



Exeter City Council

MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS FORUM

Monday 19 August 2013 at 2.15 pm

(informal meeting from 1.45pm)

Rennes Room, Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter

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Agenda Item 2

MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS FORUM

Monday 13 May 2013

Present:

Councillor Heather Morris (Chair)
Councillors D J Henson

Also Present:

Jan Grundy	- Exonia Park
Colin Hughes	- Exonia Park
Val Ewings	- Exonia Park
Mr P North	- Newport Park
Alan Southard	- Newport Park
Julie Wale	- Ringswell Park
Malcolm Thomas	- Ringswell Park
Graeme Guy	- Ringswell Park

Also Present:

Environmental Health Manager, Licensing Solicitor and Assistant Democratic Services Officer (Committees)

In Attendance:

Inspector Andrew Webber	- Devon & Cornwall Constabulary
Martyn Rogers	- Age UK Exeter

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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Geoff and Wendy Threlfall (National Association of Park Home Residents), Councillors Bull, Leadbetter and Hannaford.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 JANUARY 2013

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2013 were agreed, subject to the change of wording 'It was suggested that the owners did not carry out any consultation with the residents and that the facility has been closed without following the correct procedure' to 'It was *stated* that the owners....'.

Matters Arising

Cornwall Council had adopted references to Park Homes rather than caravan. Although caravan was the legal definition and had to be used for the purposes of enforcement, it was agreed that all communications in future would relate to Park Homes.

Minute No. 7 – Updates on current legislation

It was reported that the Mobile Homes Act had gained Royal Assent, although certain provisions would not be enforced until April 2014. Further details would be provided under Any Other Business.

TO WELCOME MARTYN ROGERS, AGE UK EXETER

The Chair welcomed Martyn Rogers, Director of Age UK Exeter to the meeting.

Age UK Exeter provides advice, support and guidance to the over 50s, and it was considered helpful to have a presence at this Forum to gather awareness of problems faced on mobile sites, and to see if Age UK Exeter has a role in supporting this group and to help wherever possible.

A member advised that Cornwall Council had distributed safety leaflets at their Forum. Age UK Exeter produce the Sauce Magazine which contains articles about leisure, sport, services etc, and Martyn advised that he was happy to provide members of the Forum with copies. An information advice service is also available from Monday to Thursday between 10am-1pm. Telephone enquiries were welcome on 01392 202092. 2,500-3,000 enquiries were received every year.

Age UK produce fact sheets for owners/prospective owners of park homes - <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/home-and-care/housing-choices/park-homes/>. Any comments on the factsheet would be gratefully received.

Reference was also made to funding for safety locks. Martyn advised that this funding had now ceased, but they could try their best if possible.

Inspector Webber reported that there were no specific crime issues being reported in park homes. He suggested giving the Forum a higher media profile as the meeting was a positive step. It was noted that an article was placed in the Express & Echo when the Forum was first formed, but the Chair would speak to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Involvement to see how the profile could be raised.

Reference was made to parking problems within park home sites in relation to emergency vehicle access. A member had invited the Fire Service to undertake one of their training sessions at their park site to ascertain if access could be easily gained, but he had not received a response to date.

Inspector Webber advised that parking enforcement is subject to whether it is on private property. It was also noted that although it is included in the park rules, untaxed vehicles can be used on site if it is private land. He suggested that any issues should be addressed with the park owner. However, a member stated that the park owner was not present on site 24/7 and he would be writing to the Chief Fire Officer.

It was noted that the Fire Prevention Team would be attending the next meeting, so these issues could be raised at that time.

MODEL SITE LICENCE

As all sites currently have different conditions, it was proposed to use the Model Site Licence so the same standards are applied to all parks, except for Ringswell Park which would also include the condition imposed on it by the Court. By having a model standard for all sites, it would make the enforcement procedure easier.

Members made comments around semi-detached homes, porch doors and height of fences, but it was agreed that members should email any comments or suggestions for change. Responses would then be collated and the revised

document would be distributed prior to the next meeting in order for agreement to be reached at the meeting.

