

The Southwick Estate - Residents Working Group

Subject: Residents' Working Group

Venue: Southwick Community Centre

Date: 4th July 2023

Present:

Cllr Carol O'Neal – (CO)

Cllr Jim Funnell – (JF)

Sue Wells – (SW)

Marilyn Foster – (MF)

Lesley Bridle - (LB)

Leanne Crump – (LC)

Sean Hart – (SH)

Marcia Browne – (MB)

Jasmine Johnson (JJ)

Morven Rushworth – Cratus Communications
(MR)

Jeanette Kenyon – Adur District Council (JK)

Keith Meredith, Adur District Council (KM)

Rob Lantsbury – New Mill (RL)

Christine Searle- New Mill (CS)

Item	Comment	Assigned to:
1	Introduction	
1.1	JK led the introductions. Apologies were received from Cllr Jim Funnell.	
2	Previous Meeting Minutes and Matters Arising	
2.1	<p>JK confirmed amendments to the Residents Charter are ongoing.</p> <p>JK explained that the Council had reviewed the proposed eligible works for the S20 charges for leaseholders and hence the Interim Works delay.</p> <p>JJ raised concerns regarding the cracks within the homes, and said these issues are not being solved.</p> <p>JK noted that the stock conditions surveys undertaken noted the buildings were structurally sound, the safety issues relate to balconies railings.</p> <p>LC noted that the mention of a 50-year refurbishment plan for Watling Court needed more detail.</p> <p>JK said they did not have full details at this point, but that the scheme is based on ongoing refurbishment of the block rather than a one-off programme.</p>	
3	Introduction from Head of Property Services	
3.1	<p>KM introduced himself, he began in May 2023, works across properties across Adur and is looking at the asset management of the site. He is aware of the issues and concerns on site; he brings a lot of experience and wants to help residents to live in decent homes.</p> <p>He also deals with day-to-day repairs and was aware of the Grange Court and Sea House broken lifts, as well as a lack of lights near the lift, and vandalism.</p>	
4	Questions	
4.1	The group discussed the issue anti-social behaviour on the estate.	

	<p>KM noted this is not his area of work but he can pass it through to the relevant managers. He added that all issues must go through the official customer service route in order to maintain an audited trail.</p> <p>AF noted that the residents just want to know how someone is evicted for anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>JK noted that this will be raised internally.</p>	JK
4.2	<p>CO noted that there is no housing officer covering all of the Southwick Estate, who should be the first port of call for residents.</p> <p>KM said they are increasing and expanding their team, to ensure they have enough people to meet the needs of all residents. Planned maintenance is linked with this, the teams look at budgets and works that are needed to make improvements across all of the Council's assets.</p> <p>KM's team will work with JK's team on redevelopment plans, as building homes to a high standard is key.</p>	
4.3	<p>A resident noted that they felt the health and safety team have only looked up at the balconies, not been up close, also not noted the big crack issues in foundations of buildings.</p> <p>KM to review the survey and photos to be taken of the cracks.</p> <p>AF suggested appointing one person representing each block for maintenance issues.</p>	
4.4	<p>A resident asked why there are empty council flats. KM said he and his team are investigating all void flats.</p> <p>JK noted that the voids have been high because the works associated stalled due to the contractor, which caused delays.</p> <p>KM noted they are trying to turn the void properties around as quick as possible, since he has started at the Council around 12 void properties have moved into the letting process. He will employ two more contractors to have three contractors on board total. He is hoping to rid the backlog of void properties on financial process by end of year.</p>	
4.5	<p>A resident said they do not understand why Southwick Square regeneration was prioritised and asked how much that will cost.</p> <p>JK noted that it's a different department, with different pot of money, and there had been resident consultation on this work.</p> <p>SB asked how budgets are allocated.</p> <p>KM explained that the budget for works on the estate comes predominantly from rent into the ring-fenced Housing Revenue Account, which is a central government-led scheme. This rental income is put back into the properties. Money can't legally be put into the HRA from other Council budgets.</p>	

	<p>KM noted that redevelopment would have money coming in from Homes England, but this would also be ring-fenced, and money could not move between the two pots.</p> <p>KM noted that are trying to bring in extra money from external funding e.g. funding to improve energy efficiency. KM noted that there is potential for Watling Court to put in external wall insulation, which could put another 10-15-20 years of life, potentially new roofs etc. This could get up to 100% funding for these works, meaning the money the Council would have spent can be put into other areas of estate.</p>	
5	Cabinet Process Update and Next Steps	
5.1	<p>JK is writing a detailed report on the 'preferred way forward', discussing the financial case and residents' preference for redevelopment for most of the Estate. This will go to Cabinet for sign-off.</p> <p>Cabinet will need to approve and set the ballot process. They are aiming for a sub-committee meeting in September before going to formal cabinet.</p> <p>JK noted that Homes England have changed their regeneration funding policy, and so this is being reviewed.</p>	
5.2	<p>JK ran through the consultation process for newcomers. AF asked if there have been draft plans. MR to send information.</p> <p>LC said she did not trust the process, therefore did not provide feedback.</p> <p>JK explained the team had previously been in listening mode for the consultation, the previous RWG meetings and reports such as the surveys and environment reviews, all of which led to redevelopment as the preferred option.</p> <p>The question on the ballot would be a yes or no to redevelopment.</p>	MR
5.3	<p>CO noted that council meetings are public, when these plans come forward anyone from estate can come through and scrutinize the process.</p> <p>DL asked whether the ballot would be on individual blocks, or would it be overall. JK stated it would be for all blocks except Watling Court and Spring Gardens. Residents would be requested to vote for the redevelopment proposal.</p>	
5.4	<p>A resident asked what would happen to people during the moving process.</p> <p>RL explained the timeline and said that these questions would be answered nearer the time.</p> <p>SB said he remains concerned that they will be moved to a smaller home.</p> <p>JK noted residents would have the right to return to a flat with the same number of bedrooms.</p>	
6	Interim Works Update	
6.1	<p>These will take place in Spring 2024.</p> <p>Ann Phillips has replaced Tim Blackwell to lead on the interim works project, she will be invited to a future meeting.</p>	JK

6.2	<p>RL asked what can be done if residents want to pay for their fire door replacement, mentioning a resident in Albion House.</p> <p>KM to check where Albion House is on the list. He added that the joiner carrying out the work needs to be certified and accredited for fire door installation.</p>	
6.3	<p>A resident mentioned previous work had been of a poor quality.</p> <p>KM said part of his job is to look at the repair service, see what is failing and what works. He is aware that the appointment times are an issue.</p> <p>If there are performance issues his team will investigate.</p> <p>KM mentioned that while two external contractors are being brought in to work on the voids, building services works would be internal.</p> <p>AF said she would like to know who the housing officers are. KM said there is recruitment taking place for this.</p>	
7	Any other business	
7.1	<p>JK announced that the Council has secured funding for early buy backs for up to 10 properties, and more detail will be provided shortly.</p> <p>JK reminded the group these meeting minutes are uploaded on the www.thesouthwickestate.co.uk website.</p>	
8	Close	