

# Leaseholder Forum Minutes (both meetings combined minutes)

Wednesday 13th July 2022

1.00 pm – 3.00 pm @ Community Room, Carley Evangelical Baptist Church, Wharf Street North, Leicester, LE1 2AB.

5.00 pm – 7.00 pm via Virtual Teams Meeting

## Attendees

Stacey Hewitt (SH) – Leasehold Officer (Leasehold Liaison Team)

Sharon Kent (SK) – Assistant Leasehold Officer (Leasehold Liaison Team)

Number of Leaseholders (LESH) in attendance:

Face to face forum = 23

Virtual meeting = 8

## Agenda

### 1 - Welcome, Introductions & Housekeeping

SH & SK team introductions and welcome to the first face to face meeting to be held since the covid 19 pandemic.

### 2 - Contact updates

SH - Ian Marlow centre has now closed, and members of the team are now working permanently from home. Contact details updated of new correspondence address, contact by phone of the team through customer services and use of our direct email address – further details on our dedicated webpage on the LCC website.

### 3 - Review of previous forum topics

SH - **Service developments** since last face to face forum for our service users, such as development of the webpage and service area policies. Now implemented a **Service Charge Debt Recovery policy** and are active in putting this in place for the recovery of SC debt.

SH – If struggling with debt or payment of service charges talk to Income Collection to make arrangements for payment plans, we can also offer advice and signposting to external agencies, such as CALS and any household support offered by LCC on conditions of meeting certain criteria.

SH – The **cleaning contract** is currently under review and is set to include all communal areas in our blocks, some of which do not currently have a cleaning

schedule. This will have an impact on our leaseholders and variation or introduction of a SC for cleaning, but you will be consulted on this.

LESH – Tenants have a lack of pride of their surroundings, and it is not fair on leaseholders, we really need weekly inspections of the communal areas where there is not cleaning and would oppose extra charges for cleaning due to lack of current cleaning by tenants.

SH – This needs reporting to housing management as they oversee the communal areas, but it is not something that is easy to police and hence why the review into current cleaning is needed to unify across the city. You are reminded that any cleaning service is a cost to both tenants and leaseholders, either through rent or service charges, hence why a consultation with all residents will be required. AS outlined in the lease agreement, the tenancy agreements also include a clause that communal areas with no cleaning schedule are the responsibility of all residents in that block equally.

SH – **Buy backs** at full market value are on hold at the moment, but please still register your interest with the housing development team.

LESH – What if not happy with the valuation given by LCC.

SH – You can go to RICS valuer to challenge the offer.

LESH – Who deals with the buyback scheme?

SH – The housing development team

SK – I will send you the contact details of the team.

#### 4 - Revised Repairs charges

SH – From 1st April 2022 the labour costs up to 1.5 hours is now £58.30 and £38.87 per hour if over 1.5 hours. This is reviewed annually in discussions and agreement of elected members.

#### 5 - E-Forms Consultation

SH – We are developing E-forms for our webpage, suggestions are change of contact details, notification of intention to sell, to open a SC/invoice dispute, but are looking for other suggestions.

LESH – Reporting of ASB and environmental issues, or diary sheets?

SH – We do not oversee ASB and environmental issues as these are overseen by housing management, but we could look to have signpost links to the appropriate reporting.

LESH – We have issues with tenants and ASB, but it is very difficult to get communications to the NHO.

SH – NHO need to know of the issues going on in their block, we do work closely with our colleagues in housing management, but our role is to assist if required. LCC as the landlord has a duty to respond to reports of ASB, but in the first instance this has to go to housing management and the NHO who manage the block.

LESH – Have been reporting to the police and statements taken over the past 10 years, but no action is taken. Incident numbers given to NHO with regards to tenants, but nothing changes and feel scared in our homes.

SH – Please continue to report any criminal activity to the police and forward all crime incidences to the NHO, noise should be reported directly to the noise team and we will liaise with the NHO when required, but the leasehold team cannot take any action directly over the tenants.

LESH – With regards to invoice disputes, can we have photos to prove that work carried out.

SH – Housing repairs do not have the facility to take photos of all repairs carried out, on any dispute we consult the 3 systems we have of recording repairs data and request further info from the repairs team leaders if required. You are reminded that it is a condition of the lease agreement to pay your proportionate contribution to work completed to the communal areas/block/building.

LESH – Would it be possible for the change of contact details to also include a form to update on any third-party authorisations?

SH – That is something to consider, thank you.

## 6 - Legislation & Reforms

### Building Safety Act 2022

SH-Came into force on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022, this is primarily in response to the Grenfell Tower fire and is with regards to high rise buildings over 11M or 5 Storeys and liability for costs for removal/renewal and fire safety improvements, but I can advise that none of our high-rise buildings have cladding.