There is a requirement for formal consultation, to include site owners.

15 **REPORT BACK FROM CORNWALL PARK HOME RESIDENTS MEETING ON 15 MARCH 2013 - MALCOLM THOMAS AND VAL EWINGS**

Val Ewings reported on the visit to Bodmin to attend the Cornwall Park Home Residents meeting in March.

Cornwall are responsible for 63 sites, including caravan sites, limited and fully residential sites.

The councillors had acknowledged that there had been a lack of action in the past, and there was commitment from the Council's officers. There were representatives from Trading Standards, Police and Fire Service. There was also acknowledgement that there was a need for more local meetings, and for the smaller groups to have representatives from each to attend the county-wide meeting.

It was suggested whether a similar set-up could take place in Devon, but noted that Cornwall is a single enforcing authority and covers all sites within Cornwall. If a similar county-wide forum was set up in Devon, it may be more difficult as there would be different approaches for different areas as there are numerous licensing authorities involved. There may, however, be an opportunity to meet on a more social level.

Information was made available on smoke alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

Grants had been awarded towards the setting up of the residents park home association which helped with costs towards computers and printers etc.

Community grants are also available for projects in Exeter. Each ward has £2,000 available and the maximum that can be applied for is £300. Decisions on ward grants are made by the councillors in each ward. The grant could be used to set up a residents association, the cost of room hire to hold meetings etc. Extonia Park had submitted a bid which had been approved to help with the running costs of their association.

Councillor Morris also gave a presentation on the Exeter Forum.

16 **PARK HOMES IN CORNWALL - A RESIDENTS GUIDE TO SERVICES**

At the previous meeting, it had been agreed for members to look at the 'Park Homes in Cornwall – A residents guide to services' booklet to see if consideration should be given to producing something similar in Exeter.

Following discussion, it was felt that although this was a useful guide, it was a general leaflet rather than for Park Homes. Martyn Rogers advised that Age UK had access to numerous factsheets which would cover these issues.

GREEN DEAL

Keith Williams reported that the Green Deal had replaced the energy efficiency grants scheme. Energy companies would be replacing grants with loans.

He was currently in discussions with one energy company specifically in relation to park homes and would report back further at the next meeting.

Malcom Thomas advised that Green Deal South West would be visiting their park in order to provide more information on what it entails.

He also encouraged members to apply for energy grants if aged 70+ and income is no more than £15,000 per annum. There could be a £135 discount on utility bills.

ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Issues to be discussed at the next meeting were agreed:

- Fire Prevention Team – safety and carbon monoxide
- Trading Standards – Enterprise Act
- Energy Efficiency – Keith Williams
- Procedure for varying site licences – Elaine Kale

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Site Licence

A query was raised on the display of the site licence in a prominent position. It was suggested that this should be raised when comments are submitted in relation to the Model Site Licence.

Building Inspector

A question was raised in relation to new park homes, and whether a building inspector should visit the site.

It was noted that park homes are not covered by building regulations, and if there were problems, then Trading Standards should be involved.

It was suggested that these issues could be raised when Trading Standards attend the next meeting.

Plot Plans

An ongoing incident was referred to in relation to the marking out of pitches.

The Chair advised that she had written a report which had been presented to Councillor Hannaford (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Community Involvement), Assistant Director Environment and Environmental Health Manager. The proposals had been agreed, and would be discussed outside of the meeting as it is not a Forum matter.

Tree Preservation Orders

Reference was made to a Tree Preservation Order, where trees had not been replaced. No acknowledgement had been made to the objection.

Elaine Kale advised that there are powers to purchase and replace trees. This particular case was investigated and noticed was served, which was not complied with. It was noted that a replacement tree would cost in the region of £3,000 to import and transport and it was not deemed to be a good application of public funds, particularly when there was a risk that the tree would be felled again. There was no evidence on who felled the tree so no prosecution can take place.

