**Serpentine Court Steering Group**

**Tuesday 9th October 2018  
Minutes**

**Residents:** Danielle Slaymaker (Chair), Cassy Eliott (Deputy Chair), Sharon Jordan (Deputy Chair), Shannon McCaul (Deputy Chair), Joan Forsyth, Cllr Mohammed Rohim, Pauline Wright, Nadia Hardi, Laura Nash, Mercy Zvenyika, Nasfeexo Cabele (Observer), John Pearce (Observer)

Alicia Francis (YourMK), Kevin Farrell (Tpas),

**Apologies:** Cllr Darlington, Emma-Jane Flynn (Tpas), Robyn Goodwin, Sandra Mavunga

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| 1. | **Welcome, introductions and ground rules**  The previous minutes were agreed as a true record.  Correction: Nasfeexo Cabele attended the meeting  Matters arising:  Visits to other regeneration projects: Fullers Slade Steering Group has arranged a visit to Dollis Valley in Barnet on 24 October. Alicia to check if there are spaces for SCSG members. Alicia to organise a separate visit for SCSG after the ballot.  Data on young voters: Alicia reported that the Regeneration team has been meeting with 14 students from Sir Herbert Leon Academy that live on Serpentine Court. Bletchley College did not have the resources to help the team engage with the students from Serpentine Court, but it did send information to students. The Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) showed that there are 29 young people aged 12 – 16 years and 40 young people aged 17 – 24 years. Alicia has amended the HNA form to capture this information in greater detail on future regeneration projects. | AF |
| 2. | **Councillor Nigel Long, Cabinet Member for Housing & Regeneration**  Cllr Long thanked the SCSG for inviting him to the meeting. He previously worked for a charity on The Lakes estate and he knows the area well. His background is in tenant engagement and he once worked for Tpas.  He went on to say that Milton Keynes Council is 100% behind the regeneration of Serpentine Court and is committed to making it work.  He is impressed by the work that SCSG has done and the project has run much more smoothly than Fullers Slade.  Cllr Long would like to see a huge ‘yes’ vote and a big turnout. He mentioned the ballots at Kilburn Square, Camden and Spa Green, Islington, and how regeneration of the former had reduced crime rates, significantly.  The detailed planning would began after a ‘yes’ vote, with the financing of the project being key. MK Council has £30m available in the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for the regeneration of Serpentine Court and that is money that will not have to be borrowed. It is still not clear how the development of the 4 other sites will be funded, but it will probably be from borrowing.  On the Option C proposal, Cllr Long said that in the event of a ‘yes’ vote, there would still be opportunities to change and tweak the design. The 4 ‘opportunity’ sites were voted on in the Neighbourhood Plan process. Proposal to build on parts of The Warren Park might be an issue, and it’s up to the residents to decide.  There then followed a question and answer session:  SCSG Q: A lot of people are still saying regeneration isn’t going to happen. How do we change opinions now, so the community is ready for change?  Cllr Long A: I was Chair of Housing in 1990 when there was the possibility of EU funding, but it didn’t get off the ground. The answer is partly about effective resident involvement and achieving a high turnout at the ballot.  Q: Assuming there is a ‘yes’ vote, what is the timescale for the starting the building works?  A: Although the timeline mentions 2019, it’s very difficult to predict dates. The timescales will require some serious thinking through. The Planning Committee does not operate along party lines and it will want to make sure that the plans work. If central government allows MK Council to borrow, and the borrowing ‘cap’ is removed it will be easier to fund the regeneration projects in Milton Keynes through a mix of HRA and borrowing. MK council originally thought it could use the (opportunity sites) to help fund the borrowing, but this has proved to be illegal – we are not clear.  Q: The SCSG wants to make sure existing Serpentine Court tenants receive a Secure Tenancy when they move to their new home. Does the council support this policy?  A: On the opportunity sites, the delivery vehicle (an adminsitrative way of achieving regeneration) may not allow the council to issue Secure Tenancies – they may have to be Assured Tenancies. The council is not clear about the technical rules for borrowing, yet. All governments have decided not to repeal the cap on borrowing, but it would make things easier.  Q: Will there be homes for sale on the development sites?  A: Yes, the sale of houses on the development sites would pay for the council homes: cross-subsidy is important for this project.  Q: Would rents go up?  A: Social rents would be 30% of Market rents. Rents would be set in line with the government’s guidelines and would take account of the value of the new home.  Q: Will we get a Secure Tenancy when we move?  A: Everyone who is currently a Secure tenant will get a Secure tenancy when they move. No one will be put on a Probationary tenancy. If a tenant is responsible for anti-social behaviour, then the council should take action.  Q: I’ve just seen the newspaper article about the backlog of Housing Benefit payments. Would that backlog effect our compensation payments?  A: I’ve seen that story and it’s wrong. The story said that the backlog was causing homelessness, because private sector tenants are being evicted. It is the private landlords forcing the tenants out so they can put up the rent. I also think, based on my experience in London Borough of Harrow, that the roll-out of Universal Credit in Milton Keynes will cause problems.  Q: Do you know anything about the plans to support young people on The Lakes to find jobs and to provide better facilities?  A: The SCSG ground rules say that I should say if I don’t know the answer to something! I’m not sure and the officers will pick this query up. | AF |
