



## Minutes of the HLRA Meeting 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024

**Present:** Sarah Hands (SJH) (Chair), Keith Bristow (KB), Karen Brown (KAB), Annette Davies (AD), Ashley Hasler (AH), Ross Hollingshead (RH), Sam Hollingsworth (SHW), Nicola Hughes (NH), Melanie Johnson (MJ), Angela Ogbe (AO), Lyn Roberts (LR), Claire Wych (CW).

**Apologies:** June Heslop (JH), Matthew Shaw (MS), James Sturgeon (JaS), Claire-Louise Turnham (CT).

**1. Welcome** A potential new committee member, Mr Brett Butler, sent his apologies for this meeting; it is hoped he will be able to attend a future meeting as an observer with the intention of joining the committee.

**2. Minutes of meeting held 10<sup>th</sup> June 2024-** minutes agreed & are available on HL notice boards & RMG Living London.

### **3. Berkeley Homes Report**

RH provided updates which are recorded under “Section 6 Ongoing Actions”.

### **4. RMG Report** Organisation Updates – June 2024

- Drainage contractors inspected, unblocked and cleaned three drains at Ashfield Close and Providence House.
- The infestation of caterpillars on the hedging by the bandstand path up to the two wooden benches has been terminated.
- Lewis Godly-Arnold, our newest recruit gardener, has left his role and we all wish him well for the future. RMG have begun their search for two gardeners via their recruitment consultants.
- UKPC the parking contractors for the unadopted areas on the development have been invited to return and enforce the parking regulations set out on the UKPC signage displayed throughout the development. RMG will inform all residents of the start date when known.
- The Estate Manager facilitated RMG’s electrical contractors to conduct PAT testing on various buildings and the PAT testing schedule is now complete.
- There is an increase of residents who smoke & are disposing of their cigarette ends into communal areas from their properties. This is illegal and we ask these residents to stop this behaviour and to others we would encourage residents who witness this behaviour report the incident to Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council.
- There have been recent examples where residents are allowing or giving access to their friends or family to enter the gym and using the facilities. This is not permitted.
- The Estate Manager has produced a monthly list of outstanding remedial works that requires various contractors to quote for each of the tasks.
- Fly Tipping in the bin stores remains a problem, residents are advised that if their waste cannot fit in the bin provided then it should be disposed of by taking it to the recycling centre.
- The front of house stainless steel water feature has been attacked by a fungus and contractors have been assigned to deal with it on Monday 15 July.
- Please note that the Estate Manager’s email address was changed to [john.shaw@rmg.london](mailto:john.shaw@rmg.london) in October 2023. Residents are kindly reminded to amend their contact details.

**The village hall income for the month of June was £225** (Residents can hire hall. Cost of hire is £12.50 an hour and can be booked via the Estate Manager [john.shaw@rmg.london](mailto:john.shaw@rmg.london) )

### **Issues arising from this report:**

#### **Loss of Staff**

The committee expressed concern at the turn-over of staff and the loss of skill sets together with the associated service charge costs of providing new uniform & equipment to replacement staff. It was requested that RMG HR carry out an exit interview with staff before they leave to identify if any steps can be taken to improve staff retention. A suggestion was also made about the possibility of an apprenticeship scheme.

**33/24 Action: Ensure HR carry out exit interviews. (RMG)**

**MJ**

**Action: Consider apprenticeship scheme. (RMG)**

**MJ**



**UKPC SH**

AO expressed concern that SH residents do not have permits and asked how UKPC will monitor SH residents parking.

**34/24 Action: Confirm UKPC action in relation to SH residents.**

**MJ**

**5. SH Report**

**Gardening Service on Southern Housing Zone**

This situation is a concern to SH and their residents. SH welcome RMG's view on this issue. The gardening service does not seem to include the frequency of maintenance proposed. It was noted that the scrub beds, pruning, weeding, and tidying up front and back of scheme(s) has not been done since early May 2024.

Southern Housing estate inspections were completed on the 13 May, 10 June, 21 June, and 8 July of the areas around Poynder · Alisander · Booth · Pollyfield · Amisse.

