



SEAL
the South East Alliance of
working together for



Landlords, Agents & Residents
a better Southend-on-Sea

**Report of SEAL
to
Policy and Resources Scrutiny
Committee**

Purpose of this Report

- The purpose of this report is to inform the Members on the practical work of SEAL, and the future intentions, complimentary to the information given in the Report of Corporate Director for People.
- The work of SEAL as developed of the Compliance and Monitoring Officer and Volunteer Members.
- To inform members of the findings of the Street Blitz awareness campaign, and how this has lead to major support for Residents.
- To explain and request support from Members for the Street Groups, SEAL Community Website, and the SEAL Bin Project.
- Support for growing and influencing Membership, and work on reducing evictions, to make them less damaging to the tenant, and less wasteful of time and money.

The Work of SEAL

The daily duties are carried out by C and M Officer Tina Shepherd who:

- Prepares agendas and minutes, sets and organises meetings, collects subscriptions and manages the finances, manages the Members and Tenant Packs and website, markets for new Members and advertising Partners.
- advises, updates and reminds Members of SEAL requirements.
- Responds to complaints from Councillors and residents, locating Landlords and Agents, operating the agreed SEAL Complaints Procedure.
- Liaising with Multi Agencies, Landlords, Agencies and Tenants to comply with the Code and the Tenancy Agreement, and informing them of the excellent services available i.e. SMAART Team.
- Assisting the Police to find people including the 5 Most Wanted, passing on warnings and information to Members and the growing Community network.

All of the above duties activities are appreciated by the Multi Agencies, and carried out by Tina in a part time post.

Findings of the Street Blitz

The Blitz grew into a huge well sponsored 8 street project, from Herbert Grove to Whitegate, including questionnaire, clean up day and analysis resulting in targets, very useful in deciding how to spend SEAL property budgets.

- Research showed that any clear up will not last if there is not a street group to sustain the improvements, so SEAL added starting and supporting Street Groups as their 4th aim.
- Residents like living close to town, and some showed interest in being active.
- These are special streets, heavily used by residents and visitors walking into town from outer areas, for work, study and leisure, as well as by the people living in them. As the foot traffic is so heavy, special treatment should be arranged to help these also densely populated streets reach the standards we require.
- The list of resident's requirements was clear, topped by rubbish management in the street and in the fronts of properties, smarter landscaping of the front of rental properties so that paths are safe, and parking issues.
- There were issues focussed on certain properties and people, which were then passed on to the appropriate Multi Agencies.





SEAL supports the Residents

So the next step for SEAL was, on the advice of Neighbourhood Watch, to get the Street groups up and running at the earliest opportunity.

- Email communications were set up, residents offered their skills and time, and each group is deciding on how they think their road can be improved.
- Heygate has an active leader, who is progressing with the horrendous rubbish issues there, and is being supported by Cllr Nevin.
- York Road West is a different matter, again Cllr Nevin and Cllr Garston are supporting them.
- York Road East has started their own group ARK with support from the Kursaal Councillors.
- Active Residents hoped for their own website, so the SEAL Resident Representative put in huge effort, with technical help from another Member, and the basic SEAL Community website is now live at www.communitysos.org.uk. It informs residents how to get help on the SEAL issues of ASB, property standards and rubbish, as well as listing Community and Religious organisations. Eventually each Street Group /Residents Association will have their own page. The site can be added to in order to inform residents.
- The Echo awaits the official website launch.

Bin Project

- The SEAL Steering group is planning to use a grant to subsidise rubbish storage bins on properties where there is clearly an issue, such as multiple ownership, i.e. where one of the owners cannot be found.
- The Street Groups, Councillors and Members can identify the properties needing help.
- SEAL will appoint a maker and installer, possibly a Charity, along with providing construction options.
- The project will be a further campaign to create awareness among landlords and Agents, and will provide guidance and an easily accessible service so that more properties will be improved.

What support do we need from the Council

- We need to ensure we can pay our Compliance and Monitoring Officer.
- The Council needs to enforce existing laws more vigorously, even make new bylaws regarding littering and rubbish management to affect our culture.
- The Council needs to use the information they have in the Benefits department to automatically contact all landlords receiving Benefit payments with every letter sent out, regarding SEAL Membership and updates. This has only been done once in 3 years.
- SEAL continues to work on avoiding evictions by trying to give the tenant fuller information from the Council and the CAB. Meetings are being held with both parties to try to save Council time and to prevent the Section 21 unnecessarily clogging both accommodation and the courts.
- The Community website needs an input of regular weekly attention, good communication and press skills in order to develop it's potential as a tool to help improve our street scene and support the community. SEAL is looking for help from relevant organisations to provide a morning each week.

And to make you feel good

You Members were brave enough to support SEAL , shelving Selective Licensing to give us a chance to do the best by working together to improve the town.

Manchester has finished their 5 year term of SL and is not renewing as it did not work.

They are introducing a similar system to the one that Southend has developed!
