

# Minutes

**Name of meeting: Meeting 8 Service Charge Working Group**

**Date: Wednesday 13 Sept 18:30-20:30**

**Venue: Teams online**

<p><b>Attendees</b></p> <p><b>Residents</b>          Barbara Cliffe (BC), Lee Hall (LH), Michael Roberts (MR), Roger Hankey (RH)          Julian Cross (JC), Jean Harry (JH)</p> <p><b>Milton Keynes City Council</b>          Andrew Hodgson (AH), Catherine Arnold (CA), Mohammad Bari (MB), Roz Duffy (RD), Brighton Eraki (BE), Sebastian Kulig (SK)</p>	
<b>Guests:</b>	
<b>Apologies:</b> Roz Duffy (RD)	
<b>Note taker:</b> Rahima Ahmed (RA)	

1.	Welcome and Apologies	Action
	AH welcomed all to the meeting and acknowledged apologies	
2.	<b>Approval of minutes (0:52 – 4.28)</b> Minutes were approved.	
2.1	<p><b>Updates on actions from previous minutes.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Service Charge paperwork</b> – Letters have gone out and we have only received about 20 minor queries. We think it was a success to provide people with more information.</li> <li>- <b>Building Insurance</b> – Letters have not gone out yet as we are waiting for our computer systems provider to come back to us with a solution to enable us to record what you tell us about your insurance. As soon as we have this the letters will go out.</li> <li>- <b>Street Lighting</b> – Following RH comments about historic issues with street lighting in Milton Keynes, we are making some enquiries to see the extent of the problem.</li> <li>- <b>Second Service Charge Letter</b> – AH is in the process of writing this letter. As it will be around 20 pages, it will be designed like a newspaper. There will be articles about each of the subjects we have discussed and opportunity for residents to vote.</li> <li>- <b>Voting</b> – There will also be webpages with the above information and opportunity to vote. Voting results will also be made available on the webpages.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>GIS update</b> – GIS Team are over halfway through mapping housing land. We have now provided them with sites that have issues to map. Hopefully by Christmas we will know the scale of our land and what we have to maintain.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>3</b> <b>3.1</b></p>	<p><b>Update from subgroups.</b> <b>Caretaking and Cleaning Focus Group (4.41 – 12.53)</b></p> <p>The focus group went on a site visit to different types of properties around Milton Keynes to get an idea of the cleaning standard and issues. The group will be meeting on the 20th September to deliberate on their findings.</p> <p>AH reminded all that sheltered housing is part of the HRA stock and will also need to be considered in this review.</p>	
<p><b>4</b> <b>4.1</b></p>	<p><b>Main Activity</b> <b>Apportionments- Agree non standard expenditure items</b></p> <p>AH shared a presentation. We thought about what questions we could ask the wider residents to vote on. Below are the questions agreed and the main discussion points.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>HRA Owned Land</b> falls into 2 areas; Open Space Grounds Maintenance and HRA Garden Maintenance. Maintenance of HRA garden land was not included in the previous contract. It will be included in the new Environmental Contract that started on 1<sup>st</sup> September. We are also hoping to employ a HRA Environmental Officer to help maintain the standards.</li> </ul> <p><b>Discussion points:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We need to get the areas to standard and then pay for ongoing maintenance. Residents felt that MKCC should pay for bringing up to standard.</li> <li>- What purpose do communal areas serve? If they are bought to standard, who will use them? Ask residents their opinion.</li> <li>- Affordability of increases.</li> <li>- The cost of an Environmental Officer will be allocated to the admin fee. Query whether it would be too much work for one officer.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agreed Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Do you support the introduction of a new garden contract to maintain gardens and communal parts? Yes/No</li> <li>- If it was maintained, would you use it, Yes/No</li> <li>- Would you engage with us if we wanted to talk to you as a group of residents around garden improvements.</li> </ul>	

- **Fly tipping.** This is a MKCC wide problem. We are responsible for fly tipping on our land and it is not recoverable through council tax.

**Discussion Points**

- There is a fulltime officer that deals with fly tipping problem on HRA land.
- Could the problem be exacerbated due to the admin around going to recycling centres.
- Unfair for tenants to pick up the costs which they have no control over

**Questions/options agreed.**

- ALL costs are consolidated, and everyone pays an equal amount.
- Costs are administered at PARISH level and people pay a parish set charge.
- Customers are recharged is the waste is outside their property.
- Landlords charge a nominal amount. Residents can then phone a hotline to get their items removed.

- **Gas and Electricity** - may go down slightly in October. We need to agree the fairest way to apportion the cost of both.

**Questions agreed:**

- Weighting of block costs makes apportionment of service charges fair and reasonable. Do you agree? If disagree do you have a different proposal?

**Example**

Bedsit	0.90
1 bedroom	1.00
2 bedroom	1.10
3 bedroom	1.20
4+ bedroom	1.30

- **Water and Sewerage** - Communal be split equally by number of Properties.

**Discussion Points:**

- separate communal and tenant bill so the tenant pays for what they use inside their own flat.

**Question**

- Residents should take responsibility for their own bill. Yes/No

- **Management Fees-** Leaseholders currently pay a set annual fee based on operating costs. Shared Owners do not pay a fee – should they? Also what percentage admin charge is reasonable for tenants to pay?

**Discussion Points**

- Should shared owners be charged for something they have no control over?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- If we charge, will we also be sharing the liability</li> <li>- Is it fair for tenants to subsidise others?</li> </ul> <p><b>Question/Agreement</b> No agreement so will be discussed further.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Community luncheon club</b>- Should we charge a nominal fee for those using facilities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Question/Agreement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agree with charging something. However, it is better for the residents to be asked and make their decision.</li> </ul> <p><b>ACTIONS</b></p> <p>a) AH will get the draft letter written. b) Group emails to say if they would like to check the letter</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Any other business</b>	
<p><b>Date of Next Meeting:</b> Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> October 18:30-20:45 on Teams</p>		