



DARLINGTON

Borough Council

LEASEHOLDERS
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24TH JULY 2024

Present:	DBC Staff			
	Matthew Hufford (MH)			
	Jackie Brown (JBR)			
	Joanne Bates (JB)			
Leaseholders	6 Leaseholders attended			
Apologies Received:	2 Leaseholders gave apologies.			

Item No	Description	Action
1.	Apologies 2 apologies were received	
2.	Minutes of Previous Meeting The minutes of the meeting held on 20 th July 2023 were agreed.	All leaseholders who attended were given a copy of the minutes.

<p>3.</p>	<p>Trees rear garden – Gouldsmith Gardens raised by BG</p> <p>JM advised she had a letter from DBC dated 2009 after reporting issues with the trees blocking out their light and also attracting squirrels and rats that were coming into the flats. The drains were also blocked and when inspected they were full of tree roots. The letter stated that DBC do not like to cut trees as this accelerates the growth. The letter also detailed legislation stating that tenants are not entitled to have vertical light but are entitled to horizontal light.</p> <p>JH asked if any tree damaged their property would DBC pay for any damage?</p> <p>NB stated that DBC don't cut hedges due to possible birds nesting. However, leaseholders end up paying costs for damages that trees have caused. He had previously requested trees to be cut but was declined. Paths are also blocked due to overgrown hedges. One householder has taken it upon himself to cut the hedge but had left all the cuttings on the floor.</p> <p>MH advised that he carries out regular estate inspections and if he notices anything in the future such as paths blocked due to overgrown hedges, he will report this however he has to stick to DBC regulations.</p> <p>JM advised that the trees have become a Health and Safety issue. The pavements are covered in resin and have become slippery and dangerous to walk on. She has regularly reported this, but nothing has been done. She also stated that the paths are covered in pine needles from the trees. DBC staff have come out to clear however all they do is blow them into a pile. Why can't they clear them up ?</p> <p>YG reported that some residents were having difficulty in receiving TV reception as the trees were so high.</p> <p>JM advised that council tenants had asked Housing Tenancy Management Officer to have trees trimmed some months ago. They had agreed however nothing had been done.</p>	<p>MH advised that there would be no tree cutting before September 2024 however will contact Council Senior Arboricultural Officer to raise issues with the trees at Gouldsmith Gardens and The Sycamores.</p> <p>MH will find out and come back to leaseholders.</p> <p>MH advised that he has noted this on previous estate inspections and reported it. He will chase this up.</p> <p>MH will look into this with Council Senior Arboricultural Officer as he isn't sure that this alone is a reason to cut trees.</p>
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4.	<p>Doors and windows replaced – Heatherwood Grove.</p> <p>All blocks of flats with communal stairwells will be getting new doors and if the budget allows windows as well over the next 2 years – this was advised by DBC Surveying staff.</p> <p>Leaseholders advise that they have received notification of planned improvement works.</p> <p>BG asked if she could look to replace her windows as the previous resident declined the new windows from the council. She was advised to request permission.</p>	
5.	<p>Tenant Satisfaction Survey</p> <p>JM queried a recent meeting at the library that she received no notification of. MH advised that this was a meeting for tenants following completion of the Tenancy Satisfaction survey. There are future plans to do a similar exercise with leaseholders.</p>	
6.	<p>Fire doors/Regulations</p> <p>Tenants asked if they had previously replaced their fire door however DBC now needed to replace the door due to new fire regulations would they remove the door for the tenant and dispose of ?</p> <p>JM queried a letter she has received regarding a new front door. What will they look like? She stated that new fire doors provided by DBC have no windows due to regulations. Do</p>	<p>MH will look into this and advise leaseholders.</p> <p>MH will look into this and return to the tenants. He will ask Housing Tenancy Management Officer to take a look when they do their estate walkabout next week.</p>

