



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Wednesday 29th November 2023 – 18.30-20.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

Chair:

Simone Russell (SR) – Interim Director of Resident Engagement & Services

Lewisham Staff:

Emma Mills (EM) - Head of Home Ownership & Independent Living

Glenda Omogbai (GO) - Service Charge & Sales Manager

Yvonne Lemonius (YL) – Collections Manager & Legal Coordinator

Minutes:

Rosie O'Shea – Home Ownership Officer

Guests:

13 leaseholders attended the meeting.

Apologies: Gillian Douglas (GD) - Executive Director of Housing

Jim Preston (JP) - Interim Director of Quality & Investment

1	Welcome and introductions
1.1	SR opened the meeting at 18.35 and welcomed everyone to the first leasehold forum with Lewisham Council.
1.2	Apologies: Gillian Douglas (GD) - Executive Director of Housing Jim Preston (JP) - Interim Director of Quality & Investment
1.3	SR invited leaseholders to use the teams chat if they prefer not to speak. Asked for those attending to go around and introduce themselves. Requested for any future agenda items leaseholders would like to see to be provided to EM. Welcomed any members who would like to volunteer as chair in future meetings.
2	Service charge setting 2024-2025
2.1	SR confirmed this report was presented to the TRA chairs and members of the Leasehold Forum on 13 th November 2023.
2.2	Proposal for rents and service charges was presented on 28 th November 2023 to the Housing Select Committee and will be going to Mayor and Cabinet for final sign off in February 2024.
2.3	The headline in relation to those attending this meeting is Lewisham will be applying the same increase for service charge as for tenants rents, which is an annual increase of 7.7% based on the consumer price index plus 1%
2.4	If any leaseholders would like a copy of this report, they can request one by emailing hos@lewisham.gov.uk
2.5	Leaseholder raised the value for money that goes alongside service charge, what is the service standard? How can residents find out what the service level agreement is for their property? When receiving a bill this should also include what the entitlement is, for example how many times the grounds are cleared per annum. SR responded to say this is a very valid point she feels should be brought back to a later meeting so it can be looked at what is provided and what further information we can give to provide best transparency.



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2.6	Leaseholder raised a point they would like more opportunity to give more feedback good or bad on the services delivered, for example confirming jobs caretakers are carrying out when on site. SR responded confirming the housing transformation programme has been launched which will look at a review of the resident engagement strategy which will include consultation of residents.
2.7	Leaseholder welcomed the estimated calculation for the repairs service which seemingly creates a more accurate estimated cost.
2.8	Leaseholder suggested an online schedule where residents can check the frequency services will be carried out to their block, an online version of notice board rotas, this would allow residents to provide feedback.
Action: add 2.8 above to the action log for consideration by Head of Environment	
3	Complaints process - feedback
3.1	SR opened this section of the meeting confirming this will be another area of work being looked at, namely around what was the Customer Relations Team at Lewisham Homes.
3.2	The team has been rebranded as the Housing Complaints & Feedback Team which reports directly to SR, as it is a cross cutting service.
3.3	There will be a wholesale review end to end of the process and how Lewisham manages its resident's complaints and feedback.
3.4	Lewisham are developing a new performance dashboard for complaint logging and management.
3.5	Drafting of new complaints process are currently underway. These will explore how accessible the complaints process is. Once the drafts are finalised they will be shared with the leasehold forum.
3.6	Leaseholder was pleased to hear there will be a uniform approach to how complaints will be handled. This does however raise a concern alike to requesting a service charge breakdown a lot of queries fall to the Repairs Team where deadlines are not always kept and it creates a chain of chasing updates, leaseholder stated if the complaints process is to be filtered in the same way Home Ownership Services will be managing a number of complaints, chasing responses. SR responded that there will be a new performance dashboard for complaints and it will include a selection for reason of complaint and the service area it relates to, along with response deadlines to improve accountability across the business.
4	Property Services Updates
4.1	SR spoke about this in JP's absence.
4.2	The investment programme, Lewisham Council have made the decision to commission 100% stock condition survey, to take place in the next financial year, following this there will be a new investment programme.
4.3	Reviewing the approach to the contact centre for repairs, the feedback has been waiting times to report repairs are considerably lengthy. Leading up to the transition a freeze was put on recruitment which caused the number of vacancies within the team to be left empty, which has now been lifted and recruitment has begun.



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4.4	<p>In terms of health and safety compliance Lewisham are performing well, fire risk actions are overdue, and the issues are being looked at such as replacement of front entrance doors in leasehold properties, fire risk assessors visit estates to assess all doors at the block to confirm compliance. Following the mass mailout for FED compliance HOS carried out the programme has continued and will be picked up again in the new year.</p>	
4.5	<p>Leaseholder felt the company carrying out inspections being the company also supplying the door as an option almost created a conflict of interest, are the inspections correct? Are the company accredited to do this? EM responded confirming Shellen is one of Lewisham's appointed contractors and is fully accredited to carry out the inspections and installations of the doors, leaseholders can also find their own independent contractors to replace their noncompliant FED.</p>	
4.6	<p>Leaseholder raised they are unaware of when fire risk assessments are carried out on the building, and it is a service paid for through service charges so residents should know when these things are taking place.</p>	
4.7	<p>EM said as part of the digital transformation we are aiming to be publish reports on the residents portal against the blocks/buildings for all residents to have access too, residents can also request copies of the most recent report from HOS. SR added having the Fire Safety Team coming to a future meeting to talk about the assessments.</p> <p>Leaseholder asked, what is the purpose of the stock condition survey. SR responded stating there are several elements, one of which is to identify those properties that need works and on which schedule, using this information to create a programme. They also look at the lifecycle of the different elements of the property, taking account of the climate change agenda for zero carbon. It includes health and safety issues in line with the Health and Safety in Housing Rating System.</p> <p>Action: Explore publishing Fire Risk Assessments / asbestos surveys etc on resident portal.</p> <p>Future agenda item for Fire Safety Team to come to and speak to the forum. Director of property services to attend a future meeting to provide a full update on this agenda item.</p>	
5	Future agenda items	
5.1	<p>SR invited attendees to put forward suggestions for future agenda items.</p>	
5.2	<p>EM confirmed previous items suggested are Building and Fire Safety, stock condition survey, forward plan, Environmental Services and the new Housing complaints and feedback processing.</p>	
5.3	<p>Leaseholder raised the action log being reviewed as a standard point on the agenda always to keep on top of progress and updates. Leaseholder also welcomed an item in a later meeting for an update on the new CRM.</p>	
5.4	<p>Leaseholder recommended not having too many agenda items for one meeting also having guests from other areas of the business should be when relative points have been raised rather than at every meeting just to give information and offer a change of pace.</p>	
5.5	<p>Leaseholder recommended a permanent stock condition survey agenda item at all meetings.</p>	



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6	AOB	
6.1	Leaseholder raised question about Lewisham Council appointing an independent chair for the meeting. EM confirmed the previous chair volunteered and could no longer commit, TPAS was approached but there are costs attached to this.	

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 20:07

The next Leaseholder Forum meeting will be held on:
To be confirmed