



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

Chair:

Carol Hinvest (CH) – Director of Resident Engagement and Services

Lewisham Staff:

Emma Mills (EM) - Head of Home Ownership and Independent Living

Glenda Omogbai (GO) – Leasehold and Right to Buy Manager

Lynn Seymour (LS) – Leasehold S20 Consultation Manager

Yvonne Lemonius (YL) – Collections Manager and Legal Coordinator

Kemi Ojutalayo (KO) - Head of Stock Invest and Asset Management

Juliet Agbanubu (JA) – Home Ownership Officer (taking Minutes)

Meeting attendance: Billie(Paxton Court), Helen (Duncombe Hill), Maria (New Cross Road), Megan (Jerningham Court), Julie (Billington Road), Headley (Crossfields), Rebecca (Duncombe Hill), Jesse (Duncombe Hill) , Zeinab (Blackheath), Julia , Lori (Bence House).

Apologies: None

1	Welcome and introduction
1.1	CH welcomed everyone to the meeting.
1.2	<p>All LBL (London Borough of Lewisham) staff introduced themselves and CH - Requested for leaseholders to introduce themselves by name and borough area/block etc.</p> <p>CH - set ground rules.CH asked that all attendees mute themselves when not speaking.</p> <p>CH -asked that attendees to remind other attendees of their area or block when speaking. So that their specific enquiries could be addressed.</p>
2	Minutes of 20th June 2024
	<p>CH – At the last meeting, Loist commented on minutes, the Council use a lot of acronyms in the minutes. CH stated that we would try to avoid this. CH advised attendees that if it is done, that attendees interrupt and full words would be used instead of acronyms language.</p> <p>There is information on our websites about complaints, which tells residents how to escalate complaints to the Ombudsman service.</p> <p>Fire Risk assessments.</p> <p>Headley – Fire Safety assessments. This year each of my son's flats have been charged for a visual inspection of their front doors. The Fire assessment has not been shared with me, whilst I paid for it.</p> <p>EM – The fire safety assessments can be shared on requests.</p> <p>Headley – disputed this. Fire safety assessments should have been sent alongside the Service Charge Bills for this year.</p>



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

CH- Headley Fire safety assessments are not shared as a matter of course. This is the case for all residents' tenants and leaseholders.

Headley – As this a fire safety issue. The council have a legal duty of care. A legal duty of care to share with us, the fire safety assessment that we have paid for.

CH – the fire safety assessments are not shared as a matter of course. As EM stated, you could get hold of the fire safety assessments if you requested them.

EM – We are looking at ways to upload the Fire Safety assessments on to the resident's portal Headley. So that residents will have access to this information. At this current time, we are unable to automatically send out the Fire Safety assessments as there is no way of doing this.

Headley – From a safety point of view as resident, frankly this is not good enough in terms of your duty of care. I have paid for a fire risk assessment, and I have not seen a copy of the report. This should have been included in the mailing.

CH- It is not a legal safety requirement to share the fire risk assessments with you. But as EM has said we are looking at ways to make the fire risk assessments available on the portal.

Headley- challenged this statement. I think you will find that it is a legal requirement.

CH stated that she would check this out and get back to attendees.

Billie – This maybe going off tangent, but you referred to a resident's portal begin created so that we can access information like this. Is there a timeframe for when this portal will be available or developed.

CH – Yes, we did have a portal in the old system. Which existed before I was here. We have since then changed to a new Housing management system. It is on the development plan for our new Housing Management System. It is being worked on at the moment. I will get back to you regarding the timelines.

Billie – A timeline would be really appreciated.

CH- Yes, I can get back to you regarding a timeline.

CH – I have been in touch with Peter. There is an update on that.

CH - It is quite easy to understand on the website. If residents want to search for complaints on the website and tell me whether it is clear enough and if the language is understandable. Please give us some feedback on that.

Billie – I have found it clear enough and yes to understand.

Minutes agreed..



