

## **Newhall - Phase I**

### **Annual Residents Meeting: Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2020 – 6:30pm Estate Office, Newhall,**

#### **Attendees:**

Matthew Byatt (NHP)

Michele Gallagher (SHW)

Laura Ritchie (SHW)

17 Residents from Phase I

#### **Agenda:**

- **Introductions**
- **Annual Service Charge Budget 2020**
- **Estate Maintenance Matters (landscaping etc)**
- **Status with developers' liability for making good roadways/pavements and update on Adoption process**
- **Communal TV upgrade/Virgin Media**
- **Any Other Business**

#### **Introductions:**

MG started the meeting by introducing the various personnel. She pointed out that this was a meeting to discuss Estate Maintenance issues and not items for which the various developers are responsible. However, there will be an opportunity for a brief review of those issues.

#### **Annual Service Charge Budget 2020**

MG advised that SHW have been working with a Shadow Board (SB), made up of several (unelected) residents who volunteered to become involved with Newhall Residents Association Ltd (NRAL). The parties meet on average once a quarter. These meetings are open to any homeowner so not just those who responded to the original invitation to participate. She explained that SHW had presented a draft budget to the SB in November 2019 and, following some considerable discussions, on the recommendation of the SB, it was deemed that the contribution to both General Repairs and the Reserve Fund should be increased. It was considered prudent to secure this increase as, as the estate ages, remedial works will be required, and sensible levels of funding need to be made. The SB agreed that the expectation that the level of service charges will increase needs to be carefully managed and the sensible approach is to approve incremental increases rather than an extraordinary one in any single year. Owners also need to be mindful that Newhall Projects Ltd continues to make a significant contribution towards the service charges (£50K in 2019 and 2020) and this position will not go on indefinitely. The overall net result is an increase in the annual charge of +/-£10 per household. MG pointed out that SHW's management fee has not increased again this year.

#### **Q: Will we be able to see the actual figures of expenditure for the previous year.**

MG advised that following the year end, a Statement of Expenditure is produced and sent to all homeowners. She advised that this is a basic Statement, so not a full set of accounts, and if any homeowner requires further information or clarification on any of the figures, they should contact

SHW who will provide the details. If anyone wanted to see the full complement of invoices etc., SHW can make the necessary facilities and arrangements available.

**Q: The Management Fee seems to high - what is the reason.**

MG advised that this equates to £80 per home, plus VAT, per annum but the multiplier of homes inflates this to the level included in the Budget. SHW reduced its fee in 2019 and it remains at this level for 2020. Going forward, as the number of homes built continues to increase, consideration will be given to agreeing a fixed fee.

**Q: When will the 2019 figures be available**

The Statement of Expenditure should be available for circulation sometime in April/May

**Q: Is the service charge fund audited**

No, there is no requirement under the terms of the property documentation for the fund to be audited

**Q: How often do you benchmark your contractors**

MG advised that this year there is a more comprehensive tender process for the landscaping Contract with an extremely detailed and updated Specification of Work having been produced. This will be issued to 5/6 different companies. The contract is normally re-tendered every two years. SHWs appointment was re-tendered in 2016. SHW will always source competitive quotations for any major works.

**Q: What is the process with the tendering of the landscaping contracting**

SHW invited the SB to review the draft Specification and a final document was ultimately prepared taking account of any observations made. Before any change in the appointment is made, SHW will vet the potential contractor, such process to include taking up references and may visit sites on which the contractor already works. The SB will also be invited to comment on the final choice of contractor.

**Q: How many units contribute to the annual service charge**

There are 578 units on phase I, 328 units on The Edge, 278 on Fusion and, to date, 25 on Countryside's Base.

**Q: The website is not up to date and should be used for uploading relevant documents, so the residents have clarification on what exactly they are paying for.**

SHW will ensure that relevant documents are regularly uploaded.

**Q: What work do Honours carry out**

Honours carry out all landscaping and litter picking to the amenity land eg Telly Tubby Hill, and other communal landscaped areas, the front gardens to all homes, areas in/around the reed beds, woods, playgrounds, etc., as well as some road sweeping. They also empty the litter and dog waste bins.

