



EDDINGTON
RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION



Eddington Residents' Association and Portal meeting
Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 March, 2020 at 4.30pm
At Estate Management Office, Eddington Avenue

Those present

Eddington Residents' Association (ERA)

Pieter Desnerck, Chair
Lis De Weerd, Secretary
Steve Carey, Officer

Portal

Warren Forsyth, Operations Director
Alex Wynick, Communications Coordinator
Stephanie Jones, Executive Assistant

1. WELCOME

Introductions made.

2. ERA-PORTAL JOINT MEETING

Agreed that this meeting is an opportunity to meet and have an open dialogue between ERA and Portal, rather than a committee in its own right.

Meetings are currently running quarterly, but can be moved around as needed and increased in a topical instance.

Attendance for future meetings could include wider team as needed (for example planning or construction teams). Those in attendance from Portal are able to feed back to the larger team as needed.

Since resident arrival Portal has tried several different ways to host resident evenings, but all had an extremely low attendance so have been stopped. Agreed that having ERA support on this for the future would be beneficial and may allow these to continue in a more productive way. Important that they do take place as there is a high turnover of residents in Key Worker Housing (KWH) and more residents arriving in Athena properties.

3. COLLABORATION

Two main websites for the Portal team: the resident-focused Portal website, and the Eddington website for the general public; both are managed by AW. The ERA have a dedicated website. Both Portal and ERA agree to share content from on behalf of the other where necessary on websites and in newsletters. Portal is happy for ERA to use published images on the ERA website. More specific architectural photos need special credit placed, but are generally okay to use.

Both the ERA and Portal have an Eddington Blog; Portal's is a monthly post (300 words or less), as a conversation with people in the community. Portal would like a chat with a representative from ERA for an upcoming blog to be aimed at current or potential residents. **[ACTION: To be arranged between Portal and ERA]** Important that all nationalities feel included in the blogs, ERA to help suggest individuals who may be willing to participate in Portal's blog series. **[ACTION: AW to follow up]**



Eddington Residents' Association and Portal meeting
Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 March, 2020 at 4.30pm
At Estate Management Office, Eddington Avenue

Agreed that ERA will refer individual complaints to the Portal website (travel complaints to the Travel team on travel@eddington-cambridge.co.uk; tenancy issues to email Lodge on residences@eddington-cambridge.co.uk). ERA is not intended to be 'in the middle' of individual complaints between residents and Portal, and Portal supports that position. **[ACTION: AW to add information on how to terminate tenancies early on the FAQ on the Eddington website]**

ERA requested access to the full feedback from the survey for Post Occupancy Evaluation that was conducted in 2019. **[ACTION: AW to make this request to the relevant teams. Response (sent via email on March 23, 2020) is below:**

"We would be delighted to offer a presentation to demonstrate and explain the more detailed results of the 2019 residents' survey, if this is something the Eddington Residents' Association would be interested in. We could invite all Eddington residents, if there is sufficient interest and the ERA think it appropriate. Please let me know if this is something the ERA would like to do and we can make arrangements. Of course, this will only take place once the current COVID-19 lockdown measures are lifted by the government and all parties are confident it is safe to arrange such an event."]

4. HOUSING

ERA requested clarity about the dual Key Worker Housing rental models. There are currently two groups:

- Those on the old model, whose rent is directly connected to their salary and can stay at Eddington for a maximum of three years.
- Those on the current model who have a standardised rent and can stay at Eddington for a maximum of five years.

Residents on the old model who are now in their third year are able to switch to the current model to allow them to stay for years four and five, but must pay the appropriate rent as per the current model. Individual letters to all those affected will be sent on Monday 16 March to give full details and explain options. Going forward this information will be available to the relatively small number of tenants on the old model as they enter their third year so they have as much time as possible to make an informed decision.

Residents on the current model who wish to know the rent for years four and five may request that information from Lodge Property Services, but no separate communications will be distributed as it is part of the standard tenancy renewal process.

ERA raised concerns about how the rent level was reached and the affordability of living in Cambridge. The current rent model was introduced because residents found the old model intrusive, stressful, and confusing. It was also a high administrative burden on Lodge Property Services, as rent would vary from month-to-month. This was not sustainable for the long-term management, especially as Eddington grows in size.