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

3	Action Log	
3.1	EM shared the action log and provided updates – see separate log.	
4	Kemi Ojutalayo- Stock Invest and Asset Management	
4.1	<p>KO – introduced herself. KO is the new Head of Stock investment and Asset Management.</p> <p>We have instructed Savills to carry out a stock investment condition survey to our tenanted properties and the buildings in general. To date they have surveyed around 1498 blocks and are due to complete the other blocks circa 77 or so over the next coming months. With an estimation of a completion date by the December.</p> <p>Savills are looking at is the communal areas, as well as internal areas including windows, roofs, any structural repairs. This will help us to form our Stock Investment plan. We are also looking at our repairs data to see where there have been pinch points based on the numbers of repairs that have been carried out for examples on roofs, where we have had high number of reports. We are also including building safety works.</p> <p>You might have received some letters from my team in regard to works that are due to be carried out by our long-term contractors Mullaley or United Living.</p> <p>CH- anything else that you would like to add Kemi.</p> <p>KO – the floor is open for any questions. Residents are aware of some of the works that we are doing. We are currently working on Dacres Estate, Milford Towers. There is quite a long of list of properties. We are also looking to work at the Pepys Estate. There are a lot of ongoing projects.</p> <p>Billie – It's good to hear that an assessment has been done to understand the quality of the stock of housing overall. When the works are done, how can we be assured as Leaseholders that Lewisham Council are getting the best value for money in terms of the building works. I know speaking with my neighbours and myself our service charges has increased significantly. There seems to be a lot of charges there that are extremely high for what the job task is. I am just wondering how we as leaseholders can be reassured that you are out there getting the best value for money and that when the works are done. The works are carried out properly. Just because we have also had experiences where something is repaired but the builders have repaired the wrong part of the building, or the builders have come out about two or three times to do the same job. How can we be reassured that it is going to be better moving forward.</p> <p>Rebecca- This is a complex issue, as we have loads of issues at Duncombe Hill. But I am going to focus on two things just now. For the other leaseholders here, we got a Major Works bill for about £58,000 for each property and then there was a review being done to try and secure a deal. As that is an insane amount of money. We got a message back saying that Lewisham were going to re-tender</p>	



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

but are unable to use a dynamic purchasing system to invite contractors to tender for the works. Can we explain what that means?

Also, the other thing of many that I wanted to mention, in our lease it talks about a lessor usual repainting cycle for the building to paint and decorate in good order the exterior of the building and communal areas, staircases etc. When I asked what that cycle was, I was told that it was every 8 years. So, I just wondered about as I have been here for 11 years and that hasn't happened. That has been included in the costs of our major works.

CH – Okay thank you, KO if you can answer Billie's question and I will get EM to answer Rebecca's question. Given that it is a long running thing and obviously KO has only just started. Specific questions about the lease are probably better to EM or a member of her team.

KO – Just to give that reassurance regarding the quality check, we currently utilise two main contractors United Living and Mullaley. Where robust checks are carried out also by our commercial team. When we get the estimated costs from the contractors, they are reviewed by our commercial team to ensure that the value for money is achieved. Once the work is done, there is a robust process in check to quality inspect the works. We have a clerk of works that carry out the quality inspection alongside the site manager. A second check is then carried out by the contractor managers before any payment is made. That must be signed off as part as the quality inspection piece.

Billie– I think that's good that you are doing that quality reassurance once the works have been done. But if I have work to be done, how do I know as a leaseholder that you are out there finding the best value for money contractor in the first instance. So how do I know that United Living are offering best value for money. You might have a working relationship with them but has that meant that they have been able to increase prices without enough scrutiny. Is that applied for repair works as well as major works?

KO – I am unable to comment on the repair's aspect. But regarding Mullaley and United Living, just to bear in mind that sometimes they try to hold the prices that they originally scoped for. Secondly, we have to consider any uplift in terms of material cost, that has gone up and labour cost as well. Prices cannot remain the same. We try as much as possible to value engineer the cost that we receive. As previously said, we have a commercial team that looks at this element and reviews contracts that we have got to ensure that we are getting the best value for money which is done by an external party. Just to give that extra level of reassurance.

CH - In terms of the Repairs Service, some of the repairs are carried out by our own operatives. Our own in-house direct labour organisation and some repairs are carried out by external contractors. There has been an increased focus in terms of contract management within the Repairs Service and there are new



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

contracts to be tendered. So, we will have an up to date test of the market which is the way that we attempt to achieve value for ourselves and for you.

EM – Rebecca if you could just remind me of the questions, I think one was about the maintenance programme.

Rebecca - The first one was the quote that I am reading from the email that we got. Which said that Lewisham are unable to access a dynamic purchasing system to invite contractors to tender for our major works. I just wondered whether you could explain what that means the second was about the cycle being every eight years and that not happening and where that cost goes.

