



## **Serpentine Court Steering Group**

**Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

### **Minutes**

**Residents:** Danielle Slaymaker (Chair), Cassy Elliott (Deputy Chair), Sharon Jordan (Deputy Chair), Shannon McCaul (Deputy Chair), Cllr Mohammed Rohim, Pauline Wright, Nadia Hardi, Mercy Zvenyika, Nasteexo Cabdi, Robyn Goodwin

Alicia Francis (MKC), Anne Bircham (MKC) Kevin Farrell (Tpas), Emma-Jane Flynn (Tpas), Cllr Emily Darlington, Cllr Mohammed Khan

**Apologies:** Joan Forsyth , Sandra Mavunga, Nadia Hardi, John Pearce

### **1. Welcome, introductions and ground rules**

The previous minutes were agreed as a true record.

Danielle opened the meeting by responding to the accusations of secrecy made in the press by RORE against SCSG. She highlighted the resident engagement report that she had prepared for the cancelled October Regeneration Sub Committee, which she edited and read out at the last Cabinet meeting. The report demonstrates that SCSG meetings are open meetings and many residents have attended as observers and be given the opportunity to speak. SCSG has attended every public consultation event and members had made themselves available to the residents of Serpentine Court and the wider Lakes Estate. A Facebook group has been created where SCSG can post news and answer questions and all SCSG members speak with residents when they are out and about on daily errands.

SCSG agreed to attach the resident engagement report to these minutes (see appendix), which will be uploaded to the MKC webpage, so viewers can read the true facts and statistics.

Danielle welcomed Anne Bircham (Community Partnership Officer) back into the Serpentine Court family, and SCSG expressed its delight at having Anne back in post.

Nasteexo Cabdi (Hani) was appointed as a member of the SCSG. Danielle recognised the contributions Hani had made in setting up Regen-a-tea and supporting consultation events.



Matters arising:

Visits to other regeneration projects: Fullers Slade Steering Group's visit to Dollis Valley in Barnet went ahead on 24 October. There were no spaces for SCSG members. Alicia to organise a separate visit for SCSG after the ballot.

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Young people: Alicia reported on the plans to support young people to find jobs and to provide better facilities. The Job Club is running and Phil Chandler (NEP Operations Manager) would like to attend the next SCSG meeting to talk about what the Job Club provides and how residents can access the services.

Home loss payments: Alicia will organise a workshop to look at the impact of home loss payments on social security benefits in the New Year. SCSG noted that the issue would be further complicated by the roll out of Universal Credit in Milton Keynes.

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## **2. Project update**

Cabinet met on 2 October 2018 and confirmed the dates of the ballot.

Subsequently, 20 citizens, including some from The Lakes, had asked for the decision to be called-in by the Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee (HSSC). It was discussed at length by HSSC and Kathryn Eames (Head of Regeneration) had prepared a response. HSSC made a unanimous decision not to refer the matter back to Cabinet.

In response to the concerns that had been expressed by the citizens, a Play & Leisure strategy will be developed and there will be full consultation with residents and stakeholders of the wider Lakes.

Alicia reported that two businesses had been left off the electoral register (Wind in the Willows Nursery and Spotlight) and both had now been given a vote.

Wind in the Willows has put out a statement in the SCSG newsletter to re-assure the community that it will be staying open, and they are also mentioned in the statement to the BBC. Alicia pointed out that any plans to re-provide the nursery in another location would be the subject of further public consultation, and detailed exploration with the nursery. The land the nursery stands on is subject to leasehold agreements. Alicia has been meeting with the owners to ensure they have all the available information.



### **3. Communications plan for ballot**

Shannon took the SCSG through the plan and highlighted the key activities. It was agreed that should the majority of residents vote for Option C, there needs to be a post-ballot plan of action to keep up the momentum while the community waits for the works to start. Alicia confirmed that MKC is working on a plan and it will be shared with SCSG in December for comments and suggestions.

Councillor Darlington encouraged SCSG and residents of Serpentine Court to comment on the plans on the MKC Planning website, in the event that Option C is chosen. Those plans would provide greater detail on the play and leisure space, business premises, any re-provision of the nursery and it would open up the discussions to the wider Lakes.

