

Minutes of Meeting

Meeting: Members' Forum Meeting
Date: 15 September 2022
Time: 18:00 – 20:00
Venue: Boardroom

Present

Margaret Buckell	Rob Stark
Vic Breach	Sue Such
Gerald Prior	Amanda Browning
Bertie Doy	John Smelt
Ann-Marie O'Sullivan - Chair	Kay Sentence
Peter Haynes	
Deb Wills	

Also in attendance

Matt Archer, Jackie Logan, Michelle Pugh-Roberts & Andrea Bain

1 Apologies for Absence

Aurora Acone, Kay Hyde, Val Kir

2 Approval of Minutes - Approved

3. Chairs report by Ann-Marie O'Sullivan

As we are getting back to our full face to face meetings now, I will need to remind you for the meetings to run smoothly and for each member to go through the chair to speak.

This helps me to keep to time and allows different people to get involved, this is also helpful if we have any virtual guests.

There have been a lot of changes recently that have really been out of our hands. I understand it will be affecting most if not all our households here tonight.

Just to update you, Soha are taking all the steps they can to help with the cost-of-living crisis. Rents and service charges will be going up which will have an impact on each and every household. When Soha have more information, they will be coming to the Forum with information. In the meantime, you will see there is a

workshop at the end of this meeting, where we will have the opportunity to think about how Soha can best support residents most affected

4. Chief Executive Update by Matt Archer

External news

New Prime Minister Liz Truss appoints Simon Clarke as new Housing Minister. We await to hear what changes will be put in place following his appointment.

Inflation is currently at 9.9%. This is the highest we have seen it in many years. Key indications for us are the cost of delivering our services in terms of building materials, contractors, cost of living pressures on residents and staff, and how we respond appropriately.

Energy Cap at £2.5k for 2 years announced last week. We await further information in due course.

Soha to take part in rental cap consultation by the regulator. Possible rent increase will take effect from April 2023. Typically, that has been set relative to CPI and RPI. Government is currently consulting, and their preferred option is to cap these increases at 5%

Internal news

Soha's new recruitment brings staffing numbers to 151 so we are growing steadily.

It has been decided that Wallingford Retirement Living Scheme to be fully social rent. Historically, we have had a mixture of affordable rent, social rent along with shared ownership options.

Independent Living (IL3) to be reclassified. This means that anyone living in an Independent Living 3 property will still get the same level of service but will not be required to pay the service charge. This change has been made following a recent Scrutiny and Audit recommendation made by the group.

BD asked if all residents in Independent Living will get a letter explaining the change? MA advised yes, that will happen. JL also explained that the senior's group are in the process of designing a leaflet for all Independent Living residents with detailed information of what this service provides as there appeared to be some confusion amongst the residents what type of property they lived in i.e. IL1, 2 or 3. VB advised it would be very helpful if a letter was sent out to all residents explaining this. MA agreed that this will happen.

To improve the service to our residents a door knock was due to take next week, but due to the passing of the Queen we have decided to postpone this date, provisionally to the first week of November.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Wave Two Funding coming soon to make residents home as energy efficient as possible.

We have a working group that has been set up to address the cost-of-living crisis. This group will include staff and members. Please let Michelle know if you are interested in becoming part of this group.

5. Service Charges and Inflation by Margaret Buckell

Rising cost of energy and other inflation pressures are expected to impact on service charges. Soha has set up a working group to understand the size of the increase and how to help contain any significant increases and the best way to communicate with residents. To ensure that we get the Members' Forum input to the process, a group of us, myself as Portfolio holder and other colleagues, Vic, Dreena and Peter will form a group to look at this. Our first meeting with Soha staff is in a few weeks so I will ensure that your views are taken into account and keep you informed.

By the next Forum Meeting in November, meetings will be underway so we will hopefully be able to provide you with at least a preliminary statement.

6. Draft SLT Paper on Independent Living 3 Service by Jude McCaffrey

For noting only.

7. Voting for Portfolio Holders by Ann-Marie O'Sullivan

There are two positions available for a Portfolio Holders role.

1. Finance
2. Shareholder/Leaseholder

VB has put himself forward for Finance and MT as Shareholder/Leaseholder. A vote was taken by a show of hands, and both were voted in.

8. Cost of Living Crisis workshop by Matt Archer and Amanda Browning

We will be focusing on the cost-of-living crisis as a priority. We have been liaising with local partners, Soha staff and the Board.

Amanda Browning had prepared a paper for the Forum based on the below

Case Study on the Cost-of-Living Crisis

- Based on a client who lives alone with no dependents, on health benefits.
- This covers the increase in energy usage only. This does not calculate the increase in cost of food and other household bills over the coming year.

In the table below we have used the new energy cap charges to predict the costs for the coming year and compare these with charges from earlier this year to see how much this has increased.

