

Minutes of the Leaseholders Council Meeting on Thursday, 1 December 2005 in the Town Hall, Assembly Hall

Delegates:

Brixton Area

Irena Kowalewska
Joan Francomb
Shirley Williams

Patch

Effra
Effra
Fernview

Clapham and Stockwell

Chris Vaughan (Chair)
Lesley Foyle
Beryl Jones
Julie Hansen

Clapham Common
Clapham Common
Clapham High Street
VMW Plus

North Lambeth

Tracey Gregory
Barry McCalla (Vice Chair)
Rosa Almeida

Minet
Kennington
Ashmole

Norwood

Leroy Daley

Norwood Park

Tenants Council:

Jean Kerrigan (Chair)

Guests:

Borough Commander Martin Bridger
Mark Rowland, Strategic Performance Manager, Metropolitan Police
Gary McFarlane, Partnering Director, Morrison

Councillors:

Councillor Clyne, Leaseholders Champion
Councillor Kazantzis, Labour Housing Spokesperson

Officers:

Tom Bremner, Head of Housing Management
Will Manning, Head of Property Services
Keith Hardy, Major Works Manager
Ashley Parrette, Home Ownership Services Manager
Judith Franklin, Area Manager (North Lambeth)
Cathy Kempadoo, Resident Participation Officer

Apologies:

Maureen Dennie, Assistant Risk and Insurance Manager
Fathia Abdi, Risk and Insurance Assistant
Valerie Anderson Springfield
Laura Gibbon Orchard
Carlos Brito HMS

Rod Brown
Phoebe Ejimbe
Thomas Davies

Memorial
Ashmole

Observers:

Ella Lewis
Pauline Francis
Ron Francis
Bob Ashby
Linden Turvey
Carol Wells
Anthony Hedges
Vera Odisi
Liz Muonya
Peggy Hayes
K McFarlane
Elaine Mander
Josie Heffernan
M Mackiewicz - Incomplete address given
Kathleen Derrig
Harriet Greer
Carl Webster
Bill Allison
E Sobers

1.0 Welcome

The Chair opened the meeting, welcomed everyone and introduced Cllr Jeremy Clyne, Leaseholders Champion and Cllr John Kazantzis, Labour Housing Spokesperson. They both gave apologies because they would not be able to stay for the entire meeting.

2.0 Crime/Community Safety

Chris Vaughan introduced Borough Commander Martin Bridger (BCMB) BCMB gave a PowerPoint presentation on Crime and Community Safety (Please see attached presentation, appendix 1). He gave a brief overview on Safer Neighbourhoods explaining that this is a dedicated small team of officers made up of a sergeant, two constables and three police community support officers (PCSOs) who would not be given other duties outside their particular ward. The Local Community Panel, which is police driven will inform the Safer Neighbourhood Team where to prioritise their work. The scheme is currently being operated in 8 of the wards. The remaining thirteen wards will be introduced by April 2007.

BCMB stressed that the process of tackling crime was not just a police issue and that a partnership approach between them and Council was vital. He added that the Safer Neighbourhood Teams were responsible for their ward however; they would not be responsible for tackling environmental issues such as, graffiti.

He advised that crime reduction over the last three years has been one of the best for Lambeth. However, in relation to the Public Service Agreements set by the Government a 20% reduction has to be achieved by 2007/08 and that under this legislation other partners apart from the Police will be held responsible.

BCMB explained about the No Deal policy. Please see appendix 1, which explains this in more detail.

Chris Vaughan (Chair) stated that she travelled across the borough when attending the Leaseholders Patch meetings and it was evident that drug taking was taking place on the estates, however, it was difficult to get the police involved. BCMB stressed the importance of residents informing the police of such activity in order for them to act on that intelligence.

A resident confirmed that the drugs issue was a daily hassle but was grateful for the action being taken in Brixton Town Centre.

Another question was raised concerning late night drinking. BCMB advised that from now until Christmas there is an operation in place to visit clubs and pubs on Thursday's Friday's and Saturday's.

The issue of protecting witnesses was raised and BCMB stated that they were investigating more ways of protecting witnesses.

