

FIRST CHOICE HOMES OLDHAM SADDLEWORTH & LEES LOCAL BOARD

*Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 16th August 2006
at Old Mill House, 7pm*

Present:

Councillors: Brian Lord, Chair; Val Sedgewick; Derek Heffernan

Tenant Members: Bill Hullah; Jean Bradley; Edith Bentley

Independent Members: Winifred Dillon

In attendance: Gary Walsh, Repairs Manager; Lynn Phillips, Minute Taker

Members of the public present: Clarice Fletcher, 50 Old Mill House
Katie and Walter Jones, 45 Old Mill House
Neville Ibbotson, 30 Hood Square
Mr & Mrs McCleverty, 22 Hood Square
Dorothy Jackson, 15 Old Mill House
Alice Pearson, 36 Old Mill House
Phyllis Rafferty, 3 Old Mill House

1. WELCOME, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Paul Newcombe, Caretaking Manager sent his 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 12 JULY 2006

Correction to Matters Arising, item 5.2: the tenant suspected of sub-letting resides at Hood Square, not Old Mill House.

5. MATTERS ARISING

Item 5 of the previous minutes: Cllr Val Sedgewick enquired about progress on the heating service. Mr Ibbotson said no one from FCHO has been in contact and is extremely dissatisfied. Gary **ASSURED** Mr Ibbotson he would speak to Colin Greenwood immediately. Mary McCleverty reported her heating has been attended to, after she contacted Apollo directly.

Regarding item 5.4: It was confirmed the heating at Lees House is working at the moment, however if the heating fails, there are concerns about the ability to repair it. The tenants have not been re-housed. Cllr Heffernan was concerned about the condition of the fire alarm. The Chair explained there was a minor fault with the system that had been repaired immediately, but was disappointed that matters raised at the previous meeting have not been dealt with. The Chair **RECOMMENDED** that the Board complain to a higher authority.

Referring to PFI2, The Chair has received a letter from Alan Caddick, explaining why the contract has not yet been signed.

With reference to item 5.2 and the tenant under suspicion of sub letting, Edith Bentley has information that the tenant in question has requested a change of tenancy (he wishes to move to Chadderton). Edith commented although this would solve the problem at Hood Square, it could be construed as queue jumping. The Chair added he has spoken to Asma Rani, the housing officer, but was unhappy with the conversation that took place. FCHO have denied any diary sheets have been submitted. The net result is The Chair and Cllr Sedgewick have personally visited Hugh Broadbent with their complaint, however The Chair has not received any feedback from FCHO since. Mr & Mrs McCleverty stated they feel they have received a poor response from the housing officer. Edith Bentley also voiced her disappointment in Steve York. The Chair reminded the Board they do not have the power to reprimand officers.

Jean Bradley was very concerned the man in question is claiming housing benefit, which is unfair on the pensioners paying full rent. Cllr Lord again re-iterated the requirement for evidence, to maintain the legality of the case. Cllr Lord suggested there are perhaps two ways FCHO can deal with the issue: either to serve an ASBO on the female suspected of sub letting, or to evict the tenant.

AGREED: The Chair will contact Hugh Broadbent for an update on the situation and continue to push for a resolution to the matter.

Winifred Dillon again asked for the sheltered housing patrols to be re-instated as the service was excellent. Gary has enquired within FCHO, but is not hopeful of a positive outcome due to lack of funding. The Chair commented there has been £10m of cuts to prevent a financial nightmare across the Borough, and the results of this are becoming apparent. Winifred commented the patrol service was part of tenant's rent payments, yet the rents remain the same. The Chair explained cuts are made due to money being unavailable in the overall Borough budget.

The service was discontinued approximately a year ago. Jean recounted an episode where a vagrant entered her property, and the patrol attended promptly (the police were unavailable), thus proving there is a need for the service to be re-instated.

With regard to present security arrangements, Mr Ibbotson complained the security door at 25-30 Hood Square is faulty. The engineer had attended but the problem has not been resolved. The door is insecure and residents are vulnerable. Gary **AGREED** to chase up this up immediately.

Regarding the allocation of the environmental improvement budget: the Board and members of the public present noted that tree pruning around Old Mill House and Hood Square had commenced and asked for confirmation that this activity was part of the agreed FCHO environmental improvement spend. Gary replied that as far as he was aware, FCHO staff had not yet commenced tree work in the area, and it was more than likely that OMBC environmental services department were carrying out their own scheduled tree work. Gary **AGREED** to investigate.

6. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

Katie Jones queried the Council's responsibility to attending issues when Housing 21 is about to take control of sheltered accommodation. The Chair responded that FCHO are attending to emergencies only, not long-term repairs.

Jean expressed her disappointment at the delay in the signing of the Housing 21 contract. Winifred stated that maintenance has slipped and action needs to be taken, as tenants are paying rent and receiving a poor service. Gary explained that the repairs service to properties has not stopped. Approximately two years ago, extra money was identified by FCHO to sustain a repairs service to properties identified for PF12 transfer. Winifred and the Chair still **AGREED** it seems unfair FCHO are taking rents but not supplying an adequate repairs service.

7. REVIEW OF THE ROLE & FUNCTION OF A PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE

One meeting of the committee has taken place thus far. The Chair **REQUESTED** a debrief form the committee, including the list of individuals who form the committee.

8. UPDATE ON GROUNDS MAINTENANCE ON SADDLEWORTH & LEES

The Board are happy with grass cutting at the moment.

It was **AGREED** Gary will ask Paul Newcombe for an update and will report back to the next meeting on the caretaking arrangements for the area.

9. PERFORMANCE CONTRACT

Gary distributed copies of the Team Contract 2006/7 to members of the Board and public present, and ran through the statistics, including estate inspections.

Jean is dissatisfied that there were six repair operatives and there are now only two. Gary explained the area has access to a pool of 28. Jean will remain as a void inspector in Saddleworth & Lees.

The Chair was disappointed a house in Springhead has taken seven months to prepare for a new tenancy. The Board discussed the length of time properties are void. Gary **AGREED** to report back to the next meeting with a reason why void turnaround takes so long.

10. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

It was **AGREED** to include

- Grounds maintenance
- An introduction by the new TPU officer to the Board
- Attendance of a Housing 21/PFI2 officer to the next meeting

11. FEEDBACK FROM MAIN BOARD

Main points were:

- Jean informed the Board there would be a further inspection by the Audit Commission in 2007, as a promotion to a 3 star rating would secure further funding from the Government.
- Hugh Broadbent has asked the Government if FCHO can be included in the pilot for freedoms and flexibilities of ALMO'S. FCHO will only be able to shadow at the present time.

12. DATES AND TIME OF NEXT BOARD MEETING

Wednesday 4th October 2006, Old Mill House 7.00pm.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm.