

Tenants' and Leaseholders' Panel Meeting
Wednesday 25th June 2008

Present: Robert Gristwood (RG) (Chair)
 Bob Begbie (BB)
 Marcella Begbie (MB)
 Maurice Grant (MG)
 Chick Lavender (CL)
 Barbara McMinnies (BM)
 Trevor Pearson (TP)
 Bill Potts (BP)
 Tim Rawsthorne (TR)
 Derek Sullivan (DS)
 Nick Westlake (NW)
 Sheila Lamborne (SL)
 Herbie Barlow (HBa)
 David Weston (DW)
 Michael Marsh (MM)
 Phil Jones (PJ)
 Margaret Firth (MF)
 Cllr Shelagh Pile (SP)

Officers: Linda Wells (LW) – Project Director
 Emma Martin (EM) – Resident Involvement Assistant
 Mark Hickson (MH) - Head of Housing Management Services

Observers: George McMinnies (GM)
 Murial Rawsthorne (MR)
 Sue Cleaver (SC)

		ACTION
	<p><u>Welcome and Apologies</u></p> <p>Apologies were received from:</p> <p>Henry Bone Joanna Flaxman</p> <p>Welcome to:</p> <p>Margaret Firth Phil Jones</p>	
1.	<p><u>Chairing arrangements until August AGM</u></p> <p>RG passed around a handout with the information regarding the resignation of Peter Maguire from Chair. RG said he would be more than happy to act as Chair until the August AGM. BM proposed, and 14 agreed.</p>	

2.	<p><u>Agreement of Minutes of Last Meeting/ Matters Arising</u></p> <p>BM pointed out that CL had been elected unopposed in Harmans Water, not Hanworth.</p> <p>HBa said that in the minutes of the last meeting, HBa had mentioned some items and it was typed that HBo had said them.</p> <p>DS asked whether the outcome of the possible evening meeting with Clare Dorning (CD) had been arranged. LW confirmed that in an email sent to Joanna Flaxman (JF) that CD would be happy to attend a meeting, but was unsure as to whether she could attend an evening one. LW will email CD and discuss an evening meeting. <i>POST MEETING NOTE: JF confirmed CD can make an evening meeting and EM has sent her dates of future meetings.</i></p> <p>DS suggested leaving the constitution to be signed until the AGM in August, when the new Chair could sign it. Everyone agreed.</p> <p>The minutes from the last meeting were agreed and signed by RG.</p>	LW
3.	<p><u>Housing Management Update</u></p> <p>MH circulated the Quarterly Report for BFH housing management.</p> <p>MH explained that the future Right-to-Buy figures are expected to be lower than in the past because of a number of factors to do with the housing market, credit crunch and the rush of sales before the transfer.</p> <p>DS queried the low numbers of court actions and notices, and LW said that evictions are actually low, which is good, and about average for this time of year. MH added that notices and court actions were not evenly spaced throughout the year. BFH are continuing to sensitively pursue rent arrears during the busy time since the stock transfer. NW asked if the payment of Housing Benefit direct to tenants was affecting the arrears figures? MH responded that approximately ten tenants had asked for rent direct. BFH send out statements 4 times a year and run them specifically when rent has been paid in, rather than when the account is in arrears.</p> <p>HBa asked if it was trusting of BFH to take housing benefit.</p>	

	<p>LW said that tenants should be taking responsibility for paying their own rent. MH added that if a tenant is not paying rent from their housing benefits once the arrears reach eight weeks rent, BFH can require it is paid direct to them.</p> <p>RG asked what happens when an account is in arrears, and the tenant is receiving housing benefit, but then returns to work? MH said that housing benefit stops when the tenant goes back to work. It is the tenant's responsibility to talk to us about their situation and we find a way to help. Generally, we ask that tenants pay a little extra every week so get them back up to date with rent.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><u>Bracknell Forest Homes Update</u></p> <p>LW said that about 2750 tenancy agreements have been returned to us, which is a better response than was first thought. An incentive (prize draw) was included to encourage people to return the agreements to us.</p> <p>The major works programme is soon approaching, and the main contractors that have been accepted can now be revealed. They are Mears and Mitie for the kitchens and bathrooms and Wates Construction for the heating. A special edition of Spotlight will be brought out this August to keep everyone up to date with the progress.</p> <p>BFH have now settled in at Berkshire Court, unfortunately BT phone lines have gone down twice now, and it affected most of the Western Industrial Estate. BT can however divert customer calls to mobiles so that we are always able to be contacted.</p> <p>The information technology is up and running, the building is working really well, there are currently over 25 visitors a day, and they often comment on how easy it is to get here, and how handy the extra parking is. There is still a presence in town with officer on a rota basis at Easthampstead House.</p> <p>Landscaping are taking steps forward with new machinery brought in to help. Some aspects have slipped, and staff are now are fully concentrating on those issues.</p> <p>LW said BFH are now looking into weekend cover for the sheltered schemes and it is one of the main priorities.</p> <p>RG had 3 questions about NEAT, disabled adaptations and the £200k for improvements. LW said that once a NEAT</p>	

