

MINUTES OF TENANTS' LIAISON FORUM
11th November 2008

Present:

Mrs M Horn (Chairman)	Grange Park Residents' Association
Mrs C Thornber	Boston Way Tenants' Association
Mrs C Hardiman	Linden and Edmonton Residents' Association
Mrs J Sanderson	Linden and Edmonton Residents' Association
Mrs D Wightman	Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart Residents' Association
Mr B Rogers	Melbourne, Brisbane and Hobart Residents' Association
Mr C Randall	Munsters Residents' Association
Mrs G King	Queens Park Residents Association
Mrs C Cook	Queens Park Residents Association
Mrs A Allen	Mereside Tenants' and Residents' Association
Mr M Christian	Ingthorpe Tenants' and Residents' Association
Mrs E Christian	Ingthorpe Tenants' and Residents' Association

In Attendance:

Mr A Walker	Blackpool Coastal Housing
Ms S Grundy	Blackpool Coastal Housing
Mr M Glennon	Blackpool Coastal Housing
Ms S Buckley	Blackpool Coastal Housing
Ms S Tomlinson	Blackpool Coastal Housing
Ms J Ellis	Blackpool Coastal Housing
Mr C Holland	Blackpool Coastal Housing
Miss G Atkinson	Legal and Democratic Services, Blackpool Council

Action

1. WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. APOLOGIES

Apologies were submitted on behalf of Councillor Mrs Henderson, Mrs Feeney, Mr Jefferson, Mrs Stringer, Mr Clayton and Mrs Cornall.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING 16th September 2008

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 16th September 2008 were agreed as a correct record.

4. HOUSING MATTERS

(a) Blackpool Coastal Housing (BCH)

The Forum was provided with an update on the progress achieved under the Decent Homes scheme. The Local Employment level had increased in previous months from 60 per cent to 76 per cent.

Scheme feedback sessions with tenants had identified a number of issues with the contractors. Communication methods was a key concern raised, with tenants requiring improved communication from the contractors both prior to and during improvement works. In addition, a number of complaints had been raised relating to untidiness from contractors while working within properties. The Forum was advised that these issues would be raised with the contractors for resolution.

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With regard to the level of work achieved, it was reported that approximately 900 different improvements had been completed since July 2008, as follows:

- Nearly 400 external doors fitted;
- Nearly 250 kitchen or bathroom refurbishments;
- 170 heating systems installed;
- 60 roofing and rendering works.

BCH and the contractors would be celebrating the 1000th improvement work achieved, which was due for completion in the near future and would be publicised in the local media. The satisfaction survey indicated that 99 per cent of tenants were satisfied with the level of work being undertaken.

In response to a query raised from the Forum, Mr Holland advised that spending under the Decent Homes scheme was currently on target and had achieved a small level of spending which would be allocated to other improvements works.

With regard to the heating systems, different systems were currently being explored and assessed for cost-effectiveness.

(b) Sheltered Housing and Community Centres

Mrs Buckley advised the Forum that the post of the Community Centre Co-ordinator had been recruited with the employee due to commence work on 17th November 2008.

A Scheme Manager had been recruited for the Seven Oaks sheltered accommodation, although the Forum was advised that this would only be on a temporary basis. The current employment contract for Scheme Managers was being reviewed and until this had been completed, a permanent employee could not be recruited. It was anticipated that the review would be complete by the end of the year.

An outline of all work required for each community centre was currently being collated which would be subsequently prioritised in accordance with budget availability. The Forum was advised that this would be presented at a future meeting for consideration.

With regard to the use of community centres, members were reminded to only use rooms that had been formally booked as each booking needed to have the necessary insurance and health and safety requirements completed.

It was reported that a monthly coffee morning would be launched shortly to improve engagement with tenants and ascertain their needs in terms of services. Blackpool Primary Care Trust would also be involved with the scheme to identify health service requirements from the tenants.

The next Sheltered Housing Forum meeting had been scheduled for 12th December 2008.

Sharon
Buckley

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(c) Performance Indicators

Mr Holland circulated commentary on quarterly performance management from April to September 2008, outlining the performance of Blackpool Coastal Housing in a number of the main sections of its core business. The Forum was provided with an explanation on each of the following performance indicators that had been most active within that period.

In response to a number of queries raised, the Forum was advised that empty properties that did not achieve the Decent Homes standard would be improved prior to inhabitation and that the proposed tenants would be consulted with regard to choice of kitchens and/or bathrooms where applicable. Blackpool Coastal Housing had three technical officers employed who inspected improvements work undertaken in empty properties.

5. CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT

The Forum was provided with an update in relation to the re-launch of a number of schemes within the Customer Involvement team, including:

- Reading Panel
- Mystery Shoppers
- Green Wardens
- Tenant Inspectors

In respect of the Disability Forum, members were advised that this now met on a regular basis and was in the process of developing a DVD to be used for staff training purposes to raise their sensitivity and awareness of the disabled tenant needs. It was agreed that the DVD be presented at a future meeting for consideration.

