

THE HYDE GROUP
CENTRAL HOME OWNERSHIP PANEL
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 28 NOVEMBER 2017
AT PARK STREET FROM 6.00PM - 8.30PM

1.0 Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for absence

1.1 The meeting opened at 6.00pm. Apologies were given from 3 members. 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 27.9.2017 were approved by all as a true record. Outstanding actions to be added to this meeting's action list as per below.

3.2 4.3 CHOP confirmed that they would like to be involved in the consultation regarding the communications and information being sent out to residents from the new Service Charge system. HRV and CHOP will be involved in the consultation for the letter templates to be sent out in January. Information on the statement will also be included. The consultation will take place via the OAK in mid-December and potentially followed with a face to face meeting if necessary. **ACTION**

3.3 The Service Charge Manager updated CHOP on the training of the Property Managers in Service Charges, and apologised for not involving CHOP in this earlier. The Service Charge Manager will update CHOP on the OAK regarding the training specifics. **ACTION**

3.4 The Head of Housing gave an update on self-serve in that it is on hold at present due to larger more priority projects. The Housing Strategy is to be revised in 2018, with self-serve part of it. CHOP were given reassurance that when the time comes, they will be involved in the user testing. It was noted by CHOP that all organisations offer self-service now and that Hyde should have addressed this sooner. CHOP was reminded of improvements that have been made in the last few years, that the delivery of projects like Look Again have now happened and the business are optimistic of positive improvements moving forward.

4 Introduction from Head of Housing

4.1 An introduction to CHOP was made, including previous role history. It was relayed again that in the last three years positive changes have been seen at Hyde. Look Again was launched on Monday (27), there are only five vacancies left to fill, which should be filled by the end of the week. There were a lot of internal candidates for the roles, and some new staff. All staff were subject to a stringent recruitment process. Some Property Managers have come from the private sector.

4.2 Look Again, as a concept, was explained to CHOP, along with the role of the Property Managers. It was confirmed that the Property Managers will be responsible for improving service charge accuracy. They will be mobile, not office bound and their patch sizes have increased and are managing larger patch sizes. They will not be

involved in ASB, Lettings or Tenancy Sustainment. The expanded patch sizes was noted as a potential issue, as there would be a risk of too much to do. It was explained that although the patch sizes have increased, the role responsibilities have reduced so this was not expected to be an issue. There is also an administration team working with the Property Managers. There was a nervousness that the Property Managers may not be able to follow up issues as the patches are too large and they will have too much to do. It was explained that the Tenancy Managers will be covering the tenancy related issues.

- 4.3 The Look Again pilot in Southampton was discussed. The Service Charge Team are confident that they are ready for the roll out and that improvements have been made in line with lessons learnt from the pilot.
- 4.4 CHOP were shown the Property Manager video, available on the Hyde website. It was clarified that ASB is still reported through the Customer Services in the same way as before.
- 4.5 The Look Again model was confirmed to have been benchmarked against other organisations, and other organisations in the sector are already using such a structure, such as L&Q.
- 4.6 It was clarified that, in the first instance, residents' issues should be reported into Customer Services. The customer should not see a difference in the way of working, but should see a better service. There was a risk suggested by CHOP that it could create another staff member to be signposted to from Customer Services, but confirmed that with proper use of the CRM system, all the information should be available and that should mitigate the risk.
- 4.7 It was asked how visible the Property Manager will be and whether they will be available after working hours. It was asked if there will be a surgery outside of working hours. Saturday estate inspections were suggested to be completed once every six months at least. However, if the service is being delivered efficiently, this will not be needed. It was agreed that if a seamless service was being delivered, they would not need to see the Property Manager. **ACTION**
- 4.8 It was suggested that residents may get an unclear message from the Property Manager video regarding their role in development. The role was confirmed to not include any aspect of sourcing new development sites. It was clarified that they will support development, and make sure that once the property is nearing completion, the Property Manager will be present to look at what the service charges should be. CHOP were reassured that the Property Manager's role will be 85% looking around their estates and ensuring communal areas are safe and clean.
- 4.9 Property Managers geographical patches were discussed and that the numbers have been thought about very carefully, i.e. KPE have two due to the estate size and Bermondsey Spa have three.
- 4.10 It was asked how residents will know if something has or has not been reported in regarding communal issues. The response was that Hyde will be making more use of the notice boards, where available. There was the potential to develop communal customers in TED, so that it could be recorded and the Customer Service Officer should be able to stop re reporting. As part of the pilot, we have looked at the existing processes, what is working and what could be better. Process maps are in place to streamline and make the service better. Weekly joint meetings are being held so that we can improve the system straight away.

