

FIRST CHOICE HOMES OLDHAM
ROYTON AND SHAW LOCAL BOARD

*Minutes of a meeting held on Thursday 25th May 6.15pm
At Chester Place, Royton.*

1. WELCOME INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Present:

Councillors: Rod Blyth, Steve Bashforth, Olwen Chadderton

Tenant Members: M Kelly (Chair) A Stott, M Doyle.

Independent Member: L Herring, M Peters

FCHO: Hugh Broadbent, Harry Burns, Paul Shelmerdine (minutes)

Members of the public: Mrs D Robinson, Mrs E Wright

The Chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced all Members present.

Apologies had been received from: Barbara Stringer, Terry Brophy, Tony Crocker, Lyn Pertoldi, Angela Farrell and Nimisha Mistry

2. ANY ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS INTRODUCED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

3. TO RECEIVE DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ANY CONTRACT OR MATTER TO BE DISCUSSED AT THIS MEETING

There were no declarations of interest.

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 20TH APRIL 2006

The minutes of the meeting held on April 2006 were agreed as a correct record.

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5. MATTERS ARISING

The following items were dealt with as matters arising:

Page 6: Mike Beaman referred to his letter sent to Mrs Helen Hardy, concerning the upgrade of the communal TV aerial system in Shaw. The letter indicated the system should be upgraded to receive a digital transmission by January 2007. Margaret Kelly stated that further letters were to be distributed to tenants and leaseholders regarding communal aerials.

6. Public Question Time

A number of residents/tenants asked questions under the Public Question Time forum as follows:-

Highland Road Royton.

Mrs D Robinson and Mrs E Wright asked questions under the Public Question Time forum about the scheme to provide some parking bays on Highlands Road, Shaw. Residents had received letters from Mrs Knapper (Project Team) for four parking spaces to be used of by occupiers of 2-24 Highlands Road Royton. Local residents not in favour of plans due to poor condition of road due to heavy use and issues with gas pipes being only 2ft under the road.

Following a discussion where it was noted that only part of the road was owned by FCHO, the Board concurred that financing this project from FCHO finance alone was inappropriate and not feasible due to costs being prohibitive.

Action. The Board agreed that Cllr Chadderton takes the case and contact Highways, (Les Harrison and Tony Nobles) as we may struggle getting work done due to ownership issues, and would need permission from landowners. No firm decisions were made on whether to continue with the parking spaces or to await the outcomes of any investigations regarding improvements on the whole road.

7: Annual Visit of Chair of Main Board and Chief Executive

Hugh Broadbent and Harry Burns invited comments from the board .

Cllr Bashforth: Raised concern over the lack of housing availability. He went to tell the board of three cases he is currently waiting on where families are having major issues finding a home. He asked if there was any way of making any dispensations and getting around the allocations process.

Hugh Broadbent stated that the system was supported and approved by OMBC. He explained that Choice Based Lettings (CBL) put the onus on the individual to be proactive in the search for a home. He acknowledged that although CBL is based on choice, there is a definite lack of choice. He went on to comment on the transparency of the system which clearly documents housing need and the time spent in obtaining a property

A discussion followed regarding one particular case of Cllr Bashforth. He questioned the banding in which the family had been placed. It transpired that Mike Beaman knew

the case and had questioned the allocations team who were satisfied with the banding in which the family had been placed.

Cllr Blyth stated the need to tell people that they are going to be on the waiting list for a long time as the waiting list is around 8,000. This was supported by Les Herring who stated the need to publicise the numbers on the waiting list and to be honest in FCHO's assessment of a candidate's likelihood of getting a property.

Hugh Broadbent stated that we do tell applicants by geographical area the turnover times of the various management areas. He suggested the publication of a report on a regular basis of how long people had been waiting.

Agreed: It was agreed that FCHO should "advertise" the waiting list in the local press.

Cllr Blyth raised the issue of under occupancy and suggested financial incentives to be made for residents to move to a smaller property if rooms are available in their existing property.

Cllr Chadderton agreed in principle but raised concerns over individual reluctance to move.

Mark Doyle questioned the Right To Buy process and its impact on reduced housing stock.

