

The Southwick Estate - Residents Working Group

Subject: Residents' Working Group

Venue: Southwick Community Centre

Date: Wednesday 8th November 2023

Present:

Councillor Carol O'Neal – (CO)
Ben Logan – (BL)
Agata Martin – (AM)
Marilyn Foster – (MF)
Sue Wells - (SW)
Dayle Halman – (DH)
Dave Lonsdale – (DL)
Pauline Maguire – (PM)

Christine Searle – New Mill (CS)
Rob Lantsbury – New Mill (RL)
Imogen Spencer-Dale – Cratus (ISD)
Daniel Henderson – Cratus (DH)
Tina Favier – Adur District Council (TF)
Jeanette Kenyon – Adur District Council (JK)
Lee Karchewski – Adur District Council (LK)
Anne Bentley – Adur District Council (AB)

Item	Comment	Assigned to:
1	Introduction	
1.1	<p>JK led the introductions and announced the slight change in the format of these sessions to focus on wider issues.</p> <p>TF introduced herself to residents as the Director for Housing and Communities.</p> <p>LK introduced himself to residents as the Contracts Manager (Compliance), and gave apologies for Keith Meredith (Head of Property Services) who couldn't make it.</p>	
2	Previous Meeting Minutes and Matters Arising	
2.1	<p>JK reminded the group of the work Anne Bentley is doing in resident engagement.</p> <p>AB said drops-in are planned for December plus a food bank service. Anne also reminded the group that the December RWG will be discussing anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>SW said she isn't pleased with anti-social behaviour responses on the estate and said that residents are getting mixed messages about whether meetings are happening or not. The housing officer is not visible enough as well. SW had a diary sheet of all incidents which she had shared with no response. She noted the doors and lifts were broken as well.</p>	
2.2	<p>SW explained an incident that happened on 6th October where a 999 call about a drug dealer breaking doors wasn't quickly addressed and the police didn't visit until two days later. Another incident was mentioned about a boy being attacked.</p> <p>TF took details from SW.</p>	

3	Voluntary buy back scheme	
3.1	<p>JK updated group on the voluntary buy back scheme. She said based on the feedback from the Leaseholder Sub-group meeting, leaseholders did not want the block priorities to be used as selection criteria for the scheme. JK indicated that the Council had listened to this feedback and will not shortlist the applications based on block priorities. She indicated the next steps involved inviting leaseholders to express interest in the scheme. The process for selection will be open and transparent. They are aiming to share this as soon as possible.</p> <p>AM said she had not seen the proposal, it will be shared again with the group.</p>	DH
3.2	<p>DL asked how residents will receive notifications of buy back scheme.</p> <p>JK said letters will be sent out to leaseholders.</p> <p>BL asked If you go for this voluntary buy back route, do you need to vacate the property?</p> <p>JK said yes you do. She reiterated it's a separate scheme from the redevelopment buy backs, this is purely voluntary.</p> <p>BL asked how building works done in leasehold properties that may not have been Council approval affect the valuation of the properties.</p> <p>JK to investigate.</p>	JK
4	Redevelopment next steps	
4.1	<p>Regarding the Council decision on the redevelopment option, JK indicated council members in the Cabinet have been briefed and are supportive. A further meeting will be held to go through the proposals in more detail prior to formal council approval.</p>	DH
4.2	<p>DL asked if a January sign off is guaranteed. JK indicated it could go beyond this, but the team was aiming for a January approval.</p> <p>A resident asked who the Cabinet consists of.</p> <p><i>Post-meeting note:</i></p> <p><i>Cabinet Members are:</i> <i>Leader of the Council – Cllr Neil Parkin</i> <i>Deputy Leader of the Council and Adur Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources - Cllr Angus Dunn</i> <i>Adur Cabinet Member for the Environment and Leisure - Cllr Emma Evans</i> <i>Adur Cabinet Member for Communities and Wellbeing - Cllr Kevin Boram</i> <i>Adur Cabinet Member for Adur Homes and Customer Services - Cllr Carson Albury</i> <i>Adur Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Strategic Planning - Cllr Steve Neocleous.</i></p>	
5	Estate maintenance and interim works	
5.1	<p>LK announced that the balcony and concrete works are going forward, earlier than the other interim works, with no Section 20 charges for the balcony works. This was in response to residents' and councillors' comments.</p> <p>Residents were pleased with the news. BL asked if this would happen before the summer.</p>	

