

Items from the East Tenant Only meeting held on 9/10/14

1. Security doors and postal deliveries

In Craven Vale around half the blocks have security doors. They have a Trade button which stays on until 11am. The postal delivery is often later than this, so the postal workers have to ring all the doors in the blocks to get in. The same can happen when couriers are delivering parcels. This can be very disruptive for residents.

In one instance, a resident didn't receive their post for 3 days, and missed a hospital appointment as a result.

The meeting discussed several solutions to this problem:

- a. To have a secure key box outside each block, and give the code to Royal Mail and couriers. It was felt that the keys may get lost, so this wouldn't be a good option.*
- b. Ask the Post Office to do their deliveries earlier.*
- c. To change the Trade Button timer, so Royal Mail and other couriers could access the blocks until 1pm. It was agreed that this would be best option.*

The Post Office have asked Craven Vale Community Association to adjust the Trade Button timer to 1pm, but they have been advised by the RIO that they must carry out a survey first. Alan raised this proposal at the last Area Panel and was advised that Laura Turner is carrying out a pilot study into this issue.

It was agreed that this should be raised at the Area Panel again.

Clarification will be requested on the progress of the pilot study, and how soon a solution will be found for this problem at Craven Vale.

Response from Laura Turner- Performance & Improvement Officer- tel:- 01273 293997

The usual timings for trades' button access across the city is from 6am – 1pm. The delivery service provided by Royal Mail has undergone many changes in recent years and increasingly postal deliveries are being made during the afternoon up until 4pm. As a landlord we only have a duty to provide access for Royal Mail to make postal deliveries. Other services such as private couriers, district nurse visits and other services are not included in this provision and residents need to make their own arrangements to be at home.

Laura Turner, Performance & Improvement Officer, is leading on a wider project to trial closing off the trades' buttons permanently and providing Royal Mail with appropriate keys or fobs to continue with postal deliveries at a time that suits them. Laura was present for the East Area Panel meeting and provided some background information and solutions to the issues at Craven Vale.

In order to resolve the delivery problems contact has been with the Royal Mail delivery manager responsible for the Craven Vale area who reported a faulty trades button and the same access issues reported by residents. The solution has been to provide two fobs which allow access to all blocks on Craven Road - 25 to 35, 37 to 47, 61 to 71, 109 to 119, 121 to 131, 140 to 150, and 152 to 162.

By taking this action we have managed to make savings on the resources involved with consultation, not had to pay the call out charge associated with changing the timer and reduced the length of time the blocks are vulnerable to unwanted access.

The three month pilot study at Warwick Mount has been very successful; the residents association have decided to make this arrangement permanent. Essex Place is the next block to have a trial switch off of the trades' button. We hope that the above steps resolve the problems with delivering mail on the Craven Vale estate.

2. Estate Development Budget

The deadline for submitting bids for 2015-16 is 14th November 2014.

a. Work for current year

For the current year, all the work has been completed in Manor Farm, but none has been started in Craven Vale.

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel, and ask how EDB work is progressing under the new management.

b. Leaseholder contributions for work

The meeting discussed the Section 20 notices that are served on leaseholders when work is proposed for their building, to ask if they are prepared to pay their contribution. However, some issues around this weren't clear.

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel and ask the following questions:

- Are leaseholders asked to pay a contribution for all works, or are some small jobs exempt from leaseholder contributions? If this is the case, what is the threshold?*

c. EDB guidelines

The meeting felt it would be useful to know what guidelines are applied to EDB bids, to determine which are successful, and which aren't.

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel, and ask if the EDB guidelines could be made available to Associations, or published online?

Response a. from Keith Dadswell - EDB Projects Manager – tel:- 01273 574356

Regarding works being completed at Manor Farm and not Craven Vale. We have been attempting to resolve a large amount of EDB historical and new jobs and have found that one of the best approaches has been to batch the works by Tenants' or Residents' Association.

Craven Vale is programmed to have all of their work addressed soon and Richard Mckenzie has been in touch with the association to ensure that all the outstanding work is accounted for.

Below is a list of outstanding work and I will endeavour to supply actual start dates over the next week or so where applicable.

