

Leasehold Forum Meeting

25 October 2022

Minutes

Present: Julie Hood, Housing Equalities and Engagement Facilitator

Peter Holt, Housing Team Leader (Accounts and Assets)

Total number of Leaseholders 14

Apologies: 2 received

Julie Hood, opened the meeting and welcomed everybody

She reminded the meeting that:

- although you are sitting in your home you are in a meeting; please do not do anything you wouldn't do in West Offices e.g. eat
- that everyone is in the meeting for their own reasons
- to treat everyone with respect at all times, this includes staff, attendees and any organisations present/discussed in the meeting.
- let others raise their issues
- Housing issues are the only issues staff may be able to change, they have no influence over other CYC departments e.g. Council Tax, Parking etc
- if it is suggested that your issue will be investigated outside of the meeting do not continue to discuss it
- no items will be discussed in any other business unless they have been sent 7 days prior to the meeting, under any circumstance.

Peter Holt introduced himself.

A question was raised in respect of Leaseholders receiving these minutes and the creation of an action plan.

The action plan was agreed by those present and is at the end of these minutes.

Minutes are always sent to Leaseholders who are present at the meeting and those who ask for them. They are also on the City of York Council website.

Insurance

Peter Holt

Peter explained that the insurance cover Leaseholders pay for through their service charge covers four perils: fire, lightening, explosion and aircraft.

As Leaseholders need to have more extensive insurance cover this can cause problems and has for several years.

In 2015/2016 Peter and the Insurance Department investigated an extended insurance cover for Leaseholders. They discovered that Insurance companies deemed the number of leaseholders to be too low and the risk of flooding was too high so no extended cover was available.

As this has not been revisited for several years, the number of Leaseholders is now higher and improved flood management may have had an impact. All agreed Peter should revisit this.

Peter will investigate the possibility of offering leaseholders the option of two insurance covers. One would be basic and one would be enhanced. This should be completed as soon as possible as leaseholders insurance is due for renewal in April 2023.

The Leaseholders present asked that the quote be brought to the April meeting for them to make a decision.

This action is added to the action plan at the end of these minutes.

This may only be an issue for Leaseholders of flats, some of those living in maisonettes have secured the insurance necessary.

A question was raised regarding a tenanted property having a leak which causes damage to a Leasehold flat below, where responsibility lies for repair of the Leasehold flat.

The Leaseholder would be responsible however the City of York Council appreciate the limitations of insurance cover and would discuss the situation with the Leaseholder.

Open Housing and the Customer Portal

Peter Holt

The new IT system (Open Housing) launched in January 2022. Housing Management and allocations have seen their 'teething problems', it is an improvement on the many systems used previously.

Adding Leasehold information will begin in November. The properties are already on the system, the specific information for each property i.e. names, service charges etc needs to be added.

It is hoped that the service charges 2023 will all be on line; leaseholders will be able to check their accounts and see the breakdown of the service charge; section 20 consultations; ground rents etc.

More information will be available at the next meeting.

The issue of errors on the service charge was raised e.g. being charged for communal lighting where there is no communal lighting. Open Housing should mean that these errors are not made as the service charge detail will be taken from the system, not from data bases as currently.

Communal Lighting

Peter Holt

At this time of year work is starting on gathering information for the next years' service charges.

As energy prices have risen dramatically over this year the cost of electricity for communal areas has risen by 104%

This charge will be passed to Leaseholders in the next service charge and will increase to approx. £19.00 per year.

This increase will also impact rented tenants.

Updates

Peter Holt

Parking project

This project which has moved slowly for a number of years, will come into force in the next few months.

A list of areas to be included is being checked by our Housing Management Team to ensure it covers all areas of Housing land with

communal parking/garages etc. Once this is complete (beginning of November) the Parking Enforcement Team will begin the legal process of signage, enforcement notices etc. This legislative timeframe is 3 months, following this the parking restrictions will be in force.

The Communications team will be involved to make sure this project is promoted appropriately.

An issue was raised regarding parking permits and the online portal not working. These are not part of the Housing Parking project and should be reported to the appropriate department.

The renting of garages was raised, can one person rent several garages? There is nothing within the policy to prevent renting more than one garage.

Staffing

There are now 3 Leasehold Management Officers; Claire Race; Nicola Colley Samuels and Louise Kenny. Initially Louise will lead on Shared Ownership

They can be contacted by email housing.leaseholder@york.gov.uk or phone 01904 551550 option 4, option 4

Any Other Business

Leasehold Manual

As the Leasehold Manual has not been updated for several years it will be reviewed. We will be asking for volunteers to work with the Leasehold team on this and for any views opinions leaseholders have regarding appropriate content.

The purpose of this meeting

The purpose of the meeting was raised. These meetings are a forum for leaseholders to discuss any specific leasehold issues they may have. In the past Leaseholders have found them to be a useful source of information as City of York Council provide updates, changes to service etc and gather leasehold feedback at these meetings.

