

COMMUNITY VOICE
MINUTES OF MEETING

Date: 9 March 09
Time: 1pm
Venue: Scunthorpe Baptist Church

Present: Ken Willey – Chair
Mary Southgate – Vice Chair
Danny Moore – Treasurer
Terry Chatwin – Hallcroft
Pat Devine – Leaseholder
Edna Kenyan – Market Hill
Pat Cowdell – Hillside
Don Robinson – Hillside
Brian Duff – Swinburn Road
D Clifford – Lilywood
R J Clifford – Lilywood
Sandra Day – Bushfield & Kingsway
Janine Mee – Warley Road
Tony Sanderson – Warley Road
Audrey Birkenshaw – Astley Corner
Steve Dale – Crosby Park
Mrs Gul – BME tenant representative
Jane Duncan – Chief Executive
Steve Hepworth – Director of Housing Services
Karen Cowan – Resident Involvement Manager
Wendy Britcliffe – Senior Resident Involvement Officer
Pete Stones – Assistant Director Regeneration & Development
Liam Scales – Customer Services Manager
Steve Wardrope – Head of Business Improvement
Toni Mosley – Policy & Performance Manager
Chris Baker – Community Investment Co-ordinator
Steve Evans – Head of Housing Services

1. Welcome & Apologies

Ken welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies: Richard Leach, Raymond Day, Mark Harland, Alison Highlands, Mr Killen, Chris Kirk.

2. Matters Arising/Action plan

Issues from the Action plan were discussed as follows:

- Martins Close – John Healy is contacting Mr Killen direct to discuss where additional signs could be located
- Rent statements – the meeting with volunteers is still to be arranged
- New windows – a programme for the works will be put together by Anglian
- Other items on the action plan are included as agenda items

The minutes were approved as a true record.

Decision Items

3. Handyvan Scheme – Steve Hepworth

A report was given out to advise members on the progress of the scheme. Steve explained the involvement of the working group and details of the scheme. The scheme can be up and running from April 2009 and publicity will be required to promote the scheme to tenants.

Discussions took place on the cost of the scheme and concerns were raised regarding the charge for small jobs that would require only a limited time.

Steve confirmed that tenants are currently using the scheme provided by the Council but are not receiving a discount. The cost involved for NLH to have its own service internally would be much higher than using the Council scheme. A discount for NLH tenants has been agreed with the Council and a review of this will be carried out in 6 months.

Karen reminded members of the background of forming the working group and stated that the information provided to this meeting was to update members on what the group had already agreed.

Some individuals were not happy about the cost of the proposed Council scheme, even taking into account the discount negotiated for NLH tenants. Steve again re-iterated that NLH could not fund this type of scheme at a lower price than what had been agreed with the Council. He added that the proposed scheme would allow tenants access to a genuine service while receiving a discount. As no other scheme options are available at this time to NLH, it was agreed to pilot the proposed scheme.

4. Resident Involvement Strategy – Karen Cowan

A report and copy of the first version of the draft resident involvement strategy was given out. Karen asked that members take this home to look through to read and then to provide feedback on the proposed document.

It was agreed to send out copies of the draft strategy to all existing volunteers and to include an article in the next edition of the Key News signposting tenants to the consultation document available to view on the NLH website.

Comments from Community Voice members to be fed back to resident involvement within 3 weeks (the date for this will be included with information sent out). Following feedback, a one off working group will be formed to discuss the responses received.

Discussion Items

5. Service Improvement Plan – Steve Wardrope

Steve provided information on the summary of progress and copies were given out to members. Steve explained the service improvement plan has been developed from the Mock Inspection. The key areas for improvement are diversity and repairs.

Steve confirmed that the summary of progress reports will be provided at future meetings of the Community Voice.

6. Improvement Programme – Pete Stones

Pete provided an update on the improvement works and informed members that we are now reaching the end of year 2 and the programme is well ahead of schedule.

The areas of work to be progressed this year will include Aids & Adaptations and Environmental.

The KPI (key performance indicator) reports show good performance although some issues on local labour are to be addressed with contractors.

Pete reported on some positive improvements to be made which include:

- Overton Court – mains gas supply to be installed
- Isle of Axholme – air source heat pump being installed

Pete asked for ideas from members of community voice on how they would like feedback to be provided at future meetings (written or verbal format).

Issues were raised regarding water leaks from flats and who was responsible when this happened.

Warley Road area was the first to have improvement works carried out to properties and tenants had several problems from some individual works by the contractors. Karen confirmed they were made aware of the problems and these were dealt with. Karen has not been notified of any further problems and asked for details to be provided of those tenants who still have issues. Karen suggested that quality checks be carried out on properties in the Warley Road area.

Jane explained to the meeting about scheme budgets and stated that she wasn't aware of any works outstanding at the Warley Rd area.

A question was asked on who makes the decision for properties to be signed off. Karen confirmed that the Partners' site managers sign off properties.

An issue was raised regarding the design of a kitchen at the Lilywood Rd area (a kitchen that had been fitted when the property was void). Karen explained the procedure with tenants that are having a new kitchen planned as part of the improvement works.

Jane reported that properties are identified when empty for the scope of works for improvements and asked that the details of this property are to be passed onto Pete Stones.

It was agreed for future meetings Pete would provide a draft paper for updates on the improvement programme.

7. Annual Rent Increase – Steve Hepworth

Steve apologised that this issue was not included on the agenda for the February meeting. Steve discussed the NLH rent increase with members and explained that target rents have been set by Government and these have to be reached by 2012. The Board have agreed to spread any increases evenly until 2012. The following questions were raised:

Chair asked that next year the reps from community voice be included in the rent increase discussion. Steve explained that observers from community voice were present at the Board meeting when the report was discussed and that specific discussions with Community Voice members will be included next year.

