



Franklands Park meeting – Thursday 22 May @ 6.30pm

Attendees:

Alex Liburd	Executive Director of Assets & Compliance
Cara Jackson	Head of Leasehold and Homeownership
Debbie Hinbest	Executive Director of People and Culture
Kelly Privitera	Head of Building Safety and Information
Stacey Healey	Head of Communication and Public Affairs
James Marsh	NRT
Adam Smith	NRT
Peter Copeman	NRT

Frankland Park Customers

A fire occurred in a block owned by PA Housing. The cause of the fire has not been officially confirmed, though video evidence exists of the progression of the fire. We are working with PA Housing and different contractors to ensure customer safety.

Accent has decommissioned all accessible solar panels. Alex requested customers who have solar panels still in commission to contact NRT for assistance. NRT has a designated representative on-site for customer queries. Until the panels are removed or replaced, a 24/7 waking watch is in place to provide early warnings.

Alex outlined next steps, which will begin with work next week on removing the solar panels, starting with the flats and then moving onto the houses. Due to the bank holiday, scaffolding will be attempted to be brought on site on Monday 26 May but will be Tuesday 27 May at the latest. Panels will be replaced or removed based on customer preference.

A customer raised concerns regarding emergency removal costs, safety, and returning at a later date to replace the new panels have been noted. Replacing the solar panels with new models whilst the scaffolding is up can provide immediate energy benefits without the need for rerigging the panels, with customers are offered opt-in and opt-out options. Assurance has been given that solar panels themselves are not inherently dangerous, but plans are in place to install new modern solar panels featuring advanced technology. The new panels will be installed, commissioning certificates will be provided to customers, remote monitoring software will be used to monitor their performance from Accent offices, and a cyclical maintenance program will be implemented to ensure they are kept clean.

Customers are requested to continue to send opt-out requests to the Franklands Park email address, following which, they will be acknowledged. Deadlines for flats to confirm their preference is by end of Friday 23 May, with house requests to be provided by end of Friday 30 May to quantify how many replacement panels are



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needed. Alex confirmed there would be no cost implications for residents or shared owners for removal, new installations, or remediation works to the roofs.

If customers choose to opt out, there will not be an opportunity to install panels at a later date nor will reimbursement be offered for lost electricity benefits.

NRT will continue to provide ongoing support for customers and have appointed a dedicated Customer Liaison Officer, with updates continuing to be provided on Accent's website, via the dedicated email address, and through Accent's contact centre. Meetings will continue to be held regularly with PA Housing to share updates and align processes, whilst continuing to act swiftly and in customers' best interest for their safety.

A customer queried that their solar panels have not appeared to reduce energy bills, and noted that other residents have expressed similar concerns, potentially indicating they are not wired to the property. A customer queried if customers are not receiving direct benefits but are responsible for maintenance as a homeowner, was it appropriate to pay for their upkeep without receiving the benefits of energy savings. Alex noted that solar panels on houses should directly feed those homes and should provide savings. Following the installation of the new solar panels, further investigation can be done utilising the remote monitoring software to verify the panels are producing the expected levels of energy. Solar panels on flats do not directly feed into the flats but contribute to communal lighting, such as lighting near the bin store and the TV aerial, leading to reduced service charges. Alex noted that some owners have reported direct benefits on their bills from the current solar panels. A customer requested that this was explored further and commented that other customers are also not seeing the anticipated benefits.

A customer queried how homeowners could confirm if their panels were contributing to their energy bills and what evidence supports this. Alex explained that remote monitoring and smart software will identify and provide clarity on the energy production levels and any changes to supply. A customer enquired if customers would be able to access this data. Alex noted the aims are to ensure that both customers and Accent would have access to this data.

A customer asked who would be responsible for maintenance once the new panels are fitted for customers who have opted in for replacement and whether contractors on site for customers who opted would be able to quote for maintenance, to be undertaken at the same time. Alex responded that this needs to be explored as an option but noted that any agreement would solely be between the customer and the contractor, with no involvement from Accent and emphasised the need for clear lines of designation to ensure transparency.

