



Minutes Homeowners Forum

Monday 13th December 2021

6:30pm – 8.30pm, by Zoom

Attending

Homeowners

Adaeze Chukuma (AC)
Ivan Romero (IR)
Jackie McGuinness-Seales (JM)
Jean Hutchinson (JH)
Michael Wailes (MW)
Michelle Wordsworth (MWO)
Pauline Manning (PM)
Sam Eaves (SE)
Samantha Ebanks (SEb)
Sarah Harris (SH)

Hexagon

Amanda Walker, Resident Involvement Officer (AW)
Brian Hughes, Resident Involvement Manager (BH)
Ebrahim Piperdy, Rent and Homeownership Manager (EP)
Rebecca Outram, Housing Services Director (RO)

Apologies

Adam Murby, Homeowner (AM)

Minutes	Action
1) Welcome & introductions	
RO opened the meeting and all attendees introduced themselves.	
2) Agree some rules for working together – draft terms of reference	
RO summarised the circulated draft Terms of Reference (ToR) and asked if there were any key updates at this point. These are a 'starter for ten' draft for the group to collectively agree and we'll look to sign these off at the next meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">SEb: What would happen if membership is low? RO / BH suggested a quorum (minimum number of members present) to make a decision – typically around 25%. Action: Update ToR accordingly	AW
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Meeting on Zoom preferable as large geographical spread (aside from Covid). Hexagon will follow individually to discuss any access requirements. Action: Follow up to discuss any access requirements.	AW
3) Restorative circle	
Open call for Homeowners to share their experiences in a two minute summary: What is it that motivates you to be here tonight? What's happened? What's been	

your experience? How has this impacted up on you? What are you looking for so we can move on?

- SE: Pleased the Forum has been set up, citing a lack of communal maintenance, repairs and cyclical works. Communication from Hexagon has been poor, with incomplete information and lack of transparency. This has been particularly difficult in relation to planned works which have a significant financial implication. Would like to see more frequent communication, responding in a timely manner and honesty / openness / transparency.
- SEb: Issues regarding fire safety, bulk waste, standard of communal works. Communications have been difficult requiring 20-40 emails per month to try and get responses. Hexagon doesn't work holistically. Would like to see Hexagon deliver clear expectations – i.e. do what you say you're going to do and if there is an issue, just say. I'd like to see Hexagon look at procedures (including complaints) and staffing issues to understand what works and what doesn't.
- JH: Echoes others re. poor communication. Happy to see this forum as there seems to be no care for leaseholders. There have been issues with how service charges are calculated. The standard of works has been poor – contractor issues. It feels like buildings are 'let go' and it's too much to ask for the place where you live to be good quality.
- SH: Echoes others' comments. After 11 years the new block is looking very run down in areas – citing maintenance and gardening contractor issues. Service charges don't represent good value for money – unclear why some aspects are very expensive. A previous £80 per month increase was reduced to £60 when queried and question where there have been miscalculations.
- JM: Echoes others' comments and is here to try and understand why these issues are so common. Would like to understand why the lines of communication are so bad and there doesn't appear to be oversight of repair quality. Multiple emails aren't responded to – this is very frustrating. Even if an issue isn't resolved, just been kept updated matters. Where is this approach coming from?
- MWO: Echoes others' comments, citing example that the communal carpet hasn't been cleaned in 13 years despite complaints; and no response to a broken fire window in 8 months. We are here because we care. The focus doesn't seem to be on leaseholders and would like to suggest a standing item in Home News for leaseholders. Raised an ongoing H&S issue regarding the door locking people in.
Action: RO to pick up on H&S issues with MW directly after the meeting.
- AC: The new-build has initially been ok. However, when trying to sell the property, fire safety documents were not provided for a significant time – this delay resulted in loss of stamp duty holiday. People 'pass the buck', don't respond within set timescales and complaints haven't been acknowledged. There is a lack of accountability. Customer services can be quite rude and feel ignored by managers.
- PM: Echoes others' comments, citing sending many emails to Hexagon without reply. Would like to be part of a community to help make things better.

