

THE HYDE GROUP
CENTRAL HOME OWNERSHIP PANEL
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 17 APRIL 2018
AT PARK STREET FROM 6.00PM - 8.30PM

1.0 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for absence

- 1.1 The meeting opened at 6.03pm. Apologies were given
- 1.2 3 members have resigned, so an interim Chair has been put in place until recruitment has commenced for CHOP, when an election will take place.
- 1.3 Changes to the agenda were confirmed for the meeting, given that some staff members were unavailable to attend.

2 Declarations of Interest

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were received.

3 Minutes and Matters Arising

- 3.1 The minutes of 28.11.2017 were approved by all as a true record. Outstanding actions to be added to this meeting's action list as per below.
- 3.2 Action 5.7 – CHOP members confirmed that when there has been a revision to the service charge statement, the revised version was not sent to residents. It was confirmed that the new system will enable the Service Charge Team to be able to do this more easily. CHOP members confirmed that none had ever seen an update following an adjustment. A suggestion was made that if more than one person in the block had requested an adjustment, the revised documents may only be sent to those individuals rather than the whole block. This will not be the case moving forward. **ACTION**

4 Service Charge update and budget work update

- 4.1 The Service Charge Project is on track. The new system went live over the Easter weekend. There were no issues with the go live. There have been a few teething problems since, i.e. a few issues with property groupings but the Service Charge Team are working with the Property Managers to rectify this. There is now a board to look at the changes that need to be made and these are held monthly. If a block/estate has been set up in a certain way that does not mean it needs to stay that way; the approach is very flexible. An example was given of Foreshore in London and how the sub blocks were made up of odd properties in an odd way, but this has been able to be rectified. Other blocks are being re grouped as and when they are identified.
- 4.2 If there is a mistake on the budget, i.e. you've been charged for a service that your block does not receive, the process is now easier to amend the data. The process was explained and the new system was said to be much better in recording the correct data and ensuring all properties affected will change to '0'. This has been a big change for the team and extremely beneficial for the business as the system will

change the rent account/service charge account, ongoing debits and credit back anything owed.

- 4.3 It was noted that the account statements were very bland and not consistently sent out to residents. They were also suggested to be better utilised and send out with the service charge statements. It was agreed by CHOP that there is currently no easy way to find out the balance on your account without phoning Hyde. This needs to be checked with income. It was suggested that instead of simply figures, it would be more helpful to see what the credit/debit is for, as it stands they are not very useful documents. **ACTION**
- 4.4 In the service charge updated provided to CHOP, it stated that the service charge cycle would begin on 19 February and this was confirmed to have been the case. Everyone should have received the new budget for 18/19. This was based on a new way of working and asking the budget owners to estimate how much they will spend in the upcoming year. The figures have been very different in some cases and the Service Charge Team are working with the Property Managers and Contract Managers to find out why. In some cases, it has been found that the property groupings have changed and therefore changed the cost, but these are being investigated on a case by case basis. Service Charge Team has now got more clarity of why the costs have been put in and they now have more confidence in speaking to residents about why the costs have changed.
- 4.5 When estimates go out to residents, there is an expectation of high enquiry levels; last year it was about 1000. As the Property Managers are now working with the Service Charge team and investigating relevant enquiries relating to service delivery, the enquiries have reduced to 332 this year. This has meant that the coordinators are able to respond to most within 10 working days, where as it had historically been months before a response was issued.
- 4.6 This has also left more resource within the Service Charge team to investigate enquiries more thoroughly as the numbers are lower. It was acknowledged that the service is still not perfect and some enquiries do slip through the net, however the team are confident the service is better than previously.
- 4.7 There were 16 open complaints, when the report for CHOP was written in February, however, now there are 21 open. The Service Charge team now use a dashboard of performance, which is reviewed weekly to keep on top of complaints and other performance indicators. There were 29 complaints open last week and it was hoped another 8 would be closed this week.
- 4.8 A discussion was had about the role of the Property Manager in bettering service charge accuracy. It was felt that some Property Managers had struggled with the new role and quite a lot of resource is currently going into supporting them with this task. It had been noticed that the Service Charge team now do have a better understanding of the services provided on the estates from the work of the Property Managers.
- 4.9 A discussion was had about the property groupings. CHOP noted that the new service charge statement looks ok, however, it was found confusing as to what the property groupings are. It was suggested that most residents do not know what their sub block is or if other blocks are within their grouping. It was suggested that this information be asked about within the survey for the service charge HRE inspection. **ACTION**

- 4.10 CHOP were pleased to hear that the service charge project was moving forward well and improvements had been noted, however, it was stated more time was needed before real improvements were seen by residents.

