

MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS FORUM

Monday 3 November 2014

Present:

Councillors Bull, Henson and Morris

Also Present:

Jan Grundy	- Exonia Park
Val Ewings	- Exonia Park
Lyndon Carter	- Exonia Park
Alan Southard	- Newport Park
Malcolm Thomas	- Ringswell Park
Sheila Welsh	- Ringswell Park
Wendy Threlfall	- National Association of Park Homes Residents
Geoff Threlfall	- National Association of Park Homes Residents
Richard Allen	- Cornwall Park Homes Forum

Also Present:

Caroline Aird	- Age UK, Exeter
Anthony Tregenna	- LEASE

In Attendance:

Howard Bassett	- Exeter City Council
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APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

These were received from Councillors Denham, Hannaford, Holland, Leadbetter and Newby, Denise Dearden, Graham Guy and Tanya Youngs.

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JULIE WALE

The Chair reported that Julie Wale was stepping down as one of the Ringswell Park representatives and would be replaced by Sheila Welsh.

The Chair requested that the thanks of the Forum for Julie's past service be recorded.

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MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 APRIL AND 11 AUGUST 2014

As members had not received the minutes of the meetings held on 28 April and 11 August 2014 they would be submitted again to the next meeting of the Forum.

WINTER READY INITIATIVE

Caroline Aird of Age UK Exeter updated the Forum on the Winter Ready Initiative. Energy companies were obliged to promote carbon saving. However, other than improvements to boilers, insulation schemes for Park Homes were not generally available. She was working with the Devon Welfare Rights Unit and Exeter CAB who were also lobbying energy companies to include Park Homes in the Energy Companies Obligation (ECO) scheme.

Caroline asked that Park Homes networks encourage residents to contact her at Age UK for advice on potential free/subsidised insulation schemes. Her team at Age UK Exeter would also be happy to talk through concerns about finances particularly in relation to benefits such as Pension Credit.

Caroline would be willing to run a drop in at each of the parks if space could be made available. Caroline can be contacted on 01392 202092.

Malcolm Thomas and others advised of their experience of insulation works and of the reasonable prices available. Under floor heating was also available. Reference was made to a Tedburn St. Mary based firm who undertook insulation works.

PRESENTATION BY ANTHONY TREGENNA - LEASE PARK HOMES ADVICE

The Chair welcomed Anthony Tregenna of LEASE, a Non-Departmental Public Body funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government to provide free legal advice relating to park homes in England. He spoke on the following, responding to queries as set out beneath each category:-

- Pitch Fee Review
 - can discuss maintenance issues with residents if it is felt that the site owner is only undertaking the bare minimum or avoiding their responsibilities. If there is an issue there could be grounds for challenging fee reviews;
 - any Local Authority site charge can only be added to the residents' fee once. At present Exeter City Council is giving consideration to the level of any charge and has to justify any future increase; and
 - cost of appeal to First Tier tribunal is £154 for a resident, If two or more apply this will reduce to £260
- Sales and Gifts
 - commission is payable by the buyer to site owner, the maximum payable remaining at 10%; and
 - gift may be made only to family members. Within 7 days of gift new occupier must send a Notice of Assignment Form to site owner.
- Offences
 - the word "persistently" had been withdrawn from "persistently reduce service" in the Caravan site Act 1968. As such, a local authority has power to prosecute if services are withdrawn as a criminal offence in the Magistrates or Crown Court; and
 - attempts to seek information from Estate Agents on potential buyers with a view to disrupting a sale would be considered professional negligence by the agents

- Licensing
 - from 1 April 2014 a Local Authority has the discretion whether to charge an annual licence fee and the amount. The policy must be published and any increase justified;
 - they have new enforcement powers and can serve a compliance notice setting out details of failures with a deadline for completion of remedial measures. The authority can also demand expenses and the maximum fine is level 5 in the Magistrates Court - £5,000;
 - if the site owner does not pay, a charge can be placed; and
 - an example given of potential breach was unsafe trees and branches which would constitute a health and safety hazard.

- Site rules
 - new rules since 4 February 2014 on bringing new Park Rules into force, the park owner to supply the proposal notice to each individual resident and the residents association;
 - 28 day period in which to respond and it was suggested that residents respond as a group, although individual residents could also respond;
 - costs of appeal can be met by the site owner if it is found that the owner has been unreasonable, for example, tried to introduce a banned rule; and
 - the new framework was a welcome improvement with reasons as to why any rules are not agreed.

The presentation is attached to the minutes.

Contact details for Anthony Tregenna are:-

The Leasehold Advisory Service
020 7832 2525
 info@lease-advice.org
<http://parkhomes.lease-advice.org>
 Fleetbank House, 2-6 Salisbury Square, London EC4Y 8JX

The Chair thanked Mr Tregenna for his presentation.

The Chair advised that a Mobile Homes page would be set up on the Exeter City Council website to include Park Rules and that the residents would be advised when this was operational.

She stated that the issue of site licences had been raised at a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee - Community and she stated that details would be brought to the next the Forum meeting.

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ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The Chair encouraged all present to contact herself or Jo Quinnell should they wish items to be placed on agenda for future meetings.

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DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS:

Future meetings were 27 April and 26 October 2015 starting at 2.15pm.

(The meeting commenced at 2.15 pm and closed at 3.55 pm)

Chair