

Newark and Sherwood Leaseholders Monitoring Group



MINUTES OF OUR PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 18 JULY 2006



Attended by: Ian Dunlop, Chairperson (ID)
Margaret Webb, Vice Chairperson (MW)

Carolyn Rowlston, Leasehold and RTB Officer (Newark and Sherwood Homes) (CR)

Janet Elam, Leasehold and RTB Officer (Newark and Sherwood Homes) (JE)

Barry Brassington, Assistant Technical Director (Investment) (Newark and Sherwood Homes) (BB)

Mr and Mrs Smith, Leaseholders

Apologies: Suzanne Whitling, Finance Director (Newark and Sherwood Homes) (SW)

Venue: Kings Court Community Centre, Southwell

Time: 7.00pm onwards

1) OPENING

ACTION

ID opened the meeting and introduced himself, MW and the Newark and Sherwood Homes (NSH) staff attending the meeting.

2) MINUTES OF THE LAST COMMITTEE MEETING - UPDATE

CR and ID went through the minutes giving details of matters discussed including:

- **Service Standards** – have now been approved for the Leasehold Service and have been forwarded to Newark and Sherwood Homes Business Services Directorate for inclusion into the Company's "Our Service Standards" document. The next publication is scheduled for this Summer 2006. **SP**
- **Leaseholders Handbook** – the final draft has now been approved. The company who published the Tenants Handbook have priced the publication in the region of £14,000. Apparently runs of less than 2,000 copies and the loose-leaf style of the handbook are not cost effective. Alternative sources and styles are being considered and prices being sought for publication, the quotations due for return on 1 August. **CR**

Newark and Sherwood Leaseholders Monitoring Group

- **Internal Audit** – A three-day audit by NSDC of the leasehold service was carried out in June. Initial feedback indicates that although overall there were no significant weaknesses identified, improvements could be made in the following areas:
 - To help ensure accuracy, independent checking of a sample number of accounts was recommended.
 - Charges for communal lighting repairs were not being recovered, as the actual costs were not available.
 - Invoicing should be completed by the end of September each year to ensure all relevant costs are recovered.
 - Buildings insurance: The method of calculation requires clarification, as the charges have remained the same for a number of years and is the same for each property. Leaseholders were not provided with policy information each year as standard, although information is provided on request.

SW is now considering these issues.

- **Best Value** – A review of the leasehold and RTB service is currently being carried out and is due to be completed soon. The new KLOE (key lines of enquiry) issued by the Audit Commission are forming the basis of the review with the aim to ensure NSH provide a 3* service.
- **Buildings Insurance** - CR asked other local authorities for details on what information they send out and it seems that there is no standard approach. The majority of organisations send out a summary of the policy but very few offered plain language versions.

Gedling Borough Council currently has the same insurer (Zurich Municipal) as NSDC and leaseholders are provided with a summary of cover and a statement of policy cover issued by the insurer. Both booklets are written in plain language. On receipt of this information the Council's Insurance Officer, Jenna Allen contacted Zurich and requested similar booklets be provided for leaseholders of NSDC. Initially, the insurers agreed to provide similar information but later advised that the policy cover required would need to be increased for the booklets to be provided free of charge.

NSDC –JA

Jenna has agreed to consider writing a similar document on behalf of NSDC and hopes to be able to provide copies for the next financial year, beginning April 2007. In the meantime a copy of the current version of the buildings insurance policy summary is attached.

NSDC –JA

CR

3) CORRESPONDENCE

None received.

Newark and Sherwood Leaseholders Monitoring Group

4) MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS

There have been no applications to join the Committee to date and none were forthcoming at the meeting. All leaseholders are eligible to join the Committee subject to the agreement of the existing Committee members.

5) INVESTMENT PROGRAMME – DECENT HOMES UPDATE

BB provided an update on the progress made to date and confirmed that 6.5 million was spent last year on decent homes work and 9 million is scheduled for his year. 11.3 million has been allocated for the following 3 years but this may be reduced by 2%.

BB confirmed that where windows were being replaced that were not defective, leaseholders would not be charged a proportion of the cost of this work that was carried out to other properties within the block. BB announced that proposals had been discussed to consider the feasibility of offering improvement works to leaseholders under the decent homes scheme and also for gas servicing and electrical testing, but stressed that the discussions were in the very early stages and this service may not actually be introduced.

