

Customer Involvement Group – 5th January 2010

Present:

Ian MacDonald (IM) (Chair)	Edna Griffin (EG)	Alf Merry (AM)
Sheila Lambourne (SL)	Margery Franklin (MFr)	Chick Lavender (CL)
Barbara McMinnies (BM)	Muriel Rawsthorne (MR)	Terry Dove (TD)
George McMinnies (GM)	Bob Page (BP)	Valeira Stoute (VS)
James Beasley (JB)	Sue Cleaver (SC)	Michael Marsh (MM)
Margaret Delargy (MD)	John Stevens (JS)	Lillian Rollings (LR)

Officers:

Steph Verstraeten (SV) – Resident Involvement & Policy Officer
Emma Martin (EM) – Resident Involvement Assistant
Joanna Flaxman (JF) – Policy Officer
Peter Joyce (PJ) – Landscaping Manager
Justine Thompson (JT) – Head of Policy and Community Involvement

1. Welcome and Introductions	<p>The shareholding membership leaflet was given to all attendees.</p> <p>IM welcomed everyone to the meeting. IM told the group of the sad news that Herbie Barlow had recently passed away and for anyone who would like to attend his funeral, BM has the arrangement details. The group agreed to send a card and flowers to the service.</p>
2. Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising	<p>JB said that the property he had mentioned at the last meeting in Holbeck with cables out of the window leading into the car park is still ongoing.</p> <p>JB also asked if the washing machine query he raised at the last meeting has any updates. SV said the voids team are now installing the plumbing for automatic washing machines as standards as part of void works and they provide access through to the adjacent space</p> <p>IM said that the contractor he had mentioned at the last meeting came back to his property to thank him for his positive comments.</p> <p>JB said he would like to formally apologise to the clerk of works who visited his property. JB said he had got frustrated with the member of staff and had been impolite and would like to apologise for his behaviour. BM also said she would like to apologise for raising the issue of an elderly lady who had, had a bad experience with the major works contractors. BM said the information she had been given was incorrect and apologised for raising the issue at the meeting.</p> <p>JB proposed, SL seconded and the minutes were agreed and signed.</p>
3. Landscaping Proposals – PJ	<p>PJ introduced himself and spoke of his previous experience of landscaping. PJ then went on to explain his current role at Bracknell Forest Homes.</p> <p>PJ said that the landscaping teams' aims for the next year would be 15 grass cuts; the</p>

	<p>team managed 12 cuts last year which is very good progress. Attitude to a certain extent, is customer focussed, training and resources are excellent. PJ also said there seems to be a negative view of the landscaping team which he is hoping to turn around.</p> <p>PJ mentioned how he was unsure about trees in the area. As far as he is aware, there is no tree survey. BM said that John Innes at Bracknell Forest Council undertook a tree survey in the area and should have each tree listed. CL agreed. PJ thanked BM and will contact John Innes as soon as possible about this.</p> <p>PJ said there are some inefficiencies in the way the team generates. For example, at the moment the team get petrol from the BP garage at the top of Western Road, which is not ideal. An alternative solution would need to be looked at. PJ also said there had been some major failings when it comes to things like borders and hedges. A lot of the plants are the wrong species and therefore are unsuitable, which has been inherited from the Council. AM said, for example, a hedge by a property front door should be no higher than 3 metres, as the hedge would create a good hiding place for a burglar.</p> <p>PJ said that he would like to get as many customers as possible together to create a landscaping forum to discuss ideas and initiatives for the future of landscaping around Bracknell Forest. PJ said that Bracknell Forest Homes has the potential to start from scratch and an improvement budget can be accessed to fund the ideas the group decide upon.</p> <p>JB said how for 6 weeks every year, the team cut hedges and not the grass, can this be altered. PJ said the system needs to be changed and scheduled so that it reflects weather conditions. Some areas grow faster than others and will require more cuts, etc.</p> <p>LR said that front gardens are not being cut anymore if the tenant is not home, a card saying they will come back is being left, can a front garden not be cut, if the tenant is not home. PJ said that is something that can be looked into and changed providing that is what customers would prefer.</p> <p>AM said that inspections are being undertaken but the work itself is not being done. PJ said that this is something that will need to be worked on in future and a more comprehensive staff structure should help this.</p> <p>BM said that homeowners will also need to be consulted upon when landscaping decisions will be made. PJ agreed. CL suggested estate meeting notes be passed to PJ to look at previous landscaping issues that have been raised. MF mentioned a hedge in Nuthurst that is not cut back, unless she calls and requests it be done. PJ said he would look into this.</p> <p>IM asked the group to pass their details to EM if they would like to get involved with landscape forum. The group thanked PJ for attending.</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>Tenancy Management and Major Works Service Standards – JF</p> <p>JF explained that she would like to consult the group in order to develop some Tenancy Management and Major Works Service Standards. She asked if the CIG could work in small groups, with JF SV and EM facilitating with specific topic areas to discuss with them, and give their views on what they would like to see as customer service standards in relation to tenancy management and major works.</p>