Mobile Homes Act

The Mobile Homes Act had now gained Royal Assent.

The site rules will come into force on 26 May 2013.

The main legislative changes such as fees, local authority discretion on applications to transfer the licence, right of appeal, and compliance notices will come into force on 1 April 2014.

The requirement for the manager of the site to be a fit and proper person had no implementation date yet.

A question was asked around selling a home and whether permission is required from the owner or agent to vet the new person buying the property. It was noted that as from 26 May 2013 the occupier is entitled to sell the mobile home and assign the agreement to the person to whom the mobile home is sold without approval of the owner.

A copy of the Mobile Homes Act would be distributed to all members for information.

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DATE OF NEXT MEETING - MONDAY 23 SEPTEMBER AT 2.15PM

The date of the next meeting was noted.

(The meeting commenced at 2.15 pm and closed at 3.54 pm)

Chair

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1. The Boundaries and Plan of the Site

- (i) The boundaries of the site from any adjoining land shall be clearly marked by a man made or natural feature.
- (ii) No caravan or combustible structure shall be positioned within 3 metres of the boundary of the site.
- (iii) (a) A plan of the site shall be supplied to the local authority upon the application for a licence and, thereafter whenever there is a material change to the boundaries or layout of the site, or at any other time on the demand of the local authority.

(b) The plan supplied must clearly illustrate the layout of the site including all relevant structures, features and facilities on it and shall be of suitable quality.

2. Density, Spacing and Parking Between Caravans

- (i) Except in the case mentioned in sub paragraph (iii) and subject to sub paragraph (iv), every caravan must where practicable be spaced at a distance of no less than 6 metres (the separation distance) from any other caravan which is occupied as a separate residence.
- (ii) No caravan shall be stationed within 2 metres of any road or communal car park within the site or more than 50 metres from such a road within the site.
- (iii) Where a caravan has retrospectively been fitted with cladding from Class 1 fire rated materials to its facing walls, then the separation distance between it and an adjacent caravan may be reduced to a minimum of 5.25 metres.
- (iv) In any case mentioned in subparagraph (i) or (iii):
 - (a) A porch attached to the caravan may protrude one metre into the separation distance and must not exceed 2 metres in length and 1 metre in depth. The porch must not exceed the height of the caravan. *(Where a porch is installed only one door may be permitted at that entrance to the home, either on the porch or on the home (to be removed)).*

- (b) Eaves, drainpipes and bay windows may extend into the separation distance provided the total distance between the extremities of two facing caravans is not less than 5 metres, except where sub paragraph (iii) applies in which case the extension into the separation distance shall not exceed 4.25 metres.
- (c) Any structure including steps, ramps, etc (except a garage or car port), which extends more than 1 metre into the separation distance shall be of non-combustible construction. There should be a 4.5 metre clear distance between any such structure and any adjacent caravan.
- (d) A garage or car port may only be permitted within the separation distance if it is of non-combustible construction.
- (e) Windows in structures within the separation distance shall not face towards the caravan on either side.
- (f) Fences and hedges, where allowed and forming the boundary between adjacent caravans, should be a maximum of 1 metre high **(6ft has been suggested)**
- (g) Private cars may be parked within the separation distance provided that they do not obstruct entrances to caravans or access around them and they are a minimum of 3 metres from an adjacent caravan.
- (v) The density of caravans on a site shall be determined in accordance with relevant health and safety standards and fire risk assessments.

3. Roads, Gateways and Overhead Cables

- (i) Roads shall be designed to provide adequate access for emergency vehicles and routes within the site for such vehicles must be kept clear of obstruction at all times.
- (ii) New roads shall be constructed and laid of suitable bitumen macadem or concrete with a suitable compacted base.
- (iii) All roads shall have adequate surface water/storm drainage.
- (iv) New two way roads shall not be less than 3.7 metres wide, or if they are designed for and used by one way traffic, not less than 3 metres wide.
- (v) One-way systems shall be clearly signposted.
- (vi) Where existing two way roads are not 3.7 metres wide, passing places shall be provided where practical.
- (vii) Vehicular access and all gateways to the site must be a minimum of 3.1 metres wide and have a minimum height clearance of 3.7 metres.