BB explained that contactors employed by NSH are all able to supply FENSA certificates for the work but should leaseholders wish to fit their own windows and choose not to use a registered contractor then they must obtain building regulations approval before carrying out the work.

BB announced that the September issue of 'Homes from Homes' will detail when decent homes work is due to be carried out in each area.

ID commented that he had noted that the roof tiles being replaced on 2 properties on Cranmer Road in Newark were in fact brittle and crumbling as BB had previously described.

CR announced that following a review of the administration charges with regard to decent homes works carried out under the partnership arrangement with Connaught and Bullock that a 10% charge will be applied but it has been agreed with BB and the Technical Director that the charge will be capped at £100.

6) PERFORMANCE REPORT

- **Performance Update**

1st Quarter (April – June 2006):

Survey forms sent during this period:

2 Open Market Sales

16 Annual Service Questionnaires

18 Ethnicity Questionnaires

Newark and Sherwood Leaseholders Monitoring Group

No survey forms returned.

7) FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY (FSA) FREE INFORMATION

CR provided an overview of the services provided by the FSA and free literature was made available on a variety of topics including mortgages, insurance and equity release schemes.

It was agreed that the FSA introductory leaflet would be sent to all leaseholders with a copy of the minutes from the meeting.

CR

FSA consumer helpline 0845 606 1234
www.fsa.gov.uk/consumer

6) FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed at the last Committee Meeting that the existing format would be continued into the next year and CR announced that:

Committee Meetings are to be held on: 26 September 2006, 23 January 2007, 22 May 2007 at Kelham Hall.

Public Meetings are to be held in: November 2006, March 2007 and July 2007 with the AGM in March.

Venues: A list of community centres and area listing of leaseholders was discussed at the last committee meeting and the venues for the public meetings for the 2006-2007 year was agreed:

November 2006: Rookwood Close, Bilsthorpe
March 2007: Kelham Hall, Newark (AGM)
July 2007: Dorwood Court, Balderton

It was agreed that the details will be confirmed and a revised schedule issued for 2006-2007 to all leaseholders with the minutes from this meeting.

CR

AGM

It was agreed in our Rules of Operation (12) that elections for the posts of Chair and Vice Chair would be held annually. It was agreed at the last Committee Meeting that nomination forms would be sent out with the minutes of this meeting and that nominations would require the signature of the nominated person. Nominations will be added to a voting form that will be circulated to all leaseholders with the minutes of the November 2006 Public Meeting.

CR

The appointed Chair and Vice Chair will be announced formally at the March 2007 Public Meeting following the Committee Meeting in January where all the nominees will be invited to attend a free lunch and 'vote count' at Kelham Hall.

9) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Update – New Structure. The Leasehold Service has now been combined with the Right to Buy Service and CR and JE will be the contacts for both service areas. Until suitable training has been provided CR and JE will continue to specialise in their own service areas. CR has now moved offices from Farrar Close to Kelham Hall but the contact telephone number remains the same (01636 655550).

Newark and Sherwood Leaseholders Monitoring Group

- Rules of Operation – CR provided a revised document to clarify the procedure for group members to claim their expenses.
- ID announced that the government is reconsidering the requirements of the Home Information Packs (HIPs) and it appears that the proposals regarding home condition reports may be delayed as the government intend to phase the roll out of all the aspects of the HIPs. However, the introduction of the energy performance certificates is expected to progress as planned.

10a) NEXT COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, 26 September 2006

Kelham Hall

By invitation only – please contact Ian (☎ 01636 659127), Margaret (☎ 01623 486185) or Carolyn (☎ 01636 655550) if you would like to join the Committee.

The meeting will commence with a working lunch from 1pm – lunch provided by NSH.

b) NEXT PUBLIC MEETING

Wednesday, 29 November 2006

Rookwood Close Community Centre, Blidworth.

7pm – 9pm

An invitation and map of how to get to the Community Centre will be sent out to all leaseholders shortly before the meeting.

CR

APPENDICES:

- Nomination Form for Chair and Vice Chair
- Schedule of Public Meetings 06-07
- Schedule of Committee Meetings 06-07
- Buildings Insurance Policy Information Sheet, February 2006
- FSA Consumer Information Leaflet