

# Minutes of Sinclair Residents AGM 04/02/2015, Gorgie Church Hall

## DCPM Presentation

I did not take detailed notes of DCPM's presentation, but I am including some of the highlights below. If anybody in the committee wishes to add to this please do so.

**Ian Jow, Customer Service Manager** spoke first. He said DCPM had undertaken a factoring service review which identified shortcomings. Some of the measures implemented to address these shortcomings are:

- Customer management: Customer Support is the first point of contact and hopefully most queries can be dealt with at this level. If the query cannot be resolved by Customer Support then it will go to the Customer Relationship Manager (CRM, Fiona Whyte).
- Operations: three teams involved in the provision of factoring services:
  - Estate management team
  - Building specialist team
  - In-house trades team

All three teams report to the CRM.

**Fiona Whyte, Customer Relationship Manager** then spoke. The main points I wrote down during her intervention were:

- She is planning to restart the newsletter for the estate.
- She observed that their internal trades (gas engineers, electricians, etc) team had been underused.

**Chris Lyon, Factoring Team Leader**, spoke third.

Forthcoming changes he mentioned were (non exhaustive):

- Management fee set at £120. / annum, increased from the current £90. / annum.
- Repairs above £500. including 12% VAT will incur a service charge. This applies to reactive repairs only.
- DCPM will be using in-house trades (mainly joinery, electrical, plumbing, cleaning related activities) more extensively to carry out work on the estate. The reasons given for this are lower costs and better quality control.

Ian Jow concluded the presentation by restating that a new factoring contract was going to be issued to Sinclair Development owners. Sinclair development is, according to him, one of a 'chosen few' being offered to take up the offer of this new model with further information to follow the meeting.

The calendar is as follows:

- February 15: presentation of contract to owners
- March 15: signature of new contracts.

Questions were put to DCPM after their presentation, as follows:

- Complaint regarding doubling of factoring bill overnight: the answer was that the block insurance had initially been wrongly evaluated at the 2013 AGM and had to be increased to reflect the true cost of insuring the estate in the current circumstances (high level of water damage claims), was a major factor in the increase of the factoring premium; additionally an increase in factoring charges was found to be necessary for DCPM to balance the books.
- Client being charged late payment fee despite making regular payments into DCPM.
- Complaints regarding billing: inconsistencies, disorganisation, the direct debit charges were not reviewed in a timely fashion leading residents to accrue unexpected levels of debt due to underpayment.
- Contractor bills have soared, with complaints from residents that the quality / frequency of service has dropped: frequency of stair cleaning shifting from weekly to fortnightly without notification, litter collection not happening on regular basis, exorbitant bills for changing lamp post bulbs due to the bulbs being changed one at a time instead of together, stairs and garden lights not being replaced within times stated by DCPM.

DCPM responded that these complaints would be looked into.

- The question was raised that the presented service did not seem to markedly differ from the one presented in 2013. Ian Jow recognised the frustration this generated, stated that he was new to the team and asked us to trust his commitment to seeing the improvements through.
- He felt the appointment of Fiona Whyte as CRM was going to make a big difference to the quality of the factoring service.

## Chairperson Presentation

A Chairperson Report was handed out, and with it a brochure and 'Sinclair Estate Issues Raised' doc (two pager of issues raised regarding insurance, invoice queries etc, produced by DCPM).

Anybody unable to attend and interested to see a copy of some/all the papers should be able to receive these from DCPM on request.

The committee and chairperson stood down. Two persons volunteered to join the new committee: Pamela Gidney and Dawn Allan. Barry Moore offered to join the committee at the end of the meeting. Jean-Baptiste Richon volunteered for the position of chairperson in the absence of anybody coming forward. A discussion of DCPM performance and history followed.

The question was raised of whether to give DCPM more time to sort out their performance issues or look for another factor. Rosina explained that she attended two previous meetings with DCPM, six months apart from each other with the same promises and no sign of them being implemented when reviewed at the second meeting. However the committee recognised the work involved in re-tendering, with no guarantee that a new factor would fare any better than DCPM. The committee still reported that DCPM seem to work in a better organised way than Aspect. Sadly this is representative of a generally low standard of factoring performance across the board.

A vote was taken (show of hands) on whether we should recommend not going with DCPM. The vote was in favour of continuing with DCPM for 6 months after contract signing and monitor carefully their performance. If after these 6 months it was felt that the performance was inadequate a special meeting would be called to vote on whether to start a new tendering process or to continue with DCPM. Allan mentioned there were not enough people in attendance at the meeting to make a vote either way i.e. see what DCPM has to offer or commence a tendering process.

Rosina presented a document that Fiona Whyte had left with her answering questions that had been presented before the meeting.

The question was asked whether DCPM can help the estate address the issue of excessive numbers of claims for flooding and water damage? Fiona's suggestion was that the £500 excess should be charged to each claimant rather than apportioned throughout the estate as is the current practice. DCPM have used this practice on other estates and found it very effective in reducing the number of claims. If a vote was taken for this (min 35 people voting) then this measure could be implemented.

Some residents reporting a bad experience with Fiona over the length of time it took to replace some light bulbs.

Jane Buxton advocates the possibility of doing the factoring ourselves. She gives the example of a self-factored development at Chesser.