



Key Leaseholder Scheme

Minutes of the meeting – 29 June 2011, 7pm

Attendance

Officers: Nick Claxton, Senior Home Ownership Officer, Angela Anderson, Control Centre Manager and Paul Cox, Senior Home Ownership Officer, who took the minutes.

Leaseholders: Ian Lush (Chair), Mary Rawitzer, Nichole Carpenter, John Spence, Peter Gilbert, Shirley Perlman and Margit Danielle-Dessent

Ian Lush opened meeting and introductions were made.

1) Minutes of the meeting 31st March 2011

The minutes of the previous meeting held on the 31st March 2011 were agreed to be a true record and were signed off by Ian Lush.

2) Matters arising

Angela Anderson gave a brief update regarding the Decent Homes Programme in light of the recent government funding cuts. She explained that if a survey had already been undertaken to properties then those residents affected would shortly be receiving a letter from Asset Management explaining the impact of the cuts and what works would be carried out in the future. She advised that only essential communal works would now be carried out. No internal work will be carried out to council tenant's properties unless there is a Health & Safety reason i.e. rewiring.

3) Update on membership

Nick Claxton reported that the number of members presently stood at 461, of which 60 had elected to be invited to future Key Leaseholder meetings. He went on to advise that interest in scheme was gaining momentum all of the time and word of its impact was spreading to current non-members.

4) Resident Monitoring and Mystery Shopping

Nick Claxton reported that Resident Monitoring training was organised by the Resident Involvement Team as part of their existing programme. 6 Key Leaseholders had been booked onto the session which took place on the 21st June 2011. However, only 2 leaseholders attended. It was mentioned that the Resident Involvement Team were very disappointed with the turn out considering the cost implication of running the training.

At this point, John Spence produced a letter from Resident Involvement dated the 13th June 2011 which confirmed the date, time and meeting point for the training to be held on the 21st June 2011. However, he advised the group that this letter only arrived that day (29th June 2011) clearly after the event! It was noted that the late arrival of this confirmation letter may have accounted for the low attendance. It was suggested that the incorrect postage was used for the letter. Nick Claxton advised the group that the HOT would raise this issue directly with the Resident Involvement Team to avoid a repeat.

The group agreed that it would be prudent to telephone attendees at least 48 hours before the event to confirm their attendance.

Nick Claxton stated that he would ensure that all those who didn't attend the training on this occasion would be put forward for the next session to be held in October.

Paul Cox then gave a brief update regarding the forthcoming Mystery Shopping task. He advised the group that 7 Key Leaseholders had agreed to participate in the initial round of shopping and a training session had been organised for the 4th July 2011.

5) Key Contacts – Next stages

Nick Claxton advised the group that 12 Key Leaseholders have agreed to act as Points of Contact for their block and/or estate.

He explained that essentially the purpose of the Point of Contact was to streamline the queries process to avoid numerous questions being raised about the same subject matter.

In response to a question raised by Margit Danielle-Dessent, he then reiterated what he had said in the previous meeting that the Point of Contact information supplied by a particular individual will only be made available to leaseholders. No other information will be divulged. The Point of Contact will have complete control over the method of contact and their availability.

Nichole Carpenter raised the issue of subletting. She pointed out that it was often difficult to contact leaseholders who were subletting their properties because the appropriate contact information was not available. The group was informed that leaseholders were under a duty to register their sublets with the HOT within 28 days of the commencement of any tenancy agreement. A sublet Registration Form must be completed which provides the HOT with a correspondence address and the relevant contact telephone numbers.

6) Update on insurance procedures

Nick Claxton advised the group that the draft policy for dealing with insurance issues was currently being revisited and reviewed by the departments responsible for its implementation.

He produced to the group an update prepared by Evelyne Weyalo, Business Support Officer. It was initially felt that the work instruction drafted for Tenancy Management could be amended to cover the entire organisation but this has not proved possible. The project has now re-started with a focus on creating an overall policy and a series of work instructions for each relevant team.

Angela Anderson informed the group that all Call Centre staff have been instructed to log repairs as potential insurance claims if they are in any doubt. The matter will then be re-evaluated at a later date.

Ian Lush stated that the policy should be written in plain English to ensure that it is easily understood by leaseholders.

7) Repairs Control Centre – Angela Anderson, Team Leader

Angela Anderson advised the group that the Control Centre consists of 2 Team Leaders and 12 staff. The primary function of the Control Centre is to provide a repairs and switchboard service for Homes for Haringey. However, they also deal with rent and service charge queries and take payments over the phone.

She informed the group that the re-structure of the repairs service has now been completed. This has resulted in a reduction in staff levels, most notably the loss of 17 tradesmen and 7 office based staff.

The Call Centre deals with approximately 60,000 repairs which has remained constant for the last 5 years.

With effect from the 27th June, the repairs service has introduced 'Mobile Working' for a majority of its operatives. This involves the use of Personal Digital Assistants (PDA'S). These devices are only suitable for routine day to day repairs and are not intended to be used for large or void jobs. These are dealt with by separate departments.