(viii) Roads shall be maintained in a good condition.

(ix) Cable overhangs must meet the statutory requirements.

(x) *park owners to provide grit bins?*

4. Footpaths and Pavements

(i) Every caravan shall be connected to a road by a footpath with a hard surface which shall be maintained in good condition.

(ii) Where practicable, communal footpaths and pavements shall not be less than 0.9 metres wide.

5. Lighting

Roads, communal footpaths and pavements shall be adequately lit, *at the park owner's expense*, between dusk and dawn to allow the safe movement of pedestrians and vehicles around the site during the hours of darkness.

6. Bases

(i) Every unit must stand on a concrete base or hard-standing.

(ii) The base must extend over the whole area occupied by the unit, and must project a sufficient distance outwards from its entrance or entrances to enable occupants to enter and leave safely. The hard standings must be constructed to the industry guidance, current at the time of siting, taking into account local conditions.

7. Maintenance of Common Areas, including Grass, Vegetation and Trees

(i) Every part of the site to which the public have access shall be kept in a clean and tidy condition.

(ii) Every road, communal footpath and pavement on the site shall be maintained in a good condition, good repair and clear of rubbish.

(iii) Grass and vegetation shall be cut and removed at frequent and regular intervals.

(iv) Trees within the site shall (subject to the necessary consents) be maintained.

(v) Any cuttings, litter or waste shall be removed from the immediate surrounds of a pitch.

8. Supply & Storage of Gas etc

- (i) Gas (including natural gas) and oil installations, and the storage of supplies shall meet current statutory requirements, relevant Standards and Codes of Practice.
- (ii) Liquefied Petroleum Gas cylinders must not be positioned or secured in such a way as to impede access or removal in the event of an emergency.

9. Electrical Installations

- (i) On the site there shall be installed an electricity network of adequate capacity to meet safely all reasonable demands of the caravans and other facilities and services within it.
- (ii) The electrical network installations shall be subject to regulation under current relevant legislation and must be designed, installed, tested, inspected and maintained in accordance with the provisions of the current relevant statutory requirements.
- (iii) Any work on electrical installations and appliances shall be carried out only by persons who are competent to do the particular type of work being undertaken, in accordance with current relevant statutory requirements.
- (iv) Any work on the electrical network within the site shall be done by a competent person fully conversant with the appropriate statutory requirements.

10. Water Supply

- (i) All pitches on the site shall be provided with a water supply sufficient in all respects to meet all reasonable demands of the caravans situated on them.
- (ii) All new water supplies shall be in accordance with all current legislation, regulations and relevant British or European Standards.
- (iii) All repairs and improvements to water supplies and installations shall be carried out to conform with current legislation and British or European Standards.
- (iv) Work on water supplies and installations shall be carried out only by persons who are qualified in the particular type of work being undertaken and in accordance with current relevant legislation and British or European Standards.

11. Drainage and Sanitation

- (i) Surface water drainage shall be provided where appropriate to avoid standing pools of water.
- (ii) There shall be satisfactory provision for foul and waste water drainage either by connection to a public sewer or sewage treatment works or by discharge to a properly constructed septic tank or cesspool approved by the local authority.
- (iii) All drainage and sanitation provision shall be in accordance with all current legislation and British or European Standards.
- (iv) Work on drains and sewers shall be carried out only by persons who are qualified in the particular type of work being undertaken and in accordance with current legislation and British or European standards.

12. Domestic Refuse Storage & Disposal

- (i) Where communal refuse bins are provided these shall be non-combustible and housed within a properly constructed bin store.
- (ii) All refuse disposal shall be in accordance with all current legislation and regulations.