The latest government energy cap:

- Electricity: 34p per kWh with a standing charge of 46p per day

- Gas: 10.3p per kWh with a standing charge of 28p per day

STANDING CHARGE			UNITS (kWh)	
	Electric p/mth	Gas p/mth63	Electric p/mth	Gas p/mth
Mar 2022	£6.70	£7.56	£40	£40
Oct 2022 (new cap)	£14.00	£8.51	£80.8	£132
Increase £ per mth	£7.30	£1	£40.8	£92
% Increase	109%	13%	102%	230%
Increase £ per year	£87.60	£11	£489	£1,104
TOTAL				£1691.60

Cost of living payments against increased energy costs	
Council tax rebate	£150
COL payment for people on benefits	£650
Energy Support	£400
COL payment for people on disability benefits	£150
Comparison additional income versus costs	
Total additional income	1350
Total additional energy costs	£1691.60
Difference	-£341.6

In addition to these costs Inflation is currently at 10%. This is an average across all consumable items. The highest increases are on staples like flour and low-fat milk (29.7% and 34% respectively), whilst many of the lowest increases are confectionary, alcohol and cigarettes (4%, 0.7-5.7% and 7.9% respectively). The BBC have published a good, brief overview of this topic in a recent article.

Following Amandas presentation the Forum broke into workshop groups to answer the following questions based on the information provided on the Soha website regarding the cost-of-living crisis (COLC)

1. How do we make sure everyone gets access to this information & how do we communicate to our residents?
2. How accessible is this information?
3. Is this the right information? Is the level of detail right?

Feedback was gathered follow the workshop

Answers to question 1

Door knock, Home Talk, Letters, Tenant Times, Posters, Leaflets, social media, Surgeries in schemes/Care Schemes, Jargon Buster, Phone number in CAB,

Links to Martyn Lewis talks. Communication hubs

Answers to question 2

Accessibility expert to see what's needed via websites i.e. font, colour, consistency. Having a contact point at Soha dedicated to front line advice. Contact people that do not have access to the net.

Answers to question 3

Need to check links work. Use a strap line on website to grab people's attention i.e., "if you are struggling call this number" or "always contact Soha if you are in difficulties"

This information will be used to collaborate and work out how we have best support/signpost our residents.

9. AOB

GP and BD have been looking at the estates improvement budget and made many improvements to various estates.

Please see below some of the improvements that have been made from 2021 to 2022

Date Received	Address	Details	Approx Cost	Decision / Update
	St Marys Close, Wheatley	Would like a greenhouse and hose pipe.	£0.00	Requested quote. Deferred to 2020/21. 12.10.20 Emailed Tnt saying £600 approved subject to quotations.
	Woodgate House, Henley	Would like 3 wooden tables for communal garden.	£300.00	Approved 20/21 14.01.20 what sort of tables? What about chairs? Chairs not required as they have benches. ML to confirm if still required due to no call back. Spoke to tnt and she said that she would still like them.
	Phillimore House, Shiplake	Would like greenhouse, shed and water butt	£0.00	Approved subject to quotations (£1000) 12.10.20 Email sent to tnt saying that it £1000 had been approved but subject to quotations. Water butt has been given. Chase Idverde greenhouse and shed. 26.01.21 Email sent to Idverde chasing quote. NO

				QUOTE RECEIVED £1200
11.10.21	Oakdale House, Wallingford	Would like 2 x trellis (£109.98), fixings (£20), 3 x compost (£18), 2 x shrubs (£22), 2 x pots (B&M) (£21.98)	£191. 96	Approved. Bin store, along patch. Trellis. 25.10.21 Spoke to tnt to confirm that it has been approved. She would like to say thank you to all. Tenant will purchase and send in receipts. Receipts received totalling £251.35.
	Oakdale House, Wallingford	Would like two garden tables and 12 chairs for residents to sit outside	£301. 98	COMPLETED
	Ock Bridge Place, Abingdon	Would like flowers and compost	£60.0 0	COMPLETED
10.10.21	Seymour Park Road, Chinnor	Would like a shed to store bicycles and other large items also £50 voucher for plants. Shed £250 ? Would like 6' x 10' shed and concrete base	£300. 00	Approved . EL to get quote & order vouchers
14.02.22	Mowforth Close	Would like table and chairs to replace broken ones	£410. 00	Approved. Completed
02.03.22	St Marys Close, Wheatley	Would like a four arm rotary dryer	£34.9 9	Approved and ordered 17.03.22
15.02.22	Petypher House, Kingston Bagpuize	Would like large cushions for chairs to raise seats as to low	£150. 00	Approved. Completed

06.04.22	Ock Bridge Place, Abingdon	Would like Plants/flowers for the flower tubs Soha provided	£72.00	£80.00 vouchers approved
14.04.22	The Acreage, Chalgrove	Would like table, chairs and parasols all wooden and bench	£600.00	Approved

PH would like to revisit who can apply for membership as he feels it compromising to the Community Strategy not allowing associate household members to join the Membership scheme. It was agreed that this would be an item in the November Members' Forum meeting.

AB advised the eligibility criteria was discussed with the Membership Commission prior to it forming part of the application process and inclusion in the Resident Membership Policy. However, If the Members' Forum (representing resident shareholding Members) and Staff Consultative Committee (representing staff members) agree that Soha should allow anyone over the age of 18 and living in a Soha property to become a shareholding Member, then we can review our current shareholding policy and membership criteria.

JL asked the group to give feedback on the Communities Strategy which was improved by members at the Board AGM on 7 Sept. One of the main objectives of the Forum is to monitor the strategy. It was agreed that this would be an agenda item in November's Members' Forum meeting.

Date of next meeting – November 17th

Signed..... Date
Chair of Members' Forum