HTA is planning a walkabout with residents and stakeholders in late November to discuss the plans for The Warren Park. There are also plans for a pop-up event to show the community the type of equipment and materials that might be used.

A Christmas event is planned to tell the community about the next steps after the ballot.

Anne will continue to build links with Sir Herbert Leon Academy and the primary schools.

MKC will be looking for the Social Value that the eventual development partner could bring to the community. This might include local apprenticeships and other resources for young people.

### **4. SCSG newsletter**

Sharon introduced the latest newsletter (No. 2) which will be distributed to the whole of the Lakes next week. The headline news is about the ballot and SCSG has encouraged everyone who has registered to use their vote. Articles had been provided by the CCG, Wind in the Willows and HTA and SCSG felt that this was a good sign as partners want to contribute. SCSG had asked HTA to draft the article on the plans for green space under Option C, so that the community understands the thinking behind the design, and to address the myths that have been circulating in the community.



## 5. Resident Charter

Kevin took SCSG through the plan to develop the Resident Charter. The consultation campaign #whatmatterstome was under way and Spooky Night had been held the previous Friday. A Safety Day event is planned for 10 November and a drop-in exhibition has been booked for Thursday 22 November. The purpose of the events is to check residents' priorities should the regeneration go ahead and ensure they are enshrined in the charter.

Following the initial workshops with SCSG, Kevin has been drafting the first version of the charter using a good practice example that Tpas developed for an estate in east London. He has also looked at other charters and the feedback from previous public consultation events on Serpentine Court. The charter will also include the commitments MKC has made in the Housing Offer document.

The Leaseholder Group, which is made up of Resident Leaseholders has almost completed its section of the charter, and Kevin acknowledged the commitment and thoroughness the members of the group had shown.

The charter is a dynamic document which will continue to be worked on in the event of a vote for Option B or C (and after presentation to the Regeneration Sub Committee in December). Tpas would continue to support residents to negotiate the finer details of the charter with MKC over the coming years as the Council brings forward policies and offers.

SCSG agreed to meet on Tuesday 20 November at 6.30pm in the Family Room at the Warren to review the first version.

SCSG

## 6. Neighbourhood management meeting

Mercy and Mohammed (R) agreed to attend the meeting organised by Councillor Darlington with MKC's senior management team on 28 November. Kevin agreed to attend to support the residents.

The purpose of the meeting will be to look at the action plan that has emerged from the estate walkabout that took place in September. SCSG would like an update on what is being done about issues such as the pigeons, waste management, fly-tipping and repairs.

The manager in charge of waste management has offered to come



and meet the SCSG in December and Anne will confirm the invite.

AB

## **7. Tpas report**

Kevin reported that his main focus has been on running the #whatmatterstome campaign and drafting the Resident Charter. He will be attending all consultation events and ballot activities to provide independent advice.

## **8. Question Time**

1. Can MKC provide some rent models to give residents some idea of the new-build rent levels?

A: Yes, Alicia will speak to the Regeneration Management Team about providing indicative rents.

2. Some parts of Serpentine Court are experiencing anti-social behaviour in the communal areas. What can be done about it?

A: Cllr Darlington agreed to talk to the police. She encouraged residents to report the incidents to the police as they base their response on the number of reports they receive. There is a community policing meeting in Bletchley Town Library on the evening 21.11.18 and residents are encouraged to attend. Residents should call 101 to make reports. Kevin reminded SCSG that MKC Housing as the landlord should also be acting on its ASB policy and procedure.

3. When would compensation be paid out, during or after the regeneration?

A: When the resident's move. The details haven't been worked out yet.

4. Will there be a new cleaning service when the new homes have been built?

A: It was agreed that a walkabout with the new Neighbourhood Officers (when they are in post), Marie and Colin, the ex-caretaker to look at the issues, would be a good start.

## **Any Other Business**

None.



**Date and times of next meeting**

- Tuesday 4th December - 6.30-8.30pm (coffee 6.00pm onwards) at Spotlight



## **Appendix**

### **Serpentine Court Regeneration**

#### **Statement by Danielle Slaymaker, Chair of The Serpentine Court Steering Group on Resident Engagement in the lead up to ballot**

I, and the members of the SCSG, think that YourMK has carried out a very good resident engagement process and we are ready for ballot.

