

**COMMUNITY AND HOUSING SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

20 JULY 2021

ITEMS 5 & 6 -ADDITIONAL PAPERS

**Submissions on Agenda Items 5 and 6 from
local residents' Groups**

Response from Fullers Slade Residents' Association

Submitted by Bianca Bendig-Ceesay, Chair

Please find below the points we would like to make:

- **How work is prioritised and what targets are set:**
 - How can residents in Fullers Slade find out when renewal work is planned for their property, e.g., new bathrooms or new kitchen? With the new plans Emily Darlington mentioned at the last RoRE Meeting on 2.7.21, will renewal work now go street by street and have dates already been set?
- **What has been achieved so far and progress towards Decent Homes Standard for all council housing in MK;**
 - Fire Safety is an issue on Fullers Slade, as the loft voids are not compartmented, as the estate is an area full of terraced houses this is a big issue. There is also the complication that the estate is a mix of private, private rented, housing association and council houses. In a lot of the houses fire doors are missing or have been tempered with.
 - A recent fire in Bellwether, outside one of the houses, highlighted issues regarding the wired fire alarms. Despite the strong smell of smoke inside the house the newly installed fire alarm did not go off. Other residents have complained that the fire alarms are too sensitive as they already go off when water is being boiled on the hob. Is there a plan to get all council housing fire alarms checked on the estate to adjust the sensitivity of the individual alarms or will residents have to book individual Fire and Wellness Visit appointments by emailing centraladmin@bucksfire.gov.uk?
- **What has been achieved in Energy efficiency improvements;**
 - FSRA is still waiting for an update from Emily Darlington regarding the savings that can be made using heat pumps. The figures given in the past do not seem realistic and we want to ensure that our residents get realistic figures to make an informed decision regarding the Renewal of their estate.
 - There is also new concern regarding heat pumps due to the noise they make and the impact this has on residents.
 - More concern has also been sparked by an Article in the Sunday Times on 11.7.21 about Heat Pump teething troubles.
[Heat pump howler cost us thousands on our bills | Home | The Sunday Times \(thetimes.co.uk\)](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/heat-pump-howler-cost-us-thousands-on-our-bills-home-the-sunday-times) *The article can be found in full at the bottom of this document.*
- **Timeliness of response – time from first report to resolution:**
 - We recently had issues with regards to fencing on the estate. It took weeks, if not months in some cases to establish whether a fence between a council owned house and a private owned house belonged to the council owned property or not. Several residents had to “fight” with the council and Mears to get their fencing done. Council tenants should not have to go through this, the council

should be aware of which fences belong to their properties and this information should be easily accessible to both Mears and the relevant council employees dealing with council tenant repair queries. When can we expect that a clear answer is provided to every council tenant on the estate and the maintenance information for each council property is updated, so Mears and Council can both refer to it easily?

- What is the target response time for repairs?
- Could Repair Surgeries be introduced on the estate?
- **Issues of damp – are these being escalated properly?**
 - In the past residents found it difficult to be heard by the council regarding their damp issues. What is the best approach for residents to get their case heard and action to be taken?
- **Landscaping and maintenance of HRA land on estates:**
 - Landscaping and mowing are currently a big issue on Fullers Slade. Some issues are due to the new contractor working for Stony Stratford Town Council, who does not seem to have the correct maps to show where they should be doing work and others seem to be caused by the reporting system on the council website where it points the work to the wrong agency being responsible. The website being an issue was the case with the mowing down the H2 on the outside of Fullers Slade. The grass grew so high that it was difficult to see on-coming traffic. The council system had to be overridden manually to allow for the correct agency to be alerted to the issue.
- **Pest control – how it is being tackled and is it successful?**
 - We are currently having issues with pest control (rats) between Fullers Slade and Galley Hill. This is partly due to overgrown bushes / hedges, residents not clearing their drives and blocked drains. We found that the council was not very co-operative, and residents found they were fobbed off when complaining about rat issues. In order to support our residents FSRA members assisted residents clearing drives from rubbish and buying rat traps for some residents, who found it difficult to pay for traps themselves.
- **Cleansing / litter / fly-tipping:**
 - Fly tipping is another issue on Fullers Slade and it would be great to see more enforcement by MKC to stop it.
 - Introducing a Litter Amnesty and providing skips on the estate every few months would be a way forward. With the tip booking now being a hinderance for some residents, high costs for disposal by the council another would a regular “Amnesty” (quarterly) be something the council could investigate?
 - Could letters / leaflets go out to every resident advising that rubbish for the weekly collection is to be presented at the end of the drive / property in recycling bags or black bin bags, no loose items? That this should be done

earliest the night before the weekly rubbish collection and that rubbish is not to be put out on the communal grass areas / grass covered roundabouts.

