

BARROW LEASEHOLDERS' FORUM

Minutes of Meeting held on Wednesday, 19th June 2019 at 1:30pm
in Committee Room 4, Barrow Town Hall

PRESENT:

Leaseholders

12 Leaseholders were in attendance

Council

Janice Sharp, Assistant Director – Housing
Nigel Clarke, Senior Projects Officer
Georgina Bridgens, Business Support Officer

		ACTION
	The meeting was chaired by Leaseholder, Clive Kitchen.	
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies were received from eight leaseholders.</p>	
2.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <p>In response to Leaseholder RP's request that an amendment be made to the minutes, officers stated the minutes will remain as they are and as they were interpreted and recorded during the meeting.</p> <p>The minutes of the previous meeting held on 18th October 2018 were therefore accepted as a true and correct record.</p>	
3.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>3.1 Damp-proofing and rendering work on Tummerhill (4.2)</p> <p>In response to Leaseholder (JT's) enquiry, Nigel clarified the reference to works having been completed to two Council-owned blocks, is actually related to terraced properties on Orion Terrace and a block of flats on Ribble Gardens/Darent Avenue.</p> <p>Nigel also confirmed to Leaseholder (RH) that he is the leaseholder referred to in the minutes as having applied to buy the freehold.</p> <p>3.2 Wall on High Street (7.5)</p> <p>Jan confirmed she had looked into this matter and she had been assured the wall adjacent to the flats is safe.</p>	
	At this point in the meeting, everyone around the table introduced themselves.	
4.	<p>MAINTENANCE</p> <p>4.1 Leaseholder Tribunal (Biggar Garth)</p> <p>Nigel advised that due to the ongoing Tribunal case relating to the damp-proofing and rendering works on Biggar Garth, it is not appropriate to discuss this matter at an open forum; and nothing said at this meeting regarding the matter could influence the outcome of those proceedings.</p> <p>Nigel could, however, confirm that the Tribunal has received Statements of Claim from the various leaseholders associated with the Biggar Garth project and the Council has responded to these claims. A site visit was carried out by the Tribunal Panel on Monday.</p>	

Nigel confirmed the Tribunal is an impartial, independent body and he envisages the Tribunal will notify both parties of its determination in about four weeks.

He also confirmed Leaseholders were instructed to provide Land Registry certified copies of their lease because the documents provided in their claims were not certified copies.

Nigel is happy to meet with individuals on a pre-arranged basis to discuss any question/concerns they may have.

Leaseholder CC queried what to do with the service charge invoice she had received which includes an estimated cost of the rendering works. Leaseholders were advised that pending the outcome of the Tribunal, those Leaseholders involved need at the moment only pay the regular service charges.

In response to a query about payment plans, Georgina advised payment plans are interest free. Jan confirmed that whilst there are no plans to introduce interest on payment plans, the service will be reviewing the time span over which large charges are paid as agreements are currently open-ended and, whilst individual circumstances and incomes will be taken into consideration, there is a need - as the service is income-dependent - for reasonable time frames to be introduced.

4.2 Ongoing Planned Maintenance Works (involving leasehold properties)

Lower Hindpool (1-48 Tay Court): The final phase (3) of the Lower Hindpool re-roofing programme will start in autumn. Section 20 Notices have been sent to the three leaseholders concerned.

Greengate: Phase 2 of the re-roofing/renovations has started – only one leasehold property is involved.

Walney (Biggar Garth): Phase 2 of the damp-proofing and render works (follow on from current works on Biggar Garth) have been suspended pending the outcome of the Tribunal case, which will inform us how the Council proceeds with these works and what the scope of the works will entail.

In response to Leaseholder query, Nigel confirmed the work is carried out on fixed rate prices under a national framework – they are measured and quantifiable and will be re-measured on an individual, tailored block-by-block basis with leaseholders being charged accordingly. He also confirmed leaseholders are only charged site management costs specifically relating to their scheme. On a typical renovation programme, preliminary costs account for approximately 10% of the cost.

Nigel advised works have been completed to approximately 50% of properties.

At this point in the meeting, a number of Leaseholders present left the meeting.

Leaseholder DN referred to an advisory letter he had received relating to future long-term communal maintenance agreements – relating to smoke alarms/emergency lighting/door entry systems/staircase cleaning and asked which contractors had been appointed to carry out communal maintenance works. Officers confirmed the following contractors were appointed through Procure Plus (the building procurement framework):

- Door entry/smoke alarm/emergency lighting: Keith Wilson Electrical Contractors Ltd
- Staircase cleaning: Associated Cleaners

Officers confirmed these are all separate contracts.