	LK answered it should be before spring/summer, noting that a planning consent for the balcony works will be required because the works will affect the appearance of the balconies.	
5.2	<p>LK said Grange Court scaffolding is due to be taken down.</p> <p>SL asked can windows be cleaned whilst scaffolding is going up, there are spots of concrete by windows, damaging the glass.</p> <p>LK said a 'builders clean' could be done.</p>	LK
5.3	<p>LK announced that FFT consultants who carried out the stock conditions survey will hand out Section 20 notices relating to this shortly, even though there is no charge - this is part of the process.</p> <p>The main interim works package is getting tendered separately.</p>	
5.4	<p>Residents discussed fire doors, they are worried about costs and don't want to pay when buildings are getting knocked down in the future.</p> <p>LK said Adur Council must follow strict legislation on fire doors and noted that the leasehold agreements are clear that owners are responsible for the doors.</p> <p>AM asked why it was urgent for leaseholders when tenants hadn't had theirs done. TF said here were issues with the previous contract for installing tenants' doors, the council has recommissioned a new company.</p>	
5.4.1	<p>DL mentioned he didn't like the wording of letters he's received regarding fire doors.</p> <p>LK replied he understands the legal wording comes across threatening and that they can review letters going forward. Future letters can be better worded to explain the situation.</p> <p>RL asked would it be possible to give residents notice of which doors are having work done in which blocks.</p> <p>LK replied that could get shared in newsletter.</p>	LK LK
5.4.2	RL asked is there any chance to bulk order and install doors and re-charge to the leaseholders to make things cheaper.	
5.4.3	<p>CO has heard stories from tenants that have had problems with doors from 2017 and 2018. Some leaseholders have two doors on the central landing, and she noted that she had raised how this made the fire walls unnecessary.</p> <p>TF said she'd speak with fire safety officer Ben Turner, and we could have a RWG session on fire safety.</p>	TF/Cratus
5.4.4	SW mentioned her doors need an automatic opener, and that she had been told doors from 2012 would be okay. LK to investigate.	LK
6	Improvement Plan	

6.1	<p>TF reminded the group that Adur District Council has referred itself to the Social Housing Regulator. TF indicated positive improvements will happen and is meeting with the Regulator monthly. The Regulator seems confident on the progress.</p> <p>Work is being done to clear the void properties list, plus gas and electric works are being scheduled.</p> <p>The team is not complete yet, three new people are starting soon and they are recruiting for asset manager and more housing officers among other roles.</p>	
6.2	<p>SW said there aren't enough housing officers and that safety of children is a concern, referencing a knife that was found on fifth floor. Drug dealers are breaking doors which costs leaseholders. She noted that the anti-social behaviour policy was from 2012.</p> <p>TF said they are designing an anti-social behaviour post to better address the issues mentioned.</p> <p>AB agreed that policies need updating, a residents panel will meet and review what needs to be changed.</p>	
6.3	<p>SW said she struggles to find where to complain online so ended up emailing a general enquiries email.</p> <p>TF replied that team will look at how complaints/enquiries can be made easier and said this will be the work of one of the new staff members.</p> <p>CO mentioned that some residents don't have computer access.</p>	TF
6.4	<p>CO brought up that some residents have found it hard applying for housing transfers. TF said she will review the process.</p> <p>CO also added that only one PSCO for the whole of Southwick was not enough.</p> <p>TF said Anne is drafting a Tenants Handbook.</p>	TF