- **What are your plans to tackle ASB and drug dealing on Fullers Slade?**
 - We recently had a Section 60 Order introduced on the estate. ASB and drug issues are ripe on the estate, especially on Weavers Hill.
-

Times Article about Heat Pumps in Full:

Jayne Dowle - Sunday 11 July 2021

Heat Pumps Are Still a Relatively New Product

When Michael, a project manager, and his wife, were house-hunting they were instantly attracted to a three-storey, four-bedroom home in Herefordshire that had an air source heat pump and which the developer promised would be energy-efficient with minimal energy bills.

The couple paid £230,000 for the new-build property, but their average electricity bill is now £200 a month. "There are only two of us," says Michael, who doesn't want to reveal his surname. "We're thinking, 'Sodding hell!' We've tried to save energy, cutting down on baths and getting very, very paranoid about the overall electricity consumption."

A few years ago, they invested in a smart meter to assess just how much energy they were using every day. Michael says: "During the summer it's an average of about £1 to £1.50 a day. But as soon as winter hits it's £9, £10, £11 a day. It really began to grate on me. My wife and I would be at work, having done nothing in the house, then you walk through the door and the meter is rocketing up to £11."

"When we bought our house the heat pump technology was one of the main marketing drivers. We did a bit of reading around the subject. We heard that a heat pump works really, really well when you've got the right conditions, underfloor heating and good insulation, and it should be cheaper to run than a gas combi. We have got underfloor heating, it's a new build, built to the regulations of the time."

"But the upstairs rooms can be cold in winter as the pump seems to struggle to provide enough heat, then on the top floor in the summer it's unbearably hot. The pump has to be running all the time and it overheats so much. I'm not convinced the ventilation has been considered either. There is loads of damp on the top floor. We have a hot, stuffy main bedroom that's constantly wet and damp."

Michael rang the manufacturer, Mitsubishi, and concedes that its technical help was quite good. He also commissioned Alto Energy, a heat pump supplier, to investigate further. The conclusion? "It turns out it is not so much to do with the heat pump itself, but with the 10mm micro-bore pipework," Michael explains. "The pipework is why we're ending up with such high bills; the pump is having to work overtime in winter. The annoying thing is, it is a new-build house. It's got the underfloor heating, and the heat pump seems to work fine with the downstairs. But it takes one wrong thing in the system design and fixing it becomes astronomically expensive."

"To change the pipework, we'd have to completely rip out all of the walls and have them replastered, at a cost of about £7,000 to £8,000. We just don't have that kind of money and it would take us ages to save up such a sum. We can't imagine how we would do it. So much cost and disruption, and we've gone and painted all the walls and stuff. It looks really nice."

Dave Webb, a technical director at Alto Energy, says: "In general we say that all heating system pipework should be a minimum of 22mm flow and return, with 15mm tails to the radiators. Microbore is typically 8mm or 10mm and, depending on the type of pipework used (plastic or copper), the internal diameter can be very small. It can clog with dirt more easily, which will cause blockages and low flow rate.

"This doesn't mean that microbore cannot be used with heat pumps, however it does mean the design of the pipework layout and the circulation pumps needs to be perfect, or you may find that the flow rate to the radiators is too low and the house does not get warm enough. "The couple have also been advised to install larger radiators on the first floor.

The truth is heat pumps are still a relatively new product. Mike Foster, the chief executive of the Energy and Utilities Alliance, says that there are no official standards for the width of piping for heat pump systems, even though the correct flow rate is vital for a system to work effectively.

According to the Local Authority Building Control: "The closest that building regulations come to prescribing heat pumps is that contained in Reg 25A and Reg 25B, which like many other energy efficiency regulations stem from legislation created in the EU to address climate change and international commitments to reduce greenhouse gases." For further information see labcfreontdoor.co.uk, <<https://labcfreontdoor.co.uk/projects/renewable-energy/will-i-need-building-regulations-approval-for-a-heat-pump>> .

Michael says: "I think we are in a state of denial most of the time. We've not looked into seeking any redress through our new-build warranty, but we might. We're kind of swallowing up the huge monthly bill and trying not to think about it. I'm fortunate enough to have a stable income, but if putting in a heat pump means a doubling of your heating bills, that could be an extra £1,000-plus a year. That could put people into fuel poverty, especially families."

Response from Fullers Slade Estate Renewal Forum

Submitted by David Meadows, Chair, Fullers Slade ERF

Thank you for allowing the Fullers Slade ERF the opportunity to feedback to the Scrutiny Committee.

I have read the feedback submitted from the chair of Fullers Slade Residents Association and would agree totally with the points raised.

I would like to add the following for consideration:

Decent homes/Energy Efficiency

It is my understanding that many of the properties on Fullers Slade have double glazing, which is now very old, in many cases it is unfit for purpose and does not provide the level of insulation that residents should expect.

In some cases, the security aspects of UPVC installations falls far short of what should be expected by tenants and leaves the properties vulnerable to break-in.

In some properties fire doors are no longer functional due to worn or missing intumescent strips, frames that over the years have been damaged and therefore would not meet the standards required to prevent the spread of fire for the rated time period.

Many members of the ERF have concerns over the possible installation of air/ground source heat pumps as this is still a very new technology and has its share of teething problems, many horror stories have been published on high costs and low levels of heat/hot water.

