

Longbarn Residents Association Meeting 15th January 2015

Consultation

We have carried out a couple of consultation exercises in the last year, the most recent being on the 10th November when Cheryl Wilkinson, Geoff Orange, Bev Price and I knocked on the majority of doors on the estate and hand delivered around 300 surveys in total. We had, through previous consultation, identified the following key issues and wanted to consult with residents on what they felt the resolutions to be –

- Car parking
- Monitoring grounds maintenance
- Tree issues
- Looking at recreational issues and unused spaces (providing a play area for local children)
- Identifying ownership of and repair the red brick edges
- Improving the area around the shop

The LRA have also set up a focus group to work with us to drive these changes forward. We met with some members of the group on the 8th to agree a plan of action. It was clear from the consultation that the two main issues for residents are grounds maintenance/tree issues and parking. We need to be realistic about what we can achieve, and so, although we are happy to deal with the other issues, we will focus first on these two issues first.

Parking

We have agreed that we will carry out a Planning for Real Exercise, where we will provide a large map of the estate in the shop where residents can identify which areas they think are the worst for parking. The sub-group can then use the results of the consultation to decide where to prioritise additional parking and to remove shrubbery.

Once we have the results of the consultation we will have to follow the following process –

1 – we will have to draw up a plan of work for the estate – improving the parking provision is going to be a very expensive and time consuming process. We may need planning consent and there will be issues with removing the mounds from the centre of the closes as they are classed as contaminated ground. The plan may need to be drawn up for a number of years to make the process fair. The idea is that we focus on the worst areas first. This process will be duplicated over subsequent years.

2 – once we have identified where we want to start first, we will arrange for a contractor to provide us with a quote for the necessary works, we will then have to apply to our Regional Residents Forum for funding through the Scheme Enhancement budget. We will also consider applying for external funding to enable us to carry out as much work as possible. The process will take time, but we need to

do it properly and we also need to make sure we complete as much consultation as possible as this will help any application for funding.

3 – we can do the same for any improvements to grounds maintenance on the estate

4 – in addition to this, Muir Group have agreed to pay an annual fee to the shop owner to allow local residents to continue to park in the shop car park. We are due to meet with the shop owner to assign a written agreement over the coming weeks.

We will ensure that we provide regular updates to the LRA to ensure that residents are kept informed of progress.

Time scales

We are currently trying to put together a map of the local area; once we have done this (hopefully by early Feb) we will put the map in the shop and will invite residents to make comments etc. We will leave the map in place for about a month to ensure everyone gets a chance to take part in the consultation.

Grounds Maintenance Issues

I can now confirm that the second prune has now been added to the contract for Warrington, so we should not encounter the same issues next year. We can look to take out some of the shrubbery as part of the Planning for Real Exercise.

We have received complaints about the time it takes to tackle grounds maintenance issues. When the issues are reported to us, we have to follow a process. Our contractor needs to assess the issue and if necessary provide us with a quote for the works. He then passes it on to us and we need to go to the Regional Manager for approval. We apologise that this process is lengthy and admit that we need a more robust system of recording grounds maintenance issues. I have now set up a spreadsheet to record any grounds maintenance issues we receive in the local area and update it on a regular basis.

Tree Survey

We know that trees are an issue in Warrington which is why commissioned Tree Wise to complete a tree survey. Our Regional Manager met with them recently to talk to them about the survey and to ask them to help us to tender for an appropriate contractor to carry out the works. At the end of the process, we will have a plan of works for all of the trees that we are responsible for in Warrington. We are using this area as a pilot, and will roll this approach across all of the areas that we work in.

Providing a play area

Bev Price has been involved with the consultation with residents regarding the provision of a new play area. Some people have asked for the old play area on Fallowfield Grove to be redeveloped and also the recreational ground at the end of Pasture Lane. If the progress seems slow, it is because residents have told us that they do not feel that these areas are suitable for a children's play area, this has been stated, discussed and agreed. The outcome of consultation carried out earlier this year is leaning towards an environmental type project at the old football pitch. This is

not seen as a priority in terms of resident expectations when balanced with the overall look of the estate, a safe children's play area, and parking issues. The planning for real process will serve not just to capture the parking issues but also any future play area considerations.

Red Brick Edgings

Our Asset Management Team has started to assess the red brick edges. Once the survey has been completed, they are planning to put together a plan of works to repair them. We will keep you informed of progress with this project.

Area around the shop

This can also be taken up as part of the Planning for Real Exercise. Muir is only responsible for a very small area around the shop, so we will need to work in partnership with the other landowners, and the shop owner himself. Any repairs required to the shop building itself are not the responsibility of Muir Group as the building is privately owned. We are keen to support the LRA to access external funding for these works.

Emma Robinson

Assistant Regional Manager – Muir Group Housing Association

28th January 2015