

Newark and Sherwood Leaseholders Monitoring Group



MINUTES FOR THE PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 18 JULY 2007



Attended by: Ian Dunlop, Chairperson
Carolyn Rowston, Leasehold and RTB Officer (NSH)
Janet Elam, Leasehold and RTB Officer (NSH)
Barry Brassington, Assistant Technical Director (NSH)
Two leaseholders and three tenants

Apologies: Suzanne Williamson, Finance Manager
Suzanne Whitling, Finance Director

Assumed Apologies: Margaret Webb, Vice Chairperson

Venue: Dorewood Court, Balderton, Newark on Trent, Notts.
Location: Community Centre **Time:** 7pm onwards

1) CORRESPONDENCE:

General correspondence from the Federation including notification of the office move to 21b Bailey Road on Friday, 18 May 2007. Invitation to grounds maintenance new contract consultation event and formal consultation documents.

ACTION

2) MEMBERSHIP APPLICATIONS:

No applications made to date.

3) UPDATE FROM THE LAST COMMITTEE MEETING (21 MAY 2007):

- Leaseholders Handbook – Now issued.
- Leaseholders Newsletter – First Edition – Now issued.
- Panel Meetings – CR confirmed that an e-mail was sent to Julie Davidson (Tenancy and Estates Manager) on 30 March 2007 regarding the late notifications and requested that notifications are sent out -2 weeks beforehand.
- Buildings insurance – NSDC guide – Issued with the Newsletter and Invitations for this meeting.

4) HQN (HOUSING QUALITY NETWORK) INSPECTION UPDATE / FEEDBACK

CR announced that Initial feedback was provided to senior managers yesterday. It was reported that the ten main housing functions were assessed and the current position for the Leasehold and Right to Buy service had been assessed as one star. Given the amount of effort put into the service this was a little disappointing, however, we are confident that with more proactive leadership things will continue to improve.

From notes made at the briefing by the Finance Director, CR provided a brief overview of the main points arising from the inspection (please note that the following is based on the initial feedback and the final report may differ slightly from that reported as some areas may be challenged and reassessed):

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- It seems that there is good practice within the management of the leasehold properties and it was recognised that the information provided to leaseholders, customer service, benchmarking and information sharing within other similar organisations was positive. However, it was felt that the leasehold service was somewhat isolated and could be more integrated within all departments.
- It appears that the efforts required to obtain accurate data to support service charges were not necessarily cost effective and that IT systems could be better utilised to support this role.
- Communications and joint working with NSDC could be improved.
- Concerns were raised on the lease agreements in that they could have been more clearly and concisely written.
- The leaseholders that were contacted in relation to this inspection did not report any problem areas and were generally happy with the service.

Further information should be made available to both tenants and leaseholders in due course together with an action plan to address the issues raised. It is expected that the action plan will be prepared in time for the next Board Meeting in September.

5) PERFORMANCE UPDATE:

ANNUAL (2005-2006)

A full report was included in the Newsletter.

QUARTERLY (2007-2008)

1st quarter ended 30 June 2007, details as Monthly.

MONTHLY (2007-2008)

Monthly performance monitoring applies to all appropriate telephone calls and correspondence received from leaseholders or their representatives that is addressed to the Leasehold and Right to Buy Officers.

In **April 2007** 14 telephone calls and 1 written request was made to the Officers of which 5 required a response from the Leasehold and Right to Buy Officers and were monitored for customer satisfaction. The overall % satisfaction with the service for this month is 100%.

In **May 2007** 11 telephone calls and 7 written request was made to the Officers of which 6 required a response from the Leasehold and Right to Buy Officers and were monitored for customer satisfaction. The overall % satisfaction with the service for this month is 100%.

In **June 2007** 7 telephone calls and 3 written request was made to the Officers of which 5 required a response from the Leasehold and Right to Buy Officers and were monitored for customer satisfaction. The overall % satisfaction with the service for this month is 100%.

