

Meeting on 26 January to discuss leaseholder issues and resolutions

FOR SHARING WITH TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER PANEL

Introduction/background

Long standing issues experienced by leaseholders were raised on behalf of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel by vice-chair Les Parry and long-standing panel member Dave Mundy at a meeting with Mary Larbie, director of tenancy services on **26 January 2023**.

The issues discussed at this meeting and actions regarding next steps are provided below. This is the first of many meetings focusing on leaseholders whose fees etc. contribute more than two million pounds to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Caretaker and horticultural services

Leaseholders do not currently have full visibility of the level of service they are paying for. For example, leaseholder charges include a standard rate for caretaking on estates based on planned/allocated hours, not the actual hours of service delivered.

Any absences or service failures, such as reduced service hours, or no service at all, are not recorded by tenancy services or provided to the leaseholder team. This can potentially result in leaseholders being charged for a service they have not received. The same issue applies to other service areas such as grass cutting, as it is charged in the same way.

Financial chargers/requests for detailed information

Leaseholder charges are raised based on information and billing from other council teams such as repairs, tenancy & the sustainable development & energy team. It was established that repairs do not provide detailed records, or the history related to communal repairs and don't include itemize works, quotations, named contractors or detailed billing information. The sustainable development & energy team provide an end of year spreadsheet which contains "estimated data" rather than actual meter readings.

A discussion has already taken place with Stephen Tate, director for repairs and estate improvements, who confirmed that details relating to work; such as who authorized the works, and whether there was a pre and post inspection, are currently not provided.

This information is required so that accurate charges are issued to leaseholders. Actual meter readings should also be provided to enable accurate charging.

It was noted that the re-introduction of estate inspections will help to improve the detail and history that is provided to leaseholders in relation to repairs works.

Administration fees/contact centre

Clarity is needed regarding call center charges applied to leaseholders, advising that there was no dedicated leaseholder number. Enquiries are received via the council's central contact centre. Residents asked why leaseholders are charged when other residents - including private homeowners – are not. To be discussed further.

Communication and resident engagement

It was proposed to reinstate the Leaseholder Panel under resident engagement which was discontinued prior to the pandemic.