

Berecroft Planned Works Update Minutes
Friday 21st of May 2010.

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| | <p>Meeting chaired By Zulqar Cheema (ZC)</p> <p>In Attendance: Tracy White, South Anglia (TW) Robert Halfon MP (RH) Mark Samuels, Essex Fire Service (MS) Stuart McMillan, Essex Fire Service (SM) Cllr Lee Dangerfield (LD) Cllr John Strachan (JS) Cllr Bob Davies (BD) Chief Inspector Ben Hodder (BH) David Richardson South Anglia (DR) Residents of Berecroft Joshua Jolles (JJ)</p> <p>Minutes take by :Caroline Kaldani (CK) Meeting opened at 6.35.</p> |
| ZC | <p>Opened the meeting and introduced Robert Halfon MP</p> |
| RH | <p>Gave an overview as to his involvement with the initiative. Explained that he has met with many different individuals and organisations including, residents, Fire Service, Essex Police, Council and South Anglia. He expressed an interest in joining the Steering Group and mentioned his concern over the timetable that had been created by the Steering Group to move work forward on the estate. He gave thanks to Fire Service, Essex Police, Cheema and the Councillors for the way that they had dealt with the fire and arising issues.</p> |
| ZC | <p>Introduced Cllr Lee Dangerfield.</p> |
| LD | <p>Confirmed the sentiments of RH. LD thanked Bill Rammell for his involvement and work. LD also gave thanks to the Fire Service and Joe McGill for the way they handled the fire. LD asked “why are we here?”. He explained that he had called the meeting because he felt that there were questions that needed to be answered. LD urged all residents to ask the questions that they wanted to, but requested that they controlled their tempers and that they were constructive with their responses.</p> |
| ZC | <p>Then introduced Mark Samuels from Essex Fire Service.</p> |
| MS | <p>Thanked everyone for their thanks and stressed that it was a joint effort. MS stated that the priority was that no injuries had been sustained, and that the public had followed the advice that had been circulated by Essex Fire Service. MS went on to give a brief overview as to what had happened with the two fires and explained that he had been speaking to South Anglia’s fire specialists and as well as his own colleagues to look to resolve the issues.</p> |

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| ZC | Then introduced Tracy White |
| TW | <p>Introduced herself and explained that she was there to convey a message from Chris Ellison due to him being unable to attend. TW spoke about the close working relationship that South Anglia has with the fire specialists that they had brought on board as well as with Essex Fire Service. TW understood that residents wanted to see speedy responses. She explained that the South Anglia had been working with the Steering Group to set timeframes that were suitable and acceptable. She stressed the fact that this was not a time for “quick fixes” but that the solution had to be suitable. TW recognised however that the solution should be rapid in being implemented. TW urged residents to ask questions.</p> <p>TW went on to explain the situation with the roofs. She explained that the roofs have a “latent defect”. She explained that the roofs were built to the correct standard for when they were fitted to the properties in Berecroft and that they had met Building Control requirements. TW reassured residents that the roofs have been fitted elsewhere across the country and that they haven’t been identified as being a hazard. However TW explained that the two recent fires had highlighted an issue that needed to be addressed.</p> <p>TW spoke to the residents about findings from the fire experts and the Fire Service and explained that South Anglia had decided that the best course of action to take would be to replace all of the roofs on the Berecroft estate, at no cost to residents, home owners or landlords. TW stated that the initial cost for this work had been estimated at approximately £2 million and that South Anglia was currently undergoing some financial re-modelling to allow for this. TW also stated that because these roofs had been fitted across the country but South Anglia had been the first to identify the problems with them, that all of their learning would be shared nationally with other organisations.</p> <p>TW explained that in order to move the process forward there would be a 2 week consultation and engagement process with residents from Berecroft taking place from Monday the 24th of May. TW encouraged residents to attend and to talk to South Anglia’s representatives about how they would like to engage with the process. TW stated that South Anglia hoped to be on site at the end of July to start the work. TW requested that any questions that came forward should be about process that residents will go through rather than what South Anglia will be doing.</p> |
| LD | <p>Thanked TW for coming and asked for her to respond to a couple of questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) that the roofs of the bungalows were inspected 2) Would the guttering be replaced at the same time? 3) The timeline that had been constructed. <p>LD went on to state that the roofs were the only one of that construction in Harlow. He also stated that he was happy with South Anglia’s proposal to</p> |

