



Homes & Landlords Services
Leasehold Forum

MINUTES

Meeting	Date	Time	Location
Leasehold Forum	18/07/23	18:00	Virtual meeting via Zoom
Attendees			
<p><i>Alister Goulding, Ben, Steve Carlin, Mattie Keane, Jess, Time De La Rew, Ismail Omar, Rachel, Adam Friswell, Ciarrah Barry, Tom, Aaran Ashworth, Steven Robson, Jan Heaton, Win Kennedy, Ella, (пользователь =“User” in Cyrillic), Dani.</i></p> <p><i>BCC</i></p> <p><i>Alison Scott (AS), David Maggs(DM), Ilona Marciniak (IM), James Bannerman (JB), Julie Mckay (JMC), Mary Millington(MM), Mayowa Ademuyewo(MA)</i></p>			
Apologies		Minutes	
		David Maggs (DM)	

Agenda Items

1. Welcome (Housekeeping/ code of conduct)
2. Action Points and updates since the previous forum (March 2023)
3. Tenancy Neighbourhood presentation & Grading update (Alison Scott)
4. Sprinklers & Fire Safety (Mayowa Ademuyewo, Building Services and Compliance Service Manager)
5. Home Ownership update
 - Staffing update following Transformation (James Bannerman)
 - Change in Service Charge Management (Julie McKay)
6. Interactive session – How would you prefer to contact the Home Ownership Team?
7. Housing Management Board – we need a Leasehold volunteer (Ilona Marciniak)
8. Future ‘hot topic’ ideas for the Leaseholder Forum in October 2023
9. Any other business
10. Date of next meeting 16th October and close

Agenda Item	Discussion Points/ Outcomes & Actions	Actions
1	<p>Welcome (Housekeeping/ code of conduct)</p> <p>JMC - Welcomed all attendees to the forum and explained this is a virtual Leaseholder Forum</p> <p>JMC - Highlighted the Code of Conduct to all participants</p>	
2	<p>Action Points</p> <p>There were no action points from the last forum</p>	

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3	<p>Tenancy Neighbourhood presentation</p> <p>AS presented an introduction to the Tenancy Management service – formerly known as “Estate Management”.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 60 people in 57 full time equivalent (FTE) housing officer(HO) posts. You can find your HO on BCC website by looking your street on patch list on this page. • Key aim of the service is the sustaining of tenancies, including use of the Support Tenancy Management Process (STMP) this includes working with many other partners • There are 32 conditions of tenancy, 1 is related to rent, the other 31 initially fall under the remit of housing officers. • The Service can’t immediately evict someone following a breach. Court demands a high level of evidence because we are the housing provider of last resort. It can take years to get an eviction for Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) • All new tenants get a new tenancy visit within 6 weeks of moving in • All HOs also have a proactive community engagement role– e.g attending local community groups. 	Patch link in the minutes
4	<p>Sprinklers & Fire Safety (Mayowa Ademuyewo, Building Services and Compliance Service Manager)</p> <p>Current Policy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waking watch is still in place in the High Rise buildings where they are required. All residents have been written to who are impacted. Current policy is simultaneous evacuation. <p>Sprinklers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the view of Avon Fire and Rescue, there is a safety threshold of 80% of flats that need to have sprinklers to be effective and to eliminate the need for waking watch. • Focus is on blocks with 6 or more storeys. After successful pilot at Butler House, which people are welcome to visit via MA, Lot 1 of 3 blocks followed by Lot 2 of 3 more blocks will begin in September. We are still going through the procurement process but should be able to share information with residents soon. Any areas with an opening to the external will be covered including community facilities, but not all internal communal areas because their operation can slow fire crews. • Working with partners and learning from others. In talks with Bristol Water about getting sufficient water pressure • Full installation cost covered by BCC and the first year of operation, after which it will be added to the service charge for the servicing and maintenance of the sprinklers. <p>Fire Alarm Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wireless systems are being installed from Oct 23 to Mar/Apr 24. The design process has been completed and BCC will be working with 2 contractors. • In the view of Avon Fire and Rescue, there is a safety threshold of 80% of flats to be linked up to be effective. • Full installation cost covered by BCC and the first year of 	

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	<p>operation, after which it will be added to the service charge for servicing and maintenance.</p> <p>QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will sprinklers be compulsory for leaseholders? MA replied: No. We will talk to individual leaseholders re their objections. If they initially say no, we will put the system as far as the front door so it could be connected at a later date. If the leaseholder changes their mind, there is likely to be a charge if contractors have left the site. This is the best fire safety measure because it puts out the fire. All other systems just inform you that there is a fire. • (Jess) Question: Service Charge includes insurance; will this cover damage caused by sprinklers including a malfunction of the system. MA replied: It is only buildings insurance in the service charge. There is a very low take up of contents insurance by individuals and so BCC now has a group purchase scheme that people can join. Contents insurance will cover issues with sprinklers. • JMC noted that leasehold properties were “pepperpoted” amongst the blocks and so even if most leaseholders say no, the 80% safety threshold would still be reached. 	
5.	<p>Home Ownership update</p> <p>a) Team Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • JMC noted that the Team is now called the Home Ownership Team replacing Leasehold and Right to Buy (RTB). The two elements of the service will now both be visible and will work jointly together. Mary Millington (MM) will lead the RTB Team and James Bannerman (JB) the Leasehold team. The team will also be taking on the shared ownership properties that are in development and new freehold properties that are coming, although initially they will be managed by a RP. • JB said they had been short staffed but were now recruiting 3 new Home Ownership Officers making a total of 4. There are 2 dedicated Home Ownership Income Officers working on the service charge etc – they have taken over this role from the generic Finance Department. RTB will have 2 permanent officers. The new team members will all be in place by September. <p>b) Change in Service Charge Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service charges are currently invoiced by the Finance Department. The new Home Ownership Income Officers will still sit within the Finance Department but will specialise in Home Ownership. • Changes to Service charge billing: Instead of a April estimate and a Sept/Oct final version, an estimated or Actual statement will be issued and added to a service charge account not requiring an additional invoice. This will mean that separate direct debits for the two invoices will no longer be required. With a “single balance”, JMC hopes the system will be 	

