

Tenants' and Leaseholders' Panel Meeting

15th December 2009

Present:

Nick Westlake (NW) Chair	Bill Potts (BP)
Barbara McMinnies (BM) Secretary	Derek Sullivan (DS)
Chick Lavender (CL) Treasurer	Margery Franklin (MF)
Michael Marsh (MM)	Robert Gristwood (RG)
Bob Begbie (BB)	Muriel Rawsthorne (MR)
Marcella Begbie (MB)	Ian MacDonald (IM)
George McMinnies (GM)	John Stevens (JS)

Staff:

Linda Wells (LW) – Housing and Community Director
Steph Verstraeten (SV) – Resident Involvement and Policy Officer
Emma Martin (EM) – Resident Involvement Assistant
John Wills (JW) – Head of IT
Charles Shaw (CS) – Head of Development Services

Observers: Tim Rawsthorne, Sue Cleaver, Margaret Firth

Apologies: Neville Campling, Phil Jones, Herbie Barlow, Shelia Lambourne, Shelagh Pile

1.0	<u>Introductions, apologies and correspondence:</u>	
1.1	NW welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced CS. The list of apologies was read.	
1.2	BM had received correspondence from Sheila Lambourne. She had sent her apologies to the meeting but sent her best wishes to the Panel over the Christmas period. Herbie Barlow had recently been unwell, so had also sent his apologies for the meeting but wished everyone a happy Christmas. BM responded and sent HB and SL best wishes on behalf of the Panel.	
2.0	<u>Agree and sign the minutes:</u>	
2.1	In regard to 2.2 SV had contacted the Council who would be looking into the terms of reference for the Strategic Housing Partnership meetings and would be liaising with Simon Hendy.	
2.2	2.3 SV said the Compact meetings are going well and an action plan has been put together. The meetings will be ongoing.	
2.3	6.2 SV said the Compensation Policy has been amended to allow discretion to waive rent if 2 key rooms are out of action.	
2.4	IM proposed the minutes, MR seconded. The minutes were agreed and signed.	
3.0	<u>Ambassador of the Year:</u>	
3.1	The Gas Team were nominated along with the Landscaping Team. The Panel cast there votes. 7 agreed the Gas Team should be nominated, 3 agreed the Landscaping Team and 4 abstained.	
4.0	<u>Charles Shaw – New Development Standards:</u>	
4.1	CS explained what papers had been sent out to the Panel members before hand. This included the presentation which had previously been to the Customer Involvement Group about New Development Standards.	

<p>4.2</p> <p>4.3</p> <p>4.4</p> <p>4.5</p>	<p>CS explained that Bracknell Forest Homes want to build new properties with high appeal that people would really want to live in. Properties must be affordable, have low running costs, low maintenance costs and provide high customer satisfaction. CS asked the Panel if they would like to add anything to the standards.</p> <p>RG asked if sheltered accommodation would be included in the new properties that will be built. CS said usually Section 106 sites do not have sheltered accommodation within them. However, Bracknell Forest Homes have been doing a review of Sheltered Housing and property options will be a result of this review.</p> <p>NW asked about parking for new properties. CS said we would have to check with local planners and what they require. Usually, 3 and 2 bed properties have 2 parking spaces and 1 bed properties have 1 space. CL said how he thought CS was in a good position to build spaces to accommodate homes and people. CS agreed. RG suggested homes having garages attached to properties.</p> <p>NW thanked CS for attending the meeting.</p>	
<p>5.0</p> <p>5.1</p> <p>5.2</p> <p>5.3</p> <p>5.4</p> <p>5.5</p> <p>5.6</p> <p>5.7</p> <p>5.8</p> <p>5.9</p> <p>5.10</p>	<p><u>John Wills – Changes to Contact Numbers:</u></p> <p>JW gave a presentation about the proposed changes to contact numbers for Bracknell Forest Homes, which have arisen from an objective in our corporate plan. Currently we have a 0800 number and a 01344 number.</p> <p>JW explained that 0300 numbers have been approved by Ofcom as a replacement for 0800 numbers for public sector organisations and he has carried out some research into the costs and benefits of changing Bracknell Forest Homes' 0800 number to a 0300 number.</p> <p>0300 numbers would be reversed billed to Bracknell Forest Homes and the technical set up costs are relatively low, however there are associated costs with changing the number. Rebranding, re-advertising, changes to leaflets, stationery, tenant handbook inserts, van branding would all need to be changed with estimated costs of £15,000 to £20,000.</p> <p>The potential benefits to customers are that 0300 numbers would be free from the same landlines as 0800 numbers. And the costs from some mobile phones would be cheaper for 0300 numbers but not all, it would depend on the mobile phone company and type of contract the customer had.</p> <p>JW explained that some mobile phone companies have already started to offer free calls to 0800 numbers and that 01344 numbers are often cheaper for pay as you go mobile phones than 0800 numbers.</p> <p>JW asked for any questions from Panel members.</p> <p>MR said how she thought people could get confused with the sudden change of number. NW thought it was not very good value for money and there would be no clear benefit for customers.</p> <p>There was also a concern that a lot of people have not heard of 0300 numbers and may think that they are premium rate numbers.</p> <p>JW suggested perhaps evaluating future opportunities as part of any future contact management review. At the moment we ensure that the 01344 number is offered to customers who need to contact us from a mobile.</p> <p>RG asked where the money would come from if this went ahead, there must be cut backs from another service? MM suggested at least holding back until all mobile companies adopt the 0300 number.</p>	