**Q: What is the Reserve Fund total and what has this been spent on.**

The balance of reserves at the last year end, December 2018, was +/-£64K but funds are being/have been used for major works to the reed beds, replacing kneel rails across the estate which have deteriorated, the ongoing Integrated Reception System (TV) project, etc

**Q: Who are the SB members, and can residents direct their concerns to them?**

At the moment, there are no elected members so it would be inappropriate to publish details of those individuals who are involved here. Ultimately, when responsibility for NRAL is transferred to the homeowners, a formal Board will be elected. The development will be split into 4 zones, and each zone will have 2/3 elected members which will represent the residents of that zone. In the meantime, concerns need to be raised through SHW.

**Q: How do residents become involved with the SB**

SHW advised that this is open to all residents, but we have not recently invited owners to become involved as we already have 12 members. However, that does not preclude any owner wishing to do so to become involved. Owners to make direct contact with SHW in this regard.

MB advised that the members of the Board will be required to become involved with the running of the Estate and will be fully accountable to all homeowners. MG added that NRAL is intended to adopt a holistic approach encompassing the **whole** estate rather than individual phases. She added that the reason for 2019 and 2020, the Annual Meetings were split into three, is due to their being different developer issues for each and when, in 2018, there was a single meeting, this proved to be ineffective and unproductive. Those who attended that meeting agreed.

MB advised that SHW is also appraised regularly to make sure it is meeting its obligations to homeowners under the Agreement with NPL. MB advised that once responsibility for NRAL is transferred to homeowners, it will be down to the Company to determine whether or not it wishes to employ a Managing Agent as the Board may decide to do it in-house.

**Q: When will NRAL be handed over to the homeowners**

MB advised that he is working towards getting this handed over to the residents, but it is likely that this will not be finalised until the community centre is built/up and running.

**Q: Could we have a regular newsletter on what is happening on the Estate.**

MG advised that that is of course an option if there is news to deliver. SHW will look to producing a Newsletter at least twice per annum. Interim updates will be posted on the various social platforms.

**Q: When is Countryside likely to finish its build**

MB advised that Countryside will be here for +/-10 years.

**Q: Who determines the new constituency**

MG advised the NRAL can choose whomever they want to carry out the various jobs, the structure of this will be set out in the TP1. MG advised that it would be a non-profit organization. MB advised that the maintaining of the Estate will need to be a dynamic enterprise otherwise the result might be an uplift in the quarterly service charge to cover costs.

**Estate Maintenance Matters**

**Q: Are there other Managing Agents on the Estate**

MG advised that there are a number of other Managing Agents instructed on the Estate and advised that SHW can provide details to any interested resident on request.

**Q: The lights on St Nicholas' Green are out, and there are a number of lights out on the Estate in general.**

MG advised that the majority of streetlights are the respective developers' responsibility. MG advised that St Nicholas' Green lights have been vandalized and these will be repaired once a suitable solution is identified. MB went on to advise that the majority of the streetlights is down to NHP and that NHP have taken responsibility of getting these adopted.

**Q: The £2000 for maintenance of street lighting including in the 2020 budget is a minimal amount**

MG advised that responsibility for the majority of the lights will be transferred to Essex Highways and therefore only a nominal amount was included in the budget for the current year.

**Q: Is there a better option for the lighting on St Nicholas Green**

MG advised that the contractor is looking at an alternative design which will be more robust and resilient to vandalism.

**Q: If our road is not adopted who do we contact regarding the streetlights**

MG advised that in the first instance residents should contact SHW who can provide the correct contact details.

**Q: it's not right that the restrictive covenants for residents is quite stringent, whilst the developers seems to be allowed to sit back when it comes to dealing with issues for which they are responsible.**

MG advised that SHW constantly chase Countryside and read out the most recent email exchange. SHW will chase this up but, once again, MG asked more residents to support the efforts and to chase Countryside as well (ben.hunt@cpplc.com). One resident advised that their son is disabled, and the situation with the poor condition of the roads is not acceptable as it is impossible to use these safely. It was noted that drivers are not sticking to the speed limit which contributes to the deterioration of the road surface. SHW asked to once again chase Countryside and to keep those interested parties updated on any progress.

**Q Is the developer duty bound to get the roads developed and adopted.**

Yes, but it is obviously taking a significant degree of "encouragement".

