



## Serpentine Court Steering Group

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at Spotlight

### Minutes

Residents: Mercy Zvenyika (Acting Chair), Cassy Elliott (Deputy Chair), Sebastian Power (Deputy Chair), Robyn Goodwin, Ronke Oludapo, Mariee Wymer (observer – Locals of the Lakes Residents Association), John Pearce (observer), Sue Evans (observer – Locals of the Lakes Residents Association), Delia Shepherd (observer - Fenny Stratford Town Council)

Staff/Councilors: Zulf Awan (MKCC), Kevin Farrell (Tpas)

Apologies: Danielle Slaymaker (Chair), Pauline Wright, Stacey Coleburt, Cllr Emily Darlington, Cllr Ed Hume

#### 1. **Welcome and introductions**

opened the meeting and welcomed everyone.

#### 2. **Minutes of 9<sup>th</sup> January 2024**

Agreed as a true record.

Matters arising – page 1, item 3. Information & Policy Tracker review. Completed.

Matters arising – page 1, item 3. SCSG Landlord Offer workshop. Completed.

Matters arising – page 2, item 4. Written project update report. Completed.

#### 3. **Project update – Zulf Awan, Community Engagement Manager, MKCC**

Info & Policy Tracker: SCSG reviewed the contents of the tracker with Zulf and decided which items to continue tracking. Zulf agreed to amend the document in line with SCSG's comments. Zulf also to request rent models for new-build homes and the Council Tax bandings and present to the next SCSG meeting. **Actions: ZA**

Landlord Offer document: Kevin organised a workshop for SCSG to review it. Mercy and Cassy reported the following findings:

Missing from the draft compared to the Housing Offers 2018 (ballot pack):

- Sections on resident leaseholders, non-resident leaseholders, and private tenants
- The like-for-like offer
- Statement on tenants who are overcrowded.
- Mention of The Right to Return
- Statement on the housing needs of adult children or hidden households
- Compensation for home improvements e.g. built-in beds and wardrobes



- The commitment that no one will be financially worse off.
- The commitment to not make housing situations worse.

Added to the draft Landlord Offer in comparison to the Housing Offers 2018 (ballot pack):

- Service charge costs will be calculated and set dependent on the cost of services provided for each block of the new development.
- The Council will provide residents with support with the moving process, including the services of a removal company, the cost of which will be covered by part of your disturbance Allowance.
- The Council will provide residents moving to one of the new build homes on the Lakes Estate with options on kitchen unit colours and tiles, this will not be on an individual property basis.
- If you have a pet(s) and you move to one of the new homes we are building on the Lakes Estate, you can bring them too in line with your tenancy agreement.
- The Council will continue to provide a repairs service to maintain the existing homes, communal areas, and other areas of the estate throughout the course of the regeneration.
- The Council with its contractor will look to create local jobs, training and apprenticeship opportunities for residents living on the Lakes Estate as part of the regeneration project.
- The Council will ensure residents are kept informed throughout the regeneration process.

Improved in the draft Landlord Offer in comparison to the Housing Offers 2018 (ballot pack)

- If you currently have more bedrooms than you need and move to one of the new homes we are building on the Lakes Estate that matches your housing need, you will receive an additional payment in line with the council's *downsizing incentive scheme*.

SCSG's assessment:

- The draft Landlord Offer has removed several important Council commitments and ignored others.
- The draft Landlord Offer will cause confusion for tenants trying to compare it with the Housing Offers 2018, and MKCC would seem to be dropping commitments that are no longer palatable for the Council e.g. the like-for-like policy.
- Tenants would be in a stronger position if they hold MKCC to the 2018 Housing Offers document.
- When looked at together, the omission of the original commitments from the draft Landlord Offer is an attack on tenants' benefits.
- There are several improvements, that are light on detail and do not have the same weight as the commitments that have been omitted.



Possible solutions suggested by SCSG:

- The obvious way to approach the Landlord Offer, would be to update the Housing Offers 2018.
- It would be acceptable to SCSG to delete points that have become redundant due to changes to the way the scheme is being delivered e.g. remove the offer of low-cost and Affordable Homes.
- It would also be acceptable to SCSG for MKCC to improve the offers and to provide greater detail.
- It is not acceptable to SCSG for MKCC to remove 2018 commitments from the updated version.
- One of the main reasons for suggesting this approach is 'transparency'. It will be far easier for tenants to compare the Housing Offers 2018 and the Landlord Offer if they follow the same order and use the same wording. Completely re-writing a new Landlord Offer is confusing for tenants and could give rise to essential commitments being removed or missed off.
- MKCC says it is committed to being transparent with its tenants.
- The Regulator of Social Housing, the Housing Ombudsman and the DLUHC all expect MKCC to be transparent and to honour its commitments.
- The Landlord Offer must re-instate the resident & non-resident leaseholder and private tenant sections. Good Landlord Offer documents cover all tenures. Serpentine Court is a tenure-blind community, and we are all in it together. SCSG does not like it when MKCC tries to divide us by our tenure.

Mercy to write to Will Rysdale (Head of Housing Delivery, MKCC) setting out the above points.

**Action: MZ**

GRAHAM Resident Liaison Officer: Samantha Carney has been appointed and begun work.

Community Engagement Officer recruitment: all engagement teams/services under the Housing Revenue Account are currently being reviewed.

#### 4. **Project update – Rahul Munday, Development Manager, MKC**

Rahul submitted the following written report in line with the new arrangements for reporting to SCSG:

##### Construction / Progress Update

Key Achievements:

- Start on site – achieved 15th Jan
- Site establishment, tree/shrub clearance, sites fenced – 22nd Jan
- Site strip commenced – 29th Jan
- GRAHAM's RLO appointed



Upcoming activities:

- first Homes England draw-down
- Continue site strip
- Further testing for contamination, in conjunction with stripping works
- Clerk of Works evaluation completed - prior to appointment ASAP
- S278 Highways agreement to be finalised
- Party wall agreements in progress
- Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to be completed
- Sod Cutting ceremony to take place in February

In addition Graham have committed to:

- running a supplier event to which local businesses will be invited with the aim of investing in and supporting the local economy; – this is to be planned for Spring 24
- providing 2-year trade apprenticeships and 4-year Site Management / QS apprenticeships; – this will be looked at from Summer 24.

#### 5. **Lakes Estate Renewal Forum**

The next meeting will be held on 4 March 2024. Mariee has met Sam Carney (RLO, GRAHAM) and invited her to the meeting.

#### 6. **Questions**

Are the tenants who are moving out of Serpentine Court temporarily, being issued with licences that include a clause stating they have the Right to Return? **Action: ZA**

#### **Any other business**

As part of their commitment to communication GRAHAM will be sending out monthly newsletters to the whole estate. The new Resident Liaison Officer will be responsible for this area of work.

#### 7. **Date of next meeting: Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 6.30pm – 7.45pm – via Teams**