EM – KO may want to chip on the DPS (Dynamic procurement system), but basically is a framework of contractors that have signed up to the London Construction programme. These contractors have already been checked; they have had all their credibility checks. So that we know that they have got the appropriate insurance and health and safety requirements etc. They are a shopping list of contractors that have signed up,

KO – In lay man terms they are kind of like a checker trader. Where you have a list of contractors that have been vetted, who are able to perform or deliver certain amounts of a certain type of work.

Rebecca- So then if it means that we cannot access that, what does it mean?

CH – Emma is this the point about it not being compliant with Section 20.

EM- So frameworks traditionally are not compliant with the leasehold legislation and the requirement of the Section 20 Consultation. So, we are currently looking at ways that we may be able to access that framework. One option would be to apply to First Tier Tribunal to dispense the consultation requirements. Which means that we would go to the Tribunal and say we want to use this framework, we have not consulted Leaseholders about the construction of that framework. But we believe that it will give our leaseholders better value for money. The Tribunal will either say yes go ahead and use that framework as you are striving for a better value for money. Then we would communicate with you in a more informal way not through the section 20 process. If we make this application to the Tribunal there will be things that we have to do, we will have to tell you what we are doing and invite you to make your comments. We did for this energy contract some time ago. They asked us to place notices in the local press and things like that. We would certainly communicate via this group as to what we were doing and any other methods.

Another way that we can use the contractors on the framework is to select some contractors. So, you are not using the framework as such, but you would be approaching certain contractors to tender for the works. We are currently looking at ways to use the framework in a compliant way.



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

Rebecca – thank you, it is quite complicated.

Jesse – So are these contractors alongside United Living and Mullaney?

EM- Yes so, our main long-term agreements for major works are with United Living and Mullaney. But what we are saying is there are some occasions where we might want to step away from that and use alternative contractors that have already have these checks and balances in place. So that we know that they are credible contractors. We are looking at ways where this can be done in a compliant way.

Rebecca- this is great. It would be great if we could get some more information to leaseholders as we were told that the tendering was like a done deal. Which has meant that the timeline that we were given has been adhered to. It would be great to get an update. Thank you.

EM – There is some information in the lease that says we should do have regular maintenance, but it is all subject to funding being available. Funding has not been available. We are talking to Dean Cooper as part of the transformation programme about regular checks of gutters, downpipes. Those sorts of things that give us problems throughout winters, which cause leaks and water penetration.

Zeinab – I just wanted to check with KO, the stock condition survey. Does that also cover street properties because I know you talked a lot about blocks. My flat is in a street conversion. Another thing I wanted to check is a couple of years ago, maybe two previous Head of Asset management showed us the plan for pre major works consultation. I just wondered whether that was something that you were planning to stick to.

KO – yes it covers street properties.

Megan – Just before I go ahead with the questions. I have already put this in the chat. But I think doing away with the Section 20 notice is a big red flag. As Section 20 is our protection as a leaseholder. I would like this added as a note, I think this should be reconsidered.

Just to say to Rebecca, we are in the same place as you. We also got a big of over £50,000 and its being reviewed. It's interesting to hear that there are other people also going through the process.

My question is for KO, in the start did I catch you saying something about helping leaseholders potentially apply for grants or that there might be other things to help us with these major works bills. We would definitely be interested if that is what you are saying.

My second question is picking up on the Clerk of Works, this is something that we were very concerned about. How do we make sure that we have quality. Can a



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

leaseholder representative be allowed to walk around with the Clerk of Works or be present for inspections. Is that a possibility for Major Works?

KO – Meeting the contractor, is something that I have championed on, on previous jobs that I have done. We explain what we were going to do. We were also able to bring in samples to site so that residents can see what works we were going to be carrying out there. That preconstruction consultation as well is something that I am pushing the team on. It is also on the agenda for the Executive Team which they have also been pushing. This is to ensure that we have the consultation with everyone not just the general needs residents. Residents can also raise any observations that we may not have picked up. This should ensure we catch all or most of the scope of work. We have had drop-in sessions, where we had representatives from the Council talk to residents about the works that we are about to carry out in addition to any other issues that they may have. It is something that we are championing as well.

Regarding the grants, I am not an expert, but I know that there is a colleague of mine who is quite passionate about Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. I do not want to give you false information, but I know that she is working hard to try and get grants on the majority of our buildings. So, once we have more information if it is okay, I could get her to speak to you, to provide you further information regarding that.

