

# Minutes



**Minutes of Area Panel 2 meeting held on  
20<sup>th</sup> August 2009 at Bestwood Housing Office 5.00pm-  
7.00pm**

**Present:**

|                           |       |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Maria Hemphill (Chair)    | (MH)  |
| Phil England (Vice Chair) | (PE)  |
| Jean England              | (JE)  |
| Ron Gillott               | (RG)  |
| Irene Gillott             | (IG)  |
| John Fletcher             | (JF)  |
| Lillian Bird              | (LB)  |
| Pat Chambers              | (PC)  |
| Paulett Hylton Edwards    | (PHE) |

Nottingham City Council  
Councillor Wildgust  
Councillor Grocock  
Andrew Vickers (AV) NCC Public Health

Nottingham City Homes

|                |      |  |
|----------------|------|--|
| Gill Moy       | (GM) | Director of Housing Operations             |
| Paul Stanley   | (PS) | Area Housing Manager Bestwood              |
| Claire Reeves  | (CR) | Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Officer |
| Clair Marshall | (CM) | Project Liaison Officer                    |
| Linda Clark    | (LC) | Lettings Manager                           |
| Terry Waldron  | (TW) | Property Services                          |

**Apologies:** Reginald Reddish, Councillor Lee, Councillor Arnold, Councillor Newton, Fiona Greenwood and Alec Parkinson

## Action

### **1.0 Welcome, introductions and apologies**

MH opened the Panel meeting and asked for introductions.

### **2.0 Minute & Matters Arising**

2.1 JE asked about the environmental scheme on Newport Drive

- 2.2 PS advised that a parking scheme was entered under the environmental programme.
- 2.3 PS advised that the Housing Patch Manager (HPM) had investigated the garages at Kersall Court but could find no evidence of garages.
- 2.4 CR fed back that she had investigated the use of Highbury Vale community centre and ascertained that the centre is currently being used by a community gym that are engaging with young people in the area. They are looking to further develop the centre and will be involving the community.
- 2.5 PS updated that he had investigated the pilot regarding mobility scooters and found that no further schemes were currently being undertaken.
- 2.6 The Panel discussed the suggestion that the meetings could rotate between the Bestwood and Basford wards.
- 2.7 Councillor Grocock felt that this could be negative as it could be confusing for members to know which venue the meeting would be held at. Also Bestwood housing office offers a free meeting space.
- 2.8 The Panel felt that at present they were happy to continue holding the meeting in Bestwood housing office.

### **3.0 Empty Properties**

- 3.1 LC introduced herself as a Lettings Manager and advised that the Voids and Lettings Team had brought together since 2007. There are 16 lettings officers split in to north and south teams. They deal with pre tenancy termination visits, transfer visits, allocation of properties, pre ready to let viewings and sign ups. The lettings officer will remain the point of contact after the new tenant has moved in until any issues are resolved and any benefits in place, the tenancy will then be referred to the area housing office. The lettings officers also post inspect empty properties using the lettable standard that tenant service inspectors helped develop. The team are currently undertaking a LEEN systems review to assess where work can be more efficient. There has been an issue in the area recently where empty

properties have been broken in to and fixtures and fittings taken. This has meant that Nottingham City Homes (NCH) have had to start screening properties to protect them.

