

NOTTINGHAM CITY HOMES

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

THE BOARD
26 NOVEMBER 2009

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S UPDATE REPORT

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides a brief update on some of the key issues currently ongoing in the organisation

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Board note the report.

3 SUB REGIONAL CBL

- 3.1 We have been advised by the Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe Borough Council partnership that they will not be awarding a contract for their proposed Choice Based Lettings (CBL) project.

They will be rethinking the whole project and have asked for our advise on their next steps.

4. ASB ACCREDITATION

- 4.1 Housemark in partnership with the Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group and Tenant Services Authority have recently launched a national Accreditation scheme to assess the effectiveness of landlord Anti-Social Behaviour services. Following the positive feedback from the Audit Commission inspection in November 2008, Housemark invited Nottingham City Homes to be a part of the pilot round of assessments which were undertaken in August 2009.

Nottingham City Homes' anti-social behaviour service was assessed against the 9 commitments and 70 building blocks that make up the Accreditation scheme. All areas of the assessment process focussed on the customer experience and were outcome led. The assessment included Service User interviews, Tenant Focus Groups, Employee and Partner interviews along with case file reality checks.

Nottingham City Homes has achieved Accreditation status; and feedback from the assessors included the following comment; "Nottingham City Homes can already demonstrate significant achievements in the anti-social behaviour service, including a number of areas where it has set in place excellent examples of good practice".

Each of the 9 examples of good practice will be shared nationally with other anti-social behaviour service providers. In addition, Nottingham City Homes is the first ALMO nationally to achieve this Accreditation.

5. TSA

- 5.1 The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) has set out how it intends to regulate Social Housing where tenants are at the very heart of decisions about their homes and how services are delivered.
- 5.2 The new approach to regulation will see greater emphasis placed on the relationship between landlords and their tenants at the local level - one where tenants are at the heart of shaping, influencing and monitoring the services they receive.
- 5.3 The statutory consultation sets out the standards for landlords which will be the centre of how the TSA regulates social housing in England. These focus on six areas: tenant involvement and empowerment, home (including repairs and maintenance), tenancy (including allocations and rent), neighbourhood and community (including anti-social behaviour), value for money, and governance and financial viability.
- 5.4 What this will mean for tenants is even greater opportunity to get involved, and a clear focus on these issues that affect them such as repairs, ASB and rents. There will be more responsibility for landlords to work closely with tenants, to be more flexible about how services are delivered, working with tenants to validate and benchmark performance and the development of tenant based scrutiny.
- 5.5 There is now a further consultation programme on the TSA's proposals which ends in February 2010.

6. REGIONAL TRAINING AWARD

- 6.1 Nottingham City Homes shone at the recent National Training Awards for its commitment to improving customer service across the company. We were announced as East Midlands Training Award winners for Partnership and Collaboration 2008. The 'Let's Make the Difference' programme was introduced following a poor Audit Commission report in 2006 and low customer satisfaction that remained stagnant at 60%. It was developed to give the company a new cultural identity, boost performance and inspire staff.

The "CragRats" programme encouraged teamwork, and with the help of forum theatre, gave our employees the tools to deal with conflicts and We are delighted to have received recognition at the National Training Awards. This is a huge accolade and shows that our commitment to improving customer service and the culture of our company has been recognised.

7. FIRE SAFETY

- 7.1 Nottingham City Homes is carrying out a major fire safety programme in the City's properties, partly in response to the fatal fire at Lakanal House in Camberwell earlier this year. A senior management group is currently working with the Fire Brigade to ensure an effective programme is designed and implemented.
- 7.2 Detailed fire risk assessments have been carried out on all of the city's high rises. These are being used to develop a fire safety programme for all of these buildings. Fire safety improvement work is already under way at Highcross Court and a schedule of works is currently being drawn up for both Highhurst and Clifford Courts. Work will start on these buildings shortly. Work on the remaining buildings will be prioritised in line with the fire risk assessments.
- 7.3 Fire Safety improvement work is also being undertaken at Belconnen Road and Kingsthorpe Close following recent fire related incidents at these properties.
- 7.4 At the same time a fire safety policy and procedure is being developed aimed at putting effective fire management systems in place for all NCH managed buildings. This will be brought to the Board for approval on completion.
- 7.5 The same level of fire safety work will need to be carried out on all of the properties NCH manages on behalf of the City.
- 7.6 Related Health and Safety training is being designed for Repairs Operatives so that they can undertake their work in line with fire safety regulations.