CH – This is money from the government to pay for works to decarbonise. Which means in effect energy efficiency works. It can be anything that contributes to the thermal efficiency of the building and increases the EPC score from say D to A. It is more energy efficient. New roofs, new windows, insulation that sort of thing.

Megan – My understanding is that it is very much for the social housing tenants and leaseholders are not getting any benefits from that money. I don't know if you can clarify that point and there are also other insulation grants out there at the moment for any type of tenant. We were also wondering whether any of those could help us. We seem to be excluded as leaseholders from the social housing grant. Unless you can tell me otherwise.

CH - I have to say it's not an area where I can talk with the complete confidence about. So, Tania who is our colleague whom Kemi is referring to does have a very good overview of all the different grants. She is looking to bring as much money in. She is incredibly passionate about this work. She wants to bring in the money that she can, to enable the council to deliver on its decarbonisation plans. We were hoping to get Our colleague Martin O'Brien, who is Tania's manager to come along today but he's doing some more work on the actual strategies and plans. He will be attending the next leasehold forum in January.

KO- Clerk of Works walk around, is something that my team are implementing as well. The plan is also to have a similar drop-in session after the works just to get a lesson learnt. So that we can share our best practice on future works practice.



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

Megan – Can a leaseholder join the Clerk of Works?

KO – Yes, definitely.

Megan – that's positive, thank you.

Julia – I have two questions about the condition survey. There was a condition survey not too long ago. We have discussions regarding the survey on this forum. We tried to work out what the outcome of that survey was but never really got to the bottom of it. I have been living in my flat for about 3 years now, and in the 3 years period, there was a survey carried out in the last 12-18 months and now this one. I just want to understand what the differences are and what the outcome for the last one was. What we are to expect from this new one in this short period of time.

My second question is on the surveys, do you know exactly how it works. As I am concerned like others. We have not had any works done which are mentioned in my lease. There are some things that need to be done which might look minor, the back of my flat I am on the ground floor. The patio is moving away. It's like the ground is shifting there is a bit of space between the building and the patio. My windowsills were leaking, and I was getting moisture in the flat which I reported to Repairs. But as usual you get works that is more patching up rather than fixing things. I got silicone pasted on my windowsill for that. Which is not pretty, and it does not resolve the major problem that I have, with getting water in my living room. So, I am just wondering whether these surveys capture things like that, because if you walk outside a building it might look like its fine but without talking to people who live there or getting that insight from the people who notice little things that could cause big problems. The service might not give us what we need as residents. So just those two points on the stock condition survey.

Headley – KO thanks for that, very upbeat, very positive, very optimistic. But for those that have been around a while, we were here in 2021, it does drag on and on as our previous speaker said. Many of us are fearful that the next envelope that will flutter through the letter box will say your contribution is £5,000.00. we do have to pay for things from time to time but that forward plan for leaseholders is vital. I need to know what to expect and when to expect it so that I can start to save up for it and not worry myself. As I said 2021, we start lobbying for this, so perhaps a suggestion will be as it is so important to many of us. We could even try our next meeting to coincide with the next meeting of that report which has been due for several years.

KO- I will start with the initial survey, I have only been here for 5 weeks. But I am fully aware that FFT carried out the initial survey. So, I am unable to speak on that. But what I can say regarding the Savills survey is that it captures as said previously whatever structural repairs that are needed. In conjunction we also look at our repairs data as well. To see if the number of repairs that have been raised per block so then we can prioritise the works that are needed as well.



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

The surveyor should have done an intricate assessment to see cracks on the external windowsill. Things like that if it is not part of the scope of work that we have not identified would be captured as part of the observation with the walk around.

Headley – it's just for example KO, I don't know the remaining life expectancy of the roof of our block. So, I don't know when that bill is going to arrive so I cannot save up for it. It is that simple for me or when the windows are going to end their useful life. And then you are going to come around and say your contribution is £5,000.00. I wish that was on a formal plan somewhere.

KO- That is what Savills are doing. What they have done is look at the roof and have given us a renewal year based on their assessment.

Headley – Just what I am looking for KO, thank you.

