

<b>Leasehold Forum Meeting</b>	
Venue:	Heslam Park
Date:	29 <sup>th</sup> June 2015
Time:	5-7pm
North Lincolnshire Homes Attendees:	Ian Mortimer (IM) Lesley Warburton (LW) Beckie Willing (BW)
Leaseholder Attendees:	23
Apologies:	1

IM welcomed everyone present, gave an introduction and explained in brief what the plan was for the evening. He went through the agenda briefly.

IM explained about his temporary role within the team and about Gareth Roebuck managing the Rent Income Team on a temporary basis.

### **1. Purpose of the Panel**

IM stated that the feedback from previous meetings was that there had been a lot of emphasis on individual issues and as a result people switch off and do not fully engage. He said the purpose of these meetings is to provide a forum to discuss and consult upon common issues that relate to leaseholders.

If people do have personal issues relating to their own lease, service charges or major works it should be included within an enquiry log which will be present at all future meetings. Once items are entered as a record, the Home Ownership team will look into the issues further and respond appropriately. IM explained that by doing this it reduces discussions about personal issues and keeps the group focused.

A leaseholder pointed out that his has been brought up at previous meeting. It was asked when people would get a reply. IM explained that we will get back to them as soon as we can and certainly before the next meeting. The log is to simply keep a record for people to look at.



## **2. Ground Rules**

IM highlighted each ground rule individually and explained why they are necessary.

1. Respect views and opinions of others
2. Avoid comments that may cause offence
3. Stay on topic
4. Avoid pedantic discussions
5. One conversation at one time
6. Retain confidentiality
7. Personal issues – stay in the enquiry log or any other business
8. Mobiles on silent

## **3. Service Standards**

IM outlined what service standards are and why we need them.

1. They set out a minimum level of service that you can expect from North Lincolnshire Homes when any transaction takes place.
2. They ensure you get a consistent and quality service, one that can be measured
3. They ensure that NLH are transparent and accountable
4. They underline the commitment of the Home Ownership Team and NLH to deliver a high quality service to you.
5. NLH has generic service standards; we want some that are specific to leaseholders
6. Once standards are agreed they will be monitored via surveys, informal discussions, mystery shopping exercises and through the NLH comments, compliments and complaints procedure.

## **4. Interactive Activity**

Around the room there were 19 service standards on the walls. Each leaseholder was given a notional amount of false currency and asked to use the denominations to pick and prioritise 4 service standards that they felt were particularly important to them as leaseholders.

The results were as follows

<b><u>Proposed Service Standard</u></b>	<b><u>Total Perceived Value</u></b>
Tell you about any major works which will cost you more than £250 per year and carry out full consultation with you in line with legal requirements.	£200
Issue your itemised actual service charge statement in September every year (for the previous financial year)	£112
Tell you about any long terms agreement with a duration of over 12 months which will cost you more than £100 a year in line with legal requirements	£100
Send you a service charges account statement twice a year	£70
Find out what you think about the quality of services we provide by carrying out regular surveys	£60
Consult you in changes to service provision that affects you, through meeting, letters and surveys	£20
Send you a buildings insurance summary of cover every year	£13
Provide a variety of ways that you can become involved in influencing the services we provide	£11
Provide advice and support to anyone who has financial difficulties in meeting their service charge requirements, or share of major works costs	£3
Hold quarterly leaseholder panel meetings	£2

IM discussed the issue of the quarterly meetings. He explained that in the last quarter drop-in sessions were unsuccessfully trialled. These were subsequently poorly attended and he thought it would be quite interesting to have a discussion to see if people want these meetings to go ahead or whether we convene only should specific issues arise. He said it is up the leaseholders, it is their panel. They can use it as they need it. If the answer is no then we may need to



reconsider if the meetings carry on.

A member of the panel suggested that we only have a couple of matters on the agenda to go through in depth and have the people who are accountable at that meeting.

IM said if there are specific issues e.g. repairs, grounds maintenance etc that is something we can bring back to the next meeting and have someone from that service area to discuss what is happening.

A leaseholder explained that some years ago there were contracts going out, they were reduced down to half a dozen and a presentation made where they could ask questions but they never did what was asked. She said what would be helpful is for someone to come out and see the damage following the grass cutting.

IM said that what we don't want is for leaseholder's voices to be quietened. He agreed that leaseholders pay for a service and we should be carrying that out. We can try and get someone in from that service area to discuss any issues of concern.

Someone asked if it has been going on for so long why hasn't it been sorted? It has been going on long enough.

