

Partners' Residents Open Forum Meeting 9 May 2024

Partners' staff: Katrina Dalby, Service Improvement and Engagement Manager

Islington Council Representative: Helen McNeill - Contract Compliance Manager

Islington Council Fire Safety Team/Home Ownership Team:

Cosmin Tirca – Senior Project Manager – AJS, Lydia Mbuyi – Project Liaison Officer – AJS, Brian McDonald – Senior Project Manager – AD Construction
 Ionut Loanca- Interim Project Manager – AD construction, Leanne Peters – Project Liaison Officer – AD Construction, Simon Bingham – Fire Alarm Specialist/Inspector – all works, Andrew Beeton – Electrical Inspector – all works, Richard Powell – Home Ownership Manager

3 resident attendees

Discussion Item	Response if applicable	Actions
Action points from last meeting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No response regarding meeting date changes, therefore meeting changed today and 4 July. Will contact residents for approval as need to move the in-person July meeting to the 3 July or another date if this is inconvenient. Details of how to sign up for leaseholder email alerts with members who requested it. Email asking for volunteers to be part of a test of the new mailing service we are using. Some additional issues raised some additional areas to be tested which I am investigating. Contacted the two residents who raised concerns about damp. Invited the Fire Safety Team to this meeting 	
Text Message Satisfaction Surveys At the last meeting we shared details about a new text message satisfaction survey we were planning to start in April.		

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<p>The surveys went live as planned. Information is on our website and on the front page of the latest Gazette to explain the new service.</p> <p>466 texts have been sent so far, and the response rate has been 17% and the overall satisfied rate is 90%.</p>		
<p>Flat Front Door Checks</p> <p>New fire regulations came into force in 23 January 2023.</p> <p>Following last year's initial check, it is an annual requirement that we inspect the front entrance door to homes where a block is 5 storeys or higher and a flat entrance door leads onto a communal area to check:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The door frame is in good condition • The door is in good condition and fits the frame • If door closers are in place whether work well • Door latches are working <p>We're starting this year's programme and have written to around 60 leaseholders to arrange appointments so far. If residents have any queries, they should contact enquiries@partnersislington.net</p>		
<p>Fire Safety Works</p> <p>The Fire Safety Works are being delivered by Islington Council. The Council's Fire Safety Team and Home Ownership Team attended</p>	<p>The following questions were raised by residents and addressed by Islington Council's representatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>When are the works proposed at properties in Shepperton Road?</i> 	<p>Brian to contact resident to arrange viewing of completed work.</p>



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<p>the Open Forum to answer resident's questions about the works.</p> <p>The Council will install a mains powered communal early warning fire detection system. This will consist of detectors in the communal areas and within each flat. All detectors will be radio (wireless) interlinked to one another. In the event of fire, in either the communal area or a flat, all detector alarms will be triggered within the building/block, to facilitate a simultaneous evacuation. Where required, they will also upgrade flat front doors and update the emergency lighting.</p> <p>The £10k 5 year rolling cap only applies to work delivered by Partners. The fire safety work is not included in Partners contract and is being delivered by Islington Council and is therefore not included in the cap.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>How do we check if our property - converted lateral house with 3 flats - communal hallway - falls within the criteria for the works?</i> <i>Can the Council clarify how the works fall under 'Qualifying Works'?</i> <i>Can residents see an example of work that has been completed?</i> <p>The property in question is a 3-storey street property with a communal area, therefore it does fall into qualifying works. Higher risk properties were prioritised in the programme. The majority of these have been completed and the team expects to start Shepperton Road at the end of the year. Work will most likely consist of the early warning detection system and front door replacements. Confirmation of the planned work will be provided once a visit has taken place. Leaseholders can opt into the Council's fire door replacement or can chose to do the work themselves and obtain sign off through Building Control.</p> <p>The early warning detection system is monitored by the council. The Council receives a system update every 12 hours and can monitor activations.</p> <p>The Fire Safety Team expect leaseholders to raise any questions about the scope and cost of works with them through the Section 20 process.</p> <p>The team are happy to show residents examples of completed fire safety works. Residents should ask the Fire Safety Team about this when they are contacted about their work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A leaseholder at the meeting noted that they had spoken to a number of leaseholders recently who said that their section 20s were very high and that they hadn't had advance notice of the works.</i> 	

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	<p>Section 20 notices are issued in advance of any work starting and detail why the work is needed, what work is planned and how much it will cost. The section 20 process is the opportunity for residents to raise questions and the Council must pay proper regard to any comments raised.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A resident asked about costs relating to painting/making good and carpet replacement and noted reference to 'paint with a fire-retardant paint' on their section 20.</i> <p>The council confirmed that Partners properties are not being decorated other than carrying out any 'making good' that may be needed because of the work. No carpets will be replaced in Partners properties through this work.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A resident felt that the required work had been over specified and that when looking at similar equipment he had found it cheaper online and asked why the work was being done now.</i> <p>Some costs online may not include fitting and installation and therefore may not be like for like. Overall costs are dependent on the size of the building and the results of the building survey. The systems that are being installed are bespoke to each property and it is impossible to say how much a system will cost until you know what is required.</p> <p>The Council started work to blocks over 18 meters in 2020 and now these are complete they are working on the lower rise buildings with a rolling programme across the borough. Based on the Government's building safety act some works may not be chargeable to leaseholders.</p>	<p>Brian to review resident's s20 for reference to painting.</p> <p>Resident to provide a list of items identified as cheaper with the Council.</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A leaseholder noted that their lease states that the council need to act reasonably. How are leaseholders expected to afford these works, how will they be value for money and are the council obliged to carry out the work? How are the tenanted properties being funded?</i> <p>The council are responsible for carrying out this work where there is a shared communal area. The landlord (Islington Council) has to put protection in place for residents. Most of the street properties have a single means of escape with flat doors opening out onto it. A back door into a garden is not considered a means of escape.</p> <p>The Housing Revenue Account funds the work to the tenanted properties. The council must budget for these costs, they can't take money for this work from other funds, e.g. council tax.</p> <p>If leaseholders have concerns about the cost or any aspects of any planned work the Council would always advice seeking independent legal advice and recommended the Leasehold Advisory Service https://www.lease-advice.org/.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A leaseholder suggested that the Council should consider some sort of concession for leaseholders to balance the costs of the work such as a reduction in ground rent or service charges.</i> <p>We are unable to reduce the ground rent or service charges. These are separate costs for the insurance and day to day upkeep of the building. We know that bills can be generally unwelcome. Under the terms of your lease service charges are payable in full within 14 days of demand. However, we do not expect leaseholders to be able to do this. Instead, following practical completion of works leaseholder will be sent final invoices after works have been completed and the 12-month defects period has expired. The</p>	