CH - I only started in January this year, so I don't know what happened before then. I think that the last time a comprehensive stock survey was carried out was in 2019. In terms of what is going to happen as a result of this work. I think it was you Headley that said we have heard all this before. The difference now I think is that we are under the regulatory notice. We have referred ourselves to the Regulator of Social housing and we have said to them that we are not meeting the decent home standard. At the time that we referred 17% of our properties and now through the stock condition survey the last number that I heard was 24%. So, what they are going to expect to see from us, whilst we remain under their notice until we prove to them that we are doing this properly. They want to see that we have done the stock condition survey, that we have the results and understand what does results mean and for the work that needs to be done across our stock and then we put together a plan for how we are going to do that work.

In the past I do not know what happened but that is certainly where we are now and what is going to be expected of us as a registered provider. That is why we are doing this very comprehensive survey. They are aiming to survey 100% of all the block externals by the end of December and by November 80% of this would have been done for tenant flats. It's very comprehensive in terms of understanding what needs to be done to properties.

Headley -Thank you for all of that we have been banging on about if for quite some time. And again, that will be shared with us?

CH -That's the plan that we would then develop a comprehensive plan at least for the next 5 years. It is hard to plan more than 5 years ahead.

Headley – KO said that the life of a roof could be 5-10 years, so it could be possible to give us a plan slightly longer than 5 years. I am only repeating what was said by KO.



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

Lori- I would like to make a few points. First specification on what Megan said about the grants being available only to tenants and not to leaseholders. From what I understand is that quite often government papers or formal documents refer to tenants and see leaseholders as tenants. This is because we pay the ground rent. I remember a paper that came out a couple of years ago it just had the word tenants but with that they meant anybody living at the property as a resident basically. As either tenants or leaseholders. So please bear this in mind whenever you read up grant specifications, maybe clarify that you are a tenant as a leaseholder because you pay ground rent.

The second point about the stock condition survey I have been involved with the TRA for seven years since 2017. We have been perennially in stock condition survey throughout this time. What is disappointing is it never ends. There was one I just heard from CH now that one ended in 2019. But there was no outcome. What was the result of that. There was no difference from during the survey and when it finished. There was no action point taken from our end.

Please to KO, should any material work be done to the building. Please ensure that residents are consulted thoroughly. Whether in terms of decorations or structural repairs and so on. We would like to see a plan as we do not know what the Consultation process is. Should we be proactive and contact you or will you contact us? In the past what happened is that Lewisham Homes moved, and we had to play a catch-up game. Quite often we ended up with colour schemes that we did not like, works carried out in a way that was not optimal and ideal for us. Of course, we want to make the point that structurally you are the experts, you know what is best. But we would like to be presented with options and certainly there have been instances in the past where the options could have been put forward for residents. This would not have made any substantial difference to Lewisham Homes, but we were not provided with these. We would like to have that choice, and these our homes and it makes a massive difference. We believe that we will achieve the pleasant environment through a true process of consultation with residents.

The final point that I want to make is that I would like the leaseholder team to liaise more with the Repairs Team. As we have a couple of cases at Bence House lately which the leaseholders are hugely shortchanged. An example, there was a blocked drain on top of our building. Which resulted in leaking water, this leaking water leaked for three months making our fire safety exit escape unusable. Our caretaker reported it, Repairs came around in patch work way. It was never resolved in 3 months; they are looking into it now because we copied in the Head of Repairs and Gillian Douglas and the Councillors. We made a lot of noise and now they are looking into it. However, the result is that all of our walls are full of mould and musk. The door has been substantially damaged. All the pipes are rusted and so on. Will this be seen in the condition survey because I am wondering how much damage just a blocked drain can cause. This is not acceptable because then we must foot the bill. Either we foot the bill or stay in an environment like this. Another thing is within our second-floor corridor there is a leaking pipe.



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

CH – KO is here to talk about major works and the stock condition survey. If we can focus on that rather than the Repairs Service. As we have Dean from the Repairs service last time. KO is not able to answer questions about Repairs to your block.

Lorie – I know it may sound irrelevant but unfortunately this is the reality we are in. I am confident that what we are experiencing is the same across the board. In terms of the stock condition survey is that can you please link with the Repairs Service. The unacceptable repairs system is impacting our buildings.

CH- Thank you Lori, KO has made these points before you arrived. KO has already said that part of the stock condition survey will look at the repairs data as well.