3.0 Update on Repairs Pilot Scheme

Gary McFarlane (GM), Partnering Director from Morrison gave a verbal presentation based on his paper in the agenda pack. He advised that the scheme was previously open to leaseholders in Brixton, Norwood and Streatham but was now available to leaseholders borough wide. They offer all types of work including gas repairs, which are given to another contractor. The information regarding the gas contractor will be added to the leaflet. GM advised that they will be promoting the scheme more widely by advertising in 'Here for You', Lambeth Life and the Lambeth website. He added that the prices are very competitive and that the scheme needed their support. The telephone number to call is 020 7346 5777.

A resident enquired what the procedure was if you wanted to make a complaint. GM advised that they have a complaints procedure whereby leaseholders can telephone the dedicated number above or send an email to complaints@morrisonfs.com. He added that certain work such as decorating, plastering, etc is inspected by a quality inspector; however, Morrison will telephone the leaseholder after any type of repair work has been completed to ensure the work was carried out satisfactorily

4.0 Achievements of Leaseholders Council in 2005

Due to the lateness of the hour CV advised that she would not speak on paper and that the contents were self explanatory.

5.0 Decent Homes and Major Works Update

Will Manning (WM), Head of Housing Property Services gave a PowerPoint presentation on Controlling Costs in Major Works Projects (please see attached presentation, appendix 2).

CV advised that when she had attended the Housing Theme Partnership meeting there had been a discussion on using timber where practical. She enquired how many properties would require timber frames or UPVC. WM advised that recommendations for either timber or UPVC will be given where appropriate and that the work will not commence until consultation with residents has taken place. Jean Kerrigan (Chair of Tenants Council) remarked that she was pleased to hear that there were recommendations to use timber where appropriate with the added factor of it being good for the environment.

It was asked that if leaseholders had already replaced their windows would they be charged again if the windows were replaced under the Decent Homes Standard. WM advised that if the windows were replaced leaseholders would have to be charged.

The question that timber needs to be maintained and can be expensive was raised.

WM advised that this will be covered by their planned maintenance programme.

A resident advised that no breakdown of the cost for window renewal was given in the service charge bill. Ashley Parrette, Home Ownership Services Manager advised that in the Section 20 Notice the estimate for the cost of the work would be included, however, the new notice that will be sent will give a full breakdown of the estimated cost.

6.0 Service Charges Report Update

Ashley Parrette (AP), Home Ownership Services Manager gave a PowerPoint presentation (please see attached presentation, appendix 3).

AP asked that leaseholders contact Home Ownership Services (HOS) if they felt the wording on the arrears letters needed to be amended. He advised that 450 requests for payment had been sent to mortgage lenders and that 300 arrears cases will be passed to the Legal section due to no contact from the leaseholder. He added that service charge adjustments that should not be on the service charge account will be removed in January and that he will be monitoring this.

The survey and audit for windows will be done by December and the adjustments will be done in January.

A leaseholder raised the question regarding itemised service charge bills and the fact that because this was not done in the past that errors could have been made? AP advised that leaseholders can request copies of previous service charge bills.

Another enquiry concerned leaseholders paying estimated service charge bills and therefore, technically not in arrears. Also, no confirmation is given when a payment has been made. AP advised that service charge bills will always be estimated and that HOS will investigate whether acknowledgements could be sent.

The question of when the actual and not estimated service charge bill would be sent out for April 2005 to March 2006 was raised? AP advised that this will be sent out in October 2006.

There were comments that staff in HOS were not courteous when chasing arrears on the telephone. Tom Bremner stated that staff being rude to residents was not acceptable and that leaseholders should contact AP to advise him of such incidents. However, he also pointed out the need to be assertive and to fairly but firmly pursue leaseholders who owed money and that he would expect staff to do this.

7.0 Sale of loft and other redundant spaces

Ashley Parrette, Home Ownership Services Manager gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Sale of loft and other redundant spaces (please see attached, appendix 4)

A leaseholder enquired what the process was if they wanted to purchase a loft/space, AP advised that this was currently being developed.

Jean Kerrigan (Chair of Tenants Council) advised that tenants were apprehensive about this for the following reasons:

- Depriving other residents of that space
- Worried that the building work might be sub- standard
- Concerned about the spaces that have already been taken but not accounted for

AP replied that he was aware of these concerns and that spaces that were shared between leaseholders and tenants would not be sold. He advised that if residents did have any concerns they should contact HOS.

8.0 Minutes

The minutes were agreed.

9.0 AOB

The date of the next meeting is on Thursday 2 March 2006.

