

CIRCULATION LIST

Members of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Panel

Linda Wells, Director of Housing and Community Services

Mark Hickson, Head of Housing Management Services

Steve Taylor-Edwards, Interim Head of BFS

Caroline Titley, Chief Executive of Bracknell Forest Homes

Bracknell Forest Homes Board

Cllr Mrs Shelagh Pile

I attach a copy of the minutes of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Panel meeting held on 19 March 2008.

**Tenants' and Leaseholders' Panel Meeting
19 March 2008**

Present: Peter Maguire (PM) (Chair)
Herbie Barlow (HBa)
Bob Begbie (BB)
Marcella Begbie (MB)
Maurice Grant (MG)
Robert Gristwood (RG)
Chick Lavender (CL)
Michael Marsh (MM)
Barbara McMinnies (BM)
Tim Rawsthorne (TR)
Derek Sullivan (DS)
Nick Westlake (NW)
Councillor Mrs Shelagh Pile (SP)

Officers: Joanna Flaxman (JF) – Resident Involvement & Policy Officer
Michael Leach (ML) – Head of Strategy & Business Systems
Linda Wells (LW) – Project Director

Observers: Sue Cleaver (SC)
Sheila Lambourne (SL)
Muriel Heaton (MHe)

		ACTION
	<p>Welcome & Apologies</p> <p>Apologies were received from: Henry Bone (HBo); Mark Hickson (MHi); Bill Potts (BP); Trevor Pearson (TP); David Weston (DW)</p>	
1.	<p>Agreement of Minutes of Last Meeting / Matters Arising</p> <p>SP was not marked as present when she was.</p> <p>The minutes were agreed and signed.</p> <p>RG asked how many homes had been sold under RTB in total – LW said around 60% of original housing stock, i.e. around 8,000. An accurate figure can be obtained for the next meeting.</p> <p>CL thanked LW for the way the rewiring issue he raised at the last meeting was dealt with. There is still an outstanding issue which is that the fitting is not the same as the one on the specification. CL had found the reaction to the issue was speedy and officers had been in contact.</p> <p>MHe has also had an apology regarding the issue she raised.</p> <p>PM is still awaiting an explanation on the TPAS proposal from Simon Martin.</p>	LW

	<p>LW had referred the issue re am/pm appointments back to Repairs and Maintenance</p> <p>JF said that the feedback from the Estate fun days had been collated but as there is still time for more ideas the feedback can be shared with the Panel once more have been received. There will be a feedback form on the back of the estate walkabout flyer which each tenant will receive in their rent statement in April.</p>	
<p>2.</p>	<p>Customer Involvement Update</p> <p>JF gave an written update on progress made in customer involvement and also showed the performance indicators.</p> <p>Regarding the budget, there is a £19,000 budget for Customer Involvement. The newsletter costs (approx £16,000 per year) will now come from a Communications and Marketing budget rather than this budget as they did with the Council when the budget was £23,000.</p> <p>DS queried the cost of involvement per property – this was per annum.</p> <p>CL asked about grants for translations. JF said that Bracknell Forest Homes can shop around for value for money in translation services. If any grants are publicised they can be looked into.</p> <p>JF said that if Panel members would like to be involved with staff recruitment to let her know.</p> <p>There will also be a customer training session on equality and diversity on 24th April.</p>	
<p>3.</p>	<p>Bracknell Forest Homes Update</p> <p>LW said that the rent increase letters have gone out.</p> <p>The new Tenancy Agreements will be sent to all tenants – there will be a freephone number for tenants to ask questions or request a visit from a Housing Officer. There will also be a letter regarding consent to speak to MB on behalf of the Tenants. Two copies of the Tenancy Agreement will be sent out – one to sign and one to send back. If people do not return their agreement they will be visited.</p> <p>The Tenants Handbooks will be issued after the new tenancy agreement.</p> <p>The new offices for Bracknell Forest Homes should be ready at the end of May.</p> <p>Major Works Procurement – tenders will be evaluated by the Procurement Sub Group and then they will visit sites of preferred contractors.</p> <p>There is some detail in Spotlight (the new tenants and leaseholders newsletter) on the major works and more detail is proposed for the following issue.</p>	

