

FIRST CHOICE HOMES OLDHAM ROYTON & SHAW LOCAL BOARD

*Minutes of the meeting held at Chester Place, Royton on Thursday 9th November
2006 at 6.30pm*

Councillors present: Olwen Chadderton
Tenant Members present: Margaret Kelly, (Chair)

Independent Members Present: Maureen Peters
Lynn Pertoldi

In attendance: Mike Beaman, Area Service Manager
Ahmed Imran, Housing Team Leader
Nimisha Mistry, Tenant Participation Officer
Jacqueline Thornton, Neighbourhood Service Officer, Housing
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Sue Walker, Board Support Officer
Lynn Phillips, Minute Taker

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Angie Farrell, Les Herring, Alwyn Stott, Barbara Stinger and Mark Doyle

2. ANY ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS INTRODUCED BY THE CHAIR

There were no items of urgent business

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

There were no declarations of interest.

4. TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON Thursday 10th October 2006

The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Following the previous meeting, the heating charge increase was raised. The Chair stated that she was soon to attend a petitioners meeting with Councillors and officers on this issue.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

No members of the public were present and the Chair received no written questions.

7. UPDATE ON PFI 2

Jacqueline Thornton from PFI 2 attended the meeting to provide an update regarding the PFI2 contract with Housing 21 which had been signed. The Board heard that Bullock Construction Ltd had flagged serious health and safety

issues at 2 blocks within the Whittaker Street estate: York Square and Rochdale Road. The issue of machinery on site, together with excessive noise had meant that residents would have to be moved in advance of the work commencing. Consultation with the 18 x affected residents had begun.

The Board heard that Hetra House and Holly House would also be included within the PFI 2 programme. Maureen raised concerns regarding the number of people allowed into the Chester Place Community Centre and Nimisha and Mike agreed to look into the arrangements for risk assessment.

On the issue of Lancaster House, Jacqui confirmed that it would not be part of the programme, but may be used for decanting. Mike stated that the future of the scheme would have to be reviewed, as it had been committed from the Decent Homes programme.

Regarding properties in Shaw, Mike asked whether there was any way these properties could be brought forward in the programme from year three. The Chair suggested Mike meet with representatives from Bullock Construction Ltd to discuss the matter.

RESOLVED:

- (1) that Chester Place Community Centre be checked to ensure that risk assessment had been completed.
- (2) that the concerns of the Board regarding the use of Lancaster House for decanting when it had not been part of the decent homes programme be forwarded to the Main Board.
- (3) that the Area Service Manager arrange to meet with Bullock Construction to explore whether properties at Shaw could be brought forward in the PFI 2 programme.

8. FEEDBACK FROM HARTINGTON COURT, BAMFORD STREET AND SHAW STREET ESTATES INSPECTION & GROUP UPDATE

Nimisha Mistry, Tenant Participation Officer, attended the meeting to report back on recent estates inspections and progress against each of the actions, which had resulted from each. The following issues were noted:

The Board heard that a property at Bamford Street had been troubled by youths from Our Lady's school.

Nimisha reported that the next Quarterly Networking Session was scheduled for 22nd November, 6.30p.m. at Matthias Pilling House.

AGREED:

- (1) that regarding the trouble with youths at Bamford Street, that the Housing Team Leader be requested to take up the matter with the police.

9. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY TRAINING BOARD MEMBER

Sue Walker provided a report, the purpose of which was to request nominations from Board Members for forthcoming equality and Diversity training. Sue explained that the local company, Peacemaker, that was providing the training had won national awards for their work in this area.

Lynn and Margaret asked to attend on 29th November and Maureen was booked provisionally for 22nd February 2007.

AGREED: that Lynn and Margaret be nominated to attend on 29 November 2006.

that Maureen be nominated to attend on 22 February 2007.

10. PERFORMANCE CONTRACT

Mike presented the performance contract. On the issue of walkabouts, the Board was concerned about the lack of attendance by Councillors and PCSO's.

The policy of Access to Services was also discussed and it was suggested that the follow up visits to new tenants should be promoted more.

The issue of increasing rent arrears was discussed. Mike stated it is routine for evictions to be adjourned should they go to court. Mike commented that rent arrears letters may frighten tenants and the tone of the letters could be changed, to encourage tenants to discuss arrears and other debts. The threat of court action should be used as ~~the main sanction, an extreme measure, as a degree of control is lost, once cases are submitted for possession action in the courts.~~ Incidents of debt are on the increase in society in general. Lynn agreed that a 'sooner and softer' approach may be better, and Mike is starting to work on this matter.

Performance on Customer Service was below target. Mike explained that some complaints had been allocated to the team, but should have been directed to other sections. Some of these involved disputes between contractors and had gone out of time. Lynn recommended this point be brought to the attention of main board.

AGREED:

- (1) That a renewed programme of promotion be put in place around new tenancy visits.
- (2) That in the review of arrears letters, a sooner and softer approach be adopted.
- (3) That the Chair explore with the Tenant Participation Officer, the issue of poor attendance at estate walkabouts and how it might be addressed.
- (4) That complaints are correctly allocated.

11. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Michael Pateman was **REQUESTED** to attend the next meeting, as there may be some environmental improvement schemes that could be added to the programme before the end of the financial year.

12. FEEDBACK FROM MAIN BOARD

No questions arose.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Lynn wanted to know the position on staff uniforms. Mike explained this is under discussion, and it would appear front line staff would have to wear a uniform. The uniform itself has not yet been decided.

14. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 14th December 2006, 6.30pm at Matthias Pilling House

The meeting ended at 8.15pm