8. GAS LEAK

- 8.1 A gas leak occurred at Lathkill Close in Bullwell on 10th November. It was caused by a gas pipe being hit during cavity drilling works through the exterior of the building whilst our contractors Vinshire were installing new heating. This resulted in a number of the flats having a build up of gas within them, but more importantly within the cavity which could potentially create an explosive concern to the whole block.
- 8.2 The police and fire brigade were in attendance and flats within blocks 1-19 , 2-20, 22-36 and Stockwell were evacuated whilst the gas supply was dug up, isolated and the build up of gas dispersed from each of the flats and the cavity in the building.
- 8.3 This was managed with the valuable assistance of the scheme manager from Lathkill Close. Our contractors Vinshire had 10 engineers in attendance to ensure customers' needs were met. They also assisted customers when re-entering properties having been given the all clear from National Grid at approximately 8.30pm. The incoming gas main

that was damaged is the responsibility of National Grid and was replaced on the following day.

- 8.4 It is no longer the practice for gas pipes to be run within cavities of buildings due to the potential for unnoticed escapes and potential explosive conditions, although older buildings still contain this design. The engineer therefore could not reasonably have been expected to know that there was a likelihood of any pipework being present. National Grid indicated that they would need to replace other pipework to meet current legislation. Following this incident we will be discussing other potential properties that have this type of installation with a view of undertaking a replacement program. This incident is reportable as a dangerous occurrence under the RIDDOR legislation.
- 8.5 NCH asset management team are now currently identifying similar properties and will be sending relevant information to the necessary stakeholders. It is hoped to have a final assessment of the number of properties that may be affected within the next two weeks. Unfortunately the information available on gas piping in each property is limited. It is possible that up to two hundred properties may be affected.
- 8.6 Once these properties have been identified NCH will be discussing with National Grid the replacement of pipework as soon as is practical. Working methods for these properties will also be reviewed. NCH DLO and contractors on site at Lathkill Close have been made aware of the potential risks in the meantime.

9. SELF ASSESSMENT – BUSINESS PLANNING UPDATE

- 9.1 The Business Planning exercise has covered Area Panels and Forums and across the breadth of NCH activity. We also sought the views of attendees at the Rent Setting Seminar held on 16th November 2009.
- 9.2 Priorities from the consultation include:
- Further improvements to the way we deal with repairs and maintenance.
 - Reducing re-let times whilst improving quality and taking action against those who damage properties to recover costs. Introduce incentives to downsize property.
 - Making communities a safer place to live and protecting the vulnerable. As part of this we should improve the local environment.
 - Increasing tenant awareness about their responsibilities as tenants and consideration of widening tenants repair responsibilities.
 - Reducing the involvement of consultants and contractors.
 - Need to increase involvement of younger people and those living in dispersed communities who may find it more difficult to get involved.
 - To minimise the level of decent homes work being refused

- Market and sell services to others and look at new business opportunities. Also consider charges for services currently provided at no cost.
- Realise efficiencies across all services, and target tenants for direct debit payment.

Consultation will continue to take place throughout November 2009 across all Area Panels to seek further views on the future direction of NCH.

10. KTP FUNDING

- 10.1 Nottingham City Homes has secured funding from the Government's Knowledge Transfer Partnership scheme (KTP) to carry out an assessment of the local impact (in its broadest terms) of the funding being spent to deliver our 'Secure Warm Modern' decent homes programme. KTP is a UK-wide program to encourage business/knowledge base collaborations that "help businesses improve their competitiveness and/or productivity through the use of the knowledge, technology and skills that reside within academic institutions". This project will involve Nottingham City Homes working closely with specialist academic staff from Nottingham Trent University's Business School. It is hoped that the assessment will guide current and future investment to ensure that the maximum benefits are derived from investment of this nature.

The funding (including an element of funds provided by NCH) will support a 2 year project, with an employee dedicated to the work, located within NCH and supported by academic staff at Nottingham Trent University.

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