

**New Home Panel Meeting held on 25th August 2010, 2pm
at the City Learning Centre**

Present:

Paul Dillon (*Chair*) (PD)
 Mark Humphries (MH) – attended part of the meeting
 Emma Mendez (EM)
 Tracy Ansell (*minutes*) (TA)
 Keith Edwards (KE)
 Dorothy Cameron (DC)
 Elaine Christian (EC)
 Maurice Christian (MC)
 Irene Bishop (IB)
 Peter Rowbotham (PR)
 Chris Lovelock (CL)
 John Raine (JR)

Apologies:

Viv Critchley (VC)
 Mary Everett (ME)
 Martin Lawless (ML)
 John Morris (JM)

ITEM		ACTION
1	<p>Apologies Apologies and housekeeping, all attendees introduced themselves</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of the last meeting All agreed a correct and true record</p>	
3	<p>Matters Arising <u>Empty Homes Standard Leaflet</u> MH explained that the consultation process has been done for the Empty Homes Standards leaflet and has been looked at by both the New Home Panel and the Repairs panels, MH asked the group what format would they like the standards leaflet to take and gave an example of two possible options, these being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Option 1 – look at the Poole and Sandwell leaflets and adopt a similar one • Option 2 – continue with the BCH leaflet but make some minor amendments <p>PD explained that the timescales are quite tight as the leaflet has to be ready and in place for the Inspection in February 2011. All agreed that due to the time constraints it would be best to go ahead with the current BCH format and make some minor changes and then look into changing it early next year and the group could work with it and take forward</p> <p><u>Service Standards – EHT</u> MH explained that there is not a specific Service Standards for empty homes in place at the moment as it all falls under the Property Service Standards. MH explained that he will devise a form for the</p>	

4	<p>group to look at with key area's such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of services expected • What you expect the condition of empty properties to be like • Faster turnaround times • Faster lettings times <p>MH explained that service standards are also about being SMART (specific, measurable, accurate, realistic and time-bound), efficient and VFM (value for money)</p> <p>TA will send out the form to all the group to bring along to the next meeting and provide feedback and any other comments or idea's, further consultation will also take place at the Tenant Conference</p> <p><u>Termination due to bereavement</u> At the last meeting the group asked PD to investigate if other housing providers offered 2 rent free weeks on termination due to bereavement, as they felt this was a good idea. PD has undertaken some benchmarking with 15 other landlords and 60% of them do not offer any rent free weeks. It was agreed by the group that this matter will not be pursued further. PD handed out to the group an information leaflet explaining how this matter is dealt with by BCH. A discussion took place on several different scenarios but PD stated that each case is dealt with depending upon individual circumstances. EM to confirm if Helping Hands and Refurb are the same organisation, KE suggested including e-mail addresses and telephone numbers on the leaflet and this will now become part of the termination pack.</p> <p><u>Recommendations Termination Pack</u> The termination pack was launched on the 2nd August with the following changes made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clause added stating that if the property is re-let within the 4 week termination period no rent will be payable if a new tenant moves in • Information also included on the Golden Goodbye Scheme and an article has been placed in the Autumn edition of Viewpoint along with information on the smaller home scheme. <p><u>Newsletter Improvements</u> The group were given a copy of the Homestop newsletter and the following changes have been made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'no photo' will replace the cartoon bungalow • Remove 'Blackpool' from the address and use the sub-region instead i.e. Bispham, Mereside, Layton, Talbot • 'Dec access' and 'true' now taken out • Properties advertised on behalf of other housing associations will now be included i.e. Great Places, Muir etc • On the front cover 'visit our property shop' will be replaced with 'Homestop Office' <p>Bidding results are not published in the newsletter but will be available in housing offices and links on the BCH website.</p> <p><u>Information Leaflets</u> <u>Tenant Handbook</u> The group agreed that the current My Tenancy handbook will be replaced by an A4 envelope folder which will contain all the details</p>	<p>TA</p> <p>EM</p>
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	<p>required on your tenancy and the service specific leaflets and other useful information. PD suggested that he will put together a 'mock' file and send out to all the group but at the moment a final decision has not been made on the number of leaflets we are having, a dummy pack will be made up for the next meeting in November for the group to comment on.</p> <p><u>Choice Based Lettings leaflet</u> All agreed the amendments to be made and TA will now send the document to the reading panel</p> <p>5 Performance <u>Service Standards</u> PD ran through the 5 service standards and performance indicators for Homestop, it was acknowledged and agreed that improvements were needed on the re-let times but hit the 100% target of publishing bidding results within 3 working days. PD stated that these should improve when the Empty Homes Team have agreed and produced their own Service Standards. 100% of respondents were also satisfied with the allocation and lettings service.</p> <p><u>Satisfaction Survey</u> TA to send out the results to the group.</p> <p>6 Customer feedback No complaints received but staff at Homestop has received chocolates and cards.</p> <p>7 <u>Any Other Business</u> IB asked that if a tenant or partner dies and are disabled can either one bid for a smaller property with disabled adaptations? PD confirmed that yes they can and the Smaller Home leaflet is now in place but again it is based on individual circumstances.</p> <p>JR asked can all properties bid on be viewed? MH stated that they have a 'ready to view' timescale but not on all properties. PD advised that only the successful bidder can view the property but they do carry out 'multiple viewings' for more difficult to let properties.</p> <p>PR suggested that when a tenant leaves a property in bad condition that their benefits are stopped. PD explained that the rechargeable policy is currently under review.</p> <p>8 <u>Date and time of next meeting</u> Thursday 25th November 2010, 2pm CLC</p>	<p>TA</p> <p>TA</p>
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