

Minutes

Minutes of Tenancy and Estate Management Forum Meeting held on Tuesday 16th March 2010

PRESENT:

Ennis Peck (Chair) - EP	Tenant	Phil England (Vice Chair) - PE	Tenant
Tim Shirley – TS	NCH	Kim De Vergori - KDV	NCH
Lilian Bird - LB	Tenant	John Riley – JR	Tenant
Robert Morrell – RM	Tenant	Phil Saunders – PS	NCH
Andrew Filer - AF (mins)	NCH	Jacinth Hall – JH	Tenant
Ann Gardner – AG	L'holder	Jean England - JE	Tenant

1.0 Apologies / introductions

Apologies given for Janet Storar, Frank Griffiths, Dave Barnaby, Elizabeth Tiso, Maria Hemphil, Cynthia James, Sheila Thwaites and Kate Bowley.

EP opened the meeting and welcomed everybody. Introductions were made around the table.

2.0 Minutes and matters arising from previous meeting

2.1 The minutes were initially signed off as a true representation of the last meeting. EP and PE thanked the Forum for being re-elected.

2.2 Item 2.0

The constitution is item 6.0 on the agenda.

2.3 Item 5.1

AF passed this information to CJ as requested.

2.4 Item 5.2

KDV apologised as this is still outstanding. KDV to action.

2.5 Item 5.3

CJ was not present at the meeting.

2.6 Item 5.8

The bulk waste collection pilot is still ongoing, so no update can yet be given. The Forum recommended Steve Stott to come to a future meeting to give an update. It was confirmed Eastcroft still remove up to 6 items free of charge (excluding white goods).

ACTION

KDV

2.7 Item 6.2 and 6.3
This will be covered under agenda items 4 and 5.

2.8 Item 6.5
KDV to update in agenda item 8.

2.9 Item 8.4
This item was dealt with outside of the meeting.

3.0 **A word from the chair**

3.1 EP started a discussion as he would like the Forum to be more interesting and progressive, with real outcomes coming from it as opposed to being a 'tick box' exercise. The Forum also need to hold staff to account if unsatisfactory answers are given, or if feedback / information is not given when it has been requested. The Forum also need to be pro-active, and if any issues arise, the relevant staff or departments should be invited at the next available opportunity. Updates from previous speakers should also be given where necessary.

3.2 This stems from the approach the Tenant Services Authority (who are taking over the regulation of housing providers) wish to take by empowering tenants and leaseholders to fully scrutinise landlords and ensuring that everything is outcome focussed.

4.0 **Tenant Services Inspectors (TSI)**

4.1 PS presented this item and gave handouts showing the latest ratings and a sheet showing the assessment process (enclosed for those not present at the meeting).

4.2 Tenant Services Inspectors are made up of tenants and leaseholders who monitor, review, inspect and assess the quality of services provided by NCH, and make recommendations for improvement.

4.3 One of the main aspects of the role is going on 1/4ly estate assessments looking at parking issues, pathways, play areas, green areas, graffiti, fencing, fly-tipping and garage areas. Not all streets can be covered, so a list of streets is agreed with the TSIs, which was updated in December to refresh the areas looked at. The high-rise blocks are not looked at separately, so extra streets have been added to some areas to compensate and make a more rounded assessment.

4.4 The team are currently looking at areas to improve, such as giving a breakdown of the scoring given to each of the above elements as well as the overall rating. This will help to focus work to where it is required and target any problem areas. They are also looking at picking streets at random across the city to spot check them. Changing the approach and scoring individual elements may help to provide a more robust approach and help everyone to see particular issues in each area.

- 4.5** Assessments are now done on a risk-based approach, with the team concentrating on areas that have been scored consistently low, and doing less assessments on high-scoring estates. This will also allow the team to develop the role they play to include low-rise blocks and also look at complaints procedures.
- 4.6** The team also link with other housing providers to share annual inspections allowing them to share best practice and learn from others (in line with the benchmarking organisation HouseMark). In addition to this, they are also part of an informal mystery shopping club.
- 4.7** To help consistency, the TSIs have developed a pictorial guide, but Louise Painter or another NCH member of staff is always present at assessments, with PS also doing random checks afterwards. PS stated that the Forum also needs to understand that the rating is given on 1 particular day, so could change the following day.
- 4.8** PS added that he is confident the TSIs do an excellent job, with the Audit Commission being very complimentary about the service. Nottingham also came out very positively when a recent peer assessment was done with Derby Homes.
- 4.9** JR wanted to praise the graffiti team, as several issues previously had been reported. The team now proactively look at 'grot-spots'. He also wanted to raise the issue of high hedges and owner occupiers. KDV responded that the Public Realm team at NCC are now investigating these, so should now be progressed. AG asked what action can be taken for high hedges. KDV responded that injunctions and other tenancy actions can be used if it is an NCH property, and some owner occupiers if it 'affects the housing management function of NCH'. If it does not come under these categories, it would be referred to the Public Realm team.
- 4.10** EP commended PS on his work, and hopes that the changes suggested can be brought in to progress the service. PS added that he was working closely with Housing Managers and Housing Patch Managers to develop a project plan to implement the changes.
- 4.11** RM suggested the rating given to the Meadows was low, so asked if further information could be given. PS added that details of each assessment are circulated to Housing Patch Managers, but would also be discussed at TSI meetings. RM suggested they are circulated to TRAs so that they are also aware of any particular issues. PS agreed.
- 4.12** KDV added that the TSIs assessing estates independently of Housing Patch Managers is an example of best practice, as it allows them to fully scrutinise the work done by NCH. KDV also suggested feedback and summaries of estate assessments could be brought to future meetings, and also Area Panels. The Forum agreed.

