

Luxborough Tower Residents Association

Minutes from committee meeting with the Estate Office

Weds 23rd March 2022 6pm 20th floor corridor

Present: Mike Kostyn (Chair) on Zoom, Nick Vinson (Vice Chair), Andrew Hughes (Secretary), Denise Atkinson-Hines, Alex Reid, Sara MacKay, Sharon Tash (observer), Martina Tsembelis (observer) Ray Allard (WCC Housing Team Manager), Leon Williams (WCC Area Housing Manager)
Apologies: Josephina Becci, Geneve McDonald (WCC Housing Officer)

Items in alphabetical order, with space for responses. A long list because of not meeting during the pandemic. A theme throughout was poor communications by WCC. Most of the topics here have already been raised many times, with a long and frustrating history of no response, or inadequate follow up actions. Is this a proper level of service?

These minutes include further discussion after the meeting, contributions from WCC and other topics, to give as complete a picture as possible.

- ASB. Recent intrusions on site, and into the building itself. Regular coming together of young men and cars into the rear car park. Aggressive and possibly damaging behaviour. Reported to WCC. Police called. Problem exacerbated by failure to repair car park barrier

Car park barrier fixed but failed again. Unable to get it working again consistently. New barrier replacement due May-July 2022. **WCC requesting specification of the new barrier and asking if Wates can move the installation forward**

- Bins: Location seems to have settled down. Still a discussion about how many of each type? How to stop stuff accumulating on the ground? Asked Estate Office to find out:
 - how many recycling bins are 'contaminated'
 - how often all 3 recycling bins are used

Agreed that location has settled down, and that residents seem to be using the bins more carefully, with fewer contaminated bins. Usage is 60-80% across 3 bins on 2 collections per week, which overall seems a reasonable level. Meanwhile better communications with WCC Refuse and Recycling improving notification if bins full.

Asked WCC to explore whether the rubbish bins could be moved a few feet to the left across the adjacent motorcycle parking space (without blocking emergency exit from building behind) – would ease pressure on space and blocking of garages, and possibly allow extra food waste bin. **WCC said this would interfere with the parking spaces**

WCC agreed to hurry up repair to garage 8, so that DA-H could swap her garage.

Discussed food waste re-cycling. **WCC trialling this and might involve compost bin bags and a small extra red bin**

One incident of fly-tipping from a property not Luxborough Tower, but not enough to justify the labour councillors desire to move the bins back to the undercroft. Shortly, when the landscape project starts, the undercroft flooring is to be completely re-laid, making it **inappropriate as a location for these bins.**

- Cleaning: will be included in survey on Estate Inspection. NV queried the cleaning of the lifts

Mitin Patel (WCC) reports that this has been dealt with.

Discussed changes to cleaning of foyer and lifts: **micro fibre clothes instead of wet mops? WCC also looking at cleaning of main doors**

WCC pointed out that during the building work on site there will be times when extra cleaning will be required. Wates will be aware of this. **The cleaning supervisor has been reminded that significant spillages must be cleaned even after the daily clean has been completed.**

- Clear corridors. Tripping hazards and all sorts of stuff left in corridors. WCC to take a stronger line, and will be included in next Estate Inspection, Weds 30th 1pm – all welcome

WCC will impose their Fire Loading Policy at the next Estate Inspection. Thereafter a discussion about a stricter no tolerance policy. Possibly use Luxborough Tower as a pilot venue. NV pointed out that the legal leases expect clear public areas.

On Estate Inspection all properties with items have been served with notice to remove items (24 in total). **Items to be removed by WCC next week if not removed by residents.**

- CCTV door bells. WCC agreed that these were not appropriate for the corridors in Luxborough Tower and would ask for them to be removed.

VN reported that not all had been removed. WTC commented that there had been a legal test case confirming the policy and process here, **so that WCC could and would enforce removal**

Change of WCC staff on Estate Inspection and CCTV door bells not checked. **Carry forward**

- Estate Inspection 1pm 30th March. All residents welcome
 - AH has also invited Chris Shoubridge, Senior Westminster Housing manager, who is visiting estates and blocks across Westminster
 - Other Estate Inspection dates posted on noticeboard: Mon 18 Jul, Thu 17 Nov

All welcome. Chris Shoubridge did not attend, **but if not WCC will organise another date for a visit**

- Heating: what is the plan for the temporary boiler and heating in the future?
 - Noted that the University's planning request for new gas flues up the front of the building was turned down
 - Gavin Ridgewell WCC has been chasing the University to prepare a plan for their own future heating, and then discuss the basement boilers with WCC and LTRA. Response soon
 - AH met John Haydon who has the same doubts and queries about future heating plans for the Tower. If communal gas heating is installed, we risk breaking our carbon footprint. If we go for electricity, what price per unit will be charged? Otherwise ...
 - Incidentally AH & JH noted the lack of major water leaks this year and wondered if it was the result of running our own heating boiler – smoother operation at lower pressures

WCC reported there is no lease in place at present. However progress has been made over recent weeks to re-start the discussions and get a lease in place. We expect a lease in the next couple of months.