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| | <p>replace the roofs. However he brought to the groups attention that the timeline had not been circulated at the Steering Group meeting, but that it was only sent round afterwards. LD also stated that Bill Rammell had requested that the timeline be made shorter. He felt that TW had been honest and accountable though and that he wanted to move things forward in a positive light.</p> |
| DR | <p>Responded that yes the guttering would be included in this process and had been factored into the costings.</p> |
| TW | <p>Spoke about the timeline and explained the lack of dates on the initial document. She talked about the poor communication that had been taking place through a variety of different medias including local newspapers. TW requested that the communication style be changed and that there be more communication through the phone. TW stated that CK was taking minutes to ensure that the meeting was open and transparent. TW was aware that sample inspections would be taking place this week of the bungalow roof spaces.</p> |
| LD | <p>Stated that South Anglia had made false claims in the media around work that they were carrying out. E.G they had spoken about resident safety initiatives that they had carried out by fitting spoke alarms, but this was actually something that had been established by LD. LD requested that claims like this were not submitted in future.</p> |
| TW | <p>Ensured LD that she would speak to the PR department to ask them to clarify all information about Berecroft before it was released. TW brought to the meetings attention an article that had been placed in the Star newspaper stating the tenants should not pay their rent until the issue with the roofs was resolved. TW urged tenants not to do this as it wasn't a legal action for them to carry out and they would still be required to pay their rent. TW asked tenants to speak to the Citizens Advice Bureau before making any decision regarding not paying their rent.</p> |
| ZC | <p>Informed the meeting that the minutes from this meeting and others would be available on the Berecroft website.</p> |
| Resident | <p>Stated that not all residents have access to the computer and that it is better to print the documents off and to hand deliver them to every household.</p> |
| BD | <p>Spoke to the meeting about how he had felt concern about the timeline of work that was due to be carried out. However he was pleased with the solution that South Anglia was putting forward and hoped that the consultation process wouldn't lengthen things.</p> |
| RH | <p>Asked for clarification around the consultation process and reassurance that it would be meaningful.</p> |
| TW | <p>Responded and stated that the solution to the problem had already been</p> |

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| | <p>identified, what was needed through the consultation was for residents to feedback previous experiences, for them to ask questions around the process and the technical specification, to put themselves forward for being involved and for identifying how they wanted to be involved in the process.</p> |
| RH | <p>Asked if the comments and suggestions from each day could be displayed for public consumption.</p> |
| TW | <p>Didn't feel that this would be appropriate as customers may want to make private feedback and wouldn't want this shared with other residents.</p> |
| ZC | <p>Then opened the meeting to the floor for any questions.</p> |
| Resident | <p>Didn't want an unqualified individual being involved in the signing off her property. Was also concerned about the ability get insurance and how much it would cost now that there has been two fires. Plus she was not receiving any communication about the meetings or processes that were taking place.</p> |
| LD | <p>Stated that the resident was right about her comments and that Home Owners were not receiving any information. He stated that the estate was made up of 316 properties even though only 180 were South Anglia's and as such all should be communicated with.</p> |
| TW | <p>Stated that the Steering Group were responsible for sending out the information to residents.</p> |
| Resident | <p>Stated that they were a homeowner and didn't receive any information from South Anglia, and that if they phoned South Anglia their queries weren't dealt with as they weren't a resident.</p> |
| TW | <p>Asked LD to look at the way forward and to not keep bringing past issues up. Especially as they were trying to work together for the good of local residents. TW will ensure that there will be an individual available to deal with specific issues relating to the work being carried out at Berecroft. TW also reassured the meeting that no work would be signed off by an unqualified individual.</p> |
| Resident | <p>Are homeowners going to be required to pay for the new roofs?</p> |
| TW | <p>Restated that no homeowners would have to pay for the new roofs that were being fitted. TW agreed that the issue of communication needed to be addressed and that South Anglia will commit to make sure everyone gets all information.</p> |
| Resident | <p>Stated that they were on the steering group, but had been missed off the information for the last two and had consequently missed the meetings. She felt that this was because she was a home owner. The resident also asked for clarification around the roof.</p> |