Whilst I would fully endorse the need for savings on CO₂, I would like to ask that all possible ways of achieving this be explored as we move through the renewal process.

Many of the roofs to properties have not seen any maintenance for a long time and are covered in moss. There have been leaks particularly during heavy rainfall.

Open spaces, Parks, Landscapes

On Fullers Slade we have an abundance of open green spaces, many are just grassed areas which although much more pleasant than concrete offer little else. Can more be made of these? More planting areas, Communal meeting spaces etc.

Many of the smaller "pocket parks" have fallen into disrepair and as such are unused and unpleasant to look at. Are there plans to make repairs to these or provide other facilities that would serve the whole community?

Some of the grassed areas are often used as car/van parking areas, how might we discourage this?

Fly tipping remain an issue, to my understanding this is usually centred around the flats, it's fair to say that flats have much less opportunity to deal with large items that they have no space for inside and although this doesn't excuse fly tipping it may help explain it. Can more support be offered to all tenants for large items which can prove expensive to get removed given that Covid has impacted everyone financially?

ASB, Drug dealing

I share the concerns of the Residents Association with regard to anti-social behaviour and drug dealing on Fullers Slade. WE have recently seen a particularly bad outbreak of "turf war" on our estate which led to the Section 60 order being implemented.

There have been many other smaller instances of antisocial/criminal behaviour on the estate. What other measures can be put in place on Fullers Slade to ease the unpleasant and scary events that will undoubtedly occur again?

Response from Galley Hill Residents' Association

Submitted by David Taverner, Chair

Decent Homes. I think this needs to be expanded to incorporate decent estates and living conditions. Major problems exist with antisocial behaviour being ignored by MKC and TVP. Why should decent people live in fear of aggressive noisy unreasonable neighbours. The council knows who these people are, would officers like them as their neighbours? The council should ensure that their tenants abide by their tenants' agreements and behave properly and respectfully to their neighbours. If necessary, people should be educated how to behave.

Landscaping, specifically trees on Galley Hill have been neglected and unattended despite years of protest from residents, our footpaths are in a terrible state from tree root damage.

Pest control successfully managed to resolve rat problem on Fuller Slade, they migrated to Galley Hill and are now being addressed after considerable pressure from residents.

Cleansing/litter/fly tipping. The council policies in my opinion have fostered fly tipping, policies and procedures should make it easy simple and cheap for residents and businesses to dispose of their waste. The prospect of 4 wheelie bins is daunting when we currently spend time trying to find what Serco has done with our bins as they never return them to each property as illustrated in enclosed picture.



Response from Tinkers Bridge Residents' Association

Submitted by Sheila Taylor

Landscaping and maintenance of HRA land on estates

Tree maintenance has begun on Tinkers Bridge and, while this is a welcome development, residents report that progress is quite limited so far.

There are frequent complaints about the dangers caused by high grass on dual carriageways. This is particularly dangerous for cars turning right into the estate at the junction of Groveway and Marshworth.

Pest control

There have been serious issues with rats on Tinkers Bridge. Residents feel that the provision of wheelie bins would help with this problem.

Cleansing/litter/fly tipping

This is a major issue for our residents, particularly since lockdown. Our regular litter pickers are mostly older people who have not felt able to undertake the task. We are aware of initiatives on some other estates. Perhaps these should be rolled out across MK.

There has been a considerable increase in fly-tipping, and this is probably the biggest single issue raised in our survey. This may be partly because visits to the tip now have to be booked in advance, although some residents welcome this development. Stricter enforcement measures are needed.

Thanks, Sheila

Response from Residents of Regeneration Estates (RoRE)

Submitted by David Lee, Secretary (and member of Tinkers' Bridge Residents' Association)

RoRE currently has fly tipping and litter picking as a 6 month focus, and so has some knowledge and contacts in this area, with Robbie Macpherson, our facilitator, seeking to keep it on track. The best example of good progress is probably on Eaglestone, where Michael Holland, of Eaglestone Guardians, has been very active, and reports, if I remember correctly, that fly tipping incidents on that estate have dropped from 30 to 3 (a week, I think). If Michael is able to attend, then it will be worth hearing from him.

The other recent initiative that many estates would like to copy comes from North Bradville, where a rubbish amnesty scheme ran earlier this month, organised by ABRA, Stantonbury Parish Council, and MKC. Most of my information on this comes from [Facebook](#).

I hope that reports on these are already available to you from other sources, so do not expect to speak directly on those initiatives, but if you would like me to do so, please give me some advanced notice to check on the details and generally prepare in those areas.

The input I expect to give in the meeting is to highlight various items within the reports, either because I am aware of them being important to residents, or because something may need ongoing scrutiny in order to ensure it is delivered. I am, however, very happy to support the style you deem most suitable for this meeting - there is a lot of material in the papers for the meeting, and I have confidence that your intent will be to ensure the meeting outcomes are useful, not bogged down in minor matters.