

Leasehold Forum Meeting

January 25, 26 and 27, 2021

Minutes

Present: Julie Hood, Housing Equalities and Engagement Facilitator

Peter Holt, Housing Team Leader (Accounts and Assets)

Total number of Leaseholders 13

Apologies: none received

Julie Hood, the Chair of the meeting, opened the meeting and welcomed everybody

The Officers introduced themselves.

Service Charges

Peter Holt

We are now producing quarterly advisory statements. These will include all the information regarding responsive repairs etc. from the previous 3 months and will be sent to leaseholders.

These are not bills they are for information only, the service charge bill issues each year will include all the repairs stated on the advisory statement.

These will give leaseholders the opportunity to raise any issues as they arise. It is much easier to remember if a responsive repairs has been done within a three month period than (up to) a twelve month period.

The first of these advisory statements are due to be sent to leaseholders very soon with the Service charge letter being sent over the next couple of weeks.

If leaseholders would like to raise any issues or want to discuss it further please email the Asset Officers: housing.leaseholder@york.gov.uk Tel 01904 551550 option 4 option 4

In the next twelve months we are moving to a new IT system which will include a piece of software specific to leasehold this will enable all leasehold information to be kept in one place

Currently it is very difficult to phone every month to pay the Service charge, this needs to be done as direct debit can only be taken on the 15 of the month and is not always convenient. Peter is looking to bring these payments within the Asset Team from the Debtors Team where it currently sits, this should enable more dates for the direct debit to be taken. Hopefully progress will be seen later this year.

A leaseholder has received a letter with no itemised costs, Peter will follow this up outside of the meeting.

The management fee seems high and has increased a lot over recent years. This is partly due to the fact that the fee was set too low for many years, the management fee includes:

- Cost of staff
- An amount of Peter's time

- The cost of the billing process
- Communal area management
- Service development
- Building insurance

In comparison to other service charges it seems reasonable

Within the service charge there is an insurance element, this covers the following four perils

- Fire
- Lightning
- Explosion
- Aircraft

Leaseholders have asked for this to be upgraded to cover more areas and extensive work has been undertaken in 2013, 2014 and 2015. CYC insurers, Zurich, have said that the cost and risk of providing updated cover would be too great due to the risk of flood.

Peter raises this annually with Zurich in the hope that there may be a change

Some leaseholders asked for their service charge information to be sent by email, Peter will action this.

Current working arrangements

Peter Holt

As you will appreciate West Offices is currently closed for staff to work in, there are skeleton security staff only in the building. West Offices will be closed for the foreseeable future

All staff are working from home, if they need to inspect a building they can do it in a covid safe way

When contacting members of staff their desk phones are forwarded through their computers so all numbers work as usual.

If you need to contact the Asset Officers please use the following contact details:

housing.leaseholder@york.gov.uk Tel 01904 551550 option 4 option 4

Major works

Peter Holt

There are now meetings every two months with the Capital Projects team to progress providing a programme of cyclical work for leaseholders. Capital Projects are working to develop a programme for each area which will be sent to each leaseholder once produced.

Roofing contract

Several leaseholders have received a contract consultation letter regarding a roofing contract, even leaseholders who have recently had a new roof.

The process for long term contract is that every leaseholder must be consulted, even those who will not receive work through the contract. This is stage 1 of the process

Once this stage of consultation is complete the contract is offered for contractors to tender

The second stage of consultation is then undertaken when 3 tenders are sent to leaseholders

The contracts are then scored and one of the contractors will be awarded the contract.

Leaseholders who will have the work done on the block of flats in which they live will receive 12 months notice of any work followed by a further letter, a minimum of 30 days before the work, which will include the cost

Roofs have an average lifespan, an inspection will be undertaken at around that time and the work will be ordered in the roof needs to be replaced. If the inspection determines that the roof does not need to be replaced at that time it will be rescheduled. Work will not be undertaken just because it has reached its lifespan.

Tenants do not get a bill for this type of work, the cost is taken into account when the rents are calculated so that a small amount is paid each week within the rent charged,

Any Other Business

Planned Maintenance

Repairs and repainting planned for 2017 was not carried out; why and when will they be completed. This has been raised with Capital projects, they are uncertain why the painting contract did not take place, it is next due to be undertaken in 2025. Peter will investigate further

Insurance

A tenanted property has flooded twice causing damage to the property below. Why do tenants not have to have insurance cover?

