

Home Housing Group Service Charging

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Clements
LEAD OFFICER: Fergus McMorro
REPORT AUTHOR: Laurie Priebe

Summary and Recommendation:

Members are requested to note the attached correspondence arising from questions asked at a meeting of the Council.

1. INFORMATION

On 16 March 2010 I wrote to the Managing Director of Home Northwest following a question asked about service charging at a meeting of the Council. A copy of my letter is attached for information.

Andrea Thorn replied on 26 March with a clear statement on behalf of Home Northwest and her letter is also attached.

2. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

There are no financial or resource implications arising directly from the correspondence itself.

Copeland Borough Council

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STRATEGIC HOUSING

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**Andrea Thorn
Acting Managing Director
Home Group
Copeland Homes
Copeland Centre
Catherine Street
Whitehaven
Cumbria
CA28 7SJ**

16 March 2010

Dear Andrea

Re: Service Charging

Thank you for confirming earlier this year that no additional service charge will be levied for grounds maintenance (often called grass cutting) with effect from April 2010.

Instead there will be a consultation with all affected customers in 2010 prior to a decision on whether or not to introduce a service charge (and, if so, for how much) with effect from April 2011.

However, Copeland Borough Councillors have brought to my attention a separate issue relating to the cleaning of communal areas, I presume relating to blocks of flats. It has been suggested that if these are not kept in a clean and tidy condition, the Home Group will examine the feasibility of introducing a cleaning service for which a service charge might be made.

I should be grateful if you would clarify the current position in regard to the cleaning of communal areas and what options the Home Group are considering in order to maintain standards of which the company and its customers can be proud.

Please note that I am copying this letter to all Copeland Borough Councillors and I should be grateful if you would copy them into your response.

Yours sincerely

Laurie Priebe
Strategic Housing Services Manager

26 March 2010

Mr L Priebe
Strategic Housing Services Manager
Copeland Borough Council
The Copeland Centre
Catherine Street
Whitehaven
CA28 7SJ

Dear Laurie

SERVICE CHARGING

Thank you for your letter of 16 March 2010 enquiring about the cleaning of communal areas within blocks of flats.

In January we completed the annual fire risk assessments to all the blocks of flats in Whitehaven Town Centre which highlighted a risk that customers had placed items of furniture within the communal areas which would cause an obstruction in the event of an emergency evacuation.

A letter was sent to all the customers living in these properties on 19 February to highlight the issue and the fact that some of the communal areas were in a need of a good clean. The cleaning of these areas is currently the responsibility of the residents and in most cases they maintain them to a high standard.

A suggestion was made in the letter that Home could arrange for a cleaning contractor to provide a service to customers in blocks where they don't want to undertake the cleaning for themselves. Where this was arranged, a service charge would be applicable to cover the cleaning costs.

We have no plans to implement a cleaning service unless our customers approach us and ask us to do this on their behalf.

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Cont/d...

Mr L Priebe

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26 March 2010

We will continue to inspect the communal areas in the future and we will make contact with any individual residents who are not fulfilling their responsibilities for maintaining the cleanliness of the communal areas.

I trust that this clarifies the situation, however, if you have any further queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Andrea Thorn
Acting Director