

# Minutes

Homes 4 Us

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> March 2010

5pm – 7pm

Tenant Resource Centre, Hounds Gate



## **PRESENT:**

Clive Thorpe (Chair)	C.T,
Jenny Grant (Vice Chair)	J.G,
Alison Thorpe	A.T,
Linda Kerry	L.K,
Sue Stevenson	S.S,
Linford Stevens	L.S,
Christopher England	C.E,
Ruth Haywood	R.H.
Lynn Mitchell	L.M,
Val Schneider	V.S,
Ade Aderogba	A.A.

## **Officers:**

Gary Rackstraw	G.R	NCH E & D Research Officer,
Cheryll Rawling	C.R	NCH Tenants and Residents Officer.
Mark Lawson	M.L	

**Apologies:** Elaine Graham, Loveleen Labana, Alan Darby, Margaret Pudsley, Sue O'Connor.

### **1.0 Welcome & Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked for introductions.

**ACTION**

## **2.0 Minutes of the last Meeting**

The minutes of 8<sup>th</sup> February 2010 were agreed as a true record

## **3.0 Matters Arising**

4.1 AA asked if systems were in place for people with disabilities. GR replied that they were. There is an ongoing process looking at putting procedures in place to progress the profile information.

LM stated that it should be about encouraging tenants to give information not badgering them. The Forum could send out some information. GR replied that there will be stands at the conference that can have literature on them.

LS said that the repairs workmen are not educated enough when working at homes of people with disabilities. They are not following the correct procedures.

6.3 AA suggested in order to raise our profile, the Forum should invite a member of RADAR (The Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation) to attend meetings.

## **4.0 Mark Lawson – Performance Improvement Manager**

ML gave a presentation on the proposals to close cash desks and cease rent collection (see attached).

### **4.1 Views of the Forum**

- Not everyone wants to use automation, it is so impersonal.
- People are not thrilled to contact a call centre
- It is dangerous for rent collectors; need to think about their safety. NCH are liable under Corporate Manslaughter.
- Possible dangers to vulnerable people who have to

withdraw and carry large amounts of money.

- Hardship on older people who do not like changes.
- Other landlords are phasing out cash collection.
- In the past there was only one rent office, at King Street.
- Possibility of Housing Patch Managers collecting rent.
- People sometimes have difficulties opening bank accounts.
- Older people are going to have difficulties getting to Station Street, if the rent office is moved there.
- Concerns that people will get into more debt by not paying their rent.
- Scheme Managers collect money for TV licences why can't they collect rents.
- The problem with pay points is that you could lose your receipts and then you have no proof of payment.
- Don't like the idea of stopping the service. Need to look at social changes.

4.2 ML stated that; Direct Debit costs less than 16p, Pay point payments cost 42p, payments at the post office cost 45p and payments at Lenton Housing Office cost £5.87 (This is worked out using the % of staff time plus the building costs divided by the amount of people using the service.).

Part of the service is to be more accessible and to hold local surgeries. We need to separate bricks and mortar from the service itself.

454 people regularly use a rent collector. There have been no attacks on rent collectors in the last twelve years.

NCH are in informal discussions with Nottingham City Council, there will be an office in the City Centre.

31,000 letters sent out to tenants and garage tenants, only 164 people responded.

Some people may struggle; the decision will be made by the Board at the end of the month.

## **5.0 Equality and Diversity Research Officer.**

- 5.1 GR asked the members of the Forum for their views on what NCH are doing well and what could be bettered. He wanted to know what he can do to help disabled tenants.
- 5.2 AA stated that the Company are aiming for excellence. The Forum should be including guests from the Royal National Institute of the Blind and the Deaf, Dementia and sickle cell anaemia. The Company needs to have a directory on the website. The Company has to be sensitive to peoples needs.
- 5.3 CT requested to see the company document on Diversity. The Forum could form a day workshop and bring it to the table.
- 5.4 LM stated that there was a lot of cross communication and suggested having a one stop place where people can get all the information they need.
- 5.5 VS said that NCH needed to look at the state of the heating systems and the repairs service. LK agreed that heating was a big problem in winter.
- 5.6 VS suggested publicising that the Forum is a multi-cultural, multi-ability forum in the 'NEWS'.
- 5.7 AT asked what the TSA stance is on Equality and Diversity and how the Forum can feed into that standard. GR replied that there is a big link with equality and diversity and tenant involvement. There is a lot of work to be done. Participation is not just about formal meetings or conferences and we need to try different methods to capture tenants.
- 5.8 CE was concerned about vulnerable tenants in Nottingham who are preyed upon by unscrupulous workers. He wanted to know what the equality and diversity team

where doing about this. GR said that a lot of work was being carried out by the rents team. They are looking at profiles and identifying vulnerability. This needs to be expanded throughout the company. A lot of profile information is still needed. The team need to look at other avenues where they can capture the missing information. There will be a diversity week in April. Every service area will be involved. Over the next month the team will be developing ideas on how this information can be used. The team will also be identifying areas that need to change and how to change them. ML stated that positive action was needed. NCH do have information on a lot of people, we need to strive forward and do things that make a difference. CT asked if NCH can share information with Nottingham City Council. ML said that we can have information sharing protocols. There is a lot of information on new tenants but there is less information on existing tenants.

LM said that on call users can have a yearly visit to update information. Are NCH allowed to share information with the on-call service.

- 5.9 AT suggested holding Road shows that the Forum could get involved with. There are a lot of tenants with 'hidden disabilities', a lot of people struggle to say they have a disability. The Tenants and Residents Associations could get information out to their communities. GR said that there was a possibility of holding Road shows within the week. We should at least reach all of the Housing Offices within the week, we need to make people aware of and understand the reasons why we need the information. CT stated that it was also National Carers week and this could be useful.

ML said that we need to look at target audience and go to them not vice-versa.

GR suggested shopping centres.

AA advised that Martin Valentine should be involved.

GR asked that Forum Members contact CR if they have any more suggestions.

**ALL**

**LS**

- 5.10 CR passed around the print magnifiers and informed the Forum that NCH had invested in a number of them. LS agreed to test the magnifier and give his opinions to GR.
- 5.11 VS suggested that Nottingham City Council should help to fund them.

## **6.0 Tenants Conference**

The Tenants Conference will take place on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> March. The Forum will be having a stand; CR asked for volunteers to help man the Homes 4 Us stall.

## **7.0 Moving Forward 2010 – Homes 4 Us Conference**

This item was differed until the next meeting.

## **8.0 Housing Office Presentation.**

- 8.1 SS and RH gave a presentation to the Forum on 'Helping you Helps me'. See attached.

The Forum was in agreement that the presentation was good and should be given to all front line staff. CR to arrange appointments with Housing Offices for Forum members to do the presentation during their Wednesday morning training sessions.

**GR**

- 8.2 AA asked that GR ensures that all Directors get a copy of the presentation.

## **9.0 Any Other Business**

VS stated that she had been in touch with the fire services who were willing to come to the Forum to talk about fire safety.

**10.0** **Date and Time of the next Meeting**  
**Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010**  
**12.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.**

# Tenant and Leaseholder Resource Centre