| 3. | **Project Update**  Alicia responded to the questions that were raised at the last meeting:  1. Is there more than one option for re-housing, if you don’t like the first one? Example, being offered a 3-bed flat but would prefer a house even if it’s off the estate.  A: The last Cabinet meeting agreed there would be a Local Lettings Policy (LLP), which is yet to be developed. We don’t know the detail, but tenants in most regeneration areas are given priority and there is usually a lot of flexibility. The desired process is 1 move, but it could involve more than 1 move to help the tenant obtain the home they want. There are a number of variables to factor in, and the LLP will be designed to help tenants move in the least costly, least disruptive and easiest way. The SCSG will be invited to have an input to the LLP.  2. Will all the houses be allocated to Serpentine Court residents before allocating any for sale?  A: Yes, and there is a commitment to a local sales policy. The details of the policy will be developed post-ballot (assuming there is a ‘yes’ vote for Option C).  3. Will residents that want to buy be offered properties at cost price?  A: That is not an offer at the moment; it may be something to negotiate. There is a cost-floor rule which means the council cannot sell a property for less than it cost to build.  4. In regards to floor levels, when would lifts be considered?  A: Four floors and above.  Alicia added that a workshop type event is being planned on the Design Code, to include the wider housing department E.g. housing management and maintenance and this will pick up on the future management implications of the design.  Further questions for Alicia:  Q: Will there be any groundfloor flats?  A: We don’t have that level of detail yet. The HNA was completed in September and HTA are looking at the findings to help them with their design work.  Q: Have you been able to get any further information about the impact of the home loss compensation on our benefits?  A: The advice from the regeneration schemes in London is that the Department of Works & Pensions and the Housing Benefit departments tend to be sensitive in their approach. However they are wary of people trying to cheat the system. Steve Asher (MKC) who attended the Options Week, has been asked to look into this whole area. The SCSG asked AF to set up a workshop on the subject.  Alicia then took the SCSG through the three Cabinet papers from the meeting held on 2 October 2018 (Annexes A - C) and confirmed that the ballot would be taking place on 16 and 17 November. | AF  AF |
| 4. | **Communications plan for the ballot**  The SCSG ran through the Ballot Framework paper in detail and discussed the timetable. Danielle reported on the communications plan that SCSG has been developing with Kellie Evans, Head of Communications, MKC. The initiatives will include banners for the balconies, shops and school gates; a countdown clock in one of the shop windows; a floor poster; posters in stair wells; a wishing tree for children; a social media campaign, and the publication of a poem written by Debbie Murray, which the SCSG would like translated into the commonly used languages on Serpentine Court. |  |
| 5. | **Resident Charter and Leaseholder Group update**  Kevin announced that the consultation campaign for the Resident Charter will be running through October and November, under the title #whatmatterstome  Consultation will be built around a Safety Day with the Fire Brigade and Police; a Halloween Movie Night; school-gates visits; door-knocking and a social media campaign.  The first version of the Resident Charter will be submitted to the Regeneration Sub Committee in December 2018.  Kevin explained that the Charter is a working document which will be used as a tool to negotiate with the council over tenants’ and leaseholders’ rights, benefits and aspirations, should the regeneration get the go ahead.  The Leaseholder Group continues to meet on Thursday afternoons and it is working on the leaseholders’ section of the Charter. |  |
| 6. | **Membership review**  Cassy reported that Nicola Cox has stood down from the SCSG.  Under this item, Cassy read out an email from Councillor Darlington in which she set out the actions that are being taken to address the various estate management issues that were identified during the recent walkabout with councillors and senior council officers.  SCSG members reported that there had been some improvement in Serco’s performance. The pigeon infestation works have been halted, and the repair to the concrete stairwell ceiling, that almost hit a child, has not been carried out.  Cassy asked for volunteers to join her at a meeting with Heledd Willaims, Head of Neighbourhoods, MKC, where the issues will be discussed. Mercy, Mohammed, Nadia and Shannon volunteered. Cassy will liaise with Cllr Darlington and Heledd. | CE |
| 7. | **Tpas Update**  Kevin reported that his main priorities for October will be the development of the consultation plan for the Resident Charter and supporting the Leaseholder Group. He will also be supporting SCSG to draft the next newsletter in the lead-up to ballot. |  |
| 8. | **Question time**  Q: Should a tenant continue to pursue a HomeSwap on the grounds of poor health, or would it be better to wait for the vote on the regeneration to happen and then be re-housed?  Alicia A: It would be some time before the regeneration works would begin, so if health problems are an issue, it would be sensible to continue with the HomeSwap. |  |
| 9. | **Any Other Business**  The SCSG applauded Danielle for her appearance at the Cabinet meeting, during which she gave a report on resident engagement and answered questions.  **Date and times of next meeting**   * Tuesday 6th November - SCSG 6.30-8.30pm (coffee 6.00pm onwards) at Spotlight |  |