In the beginning, Newman Francis advised the residents on the creation of the resident-led steering group.

Serpentine Court Regeneration Group, as it was then known, was advertised widely through flyers and the promotional work of the Community Participation Officer. An open recruitment event was held in September 2017, and the whole Serpentine Court community was invited.

The new steering group – which would later be re-named Serpentine Court Steering Group (SCSG) – was provided with a model terms of reference, which we worked on as a group and turned into a document that was right for Serpentine Court residents. We received training on how to run meetings from Newman Francis, and they chaired the first few meetings while we found our feet. In January 2018, we appointed a Chair and two deputies, and those volunteers took a national qualification in chairing skills, delivered by Tpas.

In March 2018, the SCSG decided to firm up the membership. We took the view that in order to be effective, the SCSG needed to have a consistent membership that was committed to attending meetings and working, collectively. We realised that we had to be business-like, and large public meetings were not a realistic way to get work done.

Fourteen residents volunteered to be permanent members and they came from diverse backgrounds. There was one private tenant and a local business, but no leaseholders. Tpas has been working to encourage leaseholders to engage with the regeneration process, and a leaseholder did attend our last meeting.



Throughout the existence of the SCSG, we have welcomed all residents who wish to attend, in the role of an observer. They are encouraged to take part in the meetings by asking questions and providing feedback on any issues affecting our community. Between March and August 2018, 10 residents attended as observers. No one has ever been turned away. The SCSG has also welcomed guest speakers from YourMK, HTA, Groundworks as well as councillors.

Meetings are run professionally and residents are in charge. Tpas take the minutes, and agendas – set by me and my team - are circulated in advance and put on the web. The Community Partnership Officer also supports every meeting. In my opinion the SCSG has held YourMK to account and there has been a healthy dialogue between the parties. I am clear that YourMK has constantly listened to our views and made changes to the project plans as a result. For example, we have been consulted over public exhibitions, ballot arrangements, design of buildings and estate layout, resident engagement, stakeholder involvement, etc etc

Residents chose their own Independent Advisors (IA). Tpas was appointed in November 2017, following a resident vote at the 'Independent Resident Advisor Selection Event'. Since then Tpas has been with the SCSG and residents every step of the way. In early December, Tpas delivered an introductory letter to everyone home on Serpentine Court and placed posters in the communal areas.

The Tpas consultant, or another member of the team, has attended every Steering Group meeting and Project Board, and delivered a series of training sessions for the SCSG on tenants' rights, rent and council tax setting, the Right-to-Buy and regeneration finance (in conjunction with YourMK).

From January 2018 onwards, Tpas held a surgery at Spotlight every Wednesday morning. They set up a freephone, email and webpage and provide regular statistics on usage. Since late July, Tpas has been spending more time out on Serpentine Court talking to residents on the doorstep and in the street.

In July, the SCSG produced a newsletter with help from Tpas. We had complete control over the contents of the newsletter, and it was timed to announce the outcome of July's Cabinet meeting. We intend to produce another one in the autumn. We are also designing the process for creating a Residents' Charter.

The day-to-day resident engagement work has been carried out by the Community Participation Officer (CPO). From the start of the project and up until July 2018, the same CPO was in post and she reported to the SCSG every month on her activities. She asked for our advice on how, where and when to contact residents and worked hard to engage people. Her replacement has continued to





work with us in the same way and has provided lots of ideas on how to get residents involved in the project.

I would also like to acknowledge the work the CPO's have done with stakeholders by attending the meeting hosted by the local health care body, and regularly visiting Sir Herbert Leon Academy to speak with the students who are affected by the regeneration.

The Thursday coffee morning, which we named 'Regen-a-tea', has been a real success story. It began as a social event for Somalian residents and has blossomed into a thriving activity where members of the wider community can drop in for some social time and learn about the latest developments in the regeneration process. We think there is a learning point to be taken from Regen-a-tea – many residents like to learn about regeneration in relaxed, informal setting with their friends in support.

