder monies are recorded separately in an earmarked reserve but they are not held in a separate bank account. Instead they are held as part of the Council's monies managed in-house. The interest rate applied to the leaseholder monies is therefore the average rate earned on those monies.

They are invested in the Council's main bank account, money market funds and an enhanced cash fund.

-JT provided members with a draft copy of the letters proposed as part of an exercise to review leaseholder's contributions to the fund

Members were generally happy with the format but suggested:

Adding a further option to contribute another amount

Providing a Frequently Answered Questions/Summary of the Reserve Fund Policy and clarifying scenarios where the Reserve Fund is exhausted and additional funds are required

Adding information on potential major works in the next five years

Exploring an optimum figure for the Reserve Fund where contributions can cease until major works are required

JT will prepare and supply an update at the next meeting

JT

Major Works and Repairs

JT noted that Michael Bryant would be attending next April's meeting as part of the Group's meet the team agenda item

Michael oversees the tendering process for when work is procured for South Essex Homes

LE, MS & IW noted problems with the automatic doors at their blocks and numerous repairs as a result of vandalism. JT noted South Essex Homes are undertaking an audit of the CCTV operated in our Estates and would pass on comments in respect of motion technologies

SF requested when the main entrance doors would be replaced at her block

JT confirmed Morgan Sindall had been awarded the repairs contract. JA requested whether leasehold representation would be sought for the contract review meetings. JT noted the resident board member would attend these but in the interim was happy to attend if required

JT noted that some operatives who originally worked for the Council in its maintenance team would move to Morgan Sindall with other roles potentially being advertised on the open market

JT to escalate the above points to Paul Longman and Anita McGinley

JT

Leasehold Event 2019

Members were advised the event had been confirmed for the 23rd July 2019 and were happy with the format the event took previously

SF and IW requested whether an enquiry log could be taken to the event by each staff member. JT would be happy to arrange

JT

Insight

Due to the previous edition being full. An article for non-leasehold residents was not possible but would be arranged in future editions

JT

Members wished for the Leasehold Event to be advertised pending on the issue date and whether the re-organisation would be advertised. JT to clarify

JT

Gas Safety

JT noted 519 of 614 certificates had been received

Further to recent Legal guidance, non-compliance would result in a breach of Landlord regulations

JT note a number of decisions had been made in the First Tier Tribunal and were successful in determining a breach of the Lease Agreement

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Member Updates

South Essex Homes

South Essex Homes have appointed Sarah Lander and Beverly Gallacher as Assistant Directors

Their focus would be on Fire Safety, implementing the new repairs contract and introduce new ways of working commercially

Simon Putt has been appointed Group Manager of Corporate Resources and Income Management

Beverly would oversee the running of Estate Services, Careline and South Essex Property Services as Commercial Assistance Director

Sarah would oversee the running of Tenancy, Property Services, Hostels etc. as Operational Assistance Director

Anita McGinley had also been appointed Housing Community Safety Manager working closely with the Police and other agencies

Queensway Development

JT noted Swan Housing Association had been awarded preferred bidder status as the developer with the Council

In their example proposal it was noted 1600 new homes would be created 500 of which would be affordable

Once the contract is awarded further work would be made on the plan including a consultation and a planning submission would be likely in 2020

Other Updates

No other updates were supplied by members

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Open Questions

SF requested information on recent repairs at her block and the length of her lease

IW requested further information on the lift refurbishment and whether he had enough monies in the fund to cover the works

PA requested further information on her Reserve Fund contributions

A number of members requested whether the Council's Income Team could number and date service charge pages for ease of reference

JT to arrange all the above

JT

Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 23rd April 2019 2-4pm

Civic Centre Committee Room 2