- Discussions continuing as to what a dedicated heating system for LT would be. We hope good progress could be made this summer to allow works to start at the end of the year. Meanwhile **WCC bringing in a consultant to look at options**. As part of which visits will be made to 2 flats to inspect original heating system (hot air vents). This would be extremely helpful in progressing the heating solution proposal. Can LTRA help to identify any residents who could help? (AH has volunteered)

Clarification of the difference between Major Works Surveyor and this Consultant:

- The major works surveyor is reviewing the 2018 client brief which did not include works to the central plant (boilers) as back then the system was connected to the universities boilers
- The situation has now changed, and the plan is to have heating units separate from the university. The new consultant will predominately be reviewing this central plant option, and reviewing the overall approach to see if there are other recent developments which could be considered.

- Insurance – Building cover

Recently LTRA asked WCC to clarify how building insurance charged. Detail question to sort out:

- What do they do if the damage to their property appears not to be covered either by their house insurance or by the buildings insurance: for example Inter flat leaks?

WCC The query related to which insurance policy to use if there is a leak into a leaseholder's property that originates from another leaseholder. The advice I have been given is that this can and should be claimed using the buildings insurance policy. There are some exceptions with regards to the cause of the damage – i.e. gradual damp issues not being covered by the policy, but leaks certainly irrespective of the source.

Details of where how to make a claim can be found here:

<https://www.westminster.gov.uk/housing/leaseholders/about-your-property/insurance>

There is further guidance, which I have put on the Luxborough Tower website.

- Leaks – 23rd Sept 2021 meeting with WCC (Sheila Allen) about improvement in leaks protocol?. Will this convert into better settlement of leaks? Communications to be improved. That meeting agreed that the WCC leaks team would organise a follow up meeting in Jan/Feb to discuss whether the protocols had worked. No meeting called (perhaps because no serious leak since?) And, see point about leaks above under heating

WCC reported that there had been 13 leaks since Sept, and it seemed that the new protocol had operated properly, with new process used to gain access: 3 legal letters, etc

But new leak in the meeting room.

The protocol has been used to establish where this leak comes from – 3 possible flats narrowed down to 1. Still waiting for third flat to be checked as source of leak. **WCC said visit planned for next week with repair asap. Re-decoration will follow after room has dried out - repaint the damaged works & replace damaged carpet tiles.**

- Luxborough Street Redevelopment of play space. In progress. Now a Resident Liaison Officer in place: Sinead King, working from our Meeting Room, which they have decorated:
 - WCC website about the project www.westminster.gov.uk/luxborough-street
 - email address for all queries and comments Luxboroughdevelopment@westminster.gov.uk
 - plans for occasional open meetings – to be arranged

NV showed meeting the document WCC & Wates have created to show outline of works. AH wondered why it hadn't been edited as per NV's suggestions and then widely distributed. **AH will follow up. Still waiting for document to be released**

- Major Works. Process currently with lawyers. WCC have agreed independent surveyors to assess what work needs doing. Two named surveyors have been agreed. WCC and LTRA to follow up

The whole process has gone silent. **WCC reported: We have reviewed and have some queries over the detail. We hope to have our comments over to our legal team this week.**

- Parking - still seem to be spare spaces? Barrier left open for weeks at a time. See above.

For barrier repair see under ASB topic above. **WCC to conduct an audit of spaces.**

- Service Charges. Both NV and AH asked WCC accounts to clarify the huge charge for block electricity on the last Service Charges bill. No response

MK was emphatic that the block electricity charge was implausible. Possible someone is stealing the electricity supply? MK wondered why it hadn't already been responded to, considering that it had been raised 6 months ago.

Response arrived after day after the meeting., with several pages of detailed payments. Further queries have been received from LTRA on 29/3/22. We wanted an investigation and explanation rather than just listings. **The basic questions remain:**

- **Is the block electricity figure credible?**
- **Why 3 Service charge letters each failing to show fuel charges properly**

- Window cleaning. LTRA asked for a change to the cleaning regime. NV organised a demonstration with an WCC H&S officer and a window cleaner. WCC were adamant that regulations have changed, and the corridor windows have to be cleaned by abseil. WCC to confirm dates and costs

May 2022 / August 2022 / November 2022 / February 2023

Residents Association Business

- Membership mostly static because of pandemic. Current membership from Oct 2019: individual members 88 / flats represented 64 = 56%
- WCC paid annual grant of £441.50. Current accounts: LTRA £1,719 / Other £4,89 (thanks to O'Shea and a new payment from a window replacement crane). Total £6,203. Hard copy at AGM
- Legal Advice – hard copy of costs at AGM
- We will have to run a full membership campaign this autumn
- A thank you to Westminster who organised a lunch for representatives of Residents Associations across the City: Lord Mayor, Head of Housing, various councillors, senior WCC managers. AH attended for LTRA and did some canvassing for Luxborough Tower – heating and Major Works

Other Business

- Repair to footpath – this repair was completed to remedy a trip hazard. We are obliged to repair in case of injury to residents or the public.
- Camera will be attached to the roof of Luxborough Tower to record the redevelopment, recording progress for publicity purposes. The camera has a privacy shield to prevent it from capturing images from the public footpath.