Part of a tenants rent covers building insurance, however we cannot make further insurance cover mandatory for tenants

Houses of multiple occupancy need specific insurance cover. Where Houses of multiple occupancy are identified in leasehold properties steps are taken to rectify this as we do have the power to resolve this.

Parking

Parking is an issue across many areas with unauthorised vehicles; many properties having several cars and permits being used irresponsibly. This results in leaseholders not being able to park in the limited spaces provided. Car parking monitoring is limited and ineffective. Could the parking bays be allocated to individual flats? Peter is creating a project with Parking Enforcement to take over the parking enforcement on all Housing Land

When this has been through the process and been agreed Parking Enforcement have to serve a CPL across the City and put notices up, they can then monitor and manage parking in the area. They will then have the power to deliver fixed penalty fines for parking illegally and work more in a preventative way, parking permits will be produced.

Work on this project is ongoing, it has slowed due to the pandemic but should pick up again

Antisocial behaviour

Many blocks of flats have individuals who do not live there sitting at the entrance to the flats. Sometimes these people undertake antisocial behaviour – drinking, drug taking and other unacceptable behaviour. This is unsafe and unhygienic. The Police are called for this behaviour but other action needs to be taken, the problem cannot be ignored, in some instances gates could be placed to deter access.

There are no plans to install gates. Peter will discuss this at a meeting later this week to determine the options to improve access for residents.

Gloucester House, Castlegate

The windows and window sills are in a very poor condition and have been for a very long time. They are draughty, deteriorating, rotting, mouldy and damp. Information has been requested as to when they may be replaced or if leaseholders can replace them with no helpful information returned.

Peter will follow this up and let the leaseholder know the timeframe for replacement and investigate replacement by the leaseholder if they are not in the programme imminently.

Zoom meetings

It would be helpful if the link was sent in the email not just the login details

Window repairs

The responsibility for windows was raised, leaseholders are responsible for the glazing and City of York Council are responsible for the frame, an individual issue was raised, Peter will follow up after the meeting.

All work has a warranty which leaseholders can ask to see. If this is the case please contact the Asset Officers by email housing.leaseholder:York.gov.uk or tel 01904 552550 option 4 option 4

One leaseholder reported a blown double glazed unit asking who is responsible for replacing it, they were advised to contact the Asset Officers who can advise

Individual structural issue

An individual structural issue was raised in regards to Health and Safety, Peter will follow up following the meeting

Replacement of doors

The doors at Festival Flats are due to be replaced next month and leaseholders are concerned that insufficient notice will be given which was the case when the windows were replaced recently. Also there need to be enough keys provided and access for the intercom needs to be taken into account

Peter has requested that these are delivered and that enough notice is given to leaseholders and tenants. He will raise it again when he meets with Capital projects team next week.

Freehold

There was a discussion around leaseholders buying the freehold of their block of flats, 75% of the residents in the block of flats need to agree to the purchase. The question arose to Ancroft/Leicester and Turpin Court, are these classed as 1 property in regards to buying the freehold or 3 properties. Peter will investigate and feedback to the leaseholder

Ongoing work due to roof leak

An individual issue was raised and photo's shared with those present. Peter will investigate and feedback to the leaseholder

Cleaning communal areas

The internal communal areas of blocks of flats has deteriorated since the beginning of the pandemic, a question was raised as to when normal service will resume. Peter will investigate for feedback to the leaseholder

Soil pipes

A question was raised as to the responsibility for soil pipes? This is dependent on where the pipe is although it is likely that CYC is responsible. Peter will discuss this individual issue with the Asset Offices and will discuss the possibility of a programme of work to renew these pipes across the City with the Capital Projects Team at the next meeting

Leasehold Agreement

A new leasehold agreement was produced in 2018 which is more detailed than the older agreement. This is now used for all new leases however for all leases to be changes to the new lease there needs to be 100% agreement from leaseholders, a vote was taken at a Leasehold Forum meeting which did not result in 100% agreement so this was not taken forward.

There may be an option when leaseholders extent their lease as a deed of variation may be required, this may provide the option to upgrade to the new lease

Communal door not closing

An individual issue of a communal door not closing properly so enabling non-residents to gain access and behave in an anti-social way was raised. Peter will follow up outside of the meeting

Odours from the flat below

The smell and smoke from the heavy smoker who lives in the flat below is coming into the flat even with the windows closed, can anything be done?

This is a very difficult issue however Peter will discuss in his regular meetings in with the Capital Projects Team where a solution may be identified

Next Meeting

A date in September, to be confirmed.