

Minutes of the Sheltered Housing Action Group Meeting

Held on Wednesday 14 May 2014 10.00am-12.30pm
Leach Court, Park Street, Brighton.

Present: Roy Crowhurst (Chair), Paul Agius (Evelyn Court, Joyce Bean (Elwyn Jones Court,), Sid Bemment (Lindfield Court,), Jean Carter (Evelyn Court,), Alan Davies (Rose Hill Court), Jean Davis (Leach Court), Kath Davis (Broadfields), Ray Goble (Elwyn Jones Court), Bette Lewis (Jasmine Court), Peter Lloyd (Pensioner Action), Mary Moore (Muriel House), Tomm Nyhuus (Somerset Point), Charles Penrose (Sloane Court), John Pierce (Lindfield Court), Walter Sargison (Broadfields), Elizabeth Tinkler (Laburnum Grove), Jonathan Woolven (Jubilee Court)

Officers: Hannah Barker (Resident Involvement Officer) (RIO) Chantel Cooper (Resident Involvement Assistant – Minute Taker) (RIA), Peter Huntbach (Older Persons Housing Manager)

Councillors: Bill Randall (Chair of Housing BHCC)

Apologies: Peter Bentley, Rachel Chasseaud (Head of Tenancy Services), Beryl Snelling (Sloane Court, Central), Tom Whiting (Observer).

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Minutes of the last meeting

2.1 P1, 2.1

Kath Davis stated that these comments have been attributed to her in error. She doesn't remember saying them. Should read as '*Jean Davis*' not '*Kath Davis*'.

2.2 P1, 2.3 Request to update the January 2014 minutes to include Cllr Randall's agenda item about the budget

Hannah advised that the January minutes had been updated and that copies of the updated minutes would be issued to everyone after the break.

2.3 P2, 3.1 Chair's Communications – Action

No such invitation letters to the tenants' only meeting of this group convened on 9 April 2014 to discuss the Chartered Institute of Housing Report were received.

2.4 P11, 7.8 Round Robin

Paul Agius had suggested at the previous meeting that the residents of Evelyn Court felt that the office should take a more active role in sorting out the problems at Hazelholt, which is more than the Scheme's Manager can deal with. Please amend minutes.

Peter Huntbach responded that twin schemes across the city were not working. Yes, Hazelholt has problems but not as deep and 'knotty' as those in other twin schemes. The Tenants' Associations of Evelyn Court and Hazelholt need to have regular meetings with their Scheme Manager to deal with these problems. The meetings which used to take place between a scheme's Tenants' Association and their respective Scheme Manager need to be re-established.

Paul commented that he has no problem with twin-schemes per se but that he feels, in this particular instance, there is a bias towards Hazelholt over Evelyn Court. The Scheme Manager's answer, when this is mentioned to him, is that 'he has problems to deal with'. It is clear that he cannot do the job of managing both schemes on his own.

Peter (Huntbach) re-iterated the need to re-establish the old Tenants' Association/Scheme Manager meetings.

Another member of the group advised that the Scheme Manager was only on site at Evelyn Court between 8am and 10am. This is not on with vulnerable people on the site.

Peter replied that more Scheme Managers are needed to do away with the twin schemes. He has spoken to Sharon Parsons as to what can be done about this.

The same group member commented how the Scheme Manager which they used to have used to spend the morning in Evelyn Court and the afternoon in Hazelholt one day and then reverse it the next and that this system worked.

Action: Peter to contact the group by the end of the working week i.e. Friday 16 May 2014 regarding a meeting to re-establish the old Tenants' Association/Scheme Manager meetings.

Minutes – agreed as an accurate record.

3. Chair's Communications

3.1 City Assembly 10 May 2014

Those of the group who were there know that a motion was put forward due to HMCSC being disbanded and the motion was successful.

City Assembly went well; there were 80 tenants and residents there and most Tenants' Associations (TAs) were represented. Although there were less people there than last time, more TAs were represented.

4. Update from Peter Huntbach on Chartered Institute of Housing Report

4.1 Service Review

- All parties have now seen the report.
- Meetings held with tenancy, staff and union groups (e.g. GMB).
- Common view is that people are in favour of the report's findings.

4.2. Actions so far

- Social Inclusion Team have visited every self-funder.
- Recruiting 4 new Scheme Managers as soon as possible.
- Sloane Court, Lindfield Court and Elwyn Jones Court have been painted as per the Rainbow Colour Standard. Now moving on to Somerset Point.
- He's met with 'Time for Talk' regarding Laburnum Grove, Lindfield Court and Broadfields.
- Met with Sylvia Peckham, the Head of Temporary Accommodation and