

A formal estate inspection is carried out every three months, with all residents and partner organisations free to attend.

PSt and MB then handed out feedback reports from estate inspections to give an example of things that are picked up, and what action is taken for each case. They also show who took part in the inspection.

A discussion then took place over the feedback reports. It was suggested a summary sheet could be used to show the total number of each issue, which could then be used to scrutinise the work and easily see if things are improving after each inspection. It was also confirmed letters are sent out to people who have nice gardens to acknowledge the effort they have taken.

PSt also confirmed issues are also picked up as part of the Housing Patch Managers normal role in their day to day work, with problems reported to the relevant department or organisation. Also if any resident notices a problem, don't wait for the next estate inspection, report it to the Housing Office for action to be taken. Several issues were reported around the local area. PSt to take forward.

PSt

It was agreed information on estate inspections will be brought along to future meetings as part of the performance agenda item.

PSt

It was noted that Councillors often don't attend Estate Inspections, as they will go on NCC-run Ward Walks. The Panel requested feedback from these also. ID to bring to next meeting.

ID

4.0 Tenant Service Inspectors (TSI)

PSa presented on this item in the absence of Louise Painter, to talk about Tenant Service Inspectors and the role they play with NCH.

TSIs are a group of tenants and leaseholders who were introduced in 2003 whose primary role is to scrutinise and monitor estates, high-rise blocks of flats, housing offices, mystery shopping and void properties. There are currently around 30 who do as little or as much as they choose. A member of NCH staff is always present due to health and safety issues and any potential risks, with reports completed and sent to the relevant service manager to see and develop an action plan to resolve any issues picked up.

This work has been picked up by the Audit Commission as a measure of good practice, and the Tenant Services Authority is encouraging organisations to use tenants and leaseholders

more in the scrutiny of their services.

The group are also shortly looking at monitoring low-rise flats and also the complaints procedure.

The estate inspection schedule is currently being reviewed to target consistent low scoring estates, with high scoring estates being monitored less frequently. The TSIs have also developed a pictorial guide to help ensure the assessments are scored consistently across the city. This has been picked up by HouseMark as another good practice example, and has been taken up by other organisations.

A pictorial guide has also been developed for standards in high-rise blocks.

NCH are also a part of a peer review group with Derby Homes and shortly will include Sheffield Homes and St Leger Homes. This group benchmarks against each other and allows networking and sharing of other best practice ideas.

As the TSI team are so well developed there is potential for NCH to be seen nationally as a leader for TSI work, but NCH are also keen to move the service forward and improve the ways of working.

A general discussion then took place. It was noted the partnership with City Services could be improved. It was also mentioned that NCC have a similar resident scheme (details enclosed).

RL added that void properties that are deemed ready to let have occasionally been sent back to the repairs department for further work. JB commented that this is a good thing, so that the properties are in a nice condition for a new tenant. PSa continued by saying some properties are let with a few minor repairs still required, but with a timetable of when they will be completed in agreement with the new tenant.

5.0 Nottingham in Bloom

The Panel watched a short DVD showing positive results from previous Nottingham in Bloom campaigns.

PSt then advised the Panel that Nottingham in Bloom are offering free starter packs for groups to encourage them to enter the Britain in Bloom 'It's Your Neighbourhood' awards.

ID also advised Councillors are offering seeding grants to increase the amount available to groups. AF advised funding is also available to recognized TRA groups through NCH, and the Woodland Trust are also looking at offering tree planting kits (details enclosed).

6.0

Business planning

- NCH are still awaiting details on the rent consultation
- NCH are looking at the possibility of stopping rent collection at certain offices, and the personal rent collector services. This could potentially save NCH £250,000 per year, as it costs NCH approx 16p per transaction for someone paying by Direct Debit, but can cost in excess of £6 if the payment is made at an office.

All affected tenants and leaseholders have been written to for feedback and their views over a three month consultation process.

A general discussion was then had. RL advised there was a delay in NCH receiving payment if PayPoint is used. JB advised older people do not like change, so a gradual reduction of the service could be tried. Education and communication of other ways of payment is vital throughout the process. AF advised paying at Post Offices and PayPoint outlets may help keep smaller businesses open.

RL then said that some feel safer paying at the Housing Office in St Anns than at the Post Office. Would the decision to close St Anns collection be re-assessed when the new LIFT project is built?

PSt advised all comments and questions would go to Mark Lawson who is leading this project, and feedback would be given at a future meeting.

- Garages. This item has been brought up to raise awareness that NCH have several garages available to rent across the city. They cost £6.81 per week to tenants or £7.81 per week for leaseholders or residents.

GH added that this was useful to know especially as hard-standing requests are not being dealt with currently.

RL added that the rent for these cannot be included in housing benefit payments as the garages are a separate building.

PSt / AF

7.0

Local Housing Issues / TRA round-up

Woodlane TRA

RL mentioned that the new Community Centre should be open shortly. The TRA are looking at setting up drop-in surgeries with NCH and the Police at this venue. The group are also consulting residents in the area on future events they could hold.

ELETRA

JB wanted to thank GH and PM who have recently joined the committee. The group are currently looking at planning a big community event to celebrate the community spirit in the area.

8.0 **Performance**

PSt gave a handout (enclosed).

A couple of items to note are:

The % of tenants evicted due to rent arrears has unfortunately increased. This is a false indicator as the process of dealing with abandoned properties has been changed, and is now dealt with by non-payment of rent which speeds up the process.

The numbers of offers taken to let a property has also increased. NCH are now inviting people in to the office if they have refused two 'reasonable offers' to see if there is any support that can be provided.

9.0 **Area Committee update**

ID advised that at the last Area Committee meeting the following issues were discussed:

- Joint Service Centre
- Feedback from a Play survey
- Food growing framework
- Nottingham in Bloom
- Surface water flooding
- Children & Young People Plan
- Anti-social behaviour issues

The next meeting is on 16th March at The Council House at 5.30pm. All are welcome, and the main topics will be:

- NCC core strategy
- Strategic regeneration framework
- Nottingham City Transport
- Area Capital Fund

10.0 **Any other business**

JB wanted to thank the Panel for choosing to hold a meeting in the area.

AF announced a date for people diaries for the Annual Conference on Saturday 20th March at The Council House. Further information will be sent out over the next few weeks.

Meeting finished at 8.10pm

Next Meeting

Next meeting is to be held on **Monday 19th April, 6.00 – 8.00pm, Winchester Court Community Centre.**

This meeting will be the Annual General Meeting.