

Newlon Scrutiny Panel Improvement Plan 1

for the recommendations about Service Charge Information to Residents

Scrutiny Panel Recommendations from 10/2/15	Action taken	Corporate objective	Lead officer	Target date	Completion date
Notifying residents about unexpected service charge increases					
<p>Recommendation 1:</p> <p>Notifying residents in writing, explaining and setting out any increase in service charge expenditure which is more than 30% or £100 above (whichever is greater) the estimated yearly charge. The explanation making it clear that this would be reflected in next year's service charge. To be sent to affected residents within that service charge year and also included in the next notification of rent and service charge review for the following year.</p> <p>Reason for Recommendation 1:</p> <p>The Panel made this recommendation to help residents budget for unexpected increases and to reduce the number of queries raised by them because of the level of service charge increases.</p>	<p>The Estates Team meet with Finance on a monthly basis to review ongoing budget figures, this enables us to highlight any extraordinary expenditure that will impact on the Service Charges going forward.</p> <p>An example of this is Mothers Square where Japanese Knotweed has been found within the grounds, this needs immediate treatment and is a 3-5 year treatment program costing £3,300. We have sent letters to all residents highlighting this unexpected expenditure.</p>	Increase resident satisfaction (2015/16)	Judith Hughes	August 2015	

Scrutiny Panel Recommendations from 10/2/15	Action taken	Corporate objective	Lead officer	Target date	Completion date
Being clearer about what the service charge headings mean					
<p>Recommendation 2:</p> <p>Providing a glossary for the accounting terms and the less common service charge headings Newlon uses in its letters and communications to residents about service charges.</p> <p>Reason for Recommendation 2:</p> <p>The Panel made this recommendation to improve the quality of the service charge information provided to residents.</p>	<p>The Readers' Panel, residents from Babik Court and Queensland Road were all asked to review a draft of our Service Charge Fact sheet. In addition to the recommendation from the Scrutiny Panel both Babik Court and Queensland Road residents had expressed their concerns to Newlon about confusing service charge headings.</p> <p>As a result of feedback from all three, over ten amendments to headings were made and an explanation of all headings provided. These are now clearer and easier to understand. The original Service Charge fact sheet has been renamed the Service Charges glossary of terms. It can now be found in residents' Service Charge Budget Statements.</p>	Increase resident satisfaction (2015/16)	Judith Perry	Not set	