	<p>these regulations apply to balcony doors as hers is UPVC which no longer meets fire regulations.</p> <p>YG highlighted that she has been advised that she has to have her door replaced as the one she had fitted is not compliant with fire regulations. She had paid £2000 for her door. Can she choose the door that has to be fitted? Could she pay extra to get a door of her choice?</p> <p>JM asked that if UPVC was no longer permitted what will happen to the large lights in the communal area that are made of UPVC?</p>	<p>JB to email DBC Surveying staff to find out and return to YG.</p> <p>MH advised that if they needed changing then DBC would change them as we are governed by regulations. He will enquire as to whether leaseholders would be charged if the lights were to be changed.</p>
7.	<p>Fire Evacuations</p> <p>ME asked if the Building Act states that there should be 2 exits out of a property? MH – not sure.</p> <p>ME – what would happen in and evacuation if the doors were broken? A window in the property has had a sticker placed stating fire exit. Would he have to climb out of the window?</p> <p>JM states there are no signs that detail what to do in an evacuation. MH is aware of this.</p>	
8.	<p>Decoration Allowances.</p>	

	<p>YG asked if there was any damage caused to the property when windows/doors were replaced would they receive a decoration allowance? MH advised that if damage was caused then DBC would look to offer some kind of compensation. MH will look into this and confirm.</p> <p>Leaseholders raised concerns that the letter advising of window works states that prior to work they must remove all blinds etc. They would not be able to do this. JH advised that he had had windows replaced and had not removed the blinds and it was not a problem. He also asked why Anglian have replaced some windows in his block but now the work has stopped? MH did not know.</p>	
9.	<p>Fire Precautions</p> <p>NB asked what the Council stance was on all residents leaving appliances e.g. Washing machines on for hours and leaving the house which could result in a fire? There had been several fires in Darlington in the past year due to these appliances catching fire.</p>	<p>MH advised that the onus was on the individual and that this query had not come up before but he would look into it.</p>
10.	<p>Jobs Outstanding/Bins</p> <p>ME advised that damage was caused by a council tenant who has now been removed however the front communal door has still not been repaired. He had been charged for repairs resulting from damage caused by this tenant. Advised that if he is charged in the future to contact us and we will refund charges that are not as a result of the leaseholders but of anti-social behaviour.</p>	

	<p>ME advised that the refuse team would not collect their communal bins due to contamination.</p> <p>MH stated that 3 things were being implemented :-</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. He would look to arrange a one off clean of the area. 2. He would request better signage so that leaseholders/tenants know which bins to put specific rubbish in. 3. He would advise Street Scene where to put the bins back to. <p>Me asked if the bins could be moved to a different location – not possible as this could result in fly tipping.</p>	
11.	<p>Parking</p> <p>YG -parking is becoming a problem with non-residents parking their vehicles in the car park.</p> <p>MH – unfortunately there is no allocated parking. There are signs stating residents only, but this is more of a deterrent and not enforceable.</p> <p>YG -can she also ask that when improvement works are ongoing that the works containers/skips are not placed over parking bays as this reduces spaces further.</p> <p>JH advised that there is also a problem with parking at their address.</p>	MH will look into this.
12.	<p>Communal Areas</p> <p>JH advised that the floor tiles in the communal area are dirty and damaged and need replacing.</p> <p>JM asked if the communal area would be updated as it is looking dirty, and the concrete is old.</p>	<p>MH will look into this</p> <p>MH will look into this.</p>
13.	<p>Signage</p> <p>ME advised that after works in the communal area the flat numbers have not been replaced resulting in the postman not knowing where to put post.</p>	MH will arrange for these numbers to be put back on.

14.	<p>Pipework</p> <p>ME stated that he was not happy with the pipework that had been carried out in his flat. MH – unfortunately we have no control over works completed.</p>	
15.	<p>Selling</p> <p>ME asked how he went about selling his flat. JB advised that he should contact the Council first to see if they wish to buy back the flat. If not he would have to sell on the open market.</p>	
16.	<p>Roof works</p> <p>NB asked other leaseholders how much disruption was caused when having your roof improved. MH advised none at all. Not too invasive.</p>	
17.	<p>Allocations</p> <p>YG asked if ground floor flats were priority for elderly and disabled persons. MH advised traditionally he thinks this was the case.</p>	
18.	<p>Call Centre</p> <p>JH wished it to be noted that the Call Centre is now very improved and calling into DBC is much easier.</p>	JB will advise Team Leaders, Customer Services to pass onto their staff
19.	<p>Meeting was concluded</p> <p>Leaseholders advised should they have any further issues to call us on 01325 405333</p>	
	Date of Next Meeting:	TBC

Minutes produced by: Joanne Bates

Distribution:			
DBC Staff			

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