

## Minutes from the Rents Improvement Panel Meeting held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> May, 10am at Horsebridge Community Centre

### Attendees

Irene Bishop (IB)  
Elaine Christian (EC)  
Maurice Christian (MC)  
Sheila Friar (SF)  
James Jason (JJ)  
Alun Jones (AJ)  
Colin Porter (CP)  
David Shakespeare (DS)  
Mark Tugwood (MT)  
Andrew Walker (AW) – Area Manager for Queens Park Estate Office and the Rents Team  
Jenni Ellis (JE) – Customer Involvement and Projects Officer

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

AW welcomed attendees to the meeting and thanked all for attending and for their involvement.

Before the meeting commenced, the new Customer Involvement Structure was discussed and an explanation on the scrutiny structure provided (currently with Blackpool Council for approval). It was stated that an advert will be included along with the summer edition of Viewpoint, due to be delivered to customers around 8<sup>th</sup> June, to recruit Scrutiny Champions in order to take on the role of monitoring and assessing the performance of BCH.

JE explained that the Service Improvement Panels are to be formalised in line with the proposed structure. This will involve adopting terms of reference and a code of conduct for each Improvement Panel, which members will be required to agree to. The role of the Panels will be more strategic with members overseeing the overall performance of services, the monitoring of local offers, customer satisfaction and other related topics. The Panel will also challenge performance issues and if standards are not being met. AW explained that this Panel will not drastically change as the majority of topics which will be reviewed are already being discussed at each meeting. JE advised members that, as the Panel will be more strategic, individual concerns and issues will not be discussed in the main meeting but could be dealt with privately upon the close of the meeting.

### 2. Minutes of the last meeting/matters arising

The minutes of the last meeting were read through and agreed as a true record. The following points were updated:

- **Customer First** – A meeting is taking place in June where outstanding issues will be discussed. Further issues were raised; long queues and lack of working payment machines. The possibility of creating a customer panel to review the service provided by Customer First was discussed – this is a Council Service, however, it is being reviewed and so may be beneficial for customers to be involved either through mystery shopping or other relevant method.
- **Review of Debt Advice Service** – Further to the review and termination of the Advice Link service, a new Rents Intervention Officer post has been created. Lynn Conifey has been successful in securing this position and will attend a future meeting once in post. A query was raised regarding partner agencies; it was stated that Lynn will work with agencies such as CAB, charities etc as part of the development of the role.
- **Rents Survey Action Plan/Equality Impact Assessment** – Both documents have been linked in order to create one Action Plan which identifies all priorities and targets for completion.
- **Rent Calendars** – Members stated that these were much improved from last year. AW stated that a specific calendar for direct debit payers had been produced to demonstrate example payments – this is to be sent to members along with the minutes.
- **Former Tenant Arrears Policy/Financial Inclusion Policy** – Both policies were approved by the Board in March and have now been implemented.

### **3. Performance**

Target = £320,000

Arrears figure, 4<sup>th</sup> quarter (Jan - March) = £367,940

The quarter 4 performance report was handed out and discussed with members. AW raised the possibility of lowering the notice level to £200 in order for customers to respond at an earlier stage in the arrears process and possibly stop arrears from accruing further – all members agreed that this would be beneficial in providing help/assistance to customers who may not otherwise get in touch.

It was advised that a further breakdown of customers in arrears, served with a NOSP and keeping to a payment arrangement or evicted could be reviewed to provide a profile – this requires data provision from the I.T. Team who currently have a number of other priorities.

### **4. Local Offers**

The information relating to the local offers has not been received and so will be reported on at a future meeting.

### **5. Customer Satisfaction**

The results and actions from the Equality Impact Assessment and the Rents Survey have been agreed and will be prioritised and built into the Team Plan for the forthcoming year.

It was stated that, once the Service Improvement Panel has been formalised, compliments and complaints will be reported on under this section of the meeting.

### **6. Service Improvements**

A report on the service improvements achieved in 2010/2011 was handed out and discussed with members. It was stated that the Rents Information Booklet had now been finalised – this is to be sent to members along with these minutes.

Items for the forthcoming newsletter were discussed and it was agreed that the following should be included: announcement on the clear rent account prize draw winner, frequently asked questions, did you know/what's new section. Following an issue raised with direct debit payments it was also agreed that this should be included in the next edition of the newsletter.

A photograph is to be taken at the next Rents meetings to advertise the formalisation of the Improvement Panel in a future edition of the newsletter.

### **7. Benchmarking**

AW stated that he would be attending a benchmarking meeting in Warrington to meet with similar organisations and make links with agencies. A suggestion for Panel members to meet with benchmarking groups was discussed – this will be looked into in the future. BCH also subscribe to the Rent Income Excellence Network.

### **8. Any Other Business**

AW advised the Panel that his position has been extended until the end of August.

A suggestion was raised on producing a DVD which reviews working practices – it was advised that this may not be viable due to staff time/resources and costs but will be looked into.

### **9. Date and Time of Next Meeting**

To be confirmed