

**FIRST CHOICE HOMES OLDHAM
SADDLEWORTH & LEES LOCAL BOARD**

***Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8th November 2006
At Old Mill House, 7pm***

Councillors present: Brian Lord (Chair)
Derek Heffernan

Independent Members present: Winifred Dillon

Tenant Members present: Jean Bradley (Vice Chair)
Bill Hullah
Edith Bentley

In attendance: Sue Walker, Board Support Officer
Gary Walsh, FCHO Area Service Manager
Joanne Bentley, Area Service Manager (East
Oldham)
Lynn Phillips, Minute Taker

Members of the public present:

Mr & Mrs Wagstaff, 2 Lido House
Irene Power, 24 Lido House; Nelly Megginson, 6 Lido House;
Barbara Winterbottom, 29 Lido House; Jean Wagstaff, 2 Lido House;
Betty Tootill, 3 Lido House; May Rennie; Katie Jones, 45 Old Mill House;
Lucy Shaw, 24 Lido House; Lydia Langden, 26 Lido House;

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Val Sedgewick sent her apologies.

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 *Wednesday 4th
October 2006***

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Questions raised by members of the public:

A member of the public asked for an update on the inadequate overflow drain in Grotton (as per several previous minutes). The Chair answered that no work is due to commence due to OMBC budgetary constraints. This news was met with disappointment from the tenant's present and the Board.

A resident complained about the pathway from the communal lounge at Old Mill House, as discussed at the previous meeting. Gary **ASSURED** the lady he would chase this up.

A resident of Lido House also wanted to know when the lounge ceiling would be re-painted. Gary has previously assessed the work though the cost would be prohibitive, however Gary will look at alternative funding.

Heating charges, heating meters and water meters were discussed. Jean informed the meeting she has received a report from Housing 21 regarding water meters and has spoken to Jacqui Thornton: water meters are still under discussion. Jean is meeting Jacqui on Monday morning to gather further information.

9. FUTURE GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS OF SADDLEWORTH & LEES

Gary explained to the meeting that he has met with Steve York to discuss the future of the Saddleworth & Lees Local Board, as the number of dwellings has decreased due to right to buy and the signing of the PFI2 contract. Joanne Bentley introduced herself, and explained there is now a lot of sense in Saddleworth & Lees and East Oldham to merge. Joanne explained that the East Oldham team already deals with many FCHO services. A final decision will be made when Joanne presents the matter to the East Oldham Local Board next week.

The Chair explained the constitutional requirements of the separate Boards: Jean raised the subject of environmental improvements. Joanne explained that the capital spend comes to an end on 31.3.07, so major works will not be presented for consideration by the Board in the future.

Bill queried the number of Board members who would sit on the East Board: would there be 18 members due to the merging? Sue clarified the situation: the proposal is for both Boards to retain the same number of members and meet together every six weeks, and that the Saddleworth & Lees Board would meet quarterly to discuss performance. Sue added these proposals must still be agreed, and if agreed would need to be assessed in due course. 18 Board members at a meeting became an issue with the meeting, and the location of future meetings was a concern. It was confirmed that present tenant Board members Jean and Edith would soon start to feed back to Housing 21, not FCHO.

Sue stressed FCHO Local Boards are strength to the organisation, as identified in the recent audit inspection. The temptation to lose Boards when stock is reduced by transfer and Right to Buy should be avoided. Therefore the merging of Boards could be an option. Winnifred **REQUESTED** a working party to be established before a decision is made. Sue **AGREED** with this suggestion. Sue stressed a decision has yet to be made by both Boards.

10. PERFORMANCE CONTRACT

Gary explained that not all data has been populated, therefore some comments are unavailable.

Winnifred queried the responsive repairs figures: Gary explained that two repairs men should be adequate for the number of dwellings in the area, however he admitted that if more repairs men were available, the figures would be better.

Void properties were discussed: Jean has not attended any void inspections since voids transferred to East Oldham. Gary assured Jean would receive information, as the new voids system commences next week. Gary explained the reasons individual properties had taken so long to be made ready for re-letting, address by address.

The complaints procedure was also discussed. Edith told Gary she had left him a phone message regarding her request for some tree pruning at 7 Benyon Street. Gary **ASSURED** Edith he would look into the problem. Gary also gave the meeting his new direct number: 911 4389. A tenant asked why she was waiting 20 minutes for her call to be answered to the repairs centre. She would prefer to hear an engaged sound or have the option dial back, rather than be on hold for so long and paying for the call.

It was confirmed tenants can reach the contact centre by email. Gary explained that there is a huge volume of calls, as tenants prefer to phone repairs in. FCHO now has permission to increase the number of staff from 5 to 6, although there are only 6 workstations at the call centre. Gary accepts there are problems, but the contact centre service is moving in the right direction.

Edith complained about queuing at the Civic Centre for half an hour to pay her rent. Services have been cut at the One Stop Shop to save money. Mrs Wagstaff from 2 Lido House informed the meeting of the benefits and convenience of direct debit, and that paying rent in cash is now becoming less popular.

11. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY TRAINING FOR BOARD MEMBERS

Sue explained this training had been such a success with the caretaking staff, it has now been rolled out to the whole organisation.

Training was made available to Board members on 29 November 2006 and 22 February 2007, during the day. Both Winifred and Bill agreed to attend the training.

12. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

It was agreed the next meeting should be held at Lido House, as many tenants from Lido House had travelled to attend this meeting.

Edith requested a representative from Housing 21 to attend the next meeting to answer questions. Winnifred added that tenants need to know how things will be organised in future i.e. will there be Housing 21 Board meetings etc. Members of the PFI2 steering group have visited Housing 21 in London to see how Housing 21 operates. Members of Lido House present were unhappy that they were unaware of the steering group, the visits to London or to see Housing 21 'show home' accommodation. Jean explained to the residents that have received regular newsletters and therefore should be informed on all matters discussed. Edith replied that she is aware of many tenants who do not agree with the PFI2 contract, do not read the newsletters and destroy them upon receipt.

Sue **AGREED** to make enquiries are made to allow tenants to view the Bullocks show bungalows. Jean also said she would make enquiries.

13. FEEDBACK FROM MAIN BOARD

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15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There were no items.

15. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 13TH December 2006, 7.00pm at Lido House.

The meeting ended at 8.20 pm.