LESH – Why are the sprinklers being installed, is this because of the BSA 2022?

SH – Not as a result of the BSA 2022 but was because of a landlord responsibility for the fire safety of the residents in our high rise buildings, but can find out further information if you have specific concerns.

LESH – I will contact you directly with regards to this

### Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) 2005 Order

SH-There are continued amendments to this order which imposes stringent measures for landlords to follow in relation to the communal areas of blocks. LCC must comply with the regulations and fire safety requirements. This includes Fire Risk Assessments (FRA), our Zero Tolerance Policy in communal areas, Building Responsible Officers completing checks and continued work being carried out by LCC to improve the safety of our buildings in the event of a fire. All this does mean charges to our leaseholders, and it is advisable to have funds set aside for this as some consulted works can be costly.

LESH – I do wonder if some of the work is over the top and not necessary.

SH – All work is specific to the block or building and the specific requirements outlined in the FRA and all FRA's are carried out in accordance with the RR(FS)2005 Order.

## Leasehold Reform Act 2022

SH – Primarily concerned a review of future Ground Rent costs and Lease Extensions. On 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2022, due to issues with Freeholders increasing the ground rent to excessive levels over periods of time there will now be no Ground Rent for all new leases issued from that date.

SH – The proposed changes to lease extensions are expected to come into force in 2023 but will extend the current limit of being able to extend the lease by another 90 years up to 990 years instead. If you are considering a lease extension we would advise waiting until this new law comes into effect, to give you the best value and lease security for the costs involved.

LESH – Are lease extensions expensive?

SH – They are dependent on the property value, number of years left on the lease etc and are dependent on meeting the criteria to be able to apply, but the costs will need to be discussed with your own independent legal advisor of how and what offer you make to LCC. It is worth noting that any lease that goes to less than 80 years does make it vulnerable and the cost of extending below 80 years increases because it includes a marriage value also.

LESH – Can you give legal advice and a solicitor's number to use?

SH – No we are not legal advisors and cannot give you solicitors details as you must have your own independent legal advice.

LESH – What is Commonhold?

SH – This is known as a collective enfranchisement where the leaseholders in the block buy the freehold from the freeholder.

## 7. Your Voice

SH – this is your chance to give us suggestions and feedback on the development of your leasehold service area.

LESH – Photos of repairs for evidence when being charged.

SH – This is not something that the leasehold team can implement and is not currently something that housing repairs can facilitate but thank you for your comments.

LESH – Issues with the customer service phone line, over 45mins to get through and then bad line, or as soon as say leaseholder they tell you to email the leasehold team. Can we have a direct number to the team, or at least an option to contact you when in the queue?

LESH – Needs to be better customer service support for leaseholders.

SH – Customer services will triage the enquiries to the appropriate service area, or if not available on the phone we receive an email to request further contact if the enquiry is directly with regards to your lease and leasehold services.

LESH – Thank you for the contact details provided and providing information on the correct way to report issues not relating to the lease as wasn't aware of the webpage until today.

## 8. Forum Representatives and AOB

SH – Please let us know if you want to be considered as a leasehold representative and work with us moving the service area forward

LESH – I am expecting a large bill at some point for the installation of the lifts at St. Leonards Court (SLC) is it possible to have a meeting for all LESH in SLC, if you can give me the details of the other leaseholders in SLC, so we can discuss our individual concerns.

SH – WE cannot give details of the other leaseholders, but all leaseholders are invited to the Forums, although we cannot discuss individual cases at the Forum meeting.

SK – If there is a notice board then you can put a note to others to meet up with you maybe?

SH – Once the invoices are to be raised, we would be happy to arrange a meeting to discuss the options available to you for service charge payment.

LESH – I have heard that LESH will not need to pay.

SH – We will discuss further with our colleagues, but in accordance with the lease agreement we have no reason to suggest that the charges are not now applicable.

LESH – We need a Forum just for SLC leaseholders.

SH- We did have a Forum/meeting with all SLC Leaseholders with Cllr Elly Cutkelvin at the start of the consultation for the installation of the lifts, if more people come forward then we would know how many have the same concerns. There have been consultations at SLC and a full section 20 consultation was carried out with regards to the expected charges. We need feedback and attendance at Forums to know that there is an issue or voiced through a representative for SLC.

LESH – Thank you for the meeting and having an online Forum option which is good for LESH who do not live in Leicester.

SH – The Forum is now twice a year, but do not wait until the Forum to bring up your concerns and use the contact details provided to contact us directly if you have a query, which includes feedback on improving the service.

LESH – Have you had issues with receiving emails recently.

SK – No issues, we have regular email queries every day.

Meeting End

Face to face – 15.30

Online – 18.50