

Open Minutes
Tuesday 29th October 2024
In person at 249 Lewisham Way, SE4 1XF
at 7.00pm
And also on Zoom

Present in person: SL-Chair (CM), SJ - Secretary (CM), GM - Treasurer (CM), MM - Committee Member Responsible for Complaints (CM), ED (CM), JC(CM), NA, RG, PB, LM & MP

Present online: SJ (Finance Manager), SS - Vice Chair (CM), AG (CM), BR (CM), LW (CM) & IRJ-T

In attendance in person: MC (Office Manager), LB (Housing Officer), GO (Maintenance Surveyor) & SKU (Administrator & Minutes)

Item No:	Agenda Item	Action Approval Decision
1.	<p>Welcome and apologies: SL welcomed all those present and declared meeting quorate.</p> <p>Apologies were received from: FJ (CM), MB (CM), RB (CM), AS (CM) TG, HS & CM</p>	
2.	Declaration of interest: None	
3.	Approve the minutes of 17th September 2024: Approved	
4.	Action List Update:	

MC has still heard nothing back from London Borough of Lewisham about the allotments.

GO still working on five-year plan which is a huge document to get through.

We need to do an exercise on risk which will be done in the policy group first and then brought to the MANCOM meeting.

We are in the middle of doing the Census which is ongoing.

MC talked about the rules and noted that the first ten pages of the Benefit and Society Act is very interesting as it talks about the act and where it came from. She has attended some of the briefings and thinks that it will be good for us as it gives Coop's a bit more protection. The National Housing Federation are going through it and MC will send out briefing notes that they sent to people so that people can get a chance to read it. SL said that he will call a special meeting so we can go through it as well. We have until December the 10th to give our views.

The planners have come back and asked for two more surveys one being an ecological survey and the other an air quality survey. The two new surveys are now being submitted, and we will wait to hear from them.

EW's apologies were added to the AGM minutes. The updated nomination policy will go to the policy group, it needed tweaking and to add the new post of Member with Responsibility for Complaints.

The answer machine has been updated - Just 24/7 have been removed and Colin of C Hurst electrical added to the out of hours.

Question was asked about getting extra sockets by our contractors privately. SL recommends that for health and safety reasons and record purposes tenants go through the office whether they are paying for it themselves or not. BTC is not opposed to people getting things done. SL gave examples of incidents where people changed electrics and gas pipes which only came to light when ripping out a kitchen. This was one incident which added to high void repair costs last year.

	<p>SJ and GO have had a huge job of delving to find evidence and chasing Hexagon for invoices.</p> <p>MM asked if we are using Help for Heroes for repairs as one of their vehicles was seen parked outside one of our properties. GO confirmed that we were not using them.</p> <p>Members to carry out home visits this is still ongoing.</p> <p>We interviewed 23 people which was far too many and it was agreed that next time we should shortlist at application stage to cut down to at least 10 people being interviewed.</p> <p>MC talked about the proposed Rent Reform Act where new grounds will be introduced. People will have to have more rent arrears before we can serve a notice.</p>	
5.	<p>Report back from BTC voice Group:</p> <p>LM fed back on behalf of The Voice Group. They have a coffee afternoon scheduled for Saturday 1st November, the group did discuss other venues but did not come to a decision so on this occasion it will be held at Muffin Break. Middleton's was a possible venue for the coffee afternoon as it is central and on the bus route. The downside of this venue is that they only accept card, the selection of cakes are not that great, and they are slightly expensive. For those who don't know BTC Voice Group hold their coffee afternoons twice a month.</p> <p>The Panto has been booked for the 15th of December to watch Sleeping Beauty. Tickets will be available to book from the 11th of November and a flyer will be going out shortly to let people know - this year 40 tickets have been booked.</p> <p>SG is finishing off the Voice Group newsletter which will be ready to distribute in a couple of weeks' time. They are launching a competition in that as well for people to design a discreet, covert window sticker. Anyone can enter it is completely optional. The sticker must be a certain size, colourful and bright. The prize will be a £20 Love to Shop voucher. SL suggested we up the prize to £50 to encourage people to enter, LM agreed to take it back to the Voice group for discussion. They will be doing their usual Christmas</p>	

	<p>hamper again this year as this went down quite well last year.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Managers' Report:</p> <p>MC talked about the five-year rent settlement which is an extension of CP1 plus 1%- rent rises will be based on CP1 in September and the maximum we could ask for is 2.7%. SL confirmed that wage increase will not exceed this amount. The sector did ask for a 10-year rent settlement but a five year one will be announced in the budget.</p> <p>MC would like us to consider joining Co-operative UK, membership is £115 plus VAT annually, they produce all the model rules and have some really good information. Although they are based in Manchester, they do online courses that are cheaper to members.</p> <p>SL asked all those in favour for BTC to join Co-operative UK and to get a subscription for the sum of £115 plus VAT to vote. The members voted and the decision to join was carried unanimously.</p> <p>Awaab's Law update is in discussion the last government wanted to apply all 29 hazards in the Housing Health and Safety 2006 legislation, and this would affect us. Noise nuisance is one of those on the list and a lot of our properties have noise concerns.</p> <p>SL noted that arrears need to come down and ideally it should be below 5%. We need to work harder to get people to pay their rent as the Labour government will make it harder to evict people. He insists that LB should start taking those who are not paying their rent to court. Although some of the grounds have been strengthened ideally court action should start before the financial year and rent Reform comes into force.</p> <p>Housing Officer Report</p> <p>We have one void property that needs lots of work and we are just waiting for Hexagon to approve the quotation for the kitchen and installation of the central heating. The property has two gigantic eucalyptus trees that have rot in them. Neighbours on one side of the property are concerned they are going to fall and neighbours on the other side have contacted</p>	<p>LB to start court proceeding for those failing to pay their rent</p>

Environmental Health wanting to know why the trees are being cut down. We need to prove to the council that the trees are not in public view, not have a preservation order and not protected species.

