

THE HYDE GROUP

CENTRAL HOME OWNERSHIP PANEL

[DRAFT] MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 27 SEPTEMBER 2017

AT PARK STREET FROM 6.00PM - 8.30PM

1.0 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for absence

1.1 The meeting opened at 6.10pm. Apologies were given. Introductions were made by all.

2 Declarations of Interest

2.1 No declarations of interest were received.

3 Minutes and Matters Arising

3.1 The minutes of 18.7.2017 were approved by all as a true record. Outstanding actions to be added to this meeting's action list as per below.

3.2 Point 6.10 of the previous minutes - CHOP were told that the statements had been completed and were confirmed to be with the printers now. Some have gone out today. The fact that the reconciliation has been done now means that the Service Charge Team can focus on other things.

3.3 A discussion was had regarding the discussion and consultation posts on the OAK. A few have been put up but with no responses. Deadlines were suggested to be added into consultations on the OAK. Reminder emails were suggested to be sent to CHOP members to post replies.

3.4 CHOP were advised that the deadline for the review of Housing Services has been extended therefore any actions relating to this are on hold. CHOP requested to be consulted on the training for new roles on service charges. **ACTION**. It was stated that the Service Charge Team do not want to inundate the new roles with too much information initially and that more information will be given to them on an ongoing basis. An exercise/test will be done as part of the recruitment process around service charges.

4 Service Charge project update including current focus

4.1 The 1st April 2018 was confirmed to be the 'go live' date for the new Service Charge system. 18/19 estimates and the actuals for 18/19 in October 2019 will be going through the new system. There was a rent setting kick off meeting last week and the Service Charge Team will be having regular meetings with the relevant project team to ensure that the issues are picked up as we go.

4.2 The actuals for this year will not be coming out of this system, as the estimates did not come from the system. They will be prepared in the old way.

4.3 User testing has not been confirmed to have happened yet. CHOP requested to look at the layout of information and accuracy of data. **ACTION**

4.4 CHOP requested details of phase 2 of the service charge project. This includes resident self-service functionality, which was noted to have been promised at CHOP 3 years ago. An update was asked for about self-serve. **ACTION**

4.5 7000 letters went out today and by 30 September just over 24,000 statements will be going out to residents. CHOP should receive next week.

- 4.6 It was confirmed that there has been a lot of communication with the printers in the last few weeks to confirm the detail and timescales.
- 4.7 An explanation of the printing process was given and how Hyde's quality assurance for the accuracy of the letters is done.
- 4.8 CHOP asked for confirmation as to the number and type of complaints that have been received from the statements going out now. They would like this information by 3 November, prior to the next CHOP meeting via the OAK. At the next meeting, CHOP would like to have an update on how many enquiries have come from the statements. The Service Charge Team do not have any previous data of how many enquiries will come in as we have never sent out all the reconciliations at the same time before.
- 4.9 It is the second full cycle of service charges now, and the officers now own their areas. This should encourage them to have prepared for the enquiries to come. The Service Charge Team is confident that enquiries will be dealt with and responded to in a timely manner.
- 4.10 Some residents will get a deficit of an amount that they do not want, and so the Service Charge Team has been reviewing these for accuracy, and reasons why. They have the information on the scheme documentation so that the service charge officer can answer questions quickly and efficiently, when they come in, i.e. was the deficit because of the implementation of the Grounds Maintenance and Cleaning contracts or a lift refurbishment. An example of a high deficit received last year was given to introduce the question of are sanity checks being done. It was explained that there was not time to do as many checks as we have been able to do this year due to the delay in sending out so many reconciliations. The difference is that now Hyde is in the position to preempt some issues and deal with issues very quickly when received.
- 4.11 There were a lot of residents at the service charge meeting in Bermondsey Spa on 6 September. It was asked if surgeries would be done in the future. It was explained that they would be looked at on a scheme by scheme basis. However, if people come to surgeries, some issues may be lost if reported in, in a different manner, but also there may be an issue surrounding the different ways issues are resolved at surgeries.
- 4.12 The Service Charge Manager gave a commitment to respond in a timely manner, but no specific timescales - a process has been set up if we have not responded in 8 working days, an acknowledgement will be sent out to say that we are looking into it. Each letter will have a coordinator name on it so each resident will know who to contact.
- 4.13 CHOP confirmed that residents do not want to have to keep chasing Hyde; Leaseholders pay Hyde to provide services and they should be provided. Will the service charge response process be monitored for timeliness? Residents would like to see an improvement in communications between Hyde and residents in terms of timeliness and accuracy.
- 4.14 It was suggested that a service charge enquiry flow chart would be good for residents and confirmed that it may be something to look at when the new housing roles are in place. If an enquiry comes in and it's about apportionment, it needs to come to the Service Charge Team, but a service charge enquiry relating to the poor gardening service, should go to Resident Services as a contract management issue.
- 4.15 A crib sheet is being created for Customer Services. The Cleaning and Grounds Maintenance Contract Managers have had meetings with Service Charges also, to talk about the different enquiry types and who should respond.