5.11	NW said that customers are much better off with the 0800 number, the Panel agreed.
5.12	BP said the average cost per person would only be £2.50, but NW said the product that customers would receive would not be beneficial.
5.13	The question was asked if inspectors would downgrade Bracknell Forest Homes for not having an 0300 number. JW said inspectors may say we need a single number for all contacts. Bracknell Forest Homes can say they have considered the 0300 number but customers were not happy to proceed with it.
5.14	NW proposed a vote. The decision was unanimous to not proceed with an 0300 number.
5.15	NW thanked JW for attending the meeting.
6.0	<u>Linda Wells Bracknell Forest Homes Update:</u>
6.1	LW said that the Audit Commission will be inspecting Bracknell Forest Homes anytime between April and October 2010. They will advise Bracknell Forest Homes of the date before Christmas. LW said she will inform the Panel of the date, as the Audit Commission may wish to attend a Panel meeting to speak to involved customers.
6.2	LW mentioned that the Independent Residents Inspectors will be inspecting estate services between January and March 2010.
6.3	The Rents and Estates modules of Northgate went live in November and all staff have now been on training sessions to get used to the new system. The Repairs module will be going live in March.
6.4	The Christmas edition of Spotlight will be delivered to customers starting Friday 18 th December. A leaflet about paying rent and benefit changes will also be with each copy.
6.5	The Equality Scheme has gone to the Board, there are 49 actions in total, 25 have been completed so far and 13 actions due, are on target. There is 1 outstanding which relates to the census for leaseholders. This will be going out in March 2010 with the Service Charge statements.
6.6	From the TSA recommendations we need to look at involving younger customers and customers from BME groups. The community development strategy should help with this. NW asked how we compare ourselves on this topic. LW said we compare members of involved groups against the demographic of all of our customers. LW said that 7% of Bracknell Forest are from BME groups and hopefully choice based lettings will help with the imbalance on the lettings of properties. NW asked how much do translations cost. EM said that translations of Spotlight cost approx £375 and are printed to order.
6.7	LW said that Estate Improvements are being worked on, health and safety issues have been completed first before anything else on the list. The next topic to look at is rubbish, waste, bin stores and areas in particular. There is also a focus on communal areas of blocks of flats in Priestwood; there is a tender out to upgrade the areas which should be back by mid January.
6.8	LW also spoke of Parking. Bracknell Forest Homes in partnership with the Council have identified sites which could benefit from additional parking spaces. Bracknell Forest Homes have put forward 80k and the Council have put forward 110k. The following will be consulted upon Highfields – 7 spaces, Waverley – 5 spaces, Drovers Way – 4 spaces, Calfridus Way – 4 spaces, Oakengates – 4 spaces, Nutley – 8 spaces, Balfour Crescent – 7 spaces, Ollerton – 7 spaces.
6.9	Councillor Mrs Birch has chosen to spend £10,000 on parking for her ward. Councillors were given additional funds to spend on improving the community they represent.

6.10	RG asked if he could have a hard copy of the document which details the parking consultation. LW agreed that this would be sent to all Panel members with the minutes. RG also asked when Choice Based Lettings would be going live. LW said hopefully in January.	LW
6.11	DS said that local employment was part of the agreement with the major works contractors and asked if this was being monitored. LW said she can find out and email BM. DS said he had recently had his major works done and the tradesmen working on his property did not speak English.	LW
7.0	<u>Chick Lavender – Treasurers Report:</u>	
7.1	CL had passed around the treasurer's report to all Panel members. CL said he had given SV the paperwork to apply for the 2 nd part of the grant.	
7.2	BM suggested asking for a pay rise. CL said if the Panel run low on money then they could access an additional £250.	
8.0	<u>Feedback from Other Meetings:</u>	
8.1	IM had previously passed out the CIG update to Panel members. This detailed the question and answer session with Zaidee O'Dell from Campbell Tickell. Major Works presentation from Karen Novell. SV spoke of the Voids Inspection progress. SV also explained to the group Mike Morrissey would like volunteers to complete a website evaluation survey.	
8.2	MR had recently attended an Access meeting. They will be cutting down on the number of buses they run because Bracknell Forest Council cannot afford to keep the service running. MR also said the "Look In" will be closing down due to lack of funds.	
8.3	BB said the SSRA had there meeting in November with a talk about Social Care for older people from Bracknell Forest Council. BB felt he was none the wiser on the subject.	
8.4	MM said the BFLA discussed there lack of attendance and ways to improve on this. The Leaseholder Handbook is almost completed; a front cover is all that is now needed, so they are on target for delivery in January. MM also said that Martin Thomas will be attending a future meeting to discuss the cost of gas servicing for leaseholders.	
9.0	<u>Referrals and Any Other Business:</u>	
9.1	NW thanked Bracknell Forest Homes for the cards and presents provided to the Panel and also the buffet for the meeting.	
9.2	NW said that he and his family will be moving to a new home which is not with Bracknell Forest Homes and will therefore have to step down from all of the groups he is involved in. NW wanted to pass on this thanks to everyone for their help and support. The Panel thanked NW for his hard work as Chair.	

Actions Table

Date of meeting	Issue	Action	Progress	Lead
17/06/09	Review the Compact	JF & SV to conduct review.	Ongoing – due for completion March 2010	JF and SV
19/08/09	BB said the weekend working at the sheltered schemes is not always	BB will take this to the next SSRA meeting and report	Ongoing – 15/12/09	BB

	working as some residents require visits.	back to the Panel.		
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