The current model is based on the average salary of University staff eligible for Key Worker Housing and went through a rigorous approval process before being implemented and is agreed with the



Eddington Residents' Association and Portal meeting
Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 March, 2020 at 4.30pm
At Estate Management Office, Eddington Avenue

local planning authorities. Portal cannot change the rules or regulations set up by the rent model, but understands and acknowledges the ERA's concerns regarding tenancy limits. However Eddington is not intended to provide long-term housing for individuals. There is a limited amount of subsidy available and, in order to maximise the number of staff which benefit from this subsidy, residents must move on from Eddington after five years.

[ACTION: Portal to provide additional information on how current rental levels are reached, how the current rental model was approved and how the base market level for apartments was reached. Response (sent via email on March 23, 2020) is below:

1. **"How was the current Eddington Key Worker Housing rent reached?** The team have confirmed that the base rental level for a two-bedroom apartment at Eddington was reached by calculating a third of the average gross salary from Grades 1-9 staff. This base level was then adjusted to reflect the different sized apartments within Eddington as appropriate. The rents are then reviewed annually, with a capped increase controlled by the local authorities.
2. **How was the current Eddington Key Worker Housing rental model approved?** The current rental model was agreed by the University of Cambridge, Cambridge City Council and South Cambridgeshire District Council as a variation on the original Section 106, which is the legal agreement that supports the planning permission for the North West Cambridge Development. Within the University the rental model was agreed by the West and North West Cambridge Estates Board, University Finance Committee and University Council.
3. **How was the base market level price for apartments reached?** Industry experts Bidwells advise the University of Cambridge on an annual basis of market rents in the local area, which are then serve a comparison to Eddington rents. However the market rents are not used as a tool in formulating Eddington rents - the Eddington rents were determined using the process in item one above. Having said that, we compare each year to ensure that the Eddington rents are providing a significant subsidy against the market rents."]

6. WATER SUPPLY ISSUE OF SUNDAY 1 MARCH 2020

The problem first arose at approximately 5pm on the Sunday, and Portal staff immediately began work to resolve the issue. It was believed that the issue was resolved at approximately 1am, but unfortunately that proved not to be the case and the issue was not resolved until approximately 2pm on the Monday.

ERA raised concerns that there were no communications to residents until 9.30am on the Monday, leaving residents without any understanding of the issue or the actions Portal were taking for several hours. Initially, as understanding as to what the problem was and when it may be resolved was unclear, Portal decided not to send out communications immediately on the Sunday afternoon. ERA feedback that any information is better than none has been received and this is a lesson learned for the Portal team in the event of a similar incident in the future.

ERA say that the Portal Out Of Hours helpline was not responsive – some left on the call for nearly an hour. **[ACTION: WF to investigate the issue here as this should not have been the case.]**



EDDINGTON
RESIDENTS
ASSOCIATION



Eddington Residents' Association and Portal meeting
Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 10 March, 2020 at 4.30pm
At Estate Management Office, Eddington Avenue

ERA wished to note that residents were very grateful to Portal staff for providing water throughout the incident.

7. AOB

Due to shortage of time the following items were briefly discussed:

- Book swap – ERA wish to establish this and Portal is supportive but there is currently no ability for Portal to provide this. Suggest that the ERA discuss with the Community Development Team.
- Public notice boards – this is something that Portal are already looking at introducing, but it is a non-urgent issue and will take some time for the team to agree an approach and then procure/install something.
- Allotment provision – this is planned for Phase 2 of the North West Cambridge Development but will not be available for several years.
- Sainsbury's trolleys abandoned – residents should not be taking trolleys out of Sainsbury's property and all trolleys that have been removed from the supermarket must be returned.
- Signage errors – Portal is aware and working to replace any inaccurate signage.
- Athena residents experiencing parking problems during school drop-off/pick-up – Portal is aware of this and working with the University of Cambridge Primary School to improve parent parking as well as be able to take over the management of the Athena roads so enforcement can begin.

8. NEXT MEETING

Next meeting will be in June, 2020.