

**Meeting action minutes**

Meeting	<b>Leaseholders Action Group Annual General Meeting</b>		
Attendees	M Briault, D Croydon, T Worsfold, R Johnson, V Belogaska, R Ellis, D Spafford, S Evasdaughter, M Green, P Brown, C Bell, T Mannion, J Moore, J Hunter, E Thain, S Rogers, X16 additional attendees Staff: Keely McDonald, Dave Arthur, Larissa Reed		
Apologies			
Meeting location	Friends Meeting House	Produced by	Keely McDonald
Date Time	01/04/2017	Minutes Completed on	27/04/17

**Section 1 – Update on actions from previous AGM**

	Description
1	No minutes from 2016 AGM, no actions agreed.

**Section 2 – Agenda items, agreements and future action**

<b>Agenda item Open Discussion</b>	
Agreement / Decision	<p>Larissa Reed introduced to meeting as the new Executive Director of Neighbourhoods Communities and Housing. She has had experience in local government and housing as well as developing processes to make leaseholders more involved. Noted dissatisfaction from leaseholders and expressed faith in an experienced leasehold team.</p> <p>DC - Separation of leaseholders from tenants is not helpful. Believes HRA is not well spent. Council tenants aren't informed of costs so can't join the argument.</p> <p>LR – Would describe it as a discussion rather than argument. Private tenants can choose their contractor. Council contractors are spending public money, this means scrutiny needs to be in place which can increase the overall price. The council can and must demonstrate that procurement is value for money. Leasehold experience is different from that of tenants, but where there are similarities the council is happy to involve both.</p> <p>VB – Personal experience differs. Tenants are scared to complain in case tenancy is put at risk. Contractors are not doing good works. Insurance is invalid due to scaffold for extended period of time. Has personally experienced abuse from contractors, feels council has not listened or taken her complaints seriously. No clear Health &amp; Safety procedure in place.</p> <p>LR – The council cannot evict secure tenants. This is through County Court Judges with an appeals process. Then a bailiff warrant needs to be applied for and this has another appeal process. Tenancy will not be put at risk through complaining. The council tries to rectify problems when they occur and will admit when things go wrong, but has taken on board this issue and will look into customer service provided. LR requested that any individual</p>

issues be discussed privately at a later date.

Q – Believes Mears are not managed well, conduct is not good. Communications are not good and too reliant on the 3 stage disputes process. More work needs to be done on preventing problems.

LR – A lot of the communication received by the council is positive. The 3 stage process is helpful to resolve disputes between the two parties. The Mears contract is currently under review with Senior Manager Lucus Critchley, all the feedback from today will help inform that review. Complaints as well as Area Panel meetings will be the avenues for further feedback. There is a problem with lack of evidence which hampers immediate action, this is why feedback is important. Please continue to communicate, Mears can do better and will be held to a high standard.

BP – Who looks at whether works are necessary?

LR – Surveyors will make decisions about whether works are needed. Major projects works identified by the council will be tendered for by Mears. There are very different opinions within the residents about what works are needed. The council is happy for privately engaged surveyors to communicate with council surveyors to improve process.

MG – More info needs put into publications such as Homing In to inform leaseholders on major works.

LR – Agree that more info needs publicised.

MA – Leaseholders don't trust surveyor reports. They feel standard responses are issued, without enough information. Personal experience has been that it's difficult to get details and/or answers around major works. Feel that a group of contractors arriving without an appointment is intimidating.

LR – Agree that communication must be improved. Sometimes information isn't available and council should be better at communicating this. Contractors do need to make site visits and take photos, happy to discuss individual issues in person.

Q – Leaseholders are scared to report issues as they may not have funds, they don't want more works added after querying. Council should estimate works and discuss with leaseholders at the beginning. The council states it commissions surveyors, but Mears pays. This is a conflict of interest, in personal experience; private surveyors have been refused access.

LR – POD is the councils independent chartered surveying organisation, however work is commissioned and going forward this needs looking into. The challenge is to work with leaseholders to ensure a process which works for both the council and the leaseholders. Aware that customer service aspects need work, this could include liaising with private surveyors. This will be an ongoing process, a meeting will be held on Monday to form a cross-party group to include work with leaseholders. The aim is to have meaningful dialog and continue improvements.

RJ – If the council is paying surveyors directly, this is better than the money coming directly from the contractor. Can leasehold representatives attend surveying meetings?

LR – This will be looked at as long as it is limited to a small number and has to work within the timeframes of council works. Leaseholder representatives

could publicly provide contact details for results and updates.

DS – Problems arise from Mears itself. Contract performance is not good. Initial contract terms were not favourable; a better price needs to be negotiated using the council's buying power.

LR – STAR satisfaction surveys over the last 10 years have shown that satisfaction in Mears' performance has improved year on year. However this doesn't mean that improvements can't be made.