Hugh Broadbent stated that the rules had recently changed and that tenants now had to be in the property for five years before the RTB is allowed. In 2005-6 300 properties were sold through RTB, around 60% of these were family housing.

7a: New Build

Hugh Broadbent asked the board for their comments regarding new build. He stated that the discussion was about sounding out ideas and in no way constituted any proposals.

Hugh Broadbent pointed out the issues relating to the following

Why we need new build:

- Decreasing Housing stock. Increasing waiting list (supply and demand) Hugh Broadbent expressed the need to tailor developments to local demand e.g. More bungalows, larger homes to prevent overcrowding
- Where? Ideally "Brown Land" or is there existing council land. Hugh Broadbent stated that there are small pockets of land all over the area and that there were options for apartment blocks as well as houses.

- Cost? Hugh Broadbent explained three ways of covering the cost of New Build
 1. Can take out a loan with developer e.g. Hounslow Homes London. Essentially, the developer would be asked to build the properties and be paid back using the rent from the properties to pay the loan. Effectively a bartering system.
 2. Use the money raised from the sale of council land to private developers to fund new build
 3. Increased rent in line with private landlords to cover increased cost.

- Cllr Blyth stated that there was £3 million left over from housing revenue two years previously and asked if this could be used. HB stated that there were plans to use some of this for the Job evaluation process

- Hugh Broadbent explained that measures would be put in place where new build properties are owned by FCHO and put into a trust, and not OMBC so therefore not open to Right to Buy. He explained that tenants were given a Secure tenancy rather than an assured tenancy.

- Margaret Kelly asked what happens to fund raised from RTB. Hugh Broadbent told the board that $\frac{3}{4}$ goes back to the government and a $\frac{1}{4}$ to OMBC to be used on various projects and clearing debt.

8. Presentation on repairs service by the successful contractors (Dianne Thompson)

The Local Board gave consideration to a presentation of the repairs service by Dianne Thompson. They were then invited to make comments. The following issues were raised.

- The contact Centre: Dianne Thompson commented on the transfer to the VIP centre and the possible move away from OMBC and a new telephone number.
- BME Apprenticeships: Mike Beaman stated that only ten out of 500 applicants for apprenticeships had come from the BME community. FCHO currently working with J21 at Hopwood Hall College.
- Mark Doyle commented on the standard of work completed by apprentices. Dianne Thompson suggested more post inspection on work completed by apprentices.
- The board raised concern over apprentices multi-tasking. Dianne Thompson explained that it was part of the apprentice training to take on other roles if required.
- Livery: Cllr Blyth questioned how much was being spent on changing FCHO livery. Dianne Thompson explained that it was due to the need to present a corporate image.

- Customer Service: The board asked for quicker response times to complaints and asked that FCHO staff be honest about appointments

9. Park Estate Inspection/Update on tenants groups (Attached)

The Local Board gave consideration to a report from Nimisha Mistry on the Park Estate Walkabout for information.

Mike Beaman commented that officials were well represented, however only one resident had attended.

Margaret Kelly commented that Lords had returned to a property on Lowe Green to replace, remove and replace ridge tiles.

Margaret Kelly commented that operatives should adhere to planning boundaries when erecting fencing. Mike Beaman commented that some owner occupiers were moving boundaries due to trees.

10. Notes from Bus Tour 29th April 2006 (attached)

The Local Board gave consideration to a report from Mike Beaman on Bus Tour 29th April 2006 for information. The following issues were raised.

Mark Doyle: £40k on fencing on Lynmouth/Lorne Avenue. The work is not being done.

Mike Beaman stated that the funds allocated for this work was to be used for the painting of internal blocks on Holly Estate

11. Feedback from main board

De- Brief not available.

Margaret Kelly :Raised issue with the main board elections. She stated that a decision had been made that existing main board members need not be re-elected if they meet a set criteria. She argued that tenants are not been given the choice to choose who represents them. ODPM states clearly that tenants should be represented properly.

Mark Doyle commented that tenants need to know more about the work of the board – More promotion

12. Any other business

None

Date and time of next meeting

Thursday 13th July 6.30pm Matthias Pilling House, Shaw