RO

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IR: We care about the place we live and would like to keep it nice and safe. There is a security issue as the door on the building doesn't lock. Also loud music from neighbours (and lack of sound proofing) which is an issue for home working. Action: RO to pick up on H&S issues with IR directly after the meeting. MW: Although we don't have it as bad as others here, the issues are similar. Systemic failures in terms of transparency, communication, standard of works, value for money on service charges. Feel like 'second class citizens' as compared to tenants and Hexagon employees aren't doing their job. <p>RO acknowledged that Hexagon are responsible for about 4000 homes and communication and quality of repairs issues are being raised with general needs tenants too (not targeted to Homeowners). Customer services is at a level RO is totally dissatisfied with and Hexagon leadership has a lot of work to do to improve this – systems and culture are just two areas to look at.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> JM: What has to happen to get a response to an email? RO noted that a contact management system, better culture, monitoring, training and holding people to account are all part of the answer. Hexagon are also considering a 'homeowners' email address that will allow for monitoring and avoid non-response due to leave / sick / individuals etc. Group members noted that complaints haven't been responded to - feels like a systematic breakdown and need action before believing it. 	<p>RO</p>
<p>4) Areas we know need improving & our service improvement plan</p>	
<p>RO summarised areas that Hexagon know need improving and headlines from the service improvement plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved customer service standards: Hexagon are developing a set of customer services standards that are robust and, crucially, can be monitored and transparent. These are being developed with a group of involved residents and will be sent to all residents with an email for comment and to hold us to account. Clearer service charges: We are increasing transparency around service charges so that you can see invoices. We are also doing monthly reconciliation and monitoring of variances to allow more accurate estimation of service charges. Information available online: RO shared a mock-up of a draft estate-specific website that is currently being developed with four estates. Residents will be able to log on and view estate specific information such as Fire Risk Assessments, service charge invoices / statements, repairs information and block inspection outcomes. Looking at putting a QR code on notice boards and ways to provide information to anyone who isn't online. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MW: What level of detail for online repairs information is anticipated? Who will be monitoring it? RO clarified that the intention is for it to include the history, pending items and the status for all communal repairs. EP as Homeownership Lead and Repairs Manager will be monitoring it. <p>Group discussion on the improvement plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SEb: How will improvement be prioritised to reflect what's impacting Homeowner's most? There are a range of other impacting issues (e.g. contract management, Fire Safety etc) PM: A timeline and action plan would be helpful. 	

- **SEb: Take a holistic approach** – include a summary of how all elements (even if not homeowner specific) are being addressed and in this context see what areas to focus on.
 - RO agreed and noted that there is an action plan in place for priority issues that affect all residents. Happy to update the group with this work and would like this group to look specifically at aspects that impact homeowners. The improvement plan will also be available for the Homeowner’s Forum so that the group can input and hold us to account.
 - Bring proposal for prioritisation to the next meeting and ask you if we’ve got those right
- **MWo: Would like for the Forum to be able to contribute ideas, experiences and priorities for the action plan – work collaboratively.** RO welcomed this.

Action: proposal for prioritisation and improvement plan to be shared and discussed at upcoming meeting(s).

RO

Group discussion on cultural change:

- RO outlined that Hexagon are also procuring new repairs contractor - with residents as part of process. That will have a positive impact but it isn't everything. The culture matters and as part of a cultural transformation starting next year there will be strong conversations that all staff need to be working for the benefit of the customers to be at Hexagon.
 - **MW: What authority is there to enforce staff cultural change?** RO There are disciplinary and competency processes in place, the authority of the board is also fully behind and committed to the cultural transformation plan.
 - **AC: Tell us more about the cultural transformation plan (have previously been disappointed even at Director level).** RO There are three directors who are all relatively new and the CEO is retiring next spring. This brings opportunity for change. Part of the transformation will be re-setting the culture and agreeing behaviours that help, not hinder. There will also be work around restorative practice - explaining and understanding the impacts of things not happening properly. It's about accountability and making sure we are delivering the customer service and experience we would want to receive ourselves. A continual improvement ethos at all levels.