Zeinab – KO has answered one of the questions. I was just going to remind her about the street properties, but she has stated that the street properties are covered. I just wanted to pull up that from the Stock condition survey previously we have had various plans in terms of major works. At one point there was going to be a 10-year plan which was reduced to a 5-year plan. The idea would be that we would know whether our property was in the next 5 years plan or whether it would be in the next plan. I just wondered how you are planning to move ahead from the stock condition survey. What your timeframes are in terms of giving us notice and knowing when something might start.

KO – at the moment we are currently working with Savills to develop the 5-year plan. Considering the repairs data, building safety is our utmost priority. That once the 1-to-5-year plan has been drafted and approved by the board that will be shared to all our customers to say that this is where we intend on carrying out works. But until the stock condition is completed it is difficult for me to give you a timeline.

CH -We are working very closely with them. We do want to have clarity on what the stock will need over the next 5 -10 years. As you say Headley some components last longer than that. So that we will also have an idea for when those components will need replacing as well. This will help to develop a proper programme based off the stock condition survey and the Repairs data.

Julie – KO welcome. You have a job on your hands. I have been a resident at New Cross for 20 years. Sorry to say that my experience has not been great. I know that there are lot of rules and restrictions. We are not asking for free works; we pay for these works. Billie I will just say from your comments earlier from my experience is that you have no guarantees over the work that is being done. My experience in 2011 with the last lot of major works was shocking. I was advised to take photos and notes and do this religiously. As this is the only protection that you have. I am sorry to be so negative, but this is 20 years of frustration built up. I really hope that things can get better and move forward. KO I wish you the best of luck .



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

KO- Thank you Julie. I just want to say that I used to be Lewisham resident. I was not a leaseholder at the time. I grew up in Lewisham, so I have a passion to deliver a really good service. I do understand, as I have had the good, the bad and the ugly as a Lewisham resident. We have new executives that have come on board and are passionate about the services that we are trying to deliver. I understand the feedback that I have been hearing. I know that there is a lot of work that needs to be done. It might not happen overnight but as CH as said we have referred ourselves to the Regulator service so that we can better improve the services that we are delivering to all customers across board. We are working behind the scenes, please be patient with us. There is a team on board that are quite passionate to ensure that not only do we deliver best value for money but in terms of the quality.

CH- From the beginning of November, we will have a new director of Quality and Investment (Chris Brown) who will manage the Head of Repairs, Compliance, and Building Safety. Chris is due to start on 4th November. We will ask Chris to come along and speak to you.

Headley – one of the things we mentioned a long time ago Emma, that I feel would win you a lot of friends, is where there is an extraordinary charge in one year there is a small annotation which explains the context for that.

In the last 3 years in the block that I am talking about ion the Crossfields Estate, the communal electricity charge for 36 lightbulbs has gone up from £1,664 to £3,900 in 3 years, without explanation, maybe it is a new contract, but I know that it's not working, and it has all been reported. Similarly, 3 years ago the lift maintenance cost £364 this year £2,274. A significant rise in 3 years despite the fact that we have paid for a new lift two years ago. I think if you want to win friends where there is an exception charge or increase a note of explanation. Which gives us a clue as to why we are paying such an amount. That would win you friends and trust. It's all about developing this relationship as other colleagues are hinting where we believe you more.

CH – thank you. Any kind of feedback is very valuable. EM & I will take that away and think about it for the next sets of estimates.

EM- Thanks Headley. You know this is something always on my wish list. particularly around repairs, I want to be able to publish the cost more or less in real time and that is something that I am talking to Dean about as part of the transformation programme. To enable us to publish things tell you what you are expecting and then you can query it in real time.

Lori - Just adding on to what Headley has said. We had an issue with our TRA a few years ago that we have several double charges which were rectified, and there were issues with refunds. Recently it just occurred to me that how maybe these double charges are arising. I noticed that for communal repairs, where residents report the same issue, we are all issued with different job numbers for



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

the same repair. I was wondering if Lewisham has a good way of checking this. If nobody checks contractors may charge for the same job.

CH- Did you want to say anything about how the records are reviewed?

EM – I think it's a difficult one CH given the systems that we are dealing with. The systems are old, we are trying to invest in them. GO and her team literally go through tens of thousands of lines on a spreadsheet to work out the Repairs charges. It is just open to so much human error. The cost is audited, that is a sample audit. We have approx. 5,500 leaseholders, they can't audit every single line. We are trying to improve the system through the transformation programme and get the systems talking to each other. To create exception reports so that we can look at where they are huge increases between estimate and actuals. But it is going to take us time to get there. I need to manage expectations around this. We don't like making mistakes it takes us time to put the mistakes right. We have lots of people making complaints we are just as frustrated as you are. I do understand the impact that some of the human errors have on you. The initial shock of opening the statements to see huge increases between actuals and estimates. I can only apologise but I do need to manage your expectations. These are manual processes; it is not a system churning out costs. This is us working through thousands of lines on different spreadsheets across all the services not just repairs.