Although the Housing Needs survey - carried out by Newman Francis over summer 2018 - had a specific purpose, I also see it as a type of resident engagement activity. At the time of writing, Newman Francis team had met with 155 households to discuss their future housing needs, and naturally used the interviews to explain the regeneration process and signpost residents to YourMK, SCSG and Tpas.

In the survey, residents were asked, 'How well informed do you feel about the proposals for Serpentine Court?' 24.84% replied 'Very well informed', 24.18% replied 'Well informed', 24.84% responded 'Adequately informed', 18.30% replied 'Poorly informed' and 7.84% 'Don't know'. My priority is to make sure residents in the last two categories feel much better informed. However, we now know that the majority of households interviewed (74%) said they are adequately or more than adequately informed.

In support of the activities carried out by the professionals, the SCSG members have acted as ambassadors for the regeneration, and as community communicators. We have all spoken with friends, family and neighbours about what's happening on a daily basis. We have strong networks and deep roots in Serpentine Court, and we have used the community grapevine to spread news and reach vulnerable and anxious neighbours who don't have the confidence to come forward and ask for advice. We have worked next to YourMK and Tpas staff when they carry out door-knocking exercises and we are 'hi-viz' thanks to our t-shirts, which we wear when we are on SCSG duties.

YourMK created an easily accessible webpage where documents have been uploaded and events have been promoted. In the view of the SCSG this has provided the right kind of content for people who like to look at information on the web. Tpas also hosts a Serpentine Court webpage which includes 'shout-outs' and advertises events.



A series of public events have been held to provide the community with project updates and to show the designs as they have been emerging. Once the SCSG had found its feet, we began to take a prominent role at these events. We were consulted over the set-up and style of each one and our views were taken on board. We hosted the registration process and we greeted residents as they arrived. We were on hand to capture residents' views and support them by being friendly faces who speak their language. I should point out that these events have been open to anybody and we have promoted the last two to the wider Lakes Estate, as we value the views of our neighbours.

For the Cabinet meeting in July, we began the SCSG promotional campaign, by ordering 'It's Our Time!' t-shirts, featuring our own logo. By the time of the family fun day at Dinosaur Park in August, we were giving out wristbands and balloons. We are seeking funding to build on our campaign with posters and banners as the build-up to the ballot begins. We are a resourceful and creative steering group, and we have been supported by YourMK and our local councillor to express ourselves and our ideas.

Since March 2018, I have attended the YourMK Project Board meeting, or one of my deputies has attended in my place. YourMK acted on the advice of Tpas in changing the membership of the Board to include a resident representative. I am allowed to have an input at meetings and I have helped to shape some of the ways in which the project is being delivered. I have found the access to architects, consultants and senior YourMK managers really empowering and they have taken views of the members and residents I represent, seriously.

I repeat, YourMK has carried out a very good resident engagement process. We accept that not every one is ready to engage with what's going on. We know that people have different preferences when it comes to finding things out.

The most important point is to offer people lots of choice over how they access information, and a range of times when they can meet staff. A menu of options for getting involved in different ways has been made available. I am in no doubt that YourMK, Tpas and SCSG have been willing to meet, or talk, with any resident while being respectful of lifestyles.

I am also satisfied that attempts have been made to reach everyone who lives on Serpentine Court, and I respect those residents who have not chosen to engage, yet.



I appreciate that some residents feel apathetic about regeneration, and others may not be in a 'good place' at any given time. But just because someone isn't taking part, doesn't mean they aren't listening or taking notice.

The only real problem we have faced with resident engagement has been down to political decisions, and the uncertainty they have created. The timing of the decision to make changes to how YourMK operates was less than ideal. The press that that decision attracted has planted more seeds of doubt in our community. But we have kept going and remained positive. We want to develop a brilliant resident engagement model with the council's Housing & Regeneration department, and we want the funding and resources to make it succeed.

It is up to Milton Keynes Council to deliver on its promises, so the doubters have a reason to believe that a change is really going to come, and the residents who have engaged feel their precious time has been worth it.

It's our time!

Danielle Slaymaker

Chair of the SCSG

September 2018