Mike
Glennon

Mr Glennon reported that very positive feedback had been received following the Customer Involvement Awards ceremony which had been held in October 2008. A workshop would be scheduled in March 2009 to consider a number of improvements to the ceremony.

The Forum was advised that the government had allocated funding for an Access to Nature initiative to allow community groups to bid between £50,000 to £500,000 for nature related schemes that they wished to develop. Further information on the initiative was available on line at www.naturalengland.org.uk.

6. HIGHWAYS SERVICES AND STREET SCENE SERVICES

As there was not a representative of the Council's Highways or Street Scene service in attendance at the meeting, the Forum requested that BCH send a formal invitation to the Highways service for their attendance at the next meeting.

Mike
Glennon

7. CODE OF CONDUCT

Mr Glennon advised the Forum that the current Tenant Liaison Forum Constitution, which had been formally approved in July 2005, included the General Principles of Conduct document. This could be updated for current use as a Code of Conduct and would be discussed further at the next Tenant Liaison Forum workshop meeting.

Mike
Glennon

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8. SCOTTISH POWER FUNDING

A list was circulated at the meeting which outlined each potential site that had been identified by the Estate Officers and Scheme Managers for the installation of benches. Areas across the town had been assessed in relation to risk of increasing anti-social behaviour and the list circulated did not include any sites where a risk had been identified.

It was agreed that each member should discuss the list with their respective Tenants and Residents Associations and report their thoughts back at a future meeting. Members were advised that the list was only a recommendation and that any other suggestions would be considered. A mapping diagram of the potential sites would also be circulated to members for consideration.

Mike
Glennon

9. FINANCE UPDATE

Members were reminded of the draft document that had been circulated prior to the meeting. The recommended guidelines provided advice on the spending of annual funding that had been allocated to Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs).

The guidelines aimed to resolve current issues with confusion relating to fund spending and allow the Associations to adopt a discretionary approach when allocating the money towards running costs and community engagement initiatives.

It was reported that upon approval of the guidelines, additional funding could be applied for by each of the TARAs.

A number of suggestions were made with regard to the wording of the guidelines document and it was felt that the current version might cause confusion relating to 'accepted expenditure'. The suggestions were acknowledged and would be adopted in the final version of the document.

Mike
Glennon

10. TENANT LIAISON FORUM CONSTITUTION

The Forum was advised that the current Constitution was being reviewed to account for any changes within the Forum, in areas such as membership or procedure. Priority areas would be identified and discussed further at future workshop meetings and subsequently reported back to a future meeting of the Forum.

It was suggested that each member of the Forum be required to sign the Constitution to indicate their approval of the document, once the new document had been finalised.

Mike
Glennon

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Forum was advised that Mr Walker, Lettings Team Leader, Blackpool Coastal Housing, was in attendance to answer any questions relating to sheltered housing.

With regard to the Sheltered Housing Review that was currently being undertaken by the Adult, Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Forum was advised that this was still ongoing

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and requested that an update be brought to the next meeting of the Forum.

Mike
Glennon

A discussion took place with regard to the allocation of a small minority of individuals within sheltered housing accommodation that had been disruptive. The Forum was advised that the Homestop computer system allowed every individual to bid for properties regardless of their eligibility. However, only certain people on the waiting list would be eligible to live in sheltered accommodation and those automatically qualified included all people aged 65 years or over, regardless of health and mobility. All applications submitted by a person aged less than 65 years would be assessed by the Housing Allocations team with regard to their health and mobility needs. It was the role of BCH together with the relevant Adult Social Care services and the Primary Care Trust, to manage that tenancy and individual to reduce the risk of the tenancy becoming detrimental to other residents.

Mr Walker informed the Forum that bi-monthly meetings with the Council were undertaken to review the Lettings Policy and address any issues relating to sheltered housing. Individual issues with disruptive tenants were taken extremely seriously and it was stressed that a log of incidents needs to be maintained for use as evidence when issuing eviction proceedings. The use of Dictaphone logs would also be permitted should any tenants experience difficulties with maintaining a written log.

Ms Ellis raised two items that had been submitted to the Customer Suggestions Scheme, as follows:

- Compost recycling bins to be provided in communal gardens.
- Chewing gum disposal boards and cigarette dispensers to be fitted outside each community centre.

The Forum requested that further information on the two suggestions be provided by the Council's Street Scene services and reported back to a future meeting.

Jenni Ellis

A discussion took place with regard to the recruitment of members to the Blackpool Coastal Housing Board. The Forum was advised that while the current procedure enabled all tenants to apply for a position, robust and rigorous checking procedures would be undertaken to ensure that the individual was appropriate for the role.

12. DATE AND VENUE OF THE NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date of the next meeting had been scheduled for Tuesday 13th January 2008, commencing at 10.00 a.m. in the City Learning Centre.

The meeting ended at 11.55 a.m.

Any queries regarding these minutes, please contact:
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