EDB ref		Description of works	update
13-14/C112	Craven Vale	Electricity and plumbing work to enable community room kitchen improvements	Works programme to commence 25/11/14
14-15/C24	Craven Vale	Play area feasibility Study	December
14-15/C28	Craven Vale	Additional external lighting for badly lit, darkened stairways and access to buildings	Contractor assigned awaiting start date chasing
14-15/C33	Craven Vale	Replace carpeting Craven Vale Community Centre	Awaiting third price before allocating contractor
14-15/C41	Craven Vale	Bench (concrete and wood)	December
14-15/C45	Craven Vale	Repainting stairwell Hadlow Close	RM will arrange start date with TA within the next week
14-15/C10_07	Craven Vale	Masonry paint for painting steps by Community Payback Team	More information required do the TA require a Cheque or materials?

Response b. from Dave Arthur – Leasehold Manager – tel:- 01273 293072

The cost of works is passed on to leaseholders in their service charge in the same way as any other works.

- However, leaseholders contribute only to costs incurred at their building
- They are protected by the fact that the lease must allow for the charge
- The law says that the costs must be reasonably incurred

This means that works to keep the building in repair such as flooring, painting or improvements like exterior lighting are normally passed on, but works to improve community facilities or the local environment are not likely to be levied.

The cost to leaseholders is limited to £250 unless the consultation requirements have been complied with.

Response c. from Becky Purnell – Resident Involvement Manager – tel:- 01273 293022

Please refer to the Housing Estates Development Budget (EDB) report that was discussed at the East Area Panel on 28 July. This included the EDB guidance and processes.

Residents at the EDB Area Panels or EDB Panel decide which bids are successful. Bids are run past housing teams where relevant to see if they are possible eg a light couldn't be installed due to lack of a power source, it is against human rights to install CCTV in a communal lounge unless there is on-going criminal activity.

Bids are considered on a case by case basis and there is no further guidance on this resident led budget apart from it can't benefit an individual (unless it is an associations' fencing scheme) and now the project needs to be delivered within a year.

These guidelines are already on the council website.

<http://www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/sites/brighton-hove.gov.uk/files/EDB%20guidance%202015-2016.pdf>

3. Internet access in communal rooms

Patrick proposed that the council look into supplying internet access points, with a computer and Wifi hub, in all communal rooms. People are increasingly being expected to use the internet to pay bills and access services, and this can be a problem for those on low incomes or elderly people.

It was agreed to raise this proposal at the Area Panel for consideration by the council.

Response from Ododo Dafé - Head of Income, Inclusion & Improvement – tel:- 01273 293201

Thank you for raising this proposal. Housing has been working with council and external colleagues, as well as with British Telecom (BT) and other service providers to start to look at a variety of issues relating to internet access, broadband and wi-fi connectivity across the city and for residents in the greatest need living in Brighton and Hove.

I think you are right to mention that people are increasingly expected to use the internet to access services and pay bills. And while this is true for a range of government, public and private services, and can be a problem for those on low incomes or for elderly people, it is not a council or Housing responsibility to provide free internet access where people live.

The council, other public sector and third sector partners are doing a lot of work currently to support access to the internet for residents in the city as part of the Universal Support Framework, for example by providing free access and training support in libraries across the city, and working with the voluntary sector to provide training and access at places like the Whitehawk Inn, The Bridge, Brighton Unemployed Families Centre, and the Hangleton and Knoll Project; and it will continue to explore cost effective options to increase this. There is also free public access at all housing offices and a wide range of community locations across the city.

If any residents would like support to get online, the Housing Inclusion Team can signpost individuals to the nearest free provision/training in their area, or provide 121 support for those residents who have access but need support to build their skills or get online for the first time. The team can be contacted on 01273 292549 or email housinginclusionteam@brighton-hove.gov.uk.

If any vulnerable tenants are having issues with claiming benefits or need the assisted bidding service for Homemove, please contact the Housing Customer Services Team on 01273 293030 or ask at reception in any of the Housing Offices.

