

COMMUNITY VOICE

MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: 10th August, 2009
Time: 1.00pm
Venue: Baptist Church, Scunthorpe

Present: Ken Willey – Chair
Mary Southgate – Vice Chair
Danny Moore – Treasurer
Alison Highlands – Secretary
Brian Duff – Swinburne Road
Tony Sanderson – Healey Road
Janine Mee – Warley Road
Barry Pridmore – Beechway
Jim Newcombe – Healey Road
Pat Stephenson – Beechway
Ron Weller – South Killingholme
Dorothy Franks – Chatterton Crescent
Alex Killen – Sheltered Housing
Terry Chatwin – Hallcroft
Edna Kenyan – Market Hill
Richard Leach - RUG
Don Robertson – Hillside
Pat Cowdell – Hillside
Steve Dale – Crosby Park
M P Woodcock – New Westcliff
J Parr – Swinburne Road
Audrey Birkenshaw – Astley Corner
Karen Cowan – RI Manager
Wendy Britcliffe – Senior RI Officer
Steve Hepworth – Director of Housing
Linder Melbourne – Empty Homes Manager
Steve Evans – Head of Housing Management
Liam Scales – Customer Services Manager

1. Welcome & Apologies

Mary welcomed everyone to the meeting.

It was stated that at the moment there had been no outcome regarding the position of the Chief Executive.

Apologies: Georgina Parkinson, Mark & Ann Harland, Shazeda Haque.

2. Accuracy of Previous Minutes & Update of Action Plan

Page 8, In the paragraph regarding supervised work done by youth offenders it should have said that the question was could we have permission to have them on site. The reply was yes we could.

Update of Action Plan

It was asked if it was possible to have a skip in Killingholme. The update is that Ron was contacted and told that a skip could not be placed there but he was not given an answer as to why not. Karen said she would speak to Ron about this at the end of the meeting.

All other items on the Action Plan had been resolved.

The minutes were approved as a true record.

Decision Items

3. Re-let Standard on Voids – Linder Melbourne

Linder gave a report on the new leaflet which had been developed that would be given out to new tenants when moving into their homes. Linder asked for any questions:

It was noted that in the useful contacts that there was not any telephone numbers for the gas supplier or Anglian water. Linder stated that these would be included.

It was asked if flooring in kitchens would be put in before the new tenants moved in. The reply was that new flooring would only be put in properties that had been fitted with new kitchens.

It was asked when clearing gardens would it not be more efficient to rotorvate them. Linder replied that gardens were only cleared as not everyone would want their garden rotorvated.

It was asked if fencing was replaced as there was no mention of this. Linder replied that under the new empty homes policy we don't put up fencing.

It was asked why we wait until tenants move in before checking the gas and electricity supplies. Linder replied that it was better to wait until the tenant moved in as it gave them peace of mind as there could be delays between the property being vacated and a new tenant moving in.

It was asked why there is no checks on properties before tenants moved out. The reply was that although we have this option we have never used it as sometimes there is no warning of tenants moving out.

A vote was taken to adopt this new leaflet, the result was that this leaflet would be used with the amendments done to the contact details.

4. Complaints & Organisational Learning – Liam Scales

Liam provided information and handouts for all members of Community Voice, then asked for any questions.

It was asked if we could change the format as some members were having problems with the small print. Liam replied that the format could be changed.

It was suggested that there should be a column stating how satisfied tenants were with the handling of the complaints.

It was suggested that a column be included for recording compliments. Liam agreed that would be a good idea.

It was asked why when repairs are passed onto other services there is no feedback as to how the work is progressing. The reply was that we need to change how we monitor this work so that everyone is satisfied.

A vote was asked to improve the format of the document and report to Community Voice quarterly. The result of the vote was unanimous.

Discussion Items

5. Performance Information/Scorecard – Steve Evans

Steve gave an update of the information included in the scorecard then asked for any questions.

Karen confirmed that the Resident Involvement ethnicity figures are to be checked and reported back at the next meeting.

It was asked when staff were on sick leave did any members of staff go out to visit them. The reply was, yes they did and support is provided.

6. 3 Items – Steve Evans

Review of Standards for Communal Areas

Steve provided a report on the standards for communal areas and stated that NLH were hoping to improve 50 communal areas by the end of this year. Steve then asked for any questions.

It was asked if NLH had already chosen the 50 areas and if so how had they been chosen. Steve replied that all NLH communal areas had been looked at and it had been decided that the top 50 areas which were in most need of improvements would be chosen.

It was asked if Community Voice members would be able to see the final list of the 50 areas. Steve replied that once the list had been finalised it would then be published and all members would see it.

ASB Strategy & Policy

Steve provided a report to members and asked for any questions. It was asked if there was a tenant enforcement officer who would visit properties with the housing officer. Steve replied that we already have a housing enforcement team which go out with the housing officers.