13. Communal Vehicular Parking

Suitably surfaced parking spaces shall be provided to meet the requirements of residents and their visitors.

14. Communal Recreation Space

On sites where it is practical to do so, suitable space equivalent to about one tenth of the total area of the site shall be allocated for recreational purposes, unless in the local authority's opinion there are adequate recreational facilities within a close proximity to the site.

15. Notices and Information

- (i) The name of the site shall be displayed on a sign in a prominent position at the entrances to the site together with the current name, address and telephone number of the licence holder and manager and emergency contact details, a copy of the site licence or the front page of the said licence and details of where the full licence and other information required to be available under this standard can be viewed and between which times (if not displayed on the notice board).

- (ii) A current plan of the site with roads and pitches marked **on together with the areas that the owner is responsible for maintaining** shall be prominently displayed at the entrances to it.
- (iii) A copy of the current site licence shall be available for inspection in a prominent place on the site.
- (iv) In addition at the prominent place the following information shall also be available for inspection at the prominent place:
 - (a) A copy of the most recent periodic electrical inspection report.
 - (b) A copy of the site owner's certificate of public liability insurance.
 - (c) A copy of the local flood warning system and evacuation procedures, if appropriate.
 - (d) A copy of the fire risk assessment made for the site.
- (v) All notices shall be suitably protected from the weather and from direct sunlight.

16. Flooding

- (i) The site owner shall establish whether the site is at risk from flooding by referring to the Environment Agency's Flood Map.
- (ii) Where there is risk from flooding the site owner shall consult the Environment Agency for advice on the likelihood of flooding, the depths and velocities that might be expected, the availability of a warning service and on what appropriate measures to take.

17. Requirement to Comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005

The site owner shall make available the latest version of the fire risk assessment carried out under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 for inspection by residents and when demanded, a copy of the risk assessment shall be made available to the local authority.

18. Fire safety measures where the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 does not apply (such as single unit sites and those sites solely occupied by family groups)

- (i) The standards in this paragraph only apply if the site is **not** subject to the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Fire Points

- (ii) These shall be located so that no caravan or site building is more than 30 metres from a fire point. Equipment provided at a fire point shall be housed in a weather-proof structure, easily accessible and clearly and conspicuously marked "FIRE POINT".

Fire Fighting Equipment

- (iii) Where water standpipes are provided:
 - (a) The water supply shall be of sufficient pressure to project a jet of water not less than 5 metres from the nozzle.
 - (b) There shall be a reel that complies with the current British or European Standard, with a hose not less than 35 metres long, having a means of connection to a water standpipe (preferably a screw thread connection) with a water supply of sufficient pressure and terminating in a small hand nozzle.
 - (c) Hoses shall be housed in a red box and marked "HOSE REEL". Access to the fire point shall not be obstructed or obscured.
- (iv) Where hydrants are provided, hydrants shall conform to the current British or European Standard.
- (v) Access to hydrants and other water supplies shall not be obstructed or obscured.
- (vi) Where standpipes are not provided or the water pressure or flow is not sufficient, each fire point shall be provided with water extinguishers (2 x 9 litres) which comply with the current British or European Standard.

Fire Warning

- (vii) A suitable means of raising the alarm in the event of a fire shall be provided at each fire point.

Maintenance and Testing of Fire Fighting Equipment

- (viii) All alarm and fire fighting equipment shall be installed, tested and maintained in working order by persons who are qualified in the particular type of work being undertaken and be available for inspection by, or on behalf of, the licensing authority or the Fire and Rescue Service.

- (ix) A record shall be kept of all testing and remedial action taken.
- (x) All equipment susceptible to damage by frost shall be suitably protected.

Fire Notices

- (xi) A clearly written and conspicuous notice shall be provided and maintained at each fire point to indicate the action to be taken in case of fire. This notice should include the following:

“On discovering a fire:

- I. Ensure the caravan or site building involved is evacuated.
- II. Raise the alarm.
- III. Call the fire brigade (the nearest phone is sited at).”