They also confirmed the other contractors who had been appointed:

- Roofing/external works: DLP (Northern) Ltd.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windows & doors: Richmond Joinery • Rewires/electrical testing: Keith Wilson Electrical Contractors Ltd • External painting: George Jones & Son • Central heating/gas checks: Sure Group • Aids and adaptations: DLP (Northern) Ltd. <p>Jan confirmed the communal area contracts cover all blocks in the Borough – not individual blocks.</p> <p>Leaseholder DN stated leaseholders ought to have been sent a follow-up letter giving details of the contract (eg in relation to the staircase cleaning contract - how often are communal areas cleaned?), who was appointed the contract and the costs involved? He also queried if the agreements come within the Section 20 threshold. Jan will ask Les Davies to get back to the Leaseholder on these queries.</p> <p>Post meeting note: Les Davies had written to the Leaseholder concerned addressing the points he had raised.</p>	Les
5.	<p>SERVICE CHARGE UPDATE</p> <p>Georgina advised there was no update required.</p>	
6.	<p>FEEDBACK FROM TENANTS' FORUM/HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</p> <p>6.1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fly-Tipping One of the issues raised at the recent Tenants' Forum on 10th June was the problem of fly-tipping. Fly-tipping can be reported via the 'Report It' button on the Council's home page or by ringing (01229) 876543 (option 3). <p>6.2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weeds The problem of weeds in and around the town was also discussed. Jan advised we have a service level agreement with Probation's Community Payback Scheme who do weeding for us in particularly bad/overgrown areas. Jan confirmed that Cumbria County Council are responsible for weed control in the Borough. <p>A Leaseholder suggested people contacting their Ward Councillors if they are not happy with the service.</p> <p>Tenants' Forum minutes are published online: https://www.barrowbc.gov.uk/residents/council-housing/get-involved/tenants-meetings/</p> <p>Housing Management Forum</p> <p>6.3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule of Rates Price Increase Members agreed a 2.4% increase on schedule of rate items and preliminary costs contained in the contracts for both Hughes Brothers and Sure Group. <p>6.4</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Management Performance Report 2018/19 Since the new housing management system Cx was introduced nearly two years ago, there have been difficulties in generating reports. However, progress has been made allowing much more year-end performance information to be provided. <p>6.5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cumbria Choice-Based Lettings Members agreed this system, which we used alongside other social housing providers in Cumbria to advertise all our vacant properties, can be upgraded as necessary and resources made available from the HRA Budget. 	

<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.2.1</p> <p>7.3</p> <p>7.4</p> <p>7.5</p> <p>7.6</p>	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>Charges for resale of former Council property and Administration of Leases</p> <p>Leaseholder DN asked if these charges been introduced? Jan advised although this has been agreed by Housing Management Forum, the charges have yet to be imposed as Officers are currently monitoring the time spent administering these tasks in order that accurate charges can be apportioned – the charges will be non-profit making.</p> <p>Fire Risk Assessment</p> <p>Leaseholder DN advised leaseholders had not received any feedback from the fire risk assessments carried out to communal areas. Jan advised following the fire risk assessments, Members had decided the best way to manage the issue of items (ie hanging baskets/plants/bikes etc) on communal areas/balconies was to impose zero tolerance to anything left in these areas. Officers are attaching warning labels to any items left in communal areas requesting their removal.</p> <p>The same leaseholder raised issue of fire proof doors. Jan suggested any leaseholders with concerns about the integrity of fire doors in their block should refer to their lease agreements; they can also request a free Safe and Well visit from the Fire Service –call 0800 358 4777 or online via this link: https://www.cumbria.gov.uk/cumbriafire/services/safetyathome/default.asp</p> <p>Centenary Centre</p> <p>In response to Leaseholder GA's enquiry, Jan confirmed Cumbria County Council own this building. They are currently looking into its future use – possibly as a community initiative – they are not looking to sell it at the moment. Jan will contact the two leaseholders who live directly above the building as soon as she receives an update from the Property Services Team.</p> <p>With regard to the piece of land adjoining the building, Jan will make enquiries about this and will get back to GA within the next two weeks.</p> <p>Brambles adjacent to 2-8 Cheviot Green</p> <p>Leaseholder SK reported brambles are growing over on to the path area. Jan will progress removal of these brambles with Probation.</p> <p><i>Post meeting note: Removal of these brambles is being progressed with Probation Community Payback scheme.</i></p> <p>Flower beds on Cartmel Crescent</p> <p>Leaseholder AB advised the flower beds in this area are looking really lovely. Jan advised Probation will be carrying out weeding of the paved area.</p> <p>Roof slabs on Bin Store Areas at Cheviot Green</p> <p>The Chair advised a property inspector had visited that morning to look at the roof slabs to the bin stores which are literally crumbling away.</p> <p><i>Post meeting note: A job has been raised to repoint cracked loose pointing around concrete capping on bin stores, followed by water proofing treatment.</i></p>	<p></p> <p>Jan Sharp</p> <p>Jan Sharp</p>
<p>8.</p>	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The date of the next meeting will be arranged once the outcome of the Tribunal is known.</p>	<p></p>