- 4.16 Something that has been noted is that sometimes the Service Charge Coordinator has missed the key point of the complaint or enquiry from a resident. A framework of questions has been developed to be asked when reviewing an enquiry – this should help with this. Service charge complaints are to be looked at in CHOP’s November meeting. **ACTION.** Trends in enquiries to be brought to CHOP as well. **ACTION**
- 4.17 A discussion was had about why service charges have not been out on time for the last few years and why have there been so many issues. It was suggested that maybe the number of staff were lower before, or that they were being completed by the local offices, but the current Service Charge Team are unsure of the reasons.
- 4.18 CHOP raised that they are concerned about the number of new developments going up with the same amount of staff to look after the service charges of the properties. This was noted as a resident concern.
- 4.19 CHOP challenged whether Hyde’s coding has been improved. Sometimes the cost centres are not correct. This was noted to have improved and a lot of work has been done about the service charge codes. The local offices put in the correct code and this is then passed to the Finance Team. With the new housing services, one of the new roles will be responsible for knowing what services should be delivered to each building and so the nominal codes will improve. CHOP challenged that Bermondsey Spa has its own office now and still has problems. This concern was noted.
- 4.20 CHOP asked whether the crib sheet includes anything about provisions – this will be checked. **ACTION**
- 4.21 All invoices for each scheme should be able to be printed in one go for an invoice pack, but this is not the case. On a complicated scheme like the Stockwell Towers that receive approx.15 different services, it could take several days for an officer to collate into an invoice pack. Hyde tried to get all invoices saved in the same place, but it took too much time away from officers doing the reconciliation. We will also start working with residents on why they want an invoice pack. If it is an individual issue on specific areas this would reduce the time it will take to compile a specific invoice pack, and they could understand a certain service they are receiving instead, i.e., why does it cost so much for my lift services? When self-serve comes in, invoice packs should be saved in one place and easily available. It was confirmed that when Service Charges are being audited, they do look at invoice packs.
- 4.22 CHOP provided feedback re asking residents why do you want an invoice pack. CHOP are concerned that it could annoy leaseholders by asking why. Residents are paying for services so as any customer, they are entitled to know exactly what services they are being asked to pay for. It was agreed that this feedback would be shared with Service Charge Officers/Coordinators re the manner of the message and why Hyde would ask this question. **ACTION**
- 4.23 It was confirmed that messages have gone out on social media and the OAK regarding the reconciliations being sent out.
- 4.24 CHP expressed concern that some of the patches for the new housing services roles were thought not the same as the Service Charge Coordinators, which could cause complications between different roles managing their patches. This will be passed on. **ACTION**

5 Sinking funds project update

- 5.1 There are no further updates on the Sinking Funds project, which is all on track.

- 5.2 It was confirmed that the actual amounts that are in the sinking funds now will be in the actuals being sent out. The statements coming out next week will show the actual amount in the bank at the moment.
- 5.3 It will not say sinking funds on statements, it will say provisions.
- 5.4 Calculation of the sinking funds is something that residents are interested to see. There has been a stock survey across Hyde and the lifespan of the components of the buildings have been looked at over the next 30 years at their projected costs. The calculations are not in the sinking fund statements.
- 5.5 If you pay into a sinking fund, you will get a line that says provision and a provision statement. This information of the difference is not in the FAQ leaflet. **ACTION**

6 Challenge Process: Enquiry vs Complaint

- 6.1 A representative from the Home Ownership team gave an overview of why they would like to introduce a new challenge process of enquiries vs complaints. The difference between the two was explained. The Housing Ombudsman is the body that oversees the complaints process, but the Service Charge Tribunal is the body who oversee Service Charge enquiries and challenge.
- 6.2 CHOP emphasised that communication is very important to the customer. Residents do not care whose team is at fault or whose responsibility the issue falls beneath; it should just be dealt with effectively by Hyde.
- 6.3 A customer journey mapping exercise was suggested, and it may be that it could be a HRE inspection moving forward into 2018. **ACTION**
- 6.4 Enquiries were suggested from CHOP for future discussion points including; how do Hyde calculate the management fees, why is the cost of responsive maintenance so high and what does provision mean? Someone also suggested a discussion about fairness of costs and processes. **ACTION**

7 Forward Planner

- 7.1 Dates for the 2018 meetings were discussed. It was agreed that there would be one meeting per quarter, four per year, beginning in late February/early March.
- 7.2 Possible future agenda items were discussed. It was asked if CHOP could look at how the budgets were processed on the new system; how this works. It was requested that maybe the Head of Service Charge could present this item. An update about the new housing services was requested either for November or at the first meeting of 2018. Self-serve was requested to be an agenda item next year. CHOP also invited one of the Heads of Housing to attend. **ACTION**

8. AOB

- 8.1 Another resident has been recruited to CHOP pending their application and interview and will attend from the next meeting.

Meeting closed at 8.10pm