LB has applied for six cases to go to court and the majority are Hexagon properties. When we take Hexagon tenants to court we have to pay for counsel, are liable for court costs and cannot represent ourselves like Brockley tenants. MC added that the management agreement is set up this way and we are not the owners of the building. Unfortunately, we have to pass on the cost to tenants.

SL reminded members that if they are experiencing financial difficulty and cannot pay their rent then they should contact the office and make an appointment to speak to LB and SF, who are there to help. If not, we will apply to court for eviction to get the property back.

We have one long standing member still in hospital and another member we have concerns for, this case is ongoing with social services.

LB is in the process of completing her quarterly checks and is asking people to complete their Tenancy Audit forms.

Maintenance Report

We are not doing too bad in terms of our budget and are on the threshold. Our boiler upgrade has gone up more than double. We were looking to upgrade 4 but it has gone up to seven. GO confirmed that he has already placed orders for the new hydrogen boilers at a cost of £2,700 each. Tommy has given us a good deal in terms of the contract and what we are paying. SL confirmed that GO does not need to ask about replacing boilers he should just go ahead and do it.

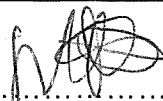
Hexagon are asking for two quotations for anything that meets the threshold. This will affect the turnaround time for work that is being done.

GO has worked with four of Hexagon contractors, he will use them for a while and if they are suitable, he will ask for them to go on our list of approved contractors.

Friendly Street external decorations are coming to an end and the contractor is working on number 24.

	<p>GO addressed concerns raised in the last meeting about one of the contractors. He explained that due to the nature of the job the contractor doing the external decorations will disappear for certain periods and that he is not skiving. He does the preparation and leaves it to cure, whilst he waits for this, he gets on with another job elsewhere and then comes back to touch up the job.</p> <p>Several properties were selected for external repairs and decorations this may have to be delayed, especially the properties that had the windows upgrade. This is because boiler repairs have gone up.</p> <p>GO is getting tender documents ready and by the end of next week he will send out tender invites to contractors. This could potentially take up to 6-8 weeks. Work can start after that even in the winter it won't be a problem, but we are looking towards April - May 2025.</p> <p>Finance Manager Report</p> <p>GE and SJ had a chance to look at some of the budget. They worked together and moved some of the income which was beneficial to BTC, as it has saved the organisation £20,000. GE feels she has a good rapport with SJ, they get on well together and she is looking forward to working with her.</p>	<p>GO to get Tender documents ready</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Approve updates to the Application Criteria</p> <p>The policies have already gone to the policy group. A few more criteria's have been added to the application procedure.</p> <p>we will not take applications from staff members relatives or contractors as we are too small to manage the conflict of interest this would generate.</p> <p>MC clarified that we cannot accept anyone who does not have the right to rent as we would be heavily fined, and they would be evicted.</p> <p>SL asked if anyone had any objections to the updates to the application criteria. Policy approved as no objections received.</p>	<p>MC & policy group to update Allocation Criteria</p>

8.	<p>Approve Equality and Diversity Policy</p> <p>Equality and Diversity Policy – MC used Hexagon’s policy and made it our own with necessary adjustments. MC will amend policy by taking out ‘Hexagon’ on point 1.</p> <p>SL asked if anyone had any objections. Policy approved with amendments as no objections received.</p>	
9.	<p>Approve Compensation Policy</p> <p>We have updated our compensation policy as this was one of the requirements that came from the Ombudsman’s report. Many housing providers use the policy devised by Network homes as it is reasonable, people like it, and the Ombudsman has not complained about it. So, MC has based this policy on theirs and made alterations to it to fit BTC Policy.</p> <p>Question was raised about when to ask for compensation. MC explained that there could be many reasons. It’s on a case-by-case basis and if you have experienced financial loss which would have to be evidenced- all is explained in the policy.</p> <p>SL asked if anyone had any objections to the Compensation Policy. Policy approved as no objections received.</p>	
10.	<p>AOB</p> <p>LM spoke about the book MC put together for the photo exhibition. She appreciates all the hard work and effort MC has put into producing the booklet. However, feels that due to an error in how it was provided to the printer that the print version is not good enough. Copies of the booklet were circulated to the group for feedback and discussion. LM extremely unhappy with how the book looks and already 50 copies have been produced at the cost of £250. The group feels that the project and the quality of the photographs should be honoured. The Voice Group will investigate other printers and get the best production they can afford.</p>	<p>Voice Group to investigate other printers to reproduce exhibition booklet.</p> <p>MC to forward LM all the text pages of the booklet.</p>

Signature.....  Date..... 4/3/25.....