Brian felt that the increase was not made clear to tenants including the structuring and percentage required. A telegraph article was provided at the meeting which referred to a letter from an individual and concerns were made that this may scare tenants. It was felt that information needs to be made clear from what has been publicised.

Sandra asked when is the rent and rate of inflation increase decided. Steve confirmed this is done at the end of September every year and carried out nationally.

Pat Devine stated that the main worry would be if tenants would get their rent subsidised. Steve said that the housing benefit limits only apply to private tenancies and all social landlord rents are automatically covered.

Edna referred to the garage rent increase when some are in poor condition. Steve confirmed the amount of increase has been done in line with inflation as agreed by the Board. Improvements on garage blocks will be looked at through the programme of works.

Discussions took place on the financial inclusion seminar recently held and help for people experiencing difficulties. NLH is putting commitment and resources in to provide help to individuals.

8. Performance Information – Steve Wardrope

The performance scorecard was discussed at the previous meeting and a copy was provided at this meeting. The document is used at Board meetings and internally to provide information on performance. Steve explained the concept of the report and read through examples.

Chair asked members if they were happy with this type of report and all agreed.

This will be included as an agenda item.

9. Complaints Policy – Liam Scales

A draft copy of the policy was sent to members of Community Voice asking for comments. Liam thanked those who responded and went

through the points raised. He confirmed that all the information will be submitted to Board.

A break was taken for refreshments.

Information Items

10. Community Development – Chris Baker

A report was handed out which provided information on progress of community development. Chris explained details in the report and the projects he is currently involved with. He confirmed that partners are also involved in some community projects.

The Chair was pleased with this progress and the idea's that Chris is working on.

Terry asked if Chris would attend association meetings to discuss ideas. Chris agreed and asked for the date and time to be emailed.

11. Customer Access Review – Steve Hepworth

Steve provided an update from the focus group meetings held. Surveys have been carried out with individual groups and more work will be done on the financial and technical issues. All the information is being pulled together and hopefully a report will be submitted to Board in 2 weeks.

Steve thanked community voice reps for attending the focus groups and the feedback provided.

12. TPAS Regional Focus – Ken Willey

The Chair reported on the recent event held at Hull which he attended. This event provided information on the TSA (Tenant Services Authority), National Tenants Voice and tenants who have been involved in inspections and managing estates.

13. Community Voice Sub Groups

A report was handed out and Karen explained the content and went through the number of existing Community Voice sub groups. Each sub group has in the past had its own agenda item at each Community Voice meeting, but due to the increase in sub groups this is taking up too much

time at the meetings. Karen proposed other ways of updating Community Voice.

Karen explained there are some sub group vacancies and Steve suggested that in order to fill these vacancies a postal vote be carried out to allow all members an opportunity to put their names forward.

Individuals attending the meeting today expressed an interest in being involved in the groups and put their names forward as follows:

- Homes Improvement panel (2 vacancies) – Mary Southgate, Janine Mee, Edna Kenyon, Danny Moore, Don Robinson
- Decoration Voucher (1 vacancy) – as the work on this group was almost complete, it was agreed to leave this with the current membership
- Key News Sub group (1 vacancy) – Mary Southgate

It was agreed that sub group meetings would only report back to Community Voice when there are specific issues or decision items to report. Minutes of sub group meetings would be available upon request.

The Humber Tenants Forward meetings have not taken place for a while. Karen explained the aims and membership of this group. North Lincolnshire Homes will host the next meeting and Karen asked for 6 names of people interested to attend future meetings. These are as follows:

- Edna Kenyon
- Danny Moore
- Tony Sanderson
- Terry Chatwin
- Richard Leach
- Janine Mee

14. Jargon Buster – Wendy Britcliffe

Information has been requested at previous meetings on housing jargon. Hand outs were provided from the TPAS website and the NLH glossary. Wendy asked that members look through the information and provide feedback on items that require updating or other information they feel should be included. To be progressed at the next meeting.

15. Any Other Business

The issue was raised regarding the recent garage consultation and individuals felt that tenants had not been consulted properly. Tenants

would prefer face to face contact and not just in written correspondence. The garage sites in Haxey are not in poor condition and tenants are concerned about parking if these are demolished. Steve confirmed he is aware of the concerns and meetings can be arranged to look at the issues. The group felt there had not been enough consultation carried out and the letters used were not clear. The consultation process needs to be revisited.

Discussions took place on repairs to garages and the rent increase.

Garages have been demolished in the Riddings area (Grasby Rd) and it was asked when the area of land will be sorted out. This item is to be referred to Pete Stones to follow up.

Steve confirmed that garage sites for demolition had been identified from surveys that were carried out through the improvement works.

Warley Road residents association was successful in obtaining funding for land to be used as a football area. Since the garages have been demolished this has now opened up the field. A request for fencing to be erected to close off the area was put forward. To be checked with Pete Stones.

The venue for future meetings of community voice was raised and the Chair confirmed the next meeting will be held at Meridian House as the Baptist Church wasn't available for April. A discussion took place on venue requirements and it was agreed that the side room at the Baptist Church was the best location as it can accommodate the larger membership.

Janine asked about the future plans for the Warley Rd office as this building was now empty. Steve explained there are several alterations to be made to change this back into use has a house. This needs looking into.

16. Date of next Meeting

Date: 6th April 2009
Venue: Meridian House, Normanby Road
Time: 1.00pm to 4.30pm

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.

Please note: Can you please bring relevant paper work with you to the meeting, including the minutes and action plan.