**SH would like RMG to advise them:**

- 1) How often should SH expect the gardeners to come to maintain Southern Housing zones? · Fortnightly or once a month during the growing season.
- 2) What service has been provided in the SH area since May?
- 3) How can SH reassure their residents that they are looking at how these jobs get done?

**Feedback and suggestion.**

- Transparency – Publish maintenance schedule.
- Accountability - Create examples of the gardening work carried out – work videos, work in progress photos of before and after. Resident testimonials.

**35/24 Action: Provide answers to SH questions ref estate maintenance. (RMG)**

**MJ**

**4 Edwards Burnt Bin Store**

Due to the costs, and complexity of work, the Complex Works Team will need to manage this property. The Direct Services Team are in the process of collating all the relevant details to pass on to the Complex team. Once the transfer is completed, Angela Ogbe & June Heslop will be updated with the name of the project lead.

**157 Poynder Drive**

Angela Ogbe carried out an inspection of the area between the block and the bike store and found the area to be tidy with no BBQ equipment nor toys. These inspections will be ongoing.

**6. Ongoing Actions**

**17/21 Cobbles Booth/Alisander/Poynder**

RH advised that further remedial action by McCoda is necessary, hopefully completion by mid-August. SJH identified that some residents have ACO drains on their private driveways. RH confirmed that cobbles surrounding these drains could become loose without appropriate maintenance and agreed to provide a copy of written guidance on the best way to maintain them. RH emphasised that it was the resident's financial responsibility to maintain such drains on their demise.

**Action: Update on progress of works (including any secondary sanding.) (BH)**

**RH**

**Action: Update on cobbles on adopted roads. (RMG)**

**JaS**

**Action: Provide guidance on ACO drains' maintenance. (BH/RMG)**

**RH/MJ**

**16/21 Cracked Bonded Paving**

RH advised that some tidying up of edges is still required. RH stressed this work is at BH's costs not service charge costs. The works in Primrose Close will be carried out at a later date, not yet determined, and residents will be advised in advance as to what these works will consist of.

**Action: Confirm any warranty for these works.**

**RH**

**Action: Update on progress of works. (BH)**

**RH**

**08/20a and 1/21 Review of Lake Level/Sluice Gate Operation**

MJ reported that Osterna had forwarded the Estate H&S assessment they carried out in January, but this did not include a risk assessment of the operation of the sluice gate. She has emailed them again



requesting this be carried out. MJ confirmed this republication of January's assessment had not incurred any additional costs which would be passed onto the residents' service charge.

**Action: Obtain Risk Assessment & provide further update.(RMG) MJ**

#### **85/21b & 37/22 Reducing the Impact of Fuel Charge Increases on Service Charge**

##### Replace Bulbs with LED Bulbs in Bollard Lights/Timers on Village Hall Heaters & Water Feature

Due to the costs involved in the replacement of bollard light bulbs the committee voted by a majority that this action should be postponed pending a further discussion with JaS regarding the estate service charge. The committee voted by a majority that the timers on the VH heaters & the water feature should go ahead as the costs were minimal and should save money in the long term.

**Action: Confirm contractor meets the necessary BH requirements & reconfirm costings & instruct electrician for installing timers on VH heaters & water feature. (RMG) MJ**

##### Obsolete Meters

RH advised that consultation with the utility companies to terminate the contracts for these meters was ongoing but that this could take some time as the power companies were resistant to accepting the meters had been removed as they had not received the correct notification at the time. The committee were incredulous at this and offered various suggestions including not paying the charges, showing the company the meters weren't there, etc., but RH said these are not acceptable to the power companies. The committee expressed concern over the time this action was taking and requested that the payment for these meters be removed from the service charge. RH said this was not possible. He was asked to provide the dates when the meters were disconnected but he said this information may not be available/accurate. The committee stressed that the costs for these obsolete meters should not be borne by residents as it was felt this situation had been caused by a BH's oversight & they requested that RH take steps to immediately transfer these accounts into the financial responsibility of BH. RH agreed to investigate if this would be possible.