Lori - Isn't this a priority for budgeting to get an automated system in place?

CH – We have a number of priorities, and this is one of them. We are looking at whether our new housing management system can bring in the module that will do this and improve this system. Which would reduce the human interaction which can lead to errors. We are humans and humans make mistakes; we are not machines. This is something that Emma has been speaking with the IT team concerning.

We are looking at whether we can get the system to do much more of this. That would be better in terms of the outcome, time it would take and the accuracy. It is part of the pipeline for our new housing management system, but it is not the only thing. We have already spoken about the customer portal today, which is on there. There are things for Repairs, Housing Management, Caretaking, it is the system that covers our housing work.

Billie– Just wondering if the next time we have the Leaseholders Forum, could we focus on Service Charges, I know that this forum is not about specific issues but maybe we as leaseholders could be a part of the transformation in what is useful for us in understanding our services charges and what are the most frustrating things that we find that need to be a priority for Lewisham Council to work on. I do appreciate that Glenda receives a lot of queries and that you have an archaic system. Just because we are leaseholders it does not mean when the service charges go up, we are questioning whether we are putting on our heating or buying groceries.



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

CH – certainly you should raise queries. We are there to answer your queries to get things right for you. Approach us with these queries. We absolutely need to know; all the feedback can go back into making the service better.

Rebecca- I was not going to bring up the Service Charge error, as EM resolved this very quickly. It is just this response that mistakes happen because we are humans. I just don't know how many organisations could function on that level again and again with these sorts of mistakes. There seems to be no accountability or checks and balances to spot that mistake. There are vulnerable residents who are not understanding the bills. We uphold our end; we are asking that you uphold your end.

CH – There is a whole process of checking that Glenda & her team go through. They do try to check everything as EM was saying but as we have said somethings do slip through. That was an error we know why that mistake was made and we will look out for it in the future. We will understand the information that we will need to interrogate more when it comes from our colleagues in the Repairs Service.

All staff are trying to do the best in all the services. We are doing our best with what we have got. We do have an auditor who is auditing this as EM said. The other thing is EM will be doing is starting earlier. Which means a lot more time spent on the process before it comes to you.

GO – I was going to respond to Billie I had a very useful conversation with Billie today. I was going to reiterate what I had said. I will be touching base with Billie and her neighbours. I am in the process of resolving some of the Repair's enquiries they have raised. I was just going to say that it wouldn't be realistic to just discuss her block as every block will be different.

Lori- Just wanted to reinforce what Rebecca and other people have said. CH response is missing the point a little bit. What is not acceptable on our end is that a large organisation like Lewisham is still doing an important task manually. What is wrong is that the organisation has not put in place the systems that should have been put in place years ago.

CH – We are looking to whether we can bring in the Service Charge Module, which is part of the Housing Management system that we have bought. We all acknowledge that having an automated system would be much better for us and for you. Which would increase the accuracy of the costs that we are sending out to people. We hope that we will be able to bring this in. This is a priority for EM and for me, along with the customer portal that we spoke about earlier.



Minutes – Leaseholder Forum

Tuesday 15 October 2024 – 18.30
Microsoft Teams video conference

5	Date of next meeting	
	<p>CH – Was supposed to be 10 December. I am unable to attend this date. Rather than bring it closer to Christmas. We were thinking that we might hold the meeting in the first week or two in January 2025.</p> <p>I am open to suggestions on this. Shall we look at some dates and canvas the dates with you.</p>	
6	Future Agenda items	
6.1	<p>Quality and Investment Update and Martin O'Brien, Head of Climate Resilience for the Council, to attend.</p> <p>Billie suggested Service Charges, Julia – talking about the transformation programme.</p>	
7	Any Other Business	
	<p>CH – Thank you very much everyone for coming. I really do appreciate it and appreciate your feedback and your suggestions. Both in the meetings and in the chat. We look forward to seeing you next time.</p>	

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 19:56pm.

The next Leaseholder Forum meeting will be held on: Thursday 16th January 2025