4.13 LB enquired whether there is any help available for people if hedge cutting etc is required, perhaps the community could help?. KDV added that a garden assistance scheme is available, but has set criteria. KDV will check insurance implications of whether the community could help. JH added that she would raise this at her TRA meeting to try and encourage community spirit.

5.0 Environmental improvement schemes

5.1 TS presented on this item and gave a handout giving the background of the scheme and an update on what has happened to date. The money available for these improvements is linked to the decent homes programme, and is 5% of the overall investment.

5.2 A stock survey has now been completed on the majority of NCH properties across the city, and the money available has been divided up between areas based on the need of investment.

5.3 The schemes for 2009_10 are now being concluded, so the Forums / Area Panels now need to start thinking of ideas or issues they may have which could be addressed this financial year. All schemes need to be driven by tenants and leaseholders through Area Panels, with checks made by the Area Committee to ensure there is no duplication of works between NCH and NCC.

5.4 AG commended the new hoop top fencing that is being used as it is very good and better quality than what was used previously. TS added that it is a long term approach taken, and so when procuring products a mix of good value, but quality products were chosen. These will then last a long time.

5.5 PE enquired whether many complaints had been received about this type of fencing, as litter often blows through it. TS replied that he did not know of any complaints made.

5.6 KDV added that HPMS pick up issues regularly on estate inspections that can be used for potential improvement schemes, but any suggestion can be made at any time to the local housing office as HPMS collate a list throughout the year.

6.0 Constitution

6.1 AF handed out a draft constitution showing some minor alterations mentioned at the previous meeting.

6.2 EP asked that everyone take this away to read, and bring back to the next meeting to agree and sign-off.

7.0 Performance update

7.1 KDV went through the performance figures up to the end of January (enclosed for those not present at the meeting). The majority of company wide targets are either being met already or on target to meet by the end of the year. The February figures are enclosed for

AF

further information.

7.2 Lots of work is ongoing to rectify issues on voids / rents / satisfaction of new tenants and the numbers of refusals of properties. But all these figures are close to target, and so are very positive.

7.3 One initiative has been to call applicants in to the office if they have had multiple refusals of properties. Their applications are also put on hold until this interview has been undertaken.

8.0 **TEM sub-group updates**

8.1 ASB Scrutiny group

A handout was given for this (enclosed for those not present at the meeting). KDV highlighted that the figures for intervention and using injunctions have doubled since last year, and the resolution of cases is also steadily improving, so good work is being done to improve the service, with the ASB Scrutiny Group having an important role to play in this.

KDV also gave a handout on two cases where NCH had allowed the Police to use a property as a 'Capture house'. This is where a property is furnished to give the appearance someone lives there, with valuable belongings left in view to entice burglars. This has been done through a signed working protocol between NCH and the Police.

This idea can also be taken forward and used with fly-tipping areas, or possible drug-dealing properties.

PE enquired whether any repercussions had been seen as a result of using these properties. KDV replied that there has been no evidence of this, and the criminal fraternity were aware this sort of thing happens.

LB asked whether smart water stickers were put in the windows of the properties used to act as a deterrent. KDV answered that the properties were made to look as attractive as possible to burglars, and so smart water stickers were not used. She added that evidence shows smart water significantly reduces burglary rates, and that as part of the decent homes work, all properties are being smart watered.

8.2 Tenant Rents Panel

A handout was given for this (enclosed for those not present at the meeting).

8.3 Allocations group

There has been no recent meeting of this group to update on.

9.0 **Any other business**

9.1 AF reminded everyone of the Annual Tenant & Leaseholder Conference on Saturday 20th March at The Council House.

9.2 EP reminded everyone to read through the draft constitution and bring back any comments to the next meeting.

EP thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.

The next meeting will be held on:

Tuesday 18th May,

5.30 – 7.30pm,

Boardroom,

Hounds Gate.

The main discussion point will be Crime and Anti-Social Behaviour.