**Action: Expedite enquiries regarding obsolete meters. (BH/RMG) RH/JaS**

**Action: Investigate transfer of accounts into BH's financial responsibility. (BH) RH**

**Action: Provide dates when meters were removed. (BH) RH**

#### **29/24 2023 Service Charge – Electricity Costs**

The committee were disappointed that JaS was not in attendance at the meeting to discuss this issue. An EO meeting of the HLRA had taken place on 01/07/24 to discuss the section 20b notice issued by RMG. A statement from the committee was issued to residents via social media and is included in Appendix A of these minutes. A list of questions has been emailed to JaS, including a request for a meeting to discuss this issue. The HLRA are unanimously aggrieved by the situation residents find themselves in with the electricity service charges. Year-on-year the Invoice Checking Group have highlighted the need to RMG to submit accurate meter readings to try to avoid just this situation. The HLRA would like it recorded that we will not accept this lack of accounting precision going forward and will continue to challenge all errors. We insist upon a revision of the accounting processes to ensure that that the recording and submission of meter readings are accurately billed going forward. We have provided a list of questions for RMG to respond to and we look forward to receiving those initial responses promptly. If necessary, we shall raise further questions until we are assured that appropriate steps are being taken to prevent a recurrence of this situation.

**Action: Respond to questions ref 2023 electricity costs. (RMG) JaS**

#### **12/23 Replacement Inspection Covers**

RH met with SJH & SHW to examine the plastic inspection cover on driveways in Primrose Close and confirmed they were installed in compliance with the original planning scheme. BH Technical Team say that if the cover needs replacing then the top of the drain and the whole unit will need replacing as well. RH agreed to discuss this further with the Technical Team.

**Action: Discuss plastic inspection covers with Tech Team. (BH) RH**

#### **29/23 Insecurity at SH Apartment Block.**

The contract for this work is being refined as it has now been agreed to include all SH blocks in these works. A further update will be provided once the contract is finalised.

**Action: Address insecurity SH block. (SH) AO**



### 25/22 Road Adoption Plan

RH advised that completion is hoped to take place within the next two weeks and hand-over to KCC shortly afterwards. SJH advised that some residents have concerns about too many streetlights within a small area. RH advised that this is KCC's decision and BH are legally obliged to comply with their instructions. If residents have any concerns, they are advised to contact BH who will raise the issues with the BH Technical Team who are working with KCC on this project.

([SouthernCountiesEstates@berkeleygroup.co.uk](mailto:SouthernCountiesEstates@berkeleygroup.co.uk)).

(Additionally, KCC website has a page dedicated to reporting street lights that shine into your property and a form can be completed here: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>)

AH questioned the poor repairs to the pavement where lights had been placed. RH reassured the committee that these repairs will be fully completed by BH prior to hand-over. RH stressed this work is at BH's costs not service charge costs.

**Action: Update on progress of road adoption. RH**

### 14/24 Dogs In LVC Apartments

Letter has been sent out by post to all LVC residents. (Post meeting update-letter has been sent electronically so residents who rent may not have received it.)

**Action: Post letter through apartment doors to ensure all residents receive it. (RMG) MJ**

### 15/24 Maintenance of LVC Water Pump

The pipe continues to expel water in LVC bin store causing H&S problems for residents. MJ reported that 'Duty Point' had not yet provided a quote for servicing the pump, but she has invited them to inspect it. There was no update from MJ regarding the comparison of water invoice costs for 2023 v 2024. RH had no update from BH Technical Team.

**Action: Compare water invoices 2023/2024 for landlord's supply at LVC. (RMG) MJ**

**Action: Obtain quote from an alternative contractor for work on LVC water pump. (RMG) MJ**

**Action: Update from BH on operation of LVC water pump overflow pipe. (BH) RH**

### 22/24 AGM

AGM will take place on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024. Poster provided to RMG for circulation.

**Action: Circulate AGM poster. (RMG) MJ**

### 19/22 Discussion ref Future Management of Estate

SJH thanked MJ for the list of RMG contractors. She will circulate it to committee members for comment once she has read through it.

**Action: Circulate list of RMG contractors. (HLRA) SJH**

### 24/24 SE Water substation untidy foliage.

The Estate Manager is in communication with South East Water in an attempt to resolve this issue. AD asked that the Estate Manager maintain a log of communication with other agencies regarding such issues.