	<p>The standards need to be measureable. JF would then take the comments and work them into service standards.</p> <p>There was a discussion about whether these topics had already been discussed by the group. JF said they had not, in the past the group has developed service standards for Anti-Social behaviour, Customer Care, Customer Involvement and Estates. The group felt that they did not want to work from scratch, that they would prefer that officers draft documents first and then ask CIG for comments. JF explained that she had questions to ask each of the groups to help them think about what sorts of things could be included in the service standards so that she could begin from a customer point of view.</p> <p>JF asked the group what they would like to do. The group said they would not like to be involved at the very start of putting future policies and standards together, they would like to be given a draft to comment on. A vote was cast on this, the majority agreed. JF will draft some service standards and bring them back to the next meeting.</p>
<p>5.</p>	<p>Vulnerability Policy Consultation – JT</p> <p>JT passed around a document with 3 different definitions for the term “vulnerability”. The first is used by government bodies and is very technical. The second is the definition that Bracknell Forest Homes use. The third definition is alternative and goes into detail about different circumstances that customers may experience.</p> <p>CL said he liked the Bracknell Forest Homes definition as it is short, plain English, to the point and easy to understand. The group agreed.</p> <p>'An individual or household needing support to enable them to live independently and to prevent social exclusion. Vulnerability can be on a temporary or long term basis.'</p> <p>The assisted gardening, decoration and handy person scheme definitions will stay the same, as will indicators of vulnerability.</p> <p>MM suggested detailing what Bracknell Forest Homes, Social Services and floating support will do as individual organisations. SL asked if the budget is held by Bracknell Forest Council. JT confirmed this.</p> <p>BM said that Bracknell Forest Homes will carry out up to £7000 worth of aids and adaptations to a property before it would have to be referred to Bracknell Forest Council. Could the government change this? JT said yes, they could tighten the budget, but it is unlikely that we would have to pay more than that per property before referral.</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>Customer Leaflets – Garden Assistance and Rent Pre Tenancy Info – JF & SV</p> <p>The garden assistance leaflet was first for discussion. It was agreed to add in “if we cannot access” we will leave a card on page 3. “and there is no family help” will be removed from Hedge Cutting on page 3.</p> <p>SL asked how we would advertise the leaflet? JF said the leaflet would be sent out, a small advertisement could be put into Spotlight to let customers know it is available, etc.</p> <p>Pre Tenancy info leaflet was discussed. The group felt that the guide would be very</p>

	<p>beneficial to someone moving into a property, particularly young people who have not had their own property before.</p> <p>LR asked about council tax figures, SV said these would be updated. BM suggested listing possible benefits. SV said these are discussed when customers move in and a leaflet is also included in the Welcome Pack.</p> <p>BM suggested putting in a rough guide of figures for contents insurance to show customers how little it can cost to insure the contents of your home.</p> <p>It was suggested to include that a small discount can be obtained with a TV licence if you are over a certain age.</p> <p>GM said how he thought the budget planner was a very good idea. CL said it would be worth checking the CAB procedure as they have changed how you can speak with a member of staff. BM suggested adding in Christians Against Poverty contact details.</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Any other Business</p> <p>JB said that he did not receive his copy of Spotlight until after Christmas. There was a discussion about who had and had not received their copy. IM said that he had spoken with a member of staff at Royal Mail who said that all of their deliveries were made on time before Christmas. SV said she would speak with Mike Morrissey, Communications and Marketing Officer and Linda Wells, Director of Housing and Community Services about this issue.</p> <p>MM said that last month 7 void inspections were made and 8 major works inspections were carried out by customers. There are only 3 drivers in the group which can sometimes cause a problem, but MM said how happy he was that the system in place, is working very well. MM also said how Linda Wells will be accompanying him on some void and major works inspections to hear customer views.</p> <p>JB said that a previous issue he had raised about a lady in Leaves Green who is waiting to have works done has not been resolved. SC mentioned an issue she was having with her heating.</p> <p>SV said that the shareholding membership leaflet is available for customers and the application will have a perforated edge to make it easier to apply. The Value for Money leaflet is also available for customers in Reception of Berkshire Court.</p> <p>The compensation policy, starter and succession policy, voids and lettings policy and relationship breakdown policy have all been agreed by the Operations Committee.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">Date of next meetings Wednesday 3rd February, Berkshire Court, 10am Wednesday 3rd March, Berkshire Court, 2pm Tuesday 6th April, Berkshire Court, 7pm</p>