When the operative records on the device that a job has been completed, he or she will then be assigned another job immediately and this continues throughout the day. All jobs must be completed on the first visit where possible. Understandably, there has been some resistance from operatives to the new system because of the change in working practices. However, it is hoped that this will subside in time and everyone, staff and residents alike will reap the benefits of an effective and efficient repairs service.

She then went on to explain the repairs service process. She stated that anyone can report a communal repair within the borough. A call is taken by a member of the Call Centre staff and the relevant details are logged onto the system using GRO which is a picture based system that allows them to click on an icon to identify the repair required. An appointment is then booked and the necessary information is then given to the operative. All communal repair jobs reported by leaseholders are logged against their block.

Each job is allocated a priority code with target completion times. These are as follows:

H – 24 hours (e.g. blocked drains/gutters/electrical works (if the electrics are disconnected for safety reasons then a period of 7 days must elapse before reconnection))

A – 3 working days (e.g. toilet/tap leak)

B – 20 working days

C – 80 working days (this timeframe allows for getting parts etc)

Priority codes H and C are allocated for communal repair jobs. A contractor should attend within 24 hours for all Controlled Entry works. Similarly, any Health and Safety issues are dealt with as a priority although, initially there is only a requirement to 'make safe'.

She then mentioned that communal repairs are identified on bi-annual estate walkabouts which are attended by a surveyor, the Tenancy Management Officer and councillors. However, Tenancy Management Officers are no longer able to report repairs. This is the responsibility of residents and surveyors only. However, Estate Service Officers should do daily checks and report any communal wants of repair where necessary.

Shirley Perlman enquired about the timeframe for dealing with Controlled Entry repairs and she was advised of the target completion date as outlined above. She was also informed that contractors will remove locks from communal doors if they cannot repair it and parts are required. Angela Anderson remarked that a charge is made to supply replacement key fobs.

All jobs are allocated a reference number when it is reported during normal office hours.

Angela Anderson explained that HFH has its own joinery mill which employs 1 joiner and 4 fitters.

She also advised the group that a Defects Liability Period of 12 months applies to all major works, in particular those carried out under the Decent Homes Programme. In addition, a 10 year guarantee is issued for replacement flat roofs and 20 year guarantee for pitched roofs.

Nichole Carpenter advised the group that the guttering at her block (Veryan Court) does not conform to current regulations. She stated that this was confirmed by the contractors currently undertaking the Decent Homes work to the block. She was concerned that blocks are not being maintained by the council. It was pointed out that all buildings were built in accordance with the regulations that were in force at that time.

Angela Anderson commented that internal repairs carried out to tenant's properties are funded from the Rent Reserve Account into which their rent is paid.

She also stated that most of the day to day repairs are carried out by the Direct Labour Office (DLO). This is an 'in-house' service as opposed to an external contractor. Since the re-structure (September 2010), it now consists of 177 tradesmen, of which 68 work within the repairs service. The remainder work in the Voids Team which is responsible for refurbishing empty properties into a habitable condition so that they can be made available for renting again. All operatives within the DLO are familiar with the properties within the borough which invariably expedites the repairs process. An 'Enhanced repairs for Tenants' service is available to disabled and elderly tenants only. This is not extended to leaseholders because it only relates to internal repairs.

Nichole Carpenter pointed out that the canopy at Veryan Court is already leaking notwithstanding the repairs carried out by the Decent Homes contractor. Angela Anderson advised her to refer her complaint to the Decent Homes Team. The Defects Liability Period should still apply.

Finally, Angela Anderson invited Key Leaseholders to attend the Call Centre to observe how it operates. This was welcomed by those present.

Action Point

The HOT will liaise with Angela Anderson to organise the Call Centre visit.

8) Revision of Key Leaseholders booklet

This item of the agenda was deferred to a subsequent meeting.

9) Any Other Business

Mary Rawitzer commented that the grounds maintenance on the Hillcrest Estate has been somewhat neglected. She was advised to put her query in writing to the HOT and they will refer it to Peter Purdie's team accordingly for a response.

Nichole Carpenter raised an issue regarding the replacement of the TV aerials. She felt that the money used to upgrade the IRS systems should have been reinvested in the repairs service. Paul Cox pointed out that these works were a necessity given the requirement to upgrade all systems to receive digital signals by 2012.

Ian Lush stated that if there is no communal aerial in place at present, then you are not obliged to accept the council's system. Apparently, this is a legal loophole which the Haringey Leaseholders Campaign Group is researching. He said he would report the group's findings in due course.

Following the installation of any new IRS system, all existing satellite dishes will be removed and the cost recharged to residents. This will be actively enforced.

The next meeting is scheduled to take place in the first week of October.

There being no other business to discuss, the meeting was closed at 9.00pm.

Minutes agreed as a true record

Ian Lush (Chair)

Date: _____