

LEASEHOLDER FORUM MEETING MINUTES

Purpose of Meeting

1. Welcome
2. Review of Leaseholder Handbook
3. Any other Business

Date 8th March 2023

Venue Committee Room 2, Charnwood Borough Council, Southfields,
Loughborough

Attendance:

Leaseholders

Andrew Rayment
Moiria Rayment
Asif Kuddus
Geoff Anthony
Charles Hicken
Dean George
Alec Whitehouse

Officers

Sarah Taylor	Leasehold Officer
Trevor Banbrook	Leasehold Officer
Mukesh Patel	Rent Accounting & Leasehold Team Leader
Amanda Eastwood	Customer Services Officer
Helen Kennedy	Customer Engagement Officer

1: Welcome

Everyone introduced themselves.

2: Review of Leaseholder Handbook

Letters were sent to all Leaseholders asking to review the Leaseholders Handbook which was updated in 2018.

All attendees agreed that the content was relevant however the following comments were made:

- Leaseholders were not aware of such handbook however a copy is supplied when a new Lease starts and it is also available on the Council's website. ST/TB will work on more promotion.
- It was asked if a formal complaints procedure could be included however this process can change so it was decided to add a link to the relevant complaints page on the Charnwood Borough Council website in the handbook.
- Most Leaseholders who attended thought that documentation is hard to find on our website, for example Policy and insurance documents, some of which, are a legal requirement. It was explained that our Insurance Team and the Leasehold Team provide documentation upon request via the Leaseholders in-box/phone requests and through the Contact Centre. ST/TB will look at putting documentation on the Leaseholder page of the Council website.
- Car Parking isn't mentioned in the handbook, and it was asked if it could. It was explained that when a lease is bought it doesn't include a designated car parking space. Parking is on a first come first served basis. We can put signs up to deter non residents parking however this is something that we can not enforce. There are specific areas in the Borough where organisations park vehicles in resident's communal car parks and we do write out to these companies to advise they are not allowed however it is very difficult for us to monitor. It was asked if Permit Parking could be an option however this will bring its own issues due to the lack of car parking spaces, and it is a chargeable service. Due to the complexity of car parking this will not be mentioned in the handbook.
- It was discussed that the Tenant handbook is different to the leaseholder's handbook however it was advised that a copy of the Tenancy Agreement is available on our website.

- It was felt that there isn't enough coverage on insurance and more situations, where a claim is involved, could be explained to help assist the leaseholder, so this will be considered. It was advised that if there is a change in the policy the leaseholder will receive an updated policy so it was felt important that the leaseholder could have access to this document so it could be an option to put on the website. It isn't clear that Leaseholders can upgrade their insurance and again needs to be made clear on our webpage. The insurance company with Charnwood Borough Council is on a 3-year contract however we have the option to extend this for a further 2 years. Tendered contracts must be publicised so the Leaseholder Team will check when this contract is out to tender.
- It was asked if the Pets Policy could be included in the handbook so this will be considered.
- It was also asked if the Contact details could be put at the front of the Leaseholders handbook and not at the rear of the handbook.

Actions to be completed:

- Additional contact information within the handbook was asked for and this will be added.
- A webpage address will be inserted in the handbook to advise on how to complain.
- The Leaseholder Webpage on the Charnwood Borough Council will be looked at and more information will be added to help Leaseholders find relevant information.

3: Any Other Business

It was explained that Charnwood Borough Council are looking at creating a 'customer portal' so in future Leaseholders can log onto this portal and see all their own relevant files including charges, statements, policy and insurance documents plus much more. This is only in its very early stages and details are yet to be confirmed.

Some who attended thought it was very difficult to be able to speak to an officer without going through the Contact Centre. It was explained that a system called Lagan is used which is a case management system where all contact made through the Contact Centre is filtered down to the relevant departments when the Contact Centre Advisor is unable to resolve the enquiry.

It was asked what the procedure is to sit with an officer, and it was advised that customers need to call or email the Leaseholders in-box, who will arrange a face to face appointment. The leaseholder officer will ask the nature of your enquiry prior to the meeting to ensure that they are the correct officer you need to speak with.

All attendees were advised that if they need to contact the Leaseholder Team then they must email the generic email leaseholders@charnwood.gov.uk where their enquiry will be answered or passed to the relevant department when necessary.

It was asked why some data isn't shared among different departments within the Council however some systems are highly classified and only a few officers have access, for

example Anti-Social Behaviour enquiries are shared with the Police and only certain officers have access.

There have been some issues with dangerous dogs and the process of dealing with these types of enquiries was explained. One certain issue that was discussed will be investigated further by an Officer and an update will be provided.

It was questioned about the recent notification of our Management and Administration fees which is set at £150 which some thought was expensive and needed justifying. It was explained that this fee is a cost that covers all the administration fees and is put forward to full Council for approval. The administration fee can include enquiries from leaseholders which are of a legal matter and needs answering by our Legal Team, this is a chargeable service from this Team.

The Estimates sent to Leaseholders with regards to the Management and Admin fee they felt made the Admin and Management Fee the highest charge and was off putting visually and asked if the fee could be broken down more. ST explained what was included within the Management and Administration and leaseholders don't get charged for the work the Housing Officers and Anti-social Behaviour Team and also the service the Contact Centre, so it is currently under-recovering. Every year a breakdown of the fee is publicised within the Your Homes Matter Magazine and the format of what is provided was agreed by a previous Leaseholder Forum and it was offered to the forum to look at it. This offer wasn't agreed, so we will continue with this format until such time it is required by the Leaseholders Forum.

Complaints were raised about dog mess in communal areas, and it was explained how these can be reported online and the Tenancy and Estate Management may also be able to offer assistance.

It was explained that the estimates for service charges were distributed to all leaseholders in February and Certified summaries will be distributed by the end of August and if overcharged/under recovered a refund/invoice will be sent in September.

Some charges were explained for example: Asbestos charges – this is to pay for reports that are required legally to check that any asbestos in our buildings hasn't been disturbed. If repairs have been made or are due on a building, we must ensure it is safe.

Gas safety certificates are a requirement, and the Leasehold Team are looking into taking legal action to leaseholders who fail to supply their annual gas safety certificate.

There was concern with the rising costs of energy bills that the communal electric charge will rise considerably however this won't come into effect until the next years charge is configured. On this subject it was asked if solar panels could be installed to reduce costs however due to budget constraints within the Council this is something that the team would have to ask however would be unlikely.

A link to the Customer Engagement Team will be included on the Leaseholders Webpage.

It was asked if the Tenancy and Estate Management Team Leader could attend the forums so this will be arranged.

It was asked that future meetings are held later, and it was agreed that we would look into this for the next forum, which we proposed a date of the 28th of June 2023 and a time of 4:00pm until 6:00pm. It was explained that it in the past it has been difficult to ensure all the officers invited to attend, due to other commitments. It was explained that we would revert to

Leaseholder Forum



the previous time if we couldn't get the officer requested by the forum to attend in the evening.

The Customer Engagement Team who facilitates these meetings will contact all Leaseholders asking if there are any items that they would like to bring to the next Forum so the Leaseholder can prepare answers where necessary.

Next Meeting: Wednesday 28th June, Charnwood Borough Council Offices, Committee Room 2, 1:00pm until 3:00pm