RJ – STAR survey only goes out to 2000 people in the city, a wider group is needed.

KMD – The STAR survey is carried out by HouseMark, an independently run benchmarking organisation. The council has no input on the surveys or who they are sent to.

SE – Made an enquiry regarding a repair but couldn't get a price. This makes it difficult to decide if costs are value for money. Was told that the price depends on what happens when contractors arrive.

LR – The same is true for private contractors, but basic prices should be available and the review will look into this. Mears have agreed that contract performance can and should be improved.

Q – If the contract is robust, penalties should be in place if performance is poor.

LR – This is true, however penalties are restricted by law.

Q – Some blocks have been neglected for years, resulting in large bills when work is finally carried out. What inspections are carried out after works to judge quality?

LR – Inspections are carried out by Clerk of Works, however the point is taken. Going forward the focus can be on what has happened in the past, or on working with leaseholders to improve processes through experience, although this not a dismissal of what has happened previously. Works do need to be carried out and elected Councillors have the ultimate say on how the budget is spent, the council will work within this.

BP – Stats can't be trusted. The two main problems leaseholders find are: 1. Communications, and 2. Mears. Better communication would improve reliability of stats.

LR – Stats come directly from tenants and leaseholders. Good or bad, the council must take it as truth.

LH – It is important that leaseholders are involved at the very beginning of capital works. Leaseholders are not invited to Area Panel and denied vital route to communicate. The leasehold handbook has printed info on works, but these are not reliable.

LR – The council recognises that communication has been a recurring theme, it needs to identify where the gaps in communication are and work to fill those gaps. Area Panel representatives will be selected from committee members elected today. It is important that each area of the city is represented in the new committee. The council will work with the committee to keep leaseholders informed of what is going wrong and apologise for it, and how and when the council puts it right.

	<p>Q – Some leaseholders believe there is an inherent complacency within the council, some estates are in poor repair and the council doesn't seem to care. Don't believe that any council contractor in recent memory has provided a good service. Where do leaseholders go if they feel this way and have no confidence?</p> <p>LR – The Leasehold Team does an excellent job working with lease issues. There is a gap where there are non-lease related issues and this needs work.</p> <p>Q – Would the council be prepared to contact all leaseholders to let them know more about what is happening across the city? Large cost works should be tendered to ensure value for money.</p> <p>LR – Yes better communications will be worked on. The council needs to ask the right questions in order to have meaningful feedback.</p> <p>All agreed to work with the council to try and improve processes and communications in future. LR stated council's willing to demonstrate how it will improve working with leaseholders. LR then thanked the attendees and left.</p> <p>LAG meetings are usually held on Monday evenings in central Brighton, location and times of the Area Panel meetings and Service Improvement Groups vary. Council staff supports the committee and minutes are published on the council website.</p> <p>Attendees are encouraged to indicate on the sign-in sheet if you are happy to have your details shared with an informal leaseholder group. Observers are welcome to attend LAG meetings and can speak through the chair. All observers are requested to give their name and contact details to Resident Involvement Team in advance of their attendance.</p> <p>Attendees expressed interest in regular updates from the LAG committee. Use of postal system would probably be cost prohibitive. It may be possible to post on estate noticeboards. These are for local resident groups to use and posting any information would be at the Resident Association's discretion.</p> <p>The email address for the informal leasehold group is lag@clarend.com.</p>		
Action(s)	<p>Look into working with HouseMark on the STAR survey, alternatively creating a specific leaseholder satisfaction survey.</p> <p>Look into including an involvement form with the annual Service Charge</p> <p>Look into advertising LAG committee in Homing In as well as update on LAG AGM discussions.</p> <p>Look into options for publishing LAG info other than online.</p>	<p>By Who</p> <p>LAG Committee</p> <p>LAG Committee</p> <p>M Briault</p> <p>LAG Committee</p>	<p>Deadline</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2018</p> <p>2018</p>
<b>Agenda item Elections</b>			
Agreement / Decision	Elections were successfully held and the following positions have been filled:		

	<p>Chair – David Croydon</p> <p>Committee members – Muriel Briault, Rosemary Johnson, Simon Rogers, Tony Worsfold, Violetta Belogaska, David Spafford, Richard Ellis, Susan Evasdaughter, Mikki Alford.</p> <p>Business &amp; Value For Money Service Improvement Group – David Croydon</p> <p>Home Service Improvement Group – Susan Evasdaughter</p> <p>Area Panel representatives will be chosen from the committee at the next meeting.</p> <p>*Please note that for eligibility reasons, Keith Marston will take Ms Alford's place as committee member.</p>		
Action(s)	Agree Area Panel representatives	By Who LAG Committee	Deadline May 2017
<b>Agenda item 7 AOB</b>			
Agreement / Decision	None		
Action(s)		By Who	Deadline