	<p>Priestwood and Ascot will be the first for kitchens and bathrooms as they are the oldest estates. Heating and windows will be done as required.</p> <p>Disabled adaptations – the Offer Document promised to catch up the back log.</p> <p>Major works on the Sheltered Schemes will be starting as a priority.</p> <p>The Estate Improvements Fund is also being consulted on.</p> <p>RG asked if a tenant could put a gas fire in for themselves? LW said they would need permission. The gas servicing would need to be looked at.</p> <p>RG asked about surveys done in Priestwood and will these be done on all properties? LW said yes – pre-work surveys will be done as the Stock Condition Survey done pre-transfer was on 20% of properties. It is important to have independent people doing this (Savills) rather than the contractors. Photos are taken and there is a database which is updated when surveys and any works are done. LW said that all residents who will have a survey will get a letter to advise them of this.</p> <p>HBa asked about the property RG referred to. LW said wall hung boilers are used instead of back boilers. HBa felt that people use the gas fires. LW said this can be fed back to the Procurement Sub-Group.</p> <p>TR asked if there is a life-time guarantee in the windows? LW said it was not for the lifetime. TR said that the uPVC windows are not environmentally friendly and windows should be timber and be looked after, when they are finished with they can be recycled.</p> <p>CL asked how local companies can find out about how to become an approved company. LW said there is a Pre-works Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ) and work is of such a cost that it must be advertised in the European Journals. The questionnaire asks e.g. Health & Safety questions, the company's approach to equalities etc. If contractors are used on an ad hoc basis there would need to be a vetting process to look at their financial status and seek references. LW said work would not usually be advertised in the local paper but in the trade journals. LW said that companies who tender will be asked how they can employ local people, particularly young people, offer apprenticeships etc.</p> <p>BM asked about rent arrears. LW said Housing Benefit is paid in arrears. As the tenant BM was referring to is not on Housing Benefit he needs to make an appointment to see his Housing Officer and talk through this.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><u>Tenant Board Member Elections</u></p> <p>PM said that the Hustings Meeting was held on Monday, with a good attendance. BM was elected by a substantial majority. There were three candidates (one candidate dropped out at the last minute).</p> <p>There will be a Press Release regarding the result.</p>	
<p>5.</p>	<p><u>Report back from Customer Involvement Group</u></p>	

SL gave an update on the Customer Involvement Group.

Over the last few months the Group have been engaged in a number of projects. The first meeting of the Group was to discuss what the tenants would like Bracknell Forest Homes to achieve in regards to customer care: Code of Conduct; Equality and Diversity and the Complaints Procedure. Many of the group felt improvements were needed in these areas, not only for Bracknell Forest Homes' employees but also some Tenants and, as a result, new items were included in the new Tenants Handbook, along with lots of useful information and useful numbers not covered in the old Council handbook. This information is particularly useful as we have tenants who do not have access to the website.

The Tenants Handbook

The handbook draft has been approved by the group and at this time is being collated ready for design and printing. The printers' that were chosen are Richfield Graphics of Reading. The group felt that this company was best qualified to do the work as they have done work of a similar nature for Reading Borough Council and seem to know exactly what was required. Richfield were not the cheapest of the five quotes received but were in the middle. Some of the group have since been to visit their premises and were very impressed.

Major Works Procurement Sub-Group

In a meeting of the CIG, Panel and other representatives. Two representatives were selected to join the Major Works Procurement Sub-Group and after a secret ballot, Barbara McMinnies and Arthur Appleyard were elected as both have had previous experience in this field.

Website

The group helped design the opening page of the website and lots of other useful ideas were suggested and have been incorporated.

Voids – Empty Properties

The Group went to visit a property at Fanes Close, Priestwood. This was to be a 'before' and 'after' repair project. The property had been empty for a considerable time and was in a very rundown state, this was due to subsidence. The property was refurbished before the changeover to Bracknell Forest Homes. The group revisited the property when the work was completed and were very dismayed at the standard of work. There were a lot of constructive issues raised by the Group after the visit. Some were of a Health and Safety nature and some were of a more practical nature. There was a lot of feedback from this visit and it is hoped that the issues raised from the visit will be taken into account and incorporated in the voids programme.

The Customer Involvement Group also went to see a void property in Balfour Crescent, Easthampstead this was due to an eviction and had been very badly damaged by the tenants and was halfway to completion.

	<p>It will not be possible to see it completed as the new tenant was anxious to move in as soon as it was completed, but those who visited met the new tenant which was useful.</p> <p>The objective of the group visiting the voids as a 'before' and 'after' policy is to ascertain whether the work in the properties is of Bracknell Forest Homes' standard. The group hope to visit another property in the near future.</p> <p><u>The Future</u></p> <p>Handbook to be printed end of May/June.</p> <p>Some of the group will be invited to sit in on the interviews when recruiting customer facing staff, as will other customer group members</p> <p>There is also the Leaseholders Handbook still to come.</p> <p>There are to be in the future training sessions for Customer Representatives. MM and SL will be attending a Charing Skills Course next week and some of the Group will also be doing a course in Equality and Diversity.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>Treasurers Report</p> <p>CL gave out the treasurers report and talked through it. There have been some changes in the itemisation of payments.</p> <p>There was discussion about the Tenant Board Member election process and whether Bracknell Forest Homes should pay, or the Panel. It was agreed that the Panel would pay for the Baptist church (Induction session), Birch Hill School hire and transport to the hustings meeting.</p> <p>NW asked if the treasurers report could be distributed with the minutes. CL said that this would make the report a month behind. NW felt that the report was self-explanatory but that people need time to consider them. He also felt that questions to make decisions on should not be presented on the night but advised beforehand for consideration.</p>	<p>CL</p>
<p>7.</p>	<p>Feedback from other meetings</p> <p>RG had attended a Scrutiny Panel meeting which only lasted half-an-hour and officers gave updates on what was happening on Social Services and Housing. It was mentioned that the housing transfer had gone smoothly.</p> <p>CL distributed a report from a meeting with Tenants of other local landlords. DS queried the report of a tenant rep misusing their position in another area. CL said that in another area a tenant rep was passing on confidential information to other members of the public. There was some discussion about this.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>RG said that Choice Based Lettings has been frequently mentioned at the</p>	