Other group discussions:

- **RO at Hexagon:** RO confirmed she is planning on staying at Hexagon a good while yet, working with customers is important and determined to sort things out.
- **Case studies:** It was agreed that the group could work to inform / review case study examples of when things have gone wrong.
- **Thanks:** There were thanks for starting this group, taking on the challenges and using the word accountability.
- **Meeting record:** It was confirmed that the video recording can't be shared but notes will be taken and circulated. Forum member are welcome to share these / update neighbours.
- **Home News:** Suggestion that there is an article announcing the Homeowners Forum in the next Home News. As well as future articles to provide information and legislation updates for leaseholders.
 - AC suggested that it would be helpful to include recent updates on the sub-letting policy.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ RO The next Home News has just gone to print but it may be possible in the next edition or an e-newsletter could go directly to Homeowners to update on the Forum. <p>Action: Put forward recommendation to Editorial Panel – do dedicated Homeowner e-newsletter if needed.</p>	AW / EP
5) Agreeing how we'll work together and out list of priorities	
<p>Forum member each put their top priorities in the chat, summarised below:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Communication & transparency (7) ● Repairs & maintenance (7): Including contract management, building upkeep and schedule of works, standard of works ● Customer Service (5): Including culture, accountability, living to values and transparency ● Service charges (3): Including value for money and transparency ● Fire safety (3): Including works outstanding and schedule of upcoming works ● Health & safety (3): Including building security issues ● Selling (1): Service that doesn't delay sale 	
<p>There was also a call to understand Hexagon's priorities.</p>	
<p>Group discussion on service charges:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● EP: Thanked everyone for comments so far and acknowledged that the service charge team need to get good administrative management right; delivering a transparent service where residents can see what service charge is going towards, including clear communication, value for money and quality of works. EP would like to evidence this for all residents on the estate-specific websites. Service charges will now be internally reviewed on a monthly basis rather than at the end of the year to be more accurate – EP would like to visit each scheme to assess works and only charge for works that exist. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AC: Can members of the Forum join these visits on our estates to share our knowledge? EP Welcomed this and is very happy to work in collaboration. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Share site visit dates with Forum members when known. ○ JM: How can service charges be checked without invoices? EP noted that a resident on the same estate has asked for 19/20 & 20/21 invoices and is happy to send-on. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action: Send invoices to JM. ○ MW: Concerned that service charges are being raised when an issue isn't fixed (citing electric gates not working for over a year and being charged maintenance). EP and RO noted that recent changes have started a more strategic approach - monthly reviews should now pick-up repeated repairs and give the ability for Hexagon to review and not pass on the charge if it isn't justified. ○ SH; Concerned that homeowners have potentially been overcharged in the past. RO advised that it is Hexagon's intention to review the past couple of years to make sure we're charging fairly. We can't do anything about the past but can make sure we have a robust and fair process in place. 	
<p>Other group discussions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is staffing level an issue? RO can increase headcount if that is an issue but before that would like to work on systems, training, improving attitudes. 	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you be sure you (holistically) know what's gone wrong and why? RO - I'm making decisions on what I'm seeing happened, and when, I think I've got to the bottom of it. I'm going to work with what I've got at the moment whilst keeping eyes and ears open to understand more. 	
6) Next steps & next meeting	
<p>AW summarised next steps:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes will be produced and circulated to everyone to ensure they are a true reflection. • Priorities: Following today's discussions, a proposal for prioritisation can be developed and shared at the next meeting, in context of the improvement plan and action plan. Action: Draft proposal for prioritisation and share improvement plan • Terms of Reference: Updated ToR will be recirculated for comment, with a view to agree at the next meeting. Action: AW to circulate. Forum members to send through any comments. • Code of Conduct: This will be sent to all members for digital signing. Action: AW to circulate. Forum members to sign. • Chair and Vice Chair: If possible, we will look to confirm a Homeowner Chair and Vice Chair of the Forum at the next meeting. Action: AW to send further information on the roles. Forum members, please advise AW in advance of the next meeting if you would like to nominate yourself. • Voucher: A GiffPay voucher will be sent to everyone as a thank you for your time and contribution. • Next meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tuesdays and Thursday, early evening, are preferred days of the week for the group. ○ It was agreed to meet every two months, particularly in early stages to keep momentum. <p>Action: AW to circulate February dates (not half term).</p>	
7) AOB	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific follow-ons took place with IR and MW regarding safety issues raised. • RO thanked everyone for their honesty, time and being part of this process. • No other AOB items raised. 	