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	<p>Council is very conscious of potential recharges to leaseholders and is currently reviewing its repayment options.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>A leaseholder asked why the work is outside of the £10k cap which exists for PFI leaseholders?</i> <p>Under Partners Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contract Leaseholders are not charged more than £10,000 for repairs, maintenance and cyclical works in any five-year period. This is because the government partly fund these works under the PFI financing agreement. However, any works carried out by the Council which are not part of the PFI contract are not subject to the £10,000 cap. This is the same for works carried out to non PFI properties.</p> <p>1. Can the fire team please provide Statistics from the Borough of Islington regarding number of fires on similar buildings (Victorian era, converted into flats) with response times from the fire brigade and casualties?</p> <p>This information can be obtained from the London Fire Brigade by submitting a Freedom of Information (FOI).</p> <p>2. Should the information not be readily available, can the team explain a) when it will be available and b) how the person conducting the FRA determined the likelihood of a fire in a building and the severity level of such an occurrence, if not by consulting such information?</p> <p>When completing a fire risk assessment, the probability or likelihood of a particular hazard resulting in a fire and the severity</p>	

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	<p>of how serious the potential problem might be in terms of harm to people or damage to property focuses on identifying the ignition sources, fuel sources to measure the possibility of a fire occurring.</p> <p>3. Noting that the referenced date on most FRAs for completion of these works was 2021-2023, a) how does the Freeholder safeguards or does not act against the financial interests of any individual Leaseholder in delivering these works? To clarify further, will the Council - the Freeholder - refund part of the recently completed Cyclical works cost? In some of the properties the Freeholder has recently completed cyclical works that include making good and decorating communal areas, only to issue new estimates to deliver similar nature of works, having failed to comply with its own planned schedule of works.</p> <p>We must complete the required fire legislation work to comply with the (Fire Safety) Order 2005; this work is not part of any cyclical or maintenance programmed works.</p> <p>4. What other alternative options have been considered apart from the two that were presented in the Section 20 to deliver the scope of works and what was the consultation process that was followed with the Leaseholders?</p> <p>Section 20 presented two scenario options for this type of Victorian construction. The active fire detection system is considered the least disruptive to household occupancy, less costly, and meets the requirements of the, (Fire Safety) Order 2005.</p> <p>5. What is the likely timeframe for properties in Halliford Street?</p> <p>The package takes approximately 12 weeks but once a property is accessed work should be completed in 2 weeks.</p>	

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<p>Cyclical Decorations</p> <p>A resident asked the following questions regarding the Cyclical Decorations programme:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. I want to hear both from Islington Council Housing Dept and from Partners to explain why cyclical works cycle has shortened from 9 to 5 years. This is based on my own experience, but I hear it is the same for other leaseholders. 2. How can I access information about the number of cyclical repairs per year and revenues of the Council and Partners from cyclical works for each year of the duration of the contract? Thank you. This should be public information. 3. Which is the FOFR contact for Partners? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The property in question was refurbished in 2008 and should have been painted within 7 years but wasn't painted again until 2018. The decorating cycles for the property in question are 2018, 2024 and 2031. Therefore, over the 30-year contract it will have been painted four times, on average approximately every 7 years, although there was a 10-year gap between 2008 and 2018. There are some timescale discrepancies to what the expected cycle of cyclical decorations was due to amendments to the programme to align work by geographical area. Overall, all properties in the PFI1 contract will receive cyclical decorations 4 times. Best practise for completing external decorations is every 5-7 years. 2. The revenue to cover the costs of these works is an element paid as part of the Unitary Payment (UP). The UP is made up of all the different streams the council pay monthly to cover maintenance costs for special maintenance/responsive repairs/voids and cyclical works. As these form part of the payment mechanism in the contract (schedule 6). The Price Breakdown Information is sensitive commercial information. Disclosure of it is likely to prejudice the commercial interests of Partners, its investors and its contractors. Clause 54 of the PFI Contract provides that the Council is under an obligation to keep confidential "all matters relating to this Contract". Disclosure by the Council of the Price Breakdown Information would result in Partners having an actionable claim for breach of confidence against the Council. 3. Any FOI request should be sent to enquiries@partnersislington.net. Regarding this specific enquiry, 	

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	section 43 of the FOIA would apply and we would not disclose these costs.	

Date of next meeting –3 July in person at Partners’ Colebrooke Place office