One homeowner suggested that If the area was private, then residents could control everything – security, lighting, roadways, CCTV cameras attached to lampposts - once the Council adopt this there will be no ability to do this.

This option will come with a significant price tag and there was no real appetite to pursue this. Some attendees felt CCTV could represent an invasion of privacy.

MG advised that members of the SB has set up a Neighborhood Watch and that overall, the crime levels are low.

**Q: There is at least one front garden on Harrowbond Road which is in a very poor state. It is full of weeds and dead plants.**

MG suggests there is clearly a specific issue here SHW to inspect and follow up with Honours as required.

**Communal TV upgrade/Virgin Media**

MG advised that the upgrade to the estate TV cabling has unearthed many complex and unforeseen issues eg collapsed/blocked ducts, no cabling, etc. MG advised that SHW is not making as much progress as anticipated, but it is working through the issues with the respective contractors. MG also mentioned that part of the issue is residents not responding to requests for access. MG advised that Virgin is currently on site and have circa 400 homes ready to go live on its network.

**Q: When will Virgin Media be making good the roads.**

MB advised that Virgin will be returning in the short term but no definitive date available at present. MB advised that NHP is talking to Countryside about timescales of when these 'making good' works will be carried out. It will probably be done in one hit.

**Q: We have been waiting for SCCI to return but have now been told that the road is adopted and cannot be attended to for one year.**

MB advised that Barratts understood it was communicating with NHP on resurfacing the road when in fact it was communicating with an individual resident. Therefore, NHP/SHW were unaware of Barratts plans to complete its making good work/having the roads adopted and Scci missed the opportunity to run new ducts. The year will be up in June/July and the works can be completed then (by approval with Essex Highways).

**Q Do I need Virgin to achieve superfast speed broadband.**

MB advised there is no obligation to subscribe to Virgin – residents can choose any provider, but Virgin do purport to offer fastest speeds.

**Q: When we moved in in December, Virgin was not available and we have EE now but there is no signal in the house (Flint Lane)**

MG will follow up on this with home owner.

**Q: Do Virgin have any exclusivity over Newhall**

MB advised that no, Virgin do not have exclusivity over the Estate and residents have other choices of provider available.

MB referenced the 5G service and the possibility of looking into getting an aerial installed on the Estate, allowing for faster and more reliable mobile telephone signal. He asked if there was a general interest and the majority would like this explored.

**Q; What would be the timeline for the project**

MG confirmed this would have to go through a formal Planning Application and residents would have an opportunity to comment on this as part of that process. It is impossible to provide details of potential timelines at the present time.

AOB

**Q: There are a number of residents of the flats on Flint Lane who park along the road making access difficult for others - who should this be reported to in the first instance.**

MG advised that reports should be logged with SHW who can write to the owner(s) of the vehicle(s) (where details are known). In addition, SHW have, and will, put Notices on cars.

**Q: Have there been any developments in taking the UKPC parking signs down.**

SHW will put the necessary in hand here.

**Q: When people park on the road it means the refuse vehicle has to be driven up on the kerb, causing damage to the grass verges (a particular issue on New Pond Street).**

SHW will see what can be done to alleviate this issue.

**Q: Are there or will there be any fast charging electric points on the Estate?**

MB advised that NHP proposed installing charging points on Forge Lane and approached Essex Highways for confirmation that this would not affect any future adoption processes. MB was advised that Essex Highways does not as yet have a strategy for electric charging points and that needs to be determined before any installation can go ahead.

**Q: Can the residents have a copy of the annual service chare budget**

MG advised that the budget is sent out with the December newsletter and that all residents should receive this. It is also uploaded onto the Newhall website ([www.newhallresidents.co.uk](http://www.newhallresidents.co.uk))

**Q: Several residents are claiming on the Nextdoor App that they are not paying Service Charge - what does this mean?**

MG advised that, as is quite normal particularly on a development the size of Newhall, there are a number of arrears cases, but these represent a very small number, totaling a nominal amount of monies. A number of these cases are with solicitors. SHW will pursue the relevant cases and ultimately sums will be recovered together with, if appropriate, interest and legal costs.

**There being no further queries/comments, the meeting concluded at 20:05**