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	<p>simpler. Direct debits at present can only be set up for 25th of the month, in future it can be on any day from 1 to 28th. You will also be able to make payments over the phone. The key contact address will remain leaseholderenquiries@bristol.gov.uk</p> <p>QUESTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Question (Steve Robson) The increase in staff sounds positive, but will there be an increase in the service charge to cover it? <p>JMC replied: We've always had the management fee, which is based on the cost of the leasehold service. This has covered what is now the Home Ownership Team but doesn't include the income officers and other elements. We also have the 15% added to the basic charge to cover such things as fire servicing, emergency lighting.</p> <p>We want to look at having a single management fee, however that is not likely to happen in the short to medium term. I was bought into this new post initially to look at the Homeownership Service because it hadn't really had any investment in resources, so the initial focus has been getting new staff resources. Another important thing is that we now have a seat at the table and provide reports to both our housing leadership team and the Lead Councillor for Housing on a quarterly basis. We have lots to catch up on, now that we have a full team complement we can start making a difference.</p> <p>Question: (Adam Friswell): For three plus years we've been waiting for the service charge for major works which will be 10's of 1000s. Such works have a variable management fee, which increases or decrease depending on the scale of the works. There are other things that you provide to leaseholders who have incurred costs of this size. It would be good to understand how this will work with the new payment system, and new way that the income team are looking at things. The risk is of putting a major work service charge, say it's £25k, for example over a 3 year period - £10k is asked for in year two, the next year 10k grand and an extra five grand in year 3. Different management fee's are added on major works depending on the total amount. If the £25k was charged in one year the costs would incur the 5% fee but as they are split over 3 years each year is charged at 15%. This doesn't seem fair. Is anybody looking with a holistic overview from a council perspective, or if when it gets to that level of charge, there's a more kind of personal approach to take into account.</p> <p>JMC replied: The answer, at present, is no, because it's done on the actual invoice of the major works elements. Major works service charge is separate to the normal service charge. It's added as percentage that's charged on major works to cover the cost of the Property Services team managing the contract. It can be between 5% and 15% depending on their level of works. You have raised a valid point that, so we'll look this at with colleagues and Property Services.</p>	<p>JMC to work with Property Services</p>

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	<p>Text Residents Portal Chat Visits</p> <hr/> <p>Surgeries Social media Others ...</p>	
6.	<p>Group responses:</p> <p>Group 1</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant issues getting through to the team. • Better to use email because you have a record. • If you use the Customer Service Centre (CSC) you have to explain things again and again because accurate notes have not been taken • Housing Officers are better at responding as we can get through to them <p>Group 2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No response to emails/phone calls • Is there a service level agreement on response times? • Can there be an issue reporting log system so that you don't have to start again every time? JMC – There is an IT Project Group working on the new Housing Management System due in 2024, and we will feed this idea into them. • Need for “seamless” communication between teams. • Can there be clear escalation pathways for complaints and queries, as a present we are always dealing with the CSC. • Preferred method of communication – group varied but there was wide agreement that email gives you an audit trail. <p>Group 3</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree with other groups re how hard it is to communicate. • Can there be clear contact emails on the website and possibly a reporting portal. • Can there be an out of hours service one day a week, so people who have work commitments etc can speak to someone if they need to? • Use other forums as part of communication system. • You have been honest about the difficulties e.g lack of staff etc, but as this happened, we received no information from you about the difficulties, so we just experienced a poor service. • Tom proposed a possible Leaseholder What's App Group and offered to coordinate it, especially for new Leaseholders. It was agreed it couldn't involve any Council staff. <p>JMC responds: Thank you for your responses. The Home Ownership Team (formerly Leaseholder) used to work in isolation from the rest of Landlord and Housing Services, the team now has a seat at the table and there will be much better/closer working with other parts of the service.</p>	<p>JMC to speak to IT Project Group</p>

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	This feedback will help to drive improvements in communication.	
7	<p>Housing Management Board (HMB) Leaseholder membership. (Ilona Marciniak) The Leaseholder representative and alternate for the HMB have both resigned. We need volunteers to cover the next two meetings, while the HMB is reviewed regarding its long-term structure. The next meeting is October 4th 6pm-8pm (Live Stream available) Housing Management Board (bristol.gov.uk)</p> <p>The following offered or asked to learn more: Ben/Ella/Jan Bohin/Alistair. We will be in touch with these people.</p> <p>There will also be a general request to all members to enable others not present today to put their name forward. Expressions of interest welcome by 31st of August 2023. Contact Ilona Email: TPU@bristol.gov.uk Names will be drawn. Individuals who expressed an interest will be connected directly.</p>	IM to follow up
8	<p>Future 'hot topic' ideas for the Leaseholder Forum in Oct 2023 Suggested items were: Major Works Service Charges</p>	
9	<p>AOB None</p>	
10	<p>Date of next meeting October and close JMC – Confirmed the next meeting would be 18:00 on 16th October 2023. JMC – Thanked everyone for their attendance and closed the meeting.</p>	