It was asked what happens if tenants go straight to the police about their problems and not their housing officer. Steve replied that NLH worked closely with the police and therefore would hope that the police would get in touch with NLH to provide information.

Choice Based Lettings

Steve informed Community Voice members that Mary and Alison had attended meetings with himself and other staff members to look at the housing application forms to see if there could be any changes made to the forms to make them easier and quicker to complete. Steve then asked for any questions.

It was asked if NLH vetted the tenants to ensure they were put in appropriate accommodation. The reply was that we can't vet tenants but we are looking to put tenants in suitable accommodation.

It was asked why some tenants were allowed to have a NLH property while still owning their own property. Steve replied that it depended on their housing needs and at the moment the policy states that we cannot discriminate against those people just because they owned their own homes.

It was stated that on Market Hill there seems to be problems with the amount of dogs in the area, do tenants need permission. The reply was that we would have to look into this to make sure that permission had been given.

7. Resident Involvement Impact Assessments – Karen Cowan

Karen gave out a report to all Community Voice members stating that a workshop had been arranged for Wednesday the 2nd of September at Meridian House and all members were invited to attend.

8. 2 Items – Steve Hepworth

Customer Access Review

As a result of feedback from the customer access review, Steve stated that NLH were now looking for premises for one customer access office to be based in the main town centre and surgeries to be held in rural areas one day per week. Over the next few months we hope to have this new office up and running. Steve then asked for any questions.

It was asked if there would be room in the new building for Community Voice. Steve replied that hopefully there would be room but if not we would still look for other sites to accommodate Community Voice in the future.

It was asked if this decision of a new building had been approved by the Board. The reply was that yes the Board had approved this plan.

Tenant Reward Scheme

Steve stated that the Board had decided that NLH would set up a reward scheme for tenants and there would be prizes available. There is money set aside for this scheme of £5,000. Steve asked for any questions.

It was asked where this money had come from. The reply was the money comes from the company and not money received from the tenants.

Information Items

9. CV Sub-Group Vacancies & Updates

Key News – 2 Vacancies

Karen stated there were now 2 vacancies for this group and since no member of Community Voice had nominated themselves this would be put to those tenants who had shown an interest from the menu of options.

10. Any Other Business

Steve explained that Andy Orry had apologised for not being available to attend this meeting but he would attend a further meeting.

It was asked if anything had been put in place for 1 member of Community Voice who was interested in paying his rent weekly by direct debit. Karen replied that it would be put on the Action Plan and hopefully we would have an answer by the next meeting.

Confirmation was given that invitations and nominations for the next Community Voice AGM had been sent out.

It was asked if Roni Wilson could attend the next meeting as she had been before. Ken replied that she could but only as an observer.

Members of Community Voice stated that they hoped the problems regarding the Chief Executive would be resolved as soon as possible as she is still on full pay while being suspended. Karen replied that it would be resolved as quickly as it could.

A query was raised if Barrow had lost their housing officer and if so why hadn't NLH informed the tenants. Steve replied that Barrow had not lost their

housing officer but there had been some changes to cover in certain areas but this would only be for a short period of time.

It was stated that there had been rumours going around that repair jobs were going to be contracted out and that staff would be losing their jobs. The reply was that there is a review being done at the moment but no jobs would be lost. The rumour about jobs being contracted out is totally false.

Karen stated that the draft of the new constitution for Community Voice had been completed and sent to the Board. When this has been approved it will be sent out to all members of Community Voice.

Karen stated that due to the acoustics in the Baptist Church we could have a trial of using the microphone at the next meeting to see if there is any improvements.

Terry & Richard gave reports on the TPAS conference they had attended. Terry stated that she had been disappointed in some of the workshops. Richard stated the same as most of the workshops were not new to them. Karen suggested that those members who attended the conference meet with her to discuss if it was worth attending in the future. Karen stated that maybe it would only benefit the newer members of Community Voice.

It was stated that there were problems with dogs wandering around on certain estates. The reply was to get in touch with NLC as they employ dog wardens.

Individual members of Community Voice reported that they were disappointed in the service of support officers in when they make a visit and get no reply, they would only leave a card stating that they have been and will call again next week. It was asked if there could be some system put in place so that support officers know when the tenant is out or not able to come to the door due to a fall or illness. Alex stated that it would be a good idea to raise this at the next sheltered housing meeting.

Individual members raised concerns regarding the charge made to tenants of £40 per visit by NLC to deal with infestation of rats or mice. Could there be another or cheaper way to resolve this problem for those people who are on low incomes. The reply was that it could be looked into.

11. Date of Next Meeting

14th September (AGM followed by CV meeting) 1.00pm – 4.30pm
Baptist Church, Scunthorpe