IM said that he cannot influence what has happened in the past but we can give a commitment and if people have issues across the board, not just individually, we can get someone from grounds maintenance to come and speak to them. If there is an issue we can set up the next meeting for 2 months time and we can get someone from grounds maintenance there.

IM reminded people about the enquiry log for individual issues and re-iterated that if there are any themes or patterns where leaseholders have concerns about a service then we will get a person from that service area to the next meeting.

Someone mentioned that it must be affecting tenants as well and IM stated that a report on grounds maintenance is due to go the NLH Board on 1 July 2015.

IM brought the subject back to service standards and asked if there were any that people thought should not be included? There were none.



IM thanked everybody for this participation and stated that a final draft of service standards would be sent to all who had attended this meeting.

## **5. Home Ownership Team Information**

**a)** LW led this part of the meeting and began with the issue of **fire doors**. She explained that it only applies if the door leads on to a communal area and explained why a property may need a new door. She explained that as the door is the leaseholder responsibility it is not a matter to consult under section 20. We have to encourage all affected to install the property fire front door and then if there is non-compliance legal measures may be considered.

LW explained that ongo has just been through a tendering process and if a leaseholder chooses to replace their door through us it will be Yorkshire Windows who carries out the work. 10 companies provided quotes and Yorkshire Windows were the best option in terms of what they offered for the price. She explained if a leaseholder has their door fitted through North Lincolnshire Homes they will have the option to set up a payment plan.

There are various options, bronzes, silver and gold and they will have the choice. We will act as the intermediary for the work to be carried out and we will inspect it.

A leaseholder stated that he only replaced his door 2 years ago but it does not comply. He wants to know the exact legislation that states that a leaseholder must do as we are asking. **Action** – LW to send the requisite statutory information

**b) Services charges** are on schedule, the estimates were out on time and the actuals are on track for September. LW explained that we are trialling a new procedure whereby we will send repairs reports out ahead of actuals so issues can be resolved before we send the actuals.

### **c) Lease Audit**

LW explained that we are looking through everyone's leases in detail and highlighting major points that everyone needs to be aware of. Payment terms are interesting as they vary depending on when the lease was done. We need to make sure that we are both complying with the lease agreement and as such we are due to finish the audit by the end



of August. Subsequently NLH will be in touch with any leaseholder who wishes to pay outside of their lease terms and we can arrange an alternative agreement.

#### **d) Grounds Maintenance (GM) reconciliation**

GM was seen to be a fair and reasonable charge across the entire leasehold stock. We are reconsidering this when the actuals are being done and specific leases may have the GM removed. It will be seen in the actuals. Discussions can then be had after this about whether they agree with it or not.

#### **e) Customer Satisfaction**

LW explained we have had a team of volunteers carrying out surveys over the telephone and the results from the survey haven't been as good as the written ones. Satisfaction is good. The main things that were identified were to speed up the service, repairs and people getting back in touch. LW suggested we get someone from the repairs teams to explain how repairs are prioritised and carried out. A quarter of our responses were not satisfied but we are looking into those and will deal with them.

#### **f) Right to Buy**

We sold 39 properties last financial year, we have 5 new leaseholders and we have sold 12 properties so far this financial year.

IM mentioned the government's plan to roll out Right to buy across housing association stock and that we are preparing a report to our Executive Management Team about the potential impact.

#### **g) Re-accreditation**

LW explained we were re-accredited and we will be reviewed in another year's time with another inspection visit.

IM summarised the meeting by stating that leaseholders can still influence the service standards by reviewing them and contacting us. A final draft will be developed and sent off for any final comments. **Action** – LW to collate views and distribute final version. They will be reviewed on an annual basis.



IM stated that we will arrange for someone from grounds maintenance to attend the next meeting. He said that leaseholders should forward any questions ahead of the meeting so that no member of staff can be tripped up and answers therefore brought to the meeting.

#### **6. Any other business**

Two participants of the group raised the issue of sterile communal areas. It is Housing Management's policy for no personal items to be left in the communal areas. This includes doormats, plants, ornaments etc. This is for fire safety. One participant believes this is taking it a step too far. He is proud of his home and thinks it is a great shame that NLH have adopted this policy. He would like it to be reviewed so that common sense could prevail. **Action** - IM said he would speak to Andrea Morley.

#### **7. Finally**

Everyone agreed that the panel meetings are a good idea and that at the next meeting we shall have someone from the grounds maintenance team attend. IM said that we will pick up any issues regarding car parking if they are put in the enquiry log and see if it warrants further investigation.