Some sheltered schemes and tenant associations do have online access, having used EDB bids previously to purchase equipment in the past. If an association is considering submitting an EDB bid then this should include all software/hardware costs, maintenance/ICT support,

licenses and broadband costs for the lifetime of the equipment, funding any tutor/support time that would be needed for residents, and related costs such as paper, printer cartridges etc. The Association would also be entirely responsible for the equipment and its' use, any broadband contract entered into, and any costs relating to that contract including line rental.

However, we would always encourage residents to investigate the free provision within their area first, and this would be taken into consideration when looking at the viability of a bid.

Residents at Clarendon House successfully bid last year for EDB funding to provide community Broadband for residents in the block of flats. However, this project has not yet been realised, but may be considered for being a pilot project within the work the council and other partners are doing with BT. There are significant cost and other factors that need to be considered within this project, and we will be able to provide updates to Area Panels perhaps in the spring when more detail will be known.

If residents associations have further thoughts on this, or ideas that can be looked into, please do contact Becky Purnell - Resident Involvement Manager – tel:- 01273 293022

4. Parking on grass verges

There are problems with people parking on grass verges throughout the area. In the winter this causes the grass to be destroyed and turned to mud. Some of this parking is local residents, but it is also vans from Mears and other contractors or utility companies.

Sometimes this happens where there are yellow lines on the road next to the grass verge.

It was agreed to raise this at the Area Panel and ask what parking enforcement is taking place to reduce this problem.

Response from Owen McElroy - Transport Programme Manager – tel:- 01273 293693

On 7 October 2014 Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee made policy recommendations on verge and pavement parking and driving. As part of these approved policies the council has decided to focus resources on managing parking on pavements/footways where the greatest road safety hazard occurs although it will continue to enforce the two zonal verge parking bans, in Withdean and Mile Oak.

In summary the council does not condone parking on verges or pavements/footways. It is accepted that parking on verges can be hazardous to pedestrians and other road users particularly at junctions.

However the powers available to the council to deal with parking on verges and pavements/footways are limited.

If parking is behind yellow lines then these are effective to the back of the verge or pavement/footway. In this event a resident can report it to parking enforcement on 08456 035469 option 3 and a mobile council Civil Enforcement Officer (CEO) will be dispatched within 2 hours.

If there are no yellow lines then parking cannot be enforced by CEOs and it becomes a matter for Sussex Police who can issue a fine if there is obstruction e.g. a buggy or wheelchair cannot pass. The police can also issue a penalty for driving on the verge or pavement, but only if the driving is observed by them. Residents can report anti-social parking or driving to Sussex Police on telephone number 101 or to operation crackdown on www.OperationCrackdown.org

The council can advertise traffic orders for new yellow lines on the road to prevent parking in the street, including the highway verge or pavement/footway. Due to budget constraints the council is prioritising requests for amendments to parking restrictions in resident parking zones.

The main lever for controlling parking in residential areas is through resident parking schemes. I am not sure of the exact geographical area covered by the East Area Panel but there are no new schemes or consultations proposed for East Brighton. Requests for schemes can be made through local Councillors or by the presentation of a residents' petition.

Residents can request that wooden bollards are installed on grass verges outside their property. The cost of this to the resident is £60 per bollard but the council maintains them thereafter. There is no general Highways budget for the council to install bollards on highway verges.

The council has no legal obligation to maintain verges other than to preserve “line of sight” at junctions by ensuring that the grass or other vegetation is cut back. If the verge is so undermined that it is causing substantial damage to the adjoining pavement/footway or road such as to cause danger to road users then the council can investigate and repair. Some verges will be under the control of the Housing department and it is in their discretion to repair them or prevent access through use of bollards etc.

Perhaps clauses can be written into contracts or tenders with council contractors that they undertake not to park or drive on verges or pavements/footways and that they will pay the council for any damage so caused. There have also been complaints from ward councillors about Mears in Hove and Portslade.

Response from Property & Investment Team – tel:- 01273 293427

Mears operatives are fully aware that parking on grass verges is prohibited and this is discussed with them at their regular ‘Toolbox’ talks meetings held with Mears staff.

If anyone witnesses a Mears van parked on a grass verge at any time, we would encourage residents to report this immediately to the repairs helpdesk team who will escalate this to repairs managers. Where possible please give the vehicle registration number, time and date where the offence occurred which will help us to identify the persons in question.