A customer enquired about the delay from Accent in resolving an issue related to the house fire a year earlier. She questioned why the house had not been demolished and noted that the Fire Report has not been issued yet. Alex confirmed that the Fire Report has not yet been received and noted that at the time of the incident, the fire was treated as an isolated case, and although there was significant damage, obtaining the fire report from the Fire Service was still required and the necessary



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insurance claim process had to be followed before reinstatement works could be undertaken.

Alex noted the current uncertainty over where the incident may have started in the fire a year ago, against where it is believed to have begun in the recent fire. A customer has moved to another flat and has raised concerns about how the lights and TV electricity charges will apply if the panels are removed.

Alex explained that the lights will be connected to the main supply, and the service charge for those services will increase slightly if the solar panels are removed.

A customer queried why Accent does not maintain the panels on houses as well as flats, commented that as the houses remained Accent's assets, it would be in Accent's best interests to ensure they were maintained. Alex commented that as stipulated in the lease, maintenance remains the homeowners' responsibility, with Accent not holding a legal right to maintain them on behalf of leaseholders.

A customer queried whether maintenance charges were the same for houses and flats and commented there would be no benefit from living in a flat if that was the case. Alex noted that costs for ongoing cyclical maintenance have not been priced yet and the price for maintenance on the flats will likely differ as there are more solar panels on the flats than the houses. Alex confirmed the details would be shared with customers once known.

A customer noted her belief that the shared ownership documentation states that leaseholders have no liability for the panels. Cara confirmed that the leases state that maintenance is the leaseholders' responsibility and noted that if customers hold contrary documentation, please share with it with Accent for review.

A customer raised concerns regarding the details and fairness of service charge, particularly relating to estate charges and maintenance. Alex clarified that solar panel maintenance is not included in the service charge for other properties. Cara explained that flats and houses have separate charges, with estate charges split across the estate. Cara offered to explain the service charge statement and legislation to customers and requested that interested customers send their contact details to the Franklands Park email address.

Alex thanked customers for their patience and assured them of their safety and the quality of the installations. Alex noted that instead of making hasty decisions, the team have striven to maintain open communication and requested that customers continue to contact Accent with queries.

A customer queried when the Fire Report could be expected and whether the report would be issued soon given the second fire. Alex commented that timescales were uncertain, following ongoing conversations with the Fire Service, who have not provided clarity on the cause of the first fire and noted that it is highly unlikely that the new Fire Report will be issued within the next few months. Alex noted that Accent are not obligated to receive the Fire Report for the second fire, as PA Housing own that block, but remain hopeful of being able to access the findings once released.



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The right to share the document lies with the landholder and the Fire Service, and it is not typically a public document.

A customer questioned how long the scaffolding would be up at a house. Alex noted the duration of the works is currently uncertain, as work continues on the planning phase. As the project progresses through the properties, a better understanding of the timeline will be available, which may identify additional work and reinforcing tasks which require completion. Alex noted the work will be completed as quickly as possible and will liaise with customers individually as the contractors approach their properties to outline how long the works will take.

A customer queried if they opt out of new solar panels, how long would the removal take. Alex confirmed would be able to advise shortly. A customer questioned whether Accent holds the original documentation for the existing panels, why no maintenance was completed and was there any service charge for the panels. Alex commented that Accent hold some documentation from the initial installations and confirmed that no maintenance had historically been undertaken, with some panel systems only requiring cleaning. Alex confirmed that no service charges have been taken for the solar panels to date.

A customer questioned when the home burnt down in the first fire would be rebuilt. Alex confirmed the desire to start on site, but noted the insurance process has caused delays. Alex acknowledged customer's concern over the site security whilst unoccupied and noted the need to begin rebuilding works shortly.