- 4.11 It was confirmed that it is easier to report a repair or a complaint, but the resident was unable to see what happens afterwards. The front end of the interaction is good, but the delivery behind it is not good or consistent.
- 4.12 It was asked if Property Managers will understand the services provided to individual blocks and buildings, such as in Bermondsey Spa. The Property Managers were confirmed to be in the best position to understand their individual patches and the local services.
- 4.13 The Property Managers and Service Charge Coordinators are meeting regularly in areas that have issues with service charges. The Property Manager will identify blocks/estates with multiple issues and liaise with the relevant teams to ensure all services are being provided, i.e. Service Charge Team and ASB Team.
- 4.14 CHOP were disappointed in the resident communication of the Look Again roll out. It had not been communicated in Stockwell, but a poster of the new Property Manager was up in Bermondsey Spa. It was confirmed that Avonley do have a notice board but no communication re the Property Manager is there. It was commented if Hyde want you to know something, they should take responsibility for telling you. Information has been put on the Hyde website, but if you do not look at the website regularly, this has been missed.
- 4.15 The Head of Housing would like to come back to CHOP in February 2018 to update on the progress of the Property Manager role. **ACTION**

5 Complaints case studies, statistics and trends in enquiries

- 5.1 Apologies were made for the lateness of the papers. A conversation was to be had with Home Ownership, Service Charges and Resident Engagement to discuss better practice. **ACTION**
- 5.2 Some statistics were given of the service charge complaints and queries since the last statements went out in October. 441 old and new at the moment, 443 came into the business before 3 October. The Service Charge Team are still dealing with the queries from the actuals. The number of queries received post October was about 4% of those that were sent out, so relatively smaller numbers than of recent years. Some are going over the 20 working days but those residents have been contacted to let them know it is still being investigated.
- 5.3 Avonley TRA have not had a response and another member has had a response to say it is going to take more the 20 days. **ACTION**
- 5.4 Hyde have found that enquiries have been coming back from the 15/16s that have since been found to be inaccurate and have taken quite a lot of resource time away from the 16/17s. The general trend is that enquiries are being closed down steadily, but then there will be a day of lots of enquiries coming in and take the numbers up again. We were at 880, but now down to 508. This is slower than expected. The feedback from the Customer Service Team has been that the type of enquiry are now more specific and therefore more meaningful, i.e. charges about fire safety, asbestos, cleaning and grounds maintenance, rather than chasing lateness of the service charge going out. Getting them out on time has really made a difference to the capacity of the team.
- 5.5 CHOP were given two complaints case studies via the OAK to review. Feedback was that complaint one seemed to be missing an assurance that the inaccurate information had been recorded on the system and you will not see this charge again. The letter writer did accept responsibility for the issue though. It was explained that in the new

system, the service not being received will be 'ended' and will then not appear again on your service charge, but in the old method with information stored in a spreadsheet it may not be taken off. The nominal code system was explained and thought to be too complicated by the business and can lead to miscoding on the invoice for a particular scheme. Moving forward, Hyde are reducing the number of nominal codes, so it is clearer when staff pay.

