

**Notes from the Disability Forum Meeting held on
Wednesday 12th January, 2pm at Blackpool Centre for Independent Living**

In Attendance

Elaine Christian – Chairperson
Irene Bishop – Vice Chair
Maurice Christian
John Bland
Brenda Giles
Mavis Thomas
Peter Jefferson – Chief Executive, Blackpool Coastal Housing
Jen Ellis – Customer Involvement and Projects Officer, BCH
Yvonne Hammond – Equalities and Communication Officer, BCH
Sally Taylor, Census Area Manager, Blackpool and Wyre (Agenda Item 3)
Sandy Grundy – Customer Involvement and Projects Officer, BCH (Agenda Item 4)

Apologies

Delia and Harold Westnage
Eric and Rose Pearson
Martin Lawless
Ray Masson

1. Welcome and Introduction

Elaine Christian welcomed attendees to the meeting and explained to new members that she is the Chair of the Forum.

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:

- Street Scene Equality Audit is still on hold – Yvonne Hammond is meeting with Karen Herschell next week and will enquire when this is due to go ahead.
- The Disability Awareness DVD will be shown at the next Forum meeting on 6th April as a number of members who requested to see it were not able to attend this meeting.

3. Census 2011

Sally Taylor, Census Area Manager for Blackpool and Wyre, attended to provide information on the Census which is due to be undertaken on 27th March 2011. All households are legally required to complete the Census form which is used for statistical purposes and to forward plan for services and priorities. The data also assists in identifying funding needs for different areas and it is therefore vitally important that realistic figures are achieved in order to secure funding for necessary services.

S Taylor explained that a team of 140 Census employees would be working throughout the area in order to offer support and guidance and to ensure that all households complete the Census. An advertising campaign is due to run from February and there is

also a helpline that people can telephone with any questions. A number of completion events have also been organised at local community venues, such as libraries, where residents can attend and receive support in completing the form. All attendees were asked to raise awareness within their communities and they stated they would assist wherever possible; the possibility of opening Community Centres to hold their own completion events was also discussed.

4. Mystery Shopping Update

Sandy Grundy attended to provide an update on the mystery shopping exercise she has organised. For the benefit of those not present at the last meeting, S Grundy explained that mystery shopping 'tests' aspects of the services BCH provides and assists in ensuring these are of a high standard and consistent throughout the organisation. The purpose of the specific disability mystery shopping exercise is to assist in ensuring that BCH's services are fully accessible.

S Grundy presented the 15 questions/scenarios, developed as a result of discussions at the last meeting, in order to test services and all agreed these were suitable and relevant. S Grundy advised those who had agreed to volunteer for the exercise that a meeting had been organised for the following week to discuss the exercise in further detail.

Once the exercise has been completed and the results collated, a report will be produced which will be brought to a future meeting for discussion. If any areas for improvement are identified, these will be highlighted on an action plan which will include completion timescales for actions.

5. Tenant Liaison Forum Update

Elaine Christian reported that the draft local offers had been discussed and agreed at the TLF meeting held on 11th January. For the benefit of all attendees, J Ellis explained that the local offers would come into force on 1st April and would set standards that departments would be required to meet under the Tenant Services Authority regulatory framework. The local offers have been drafted as a result of consultation with tenants and the work completed in the Service Improvement Panels in order to identify service priorities.

For new members, J Ellis briefly explained that the Tenant Liaison Forum (TLF) is the over-arching consultation body which 2 representatives from this group attend along with representatives from Tenants and Residents Associations and the Sheltered Housing Panel. TLF meetings are an informal meeting to encourage discussion and a chance for any staff to present proposals for change or pass on information to tenants. J Ellis stated that work was currently being completed in order to develop a scrutiny panel which would replace the TLF as the main consultative body and would allow tenants to monitor service performance more closely. It is expected that the changeover would take place in July although the TLF will still remain as a group for sharing good practice etc.

An update was provided on the decent homes funding where it was stated that BCH are back on the list as one of the organisations able to bid for this government funding. An update on the amount of funding to be received is due in February and customers will be notified on the outcome, possibly in the Spring edition of Viewpoint.

Due to ongoing issues and poor performance, the contract with Connaught/Fountains has been terminated with effect from 31/04/11. The contract is currently out for tender and

going through the process including qualification period, assessments and reality checks. Tenant representatives will also be included on the panel.

6. Specific Survey

Following the brief discussion about the disability specific survey at the last meeting, it was suggested that this survey should be sent to a sample of disabled tenants to gauge their satisfaction with the services that BCH provides. J Ellis handed out a survey used recently for the local offers consultation and members agreed to review this and assist in altering the questions to make it disability specific. J Ellis is to send out a comment sheet to all members for their suggestions along with these minutes.

7. Any Other Business

Y Hammond provided an update on the Blackpool Disability Partnership and advised that the next meeting will take place on Tuesday 18th January, 1pm at Blackpool Centre for Independent Living. The following meeting will be Tuesday 22nd March, 1pm. Y Hammond also stated that the BBC programme 'Saints and Scroungers' will feature the Blackpool Disability Information and Support Service on Wednesday 19th January, 11am.

M Christian reported that there had been recent instances of cold callers operating in the Bispham area acting as a charity but requesting a fee for magazine subscription. This has been reported to Trading Standards and any further instances should also be passed through.

J Ellis stated that it is extremely important that all meeting venues used by BCH on a regular basis are fully accessible and suitable for all. To ensure this, an approved list of venues is to be developed with this Forum. It was agreed that the Centre for Independent Living should be on this list and members agreed to check different venues for accessibility.

An information leaflet was handed out to all attendees on the forthcoming sessions and activities to be held at the Blackpool Centre for Independent Living.

8. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

Annual General Meeting, Wednesday 6th April 2011, 2pm at Blackpool Centre for Independent Living, Whitegate Drive.