

Minutes

Name of meeting: Meeting 6 Service Charge Working Group

Date: Wednesday 12th July 18:30-20:45

Venue: Teams online and Civic Offices

Attendees Residents Barbara Cliffe (BC), Julian Cross (JC), Lee Hall (LH), Soames Ramsey (SR), Roger Hankey (RH) Nathalie Malonga (NM), David Opoku(DO), Michael Roberts (MR), Milton Keynes City Council Andrew Hodgson (AH), Catherine Arnold (CA), Roz Duffy (RD) Sebastian Kulig (SK) Brighton Eraki (BE), Natasha Hutchins (NH), Rahima Ahmed (RA)	
Guests: Brighton Eraki	
Apologies: Jean Ison-Anderson, Melanie Carey, Grace Famoriyo	
Note taker: Rahima Ahmed	

1.	Introductions and Apologies	Action
	AH welcomed all to the meeting	
2.	Approval of minutes (0.02- 0.31)	
2.1	Updates on actions from previous minutes and matters arising <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Charge Checks - In the Rent and Service Charge Policy it says that Local Authority Officer will do internal check. • Transparency of data – We are at the first stage of transparency which is agreeing the structure of service charges. Once we agree what we are charging for, then we can discuss standards. There are different officers doing separate roles to fulfil service delivery, audit, and challenge. • Building trust and engagement – There is a ripple effect of the feedback from this group. For example, paper written by RH shared with senior management and the complaints system changes feedback. Tenant Satisfaction Measures will increase engagement and accountability too. • New Service Charge Accountant – Brighton Eraki will be joining the council on 24 July and his role will be Service Charge Accountant. • Minutes to the last meeting approved and on website. • Service Charge and rent definition - The definition of service charge and rents was circulated and approved. 	

	<p>ACTION Definition of service charge and rent will be added to the website</p> <p>Decision 1 Service Charge and Rent definition approved. The group approved the definition for rent and service charge. It will be added to the website. It is a working definition, there is capacity to change the definition in the future.</p>	SK/RA
<p>3. 3.1</p>	<p>Main Activities Consultation C Leaseholders (0.33 -0.38) AH asked the group to review and approve a letter going to leaseholders. The main changes outlined in the letter are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aligning the calendar for service charge billing to the financial year. - Agreeing service charge payments for 23/24 onwards - Treating leaseholders that do not live in their properties on a more commercial basis. - Waiving the covenant requiring Leaseholders to repay - From April 2024 moving to a monthly debit cycle same as Low-Cost Home Ownership (LCHO-Shared owners) <p>Letter approved by the group.</p> <p>ACTION Send approved letter to all leaseholders and add on website.</p> <p>Decision 2 Letter informing changes to leaseholder billing approved. The group approved the changes to billing for Leaseholders. Letters will be sent to all leaseholders and available on the website.</p> <p>3.2 Building Insurance (0.39- 0.42) Draft letter going to shared owners regarding building insurance. The main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As per leases, shared owners need to have adequate building insurance and provide MKCC proof of it. - Shared owners will be written to once a year for the information. They will then be given a reminder allowing a further month to provide details. Failure to provide at this point will result in shared owners being added to MKCC building insurance in perpetuity. - BC suggested using wording from schedule as it would cost less to not name MKCC. 	AH/SK/RA

	<p>ACTION</p> <p>(a) AH to amend the wording on the letter from naming Milton Keynes City Council to 'We have no reason to believe that the policy does not cover your interest' (after subsequent conversation AH will check wording with Building insurance)</p> <p>(b) AH to organise letters to go out to leaseholders (LCHO) in a couple of weeks.</p> <p>Decision 3 Building Insurance letter and process approved. Letter requesting policy details will be sent to all shared owners in due course</p> <p>3.3 Service Charge components with narratives (0.43-1:44) General points are below with the most important in bold.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - AH has designed the spreadsheet with the future in mind. This means that the relevant components can be used for properties now and those we choose to build in the future. - Waking night support is added as a housing cost it can be eligible for housing benefit. - Street lighting – whoever owns the land is responsible for paying. - White goods and laundry are costs more relevant to sheltered housing. - Alarm equipment contract is up for renewal soon so now we are in a position to explore different options. - Section 20 consultation has parts relating to contracts and major works. Major works is outside the scope of this project. Here the consultation relates to the change of service. - Legionella is statutory. - Spend to Save - as items come up for repair MKCC is looking at whether we maintain old technology or invest in more efficient items. - MKCC is looking at how to schedule Fire Risk Assessments (FRA) as high, medium, or low. This will determine when FRA will be carried out. We would look to set a consistent charge to residents. We would put it in reserve and then use the reserve to pay the for the FRA . - Individual over collective benefit - Further discussion is required to see if the collective should pay a lesser charge for a service that only a few benefit or if the few that benefit should only pay the charge ie stairlifts. Group leaned towards the collective, but no firm decision made yet. - We will not collect Leaseholder sinking fund. - Communal Gas and Electricity can be apportioned by floor area as well as use. - Garden maintenance - sheltered homes will be consulted on standard specification for ground maintenance for housing. The 	<p>AH</p> <p>AH</p>
--	--	---------------------

	<p>new waste collection contact will incorporate garden maintenance on housing land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planned maintenance and stock condition survey can be used to forecast service charges. - Communication is an area for improvement that we are aware of and working towards. - MKCC are looking for communication options for those with different digital access. - Communal water charges - MKCC are addressing communal water charges. We are working towards tenant having their own bill. <p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Group to let AH know any their suggested changes to the spreadsheet via email by 21st July 2023 (b) MKCC will send letter to all tenants and leaseholders and create new webpages to ask questions and seek observations. (c) AH/BE to organise a meeting about Section 20 consultation for Leaseholders separate to this project in the future. <p>3.4 Cleaning and Caretaking Services (1.52-2.00)</p> <p>& Discussion of scope for both caretaking and cleaning:</p> <p>3.5</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Group felt that a complete overhaul of both caretaking and cleaning is required. Particularly as it chargeable. - Amanda Griffiths, Group Head Adult Services can come to the next meeting and listen to the feedback and then look at options. - In the meantime, we need to be clear on the roles and responsibilities of staff. <p>ACTIONS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) LH will share his ideas for cleaning and caretaking solution and images to AH (b) NH to speak to Amanda Griffiths and invite her to our next meeting subject to availability. <p>3.6 Open space ground maintenance and Garden Maintenance service (1.44- 1:51)</p> <p>SK shared images of a snapshot of open spaces and ground maintenance around Milton Keynes.</p> <p>Main points of discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore scope for tenants to be encouraged to look after the communal area. The balance is MKCC liability and enabling tenants to feel a sense of pride where they live. - As the new contract starts on 1st April so we can do a one-off catch-up work before the contract rather than now. <p>ACTION</p> <p>AH to check with building insurance if there is anything regarding tenants carrying out communal work.</p>	<p>ALL</p> <p>AH/SK/RA</p> <p>AH/BE</p> <p>LH</p> <p>NH</p> <p>AH</p>
<p>Date of Next Meeting: Wednesday 2nd August 18:15-18:25 IT Checks 18:30 online meeting</p>		