Alex confirmed that Accent was not obligated to share the Fire Report with customers as they're not the legal homeowners. However, Alex confirmed that whilst Accent is not obligated to provide certain information to customers, the plan would be to discuss it with customers to ensure transparency and openness. Alex apologised for any inconvenience and noted the ongoing delay was due to an ongoing insurance claim, which can be a lengthy process. Alex will contact the Insurance Team to request an update on anticipated timescales.

A customer commented that this session had been very useful, despite the tragic circumstances. Accent's presence has been positive, although communication in the past had been challenging due to changes and sometimes a lack of a dedicated Housing Partner. Alex noted the potential to establish a yearly forum for customers to communicate directly with Accent instead of relying on automated responses and noted the emergency 24/7 support available for customers. For non-emergency queries, customers can contact us through the website or hub during working hours. Alex reported that Accent's model for managing housing services has evolved over the last two years to focus on being more local and community-focused, with a dedicated Homeownership Team available for queries. Over the coming year, Accent aims to actively engage with customers and encourage their participation in forums to enhance services, with discussions held with a Councillor to consider establishing a Strawberry Fields resident group. While Accent may not be directly involved, there is potential for collaboration and formal recognition of such a group.



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A customer enquired about the maintenance frequency and costs for solar panels and the electrical unit in the loft. Alex mentioned that the costs are currently uncertain and will vary between different properties, but they will be shared with customers once available. Peter from NRT confirmed that while regular maintenance is recommended, it isn't a legal requirement, and suggested panel cleaning to take place up to every 12 months and inverter checks annually. He noted that these intervals might change based on efficiencies, monitoring methods by Accent, and local conditions such as trees and bird mess. Alex added that Accent undertakes electrical inspections every five years for customers, which is also advised for shared owners.

A customer asked if hiring a contractor with a cherry picker or whether scaffold would be necessary for cleaning the solar panels. Peter responded that visual checks, possibly using drones, might suffice, and if no cleaning is required, it may not need to be done as frequently as yearly. A customer asked if repairs identified through remote monitoring would be their responsibility.

Alex clarified that maintaining solar panels falls under customer responsibility, and could impact efficiency, which could impact the customer directly. Accent would not mandate cleaning, but reduced efficiency might result from neglected maintenance.

A customer reported living in a flat where solar panel cables run into the bike store, and noted annual maintenance for these panels has been lacking over the last ten years. He expressed concerns about non-functional street and bin store lights, which derive power from these solar panels, and stated previous reports of gutter issues have gone unaddressed. Alex apologised for the oversight, affirmed that resolving these matters should be Accent's responsibility, and requested an email with the address details to investigate and ensure resolution.

A customer noted the recent Facebook comments suggesting last year's fire was caused by solar panels and the feed and requested confirmation if the Fire Report was available and if it could be made public with homeowner consent. Alex confirmed the Fire Report has not been received, despite requests over the last 10 days. Alex confirmed the report will be shared with the resident for whose home it applies, but any other safety risks will be communicated transparently to customers to allay concerns.

A customer commented that the solar panels have never been maintained. If homeowners are responsible for houses, why has Accent not maintained the flats' panels. Alex confirmed that Accent will now put a cyclical maintenance programme in place. Peter added that new panels will have a cyclical maintenance plan.

A customer noted the recommendation for homeowners to have electrical checks every five years, which include checking solar panels. Alex clarified that the five-year check involves examining the electrical installation to the property, rather than a visual check of the solar panel, and this differs from solar panel maintenance.

A customer asked how Accent would decide on installing solar panels in a block of flats with no consensus. Alex stated that if no consensus is reached, a consultation



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will be conducted with individual customers to achieve agreement for the way forward.

Alex thanked customers for joining the meeting and requested that if any queries arise over the next few days, they should please contact the Franklands Park inbox for a response. NRT will start on site next week, and the Resident Liaison Officer will also be available for any queries.