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| DR | Gave a technical breakdown of the issues with the roofs. DR explained that the roofs were safe and were not the cause of the fires. However the structure seemed to radiate the heat back down and therefore made fighting the fire more difficult. He reassured residents that the bitumen was not an issue in the fire. |
| MS | Spoke to the meeting about his suggestions that had been put forward to South Anglia. He stated that he was pleased with the response that South Anglia was putting forward and that they had responded to all of his primary concerns. He stated that removing the bitumen was not a primary priority and that he wanted to ensure that all residents had smoke alarms, did checks and had an escape plan. |
| Resident | Stated that they had, had a mild heart attack due to the fires and had lost everything. They felt that this wasn't represented when newspapers stated that there were no casualties. |
| TW | Agreed that the fires had a far reaching effect. She stated that the most positive way to move things forward now would be to ensure that the estate was safe. She couldn't promise that there would never be another fire, but the work that is being carried out will hopefully help to make changes. |
| JJ | Spoke to the meeting and stated that they had been involved for a long period of time with South Anglia. JJ stated that he was disappointed the situation with the guttering was still on going. JJ also stated that he was pleased with the response from South Anglia regarding the roofs and that he was very satisfied with DR and MS responses regarding the technical aspects of the fires. JJ highlighted the communications gap and looked forward to seeing all the work completed in 10 months. |
| TW | Thanked JJ for his comments and invited him to engage and be part of the process. |
| LD | Explained that he has taken over from JJ and that he had been a good mentor. LD mentioned that Harlow Council was not represented on the South Anglia Board and wondered if this might be due to the individual that held the housing portfolio. He asked for more transparency and openness. |
| Resident | Wanted to thank Fire Service for their help with the fire. They felt that only the Fire Service had learnt from the process and that South Anglia hadn't. They stated that when the roofs went on it the first place the homeowners weren't able to sign them off. They stated that residents that had loft hatches put in had found bottles of urine up there left over from contractors. Asked for better contractors and stated that they would be bringing their own surveyor in to sign off the work this time. However they did feel that the fires had created a stronger community. |
| TW | Thanked the resident for their comments and stated that this was all a learning process. TW urged residents to come forward and speak to the |

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| | consultants about their previous experience and what they would like to see taking place this time. |
| Resident | Asked whether replacing the guttering was value for money, when some of it could still be used? The resident had sent two letters in to South Anglia, but had not received any responses. Felt that this was due to them being a home owner. |
| TW | Apologised for the lack of response and asked if she could have their contact details. |
| Resident | Asked how it would be decided which properties would be worked upon first? And would it be a piece meal operation? |
| TW | Stated that the schedule of work hadn't been confirmed yet and that the resident should speak to the consultants next week for more information around the planned work. |
| Resident | Felt that there were quite a few Houses of Multiple Occupancy (HMO) on the estate and they weren't being looked after properly. What could be done to resolve this? |
| LD | Stated that on the 6 th of April 2010 new legislation had been brought into being so that any (HMO) landlords had to register with the council. LD had asked Harlow Council to look into the HDO's that were on Berecroft. |
| | In order to improve communication LD asked that monthly public meetings were held. |
| Resident | Wanted to know if the vents were going to be sealed? Plus wanted to state that there had been more than just the 2 fires that had been mentioned. |
| MS | Stated that the vents were not impacting on the spread of the fires. If residents were shutting every single door and window every time then yes they may have an impact, but realistically no they weren't. |
| Resident | Informed the meeting that they were an HMO landlord and that they were having to meet high requirements for fire safety. They also stated that the legislation that had been passed only applied to recent HMO's and so plenty of properties would be in existence and not monitored. They also stated that they didn't receive information about the meeting taking place. |
| TW | Fed back that many HMO Landlords weren't as dedicated to their tenants and with a lack of regulation they were causing problems for local residents. |
| LD | Informed resident that they had tried to deliver to all properties but found it difficult to contact him. |
| SM | Urged all residents to look at the ways that they could make their own |

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| <p>ZC</p> <p>RH</p> | <p>homes safer. SM stated that they were pleased with the ways that residents had responded at last fire.</p> <p>Rounded up the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.</p> <p>Felt that the meeting had been very positive. He asked for all communication to be sent out in as many different formats as possible so that all residents had an opportunity to be kept informed. RF also stated that he would be keen to attend steering group and will continue to monitor the situation.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 8.12pm.</p> |
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