- 5.6 It was noted that the compensation acceptance letter states in 13.2, "in accordance with our income policy" which is not on the website. Also states "Rent account", it was asked if this complainant was a leaseholder. The grammar was noted to be poor, typos was spotted and the tone of the letter did not seem to be very apologetic. The Service Charge Manager would like to put some more complaints case studies on the OAK for residents to review. **ACTION**
- 5.7 It was asked if an amendment on the service charge meant that the 15% management fee should also be reduced as well. Was it an automatic calculation? **ACTION**

6 Service Charge Project Update

- 6.1 The Service Charge Team are currently setting the budget; the budgets have been set in the past by looking at previous years, but this has not been efficient. It was commented by CHOP that this has caused service charges to double and half every year.
- 6.2 The Service Charge Team have been asking the budget holders across the business for their projected spends in 2018/19 and more planning is being done in advance, so that in October 2019 the variance should be much less than in previous years.
- 6.3 Starting in January 2018, Hyde will start doing in year reconciliation and be focusing on April 2017-January 2018. They are getting as many enquiries as possible closed down before Christmas to help free up more resource for this. These first eight months of reconciliation should be complete by July. It was also hoped that the 18/19 estimates should come from the new system, as well as the 17/18 actuals. The reconciliation from January will go into the new system. During May 2018, the Service Charge Team will begin reconciling April's costs. The Property Managers will be able to update the Service Charge Team on service chargeable related issues immediately.
- 6.4 A number of enquiries were received from residents asking for invoices and there are still 59 to complete. Invoice packs are being sent out on a scheme by scheme basis. In future, the invoice packs will be created as we go. Customer Services have been questioning the reasons residents would like particular invoices and this is working well to speed up the process, i.e. Grantham Rd Towers have 15 different services and there are 70 properties in each tower. If the resident pinpoints the services they are interested in it could save a lot of time. The Service Charge Team are not advertising providing invoice packs within 10 working days anymore, as it is more productive to evaluate what needs to be done and a more realistic timescale. The Service Charge Team gave themselves six weeks to do the invoice packs for Grantham Towers, so the officer can also get their business as usual work done concurrently.
- 6.5 A discussion was had around the invoice pack sometimes not matching the service charge statement. The Service Charge Managers have reiterated to the team, if you don't have the invoice, or if it doesn't match, be proactive and let the resident know why. We may not have received the invoice yet or there may need to be a reimbursement.

- 6.6 It was commented that the format of the statements had improved but the detail is still not correct. Residents only want to find out what they are paying for; if the charges increase by 800%, they have a right to understand why. It was also commented that sense checking is also needed more. It was confirmed that Hyde are doing a high level block by block, scheme by scheme sense checking and also looking at the individual units, however, having 1.5 million lines of data, not all will have been looked at.
- 6.7 There will also be a more robust process for new services showing up on service charge statements, by involving the Property Managers in verifying the service is being received. With month to month reconciliation, this will be a lot easier, as oddities will become more obvious.
- 6.8 A discussion was had about how Hyde view CHOP, and CHOP members feel that they need more validation by the business that their involvement is taken seriously and that they are able to improve services. It was again requested that the Head of Service Charge attend a CHOP meeting. The link between HRV and CHOP was discussed. The Head of Housing suggested that the Service Charge Manager bring some key improvements and changes Hyde have made in the last few years to CHOP to show them we are moving in the right direction. **ACTION**

7 Forward Planner

- 7.1 CHOP would like The Head of Housing to return in February and update on the Property Managers. **ACTION**
- 7.2 Agenda items for February include an update on the budget work, update on the service charge project, an agenda item from Home Ownership. **ACTION**
- 7.3 Communal repairs were noted to have got worse recently and that CHOP would like to look at this in 2018. **ACTION**
- 7.4 The replacement of lightbulbs were discussed and it was confirmed that the communal cleaner should be doing the lightbulb replacement., as found in the recent HRE inspection and if there is an issue with the electrics etc. they should sticker the bulb for another contractor to resolve. T&F results to be fed back to CHOP. **ACTION**

8. AOB

- 8.1 The OAK area of CHOP, does not have the full name on it or mention ECHO. **ACTION**

Meeting closed at 8.25pm