**Action: Contact SE Water to ask to tidy up substation foliage. (RMG) MJ**

**Action: Check Estate Manager maintains a log of communication. (RMG) MJ**

### 25/24 Fencing in relation to ASB.

BH will be contacting relevant residents with design proposals for fencing.

**Action: Update on crime-prevention fencing. (RMG) MJ**

### 27/24 CCTV Procedure

MJ had no update on this action. It was noted that another theft in a bike shed had occurred recently.

**(1) Action: Confirm CCTV contractor has been contacted ref recent burglaries. (RMG) MJ**

**(2) Action: Confirm procedure to follow to request check of CCTV is made by estate contracted CCTV company. (RMG) MJ**

**26/24 Poynder bin store.** Bin store checked and clear of furniture.

**Action Closed**

**28/24 Weeds in guttering.**



Weeds removed.

**Action Closed**

## **7. Social media and newsletter**

SHW & SJH continue to progress developing the website & hope to circulate it to the committee soon.

## **8. A.O.B**

### **8.1 Review of Service Charge Budget Processes (SJH)**

There have been regular examples of underbudgeting in the service charges. The HLRA feel it would be useful, in co-operation with the Invoice Checking Group, to hold discussions with RMG as to how budgets are drawn up in order to try to reduce these occurrences.

**30/24 Action: RMG to explain how budget figures are agreed. (RMG)** **JaS**

### **8.2 Fungus build up on the fountain (SJH)**

As per RMG report - contractors have been assigned to deal with it on Monday 15 July.

**31/24 Action: Deal with fungus build-up in fountain. (RMG)** **MJ**

### **8.3 Wildlife area in front of Walters Close**

There is problematic woody growth in this area which needs removing. Individuals have been seen urinating in this area which is unacceptable behaviour.

**32/24 Action: Cut back woody growth Walters Close. (RMG)** **MJ**

### **8.4 Bindweed**

AD requested the estate team deal effectively with the bindweed invasion near the white flats in Poynder, the Primrose trim trail & the lake path. This needs digging up properly to prevent regrowth.

**33/24 Action: Remove bindweed. (RMG)** **MJ**

### **8.5 Defective Bollard Lights Primrose Close**

KAB reported that the bollard lights in Primrose have been unlit for several weeks.

**34/24 Action: Address issue of defective bollard lights Primrose. (RMG)** **MJ**

Meeting Closed: 8.45pm Next Meeting: **AGM 7pm 09/09/24 in Village Hall. All residents welcome.**

## **Appendix A Statement From HLRA Issued on 03/07/24**

The HLRA have been made aware of the unreasonable overspend on the 2023 estate budget. We appreciate that many residents, like ourselves, will be very unhappy with this situation. The HLRA, together with Southern Housing, are in discussion with RMG regarding this matter. We would like to point out that this is a legal notification that additional service charge may be payable. RMG are actively scrutinising these invoices and meter readings in an attempt to mitigate the costs.

We have a number of questions we intend to raise with RMG and will share these with the Holborough Lakes' community when our discussions are complete. In the meantime, we wish to make you aware that the general legal advice in situations where residents are unhappy with service charge demands is that residents should make the payment on time when the invoice is received, but state they are doing so "under protest." This informs RMG that your payment should not be interpreted to mean that you agree that the charges are properly due and that you reserve your right to challenge these when you are able to do so. We would point out that failure to pay the additional service charge may result in admin fee costs being added to your account and possibly affect your credit rating. We appreciate that many of you may be in a situation where you do not have this extra money to hand; we would advise you to contact James Sturgeon, ([james.sturgeon@rmg.london](mailto:james.sturgeon@rmg.london)) and ask that you be permitted to pay it on a monthly basis.

We would like to assure you that the HLRA will do everything we can to support residents, but our actual power is extremely limited due to the legalities surrounding our existence (we are a voluntary group of residents) and the complexities of lease/contract legislation. The numbers on the HLRA committee have decreased in recent years and we are keen to recruit more motivated members; if



Email: [hello@holboroughlakes.uk](mailto:hello@holboroughlakes.uk)  
Website: <https://holboroughlakes.uk/>

this situation provokes your interest in joining us, please contact us for more information. Please feel free to contact us at [hello@holboroughlakes.uk](mailto:hello@holboroughlakes.uk)