5 HRE inspection scoping

- 5.1 The RE rep talked to CHOP about the most recent HRE inspection reviewing service charges. An overview of HRE inspections was given and the importance of the recommendations. CHOP were asked for their views on the activities and scope of the inspection.
- 5.2 Examples were given by CHOP members of areas where services were, on paper, being delivered but it was asked who monitors whether they are or not. It was asked if this was an area of scope for the inspection. This focused on grounds maintenance, communal cleaning and window cleaning. It was also asked how pest control is checked to have been delivered. This was felt to be best placed within the staff interview activity of the inspection.
- 5.3 Contact with the Property Manager was also discussed and the processes of how the Property Manager is informed of local service delivery. The posters put up to introduce the staff member only has the Hyde contact number. It was also suggested that the Property Managers should be speaking to residents to confirm services being delivered, but their presence on site seemed to be ad hoc. It was felt they should be advertising their attendance on estates in advance so that residents are given the opportunity to report issues. This could be covered in the inspection from the site visits and the staff interviews.
- 5.4 A discussion was had regarding whether the Property Managers were empowered enough to report where services are not being delivered to the service specification or other management issues. An example was given of a Property Manager who felt the cleaning of a block car park was not value for money, due to the size of the area, but it was unclear whether this had been escalated and to whom. This will be addressed in the staff interviews.
- 5.5 It was asked how the relationship works between the Contract Managers and the Property Managers. An example was given of when the Property Manager was unaware of cyclical works taking place over a number of blocks, and the Contract Manager was aware. This was another point to use in the staff interviews. Residents felt unprepared for things like cyclical works when they had not been notified they were going to happen and therefore cannot save in advance of the works. This was felt to be very frustrating.
- 5.6 It was asked if residents can be asked of their awareness of property groupings in the HRE survey. **ACTION** CHOP also agreed that there should be an open comment box for residents to air their frustrations at the end of the survey.
- 5.7 Publicity of HRE and their service inspections was discussed. It was felt by CHOP that the advertising currently being done, i.e. targeted emails and social media posts, was not enough and CHOP confirmed that none of them followed Hyde on social media. They felt that a printed advert of the year's planned inspections should be sent to all residents at the beginning of each year, or a poster that the Property Managers could put up in the display boards. **ACTION**
- 5.8 It was suggested that further staff interviews should be held with some budget holders to find out how they make their predictions and whether residents are

involved in any way in the budget setting to ensure value for money. RE team to look into whether interviews for some budget holders could take place as part of the inspection. Early evening preferable so that CHOP members can be involved.

ACTION.

- 5.9 CHOP members confirmed they would like to be involved in this inspection and advertising to be done to other homeowners through the OAK, social media and a targeted email campaign. **ACTION**

6. Introduction to Resident Engagement Resident Advocacy Manager (RAM)

- 6.1 CHOP were notified that due to the intensity of the HRE inspection programme, facilitation of CHOP would be handed to the RE Resident Advocacy Manager.
- 6.2 The RAM introduced herself and talked to CHOP about her background in local engagement, resident training and facilitation of the RACs/RSTs. She was keen to work with CHOP, and would be the main point of contact from now on.
- 6.3 CHOP were asked what areas they would like to focus on in 18/19. CHOP agreed that they would like some time to think about this and would come to the May meeting with suggestions. **ACTION**
- 6.4 Suggestions included Section 20s, communal repairs and membership of the group. A discussion was had regarding getting other homeowners involved in CHOP.
- 6.5 Use of the OAK was also discussed, and CHOP agreed that they found it difficult to keep up to date with the OAK and that they preferred the use of emails. CHOP talked about the ECHO group and their non-engagement on the OAK for Hyde consultations, however, did use the OAK to air personal issues. A better way for CHOP to use the OAK was asked to be looked at. **ACTION**
- 6.6 Complaints case studies was felt to be a productive task and CHOP would like to continue this, either on the OAK or in meetings. It was decided that the case studies would be put on the OAK for consultation (suggested through track changes) and then CHOP members would bring this information to the meeting, to shorten the face to face discussion. **ACTION**
- 6.7 It was suggested that the CHOP meetings could be less London centric and other members recruited from outside London and representative of each area of Hyde. It was also requested that leaseholders are targeted to join the group, as currently CHOP is made up of Shared Owners. **ACTION**
- 6.8 It was felt to be important to clarify the objectives of CHOP. CHOP had had presentations from each area of the business relating to homeowner services already. An outcome sheet for CHOP has previously been completed to show what they had achieved so far; this is to be shared. **ACTION.** CHOP agreed that they would like to represent the voice of shared owners and leaseholders on changes that will impact homeowners and be the frontline of meaningful consultation. CHOP would also like the power to raise and escalate issues from other homeowners. A discussion was had regarding personal issues as opposed to trends in poor service delivery.
- 6.9 It was suggested that CHOP look at complaints trends and trends in enquiries in Home Ownership, as well as other relevant performance information. **ACTION**

- 6.10 It was suggested that further benchmarking be done in engagement with homeowners. **ACTION**
- 6.11 A suggestion was made for higher directors/CEO to attend CHOP and was explained that CHOP was not the forum for senior staff. CHOP members were reminded that they are welcome to send a representative to sit on HRV, where the senior staff attend. A CHOP member will attend next HRV meeting. **ACTION**

7. AOB

- 7.1 There was no AOB.

Meeting closed at 8.25pm