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6) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Introduction to Care + Comfort Community Services:

CR provided copies of their information leaflet at the meeting and advised that C+CCS are a local charitable organisation who offer support to older people who wish to live independently in their homes.

If you would like any further information they are based in Farnsfield and may be contacted on ☎ 01623 882562 or 01623 464548.

Website update: CR advised that the Leaseholder Information page on the NSH website www.nshomes.co.uk has now been updated to include the Leaseholders Handbook, Newsletter and NSDC Buildings Insurance Guide and now also includes a direct link to the HSE (Health and Safety Executive) information leaflet "Gas appliances – get them checked, keep them safe". Hard copies of the leaflet are also available from CR or JE on request.

Health and Safety

In addition to the HSE information detailed above under 'website update', the Fire Brigade have completed fire safety checks in NSDC properties - if leaseholders would like a free safety check they can be arranged with the Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (☎ 0115 967 0880). The Group were also informed that carbon monoxide detectors are available at a discounted price – see attached letter.

Federation Services

The Group were informed that the Federation Office has computing, photocopying and faxing facilities that were available for use by tenants and leaseholders ☎ 01636 684343 for further details.

Decent Homes Work

At the last committee meeting, ID expressed concerns that the representatives may be creating an undesirable impression of NSH as they appear to be replacing windows that are not defective. ID also expressed concerns regarding emergency access and the new uPVC doors in that access time may be delayed. It was noted that locksmiths or NSH could gain access in around 30 minutes (reference our public meeting on 29 November 2006) but it may be easier to gain access via a window. ID expressed concerns that the emergency services may not realise this.

BB provided the following response at the meeting:

NSH are replacing windows that are single glazed, externally beaded or with butt hinges to bring all our windows up to the present standard in security, means of escape and thermal comfort.

It may seem that we are selecting random windows for replacement, but the random effect is caused by a previous policy of replacing the windows when they failed, resulting in say four different window programmes providing the windows for a block of flats over a 20 year period.

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We are duty bound to provide security and the doors are secured by design. Nothing else would be acceptable. Ambulance staff call police who use their baton to break windows which are toughened. They take a lot of effort to break but once broken the aperture can be quickly cleared out to gain access.

It was suggested at the meeting that a responsible neighbour could hold a key if there was an elderly person living nearby so that access could be gained quickly in an emergency. The use of 'keysafes' was also discussed (a device that attaches to the exterior of your property that holds a key accessible by a code) but there were concerns over security with these devices. Suited locks were also discussed as an option (one key to fit a number of properties) but again there were security issues. BB advised that the local Crime Prevention Officer, Trevor Timson based at the Newark Police Station would be able to provide further advice on these issues. If anyone has any concerns, Trevor may be contacted on ☎ 01636 606999, ext 3284.

District and Area Panel Meetings

District

Minutes for 27 March available – nothing relevant to report. Next meeting scheduled for 17 July – minutes not yet circulated.

Eastern

Minutes for 3 July available – Tithe Barn Court, tenders for improvement works opened 5 July. Tenants and leaseholders to be invited to a consultation event to discuss contract details shortly. Works to rainwater pipes now completed.

Western

Minutes not yet available. Previous meeting 22 March – nothing relevant to report.

New Finance Manager

CR announced that Suzanne Williamson has been appointed as the new Finance Manager and currently holds overall responsibility for the Leasehold and Right to Buy Services. Suzanne joined the Company on 11 June.

7) REVIEW OF THE GROUP – CONSULTATION WITH LEASEHOLDERS

It has been some time since we consulted everyone and reviewed our activities and asked what leaseholders thought and wanted from our Group. Our last survey was carried out in June 2004 and due to the apparent lack of interest and turn-out at recent meetings we propose to review the structure of the Group and a survey has been issued with the minutes of this meeting to help us decide the way forward. The results of the survey will determine the future of the Group.

**All
Leaseholders**

Please complete the survey and return it as requested – this is YOUR group and we are here to represent YOU!