When agenda driven and appropriate City of York Council Officers attend the meeting to give information to Leaseholders. Attendees in the past have included: North Yorkshire Fire Service, Contracts Manager, Neighbourhood Safety Manager and the Head of Building Services

If Leaseholders feel these meetings are of no use please let us know.

Sirocco Court communal areas

These were due to be repainted in 2022; when will it be done?

Currently a new contractor is being procured, 1st stage consultation with leaseholders began Sept 2022. Appointment of the new contractor will be complete in Jan/Feb 2023 and a programme of works will be known then, which will be communicated to residents.

Car charging points

Are there any plans to install car charging points at flats? Will Leaseholders have to pay?

Not at this time, although there has been tentative discussions and is something that will likely be revisited in the coming years. It is difficult to know if there will be a charge to leaseholders, this will be determined if it is revisited.

Solar Panels

There are government grants available for Solar Panels. Why aren't the council applying for them?

When will leaseholders be allowed to put solar panels on the roof?

Make it part of the planning process that Solar Panels have to be put on all new builds

Why can't CYC leaseholders get free solar Panels like their neighbours (Regent Street)?

There are no government grants for solar panels available to CYC.

Our funding comes from the government's Social Housing

Decarbonisation Fund, so our retrofit works have to focus on "fabric first" measures in order to meet the criteria for that funding. That means our focus has to be on insulation before looking at renewable technologies and heating upgrades. It is unlikely we'll be installing solar panels in isolation.

To get funding, the properties must have an EPC rating of below C. Most of the flats have an EPC rating of at least a C and above.

Our Capital Project team do not have any plans to install solar panels.

If a Leaseholder wanted to install solar panels they would need written permission from the Director of Housing as they would affect the maintenance of the roof and the possible the structure of the building.

Other Councils have 'rent a roof' projects would this be possible? City of York Council would not undertake a project of this kind for the reasons above.

Communal drains

When will the communal drains at Mawdlin House, Burton Stone Lane be replaced? They are getting worse by the week and we are having to get a plumber out every couple of weeks to unblock ours. Apparently it's silt building up caused by modern chemicals reacting to the cast iron pipes.

There are currently no plans to replace drains within the responsive repairs planning. Peter will take this forward.

The following was raised:

It is the responsibility of the landlord to make sure drains are adequate so will the City of York Council refund the necessary cost of an expert to prove the pipes are corroded? Peter will take this forward

These actions are included in the action plan.

Communal gardens

Garden areas outside ground floor flats, around front doors and communal window boxes - Is there a custom about who is responsible to keep these areas managed & tidy?

Public Realm provide a cleaning service when any litter or areas that need tidying are cleaned. Neighbours can come together to do some of this in between their visits.

Public Realm also trim and cut the grass. Planting by residents is more of a grey area as residents would need to maintain the areas and make sure the grass cutting can still be undertaken. They should also make sure any plants; planters etc do not cause a hazard on a fire exit. All fire exits must remain clear at all times.

Disabled parking bays

Now there are digital resident parking permits, people don't display their Blue Badge. Is the Council aware that this causes local issues about whether a vehicle is legitimately parked in a disabled bay?

These parking permits are managed by the parking enforcement team. Leaseholders should contact parking enforcement directly.

Communal recycling bins

The paper bin on our estate is always overflowing. How can we get an extra paper recycling bin?

Leaseholders at the meeting have received extra bins by contacting Waste Management.

Next Meeting

A date in April/May 2023, to be confirmed.

Action plan

1. Explore providing more comprehensive insurance for leaseholders

Action - Peter Holt to discuss with CYC Insurance team

Target date - December 2022

Status - On Hold. Insurance advise they need to know the full address including postcode, type of property, number of bedrooms and bathrooms and each unit will require a rebuild sum insured. Peter Holt looking into rebuild sum, however some leaseholders have added additional bathrooms / en-suites and CYC do not have full data for this

2. Creation of Leaseholder accounts on new ICT system, allowing management of service on one system

Action – Peter Holt and Asset team working with ICT to build, develop and test new system

Target date - March 2023

Status - Initial build and test complete. Leaseholder data and service charge data needs to be uploaded and tested January 2023.

Leaseholders need to complete new direct debit mandates for new

system. Letter to go out December 2022 explaining new system along with mandate to be returned before February 2023

3. Leaseholder access to Open Housing self serve portal, allowing leaseholders to see what repairs have been raised to the block

Action – Peter Holt and Asset team working with ICT to build, develop and test new system. Leaseholders need to create Open Portal account

Target date - March 2023

Status - Access available to leaseholders as of December 2022. Letter to be sent December 2022 advising leaseholders how to register for the portal

4. Parking Project

Action – Peter Holt has sent list of properties to Parking enforcement team as of December 2022

Target date - June 2023

Status - Parking enforcement need to serve Traffic Regulation Order with a 3 month lead in time before new scheme can be activated.

Letters to all residents early new year explaining scheme

5. Leaseholder Manual needs revising and updating

Action – Peter Holt to invite input from Leaseholders on reviewing the documents

Target date - June 2023

Status - Requests for leaseholder input to be sent April 2023