- 3.2 PE asked if it would be possible to let the properties that may otherwise be vacant for a long period to people from the housing register on a short term lease to reduce the amount of rental income lost.
- 3.3 GM advised we have two types of empty properties, lettable and non-lettable. Non-lettable properties are those which we are waiting a decision on their future. Lettable properties move through the system quickly and are re-let. Also NCH manages properties on behalf of Nottingham City Council (NCC) so we are restricted as to the types of tenancies we use as these have to be secure.
- 3.4 Councillor Grocock asked if Councillors could be provided with a list of empty properties in the area so that they can answer questions asked of them.
- 3.5 LC agreed to forward this.
- 3.6 PHE asked if empty properties cost money.
- 3.7 GM advised that empty properties do cost when empty due to the lost rental income and if the property has screening put on it, there is also Council Tax liability.
- 3.8 AV introduced himself as the Empty Homes Officer from NCC. His roll is to try to bring private domestic uninhabited properties which have been empty generally over 6 months unless there is a particular problem back in to use. Empty homes can cause problems of anti-social behaviour (ASB) i.e. vandalism, arson, fly-tipping, fly-posting, if they become derelict they can become dangerous. Living next to an empty property takes 10% off the house price. Empty properties are also a wasted resource 1 million properties are empty in the UK. There are 4000 empty properties in the city of Nottingham. The properties are identified via Council Tax records, complaints from neighbours, information provided by other officers and observation. He then tries to track the owner of the property through the land registry, electoral roll, probate and mail left in the property. Once found he contacts the owner to discuss the

LC

options and offer help. There are 3 actions NCC can take against the owners; 1. forced sale this is where NCC have to carry out works to the property because it is empty the cost of the works are then billed to the owner, if payment is not made the amount can be put on the property. NCC can then force the sale of the property to recoup the money. 2. NCC can apply for an Empty Dwelling Management Order which grants NCC the management of the property and any rental income but the owner retains ownership. 3. compulsory purchase, NCC have to provide an overwhelming case for this to be accepted. NCC would then sell the property with a stipulation that it must be occupied within 12 months.

#### **4.0 Property Services**

- 4.1 CM introduced herself as a Project Liaison Officer for the Modern Living element of the SWARM programme. She advised that 1,757 properties require the modern element of SWARM in area 2 and these are due to be completed by 2010. 453 have currently been completed, 124 are currently having work undertaken to them, 29 have refused the work. 99.1% have been completed within 15 days.
- 4.2 Councillor Grocock raised an issue in Top Valley were some tenants had reported only having been offered an electric fire during their SWARM improvement works.
- 4.3 TW advised that NCH are working to resolve any issues that have arisen. We are also carrying out some cost analysis on the cost of running electric and gas fires.
- 4.4 PC advised that she had experienced some issues with SWARM work carried out at her home and had not received a radiator in the hallway.
- 4.5 PE was concerned as a member of the tenant procurement group that tenants may not always be offered a choice of type of fire as the procurement group had worked hard to develop the options for tenants to choose between.
- 4.6 TW advised that NCH carry out spot checks on contractors to ensure that work is kept to a high

**TW**

standard and that tenants are offered the full range of options.

- 4.7 Councillor Grocock and Councillor Wildgust left the meeting at 6.30pm due to another commitment.

## **5.0 Area Committee**

- 5.1 PS advised that the environmental schemes approved by the Panel had been approved by the Area Committee and a schedule of works would be circulated to the Panel when it had been finalised.

## **6.0 Local Area Housing Round Up and Success Stories**

- 6.1 This agenda item was deferred to the next meeting due to time constraints

## **7.0 Performance**

- 7.1 The summary performance report had been circulated prior to the meeting
- 7.2 PS noted that the Repairs Contact Centres performance was improving
- 7.3 RG asked why it takes more than one offer to let a property.
- 7.4 LC advised that it is the customer's choice whether they wish to accept the property but NCH monitor the refusal reasons to try to assess any patterns. The predominant refusal reason currently is wrong area. A flyer has been sent to people on the housing register to ask them to consider the area before they bid.
- 7.5 MH suggested that the refusal reasons be considered by the Tenancy and Estate Management Forum.

## **8.0 Any Other Business**

- 7.1 PHE felt that the flats at Pedmore Valley would benefit from the installation of a gate.
- 7.2 MH suggested that this could be put forward as an environmental scheme.

**PS**

- 7.3 JF advised that his HPM had visited him about tarmacing a grassed area to use as parking but that he was not in favour of this.
- 7.4 PS advised that another resident had suggested this so the HPM was carrying out consultation with other residents to gauge support for the scheme.

**9.0 Future meeting date**

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> October 2009 5.00-7.00pm**  
**Bestwood Housing Office**