	<p>manager is in place, BFH can advertise for all the other positions there are available. The Manager job will be advertised next week and a customer will be involved in the recruitment.</p> <p>LW said it has been suggested to us about installing walk-in-showers. However major adaptations such as ramps, stair lifts and rails etc come from social services. A minor adaptation is up to £7k.</p> <p>The £2 million for estate improvements will soon be looked at, with the estate meetings coming up in July and August.</p> <p>NW asked if the IT problems at Berkshire Court affected tenants in anyway. LW replied that it is just an internal problem that arose from the transfer to our new office and that tenants should in no way be affected. NW then said he was very pleased with how smoothly things have gone, and how he thought there would have been a lot more disruption than there has been.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p><u>Update on elections – Panel Board</u></p> <p>DS, MF and HBa were elected for the Housing Sounding Board Panel representatives.</p> <p>The date for the Board Elections is the 30th June. There were 11 applicants, 4 dropped out so there are 7 remaining. It was decided that a second ballot would take place, if there was a tie between the 2nd and 3rd place candidates.</p> <p>TR asked if you could turn up and vote on the night without registering. LW said yes and that all tenants are welcome to vote – EM will have a list of all tenants and leaseholders so she can check if people are eligible to vote.</p> <p>LW also reported that the Open Membership discussion that took place at the last Panel meeting was taken to the Board the next day, and a draft policy will be discussed at the next Board meeting which is on the 26th June. The Panel will then be invited to look over the draft and then it will go back to the Board. NW said that LW and the Board really did pull out all the stops to get the open membership policy looked at straight away. TR was very pleased with the progress that had been made on this issue.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p><u>Treasurers report</u></p> <p>CL reported that the books had been audited and passed. The current balance is £925.08. NW said we will start saving</p>	

	<p>a lot of money now that we are holding the meetings at Berkshire Court and not paying out to independent companies for the hire of halls. CL agreed.</p> <p>MB asked if we could have the Board Election here at Berkshire Court also. However it is expected that over 60 people will attend on the night and the Board Room is not quite big enough.</p>	
7.	<p><u>Feedback from other meetings</u></p> <p><u>Leaseholders</u></p> <p>MM said the BFLA met on the 17th June, and the position of Treasurer is still open. CL attended and gave a talk on the basic duties involved.</p> <p>Thames Valley PCSO's also attended, and gave everyone in an insight into the role. The number of officers has increased from 6 to 26. The officers took notes of any incidents that the leaseholders had seen. Officer Mary Parker agreed that she would attend more meetings and give more updates to everyone.</p> <p>MM said for anyone that is interested, the new Mill Lane bridge was paid for by the Dept. of Transport and not with taxes.</p> <p>RG asked if all leaseholders are allowed to attend, and MM confirmed that any leaseholder is welcome.</p> <p><u>SSRA</u></p> <p>BB said that the SSRA also had a meeting on the 17th June. Everyone that was up for election was re-elected and there are a couple of new reps from schemes.</p> <p>The hot water and heating issue is still ongoing, and compensation will be awarded to residents at Edmonds Court.</p> <p>The quality, taste and temperature of the tap water at many of the schemes is a big issue, and is being looked into.</p> <p>NW asked whether the window cleaner issue had been resolved. BB said the issue has not been resolved yet, but Julie Rose confirmed that the window cleaner's contract had ended.</p> <p>BM said she had attended the meeting on the 19th May to</p>	

	<p>introduce herself. BM said that one lady in particular from Edmonds Court has no hot water and no heating. BM contacted Julie Rose to resolve the problem, but she has still not been in contact. LW agreed to chase this, as it was an urgent issue.</p>	LW
8.	<p><u>Any other business</u></p> <p>TR said he had to go to the post office to collect some mail that had been sent from BFH, where there was not enough postage. LW apologised, and said we have had no franking machine, and we are happy to reimburse anyone who has had to pay.</p> <p>MM asked if the Travis Perkins contract was still continuing or whether it was up for renewal soon. LW said that the contract is still ongoing and is unsure when it ends.</p> <p>The prizes for the tenancy agreements incentive was funded by the Travis Perkins bonus.</p> <p>SP said she was unsure of her future as the Tenants and Leaseholders Champion. BM said she would like to see SP continue. Everyone agreed.</p> <p>MF raised an issue that there needs to be more lighting at the MGM flats, in Home Farm. Also a lot of fly tipping is occurring by the bins. LW said that BFH will be purchasing CCTV for problematic areas such as this and tenants are encouraged to let us know. MH said BFH are meeting with a CCTV supplier on Tuesday 18th July.</p> <p>NW asked SP what the situation is with the tip. SP said it is being refurbished.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>Date of next meeting</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Thursday 17th July 2008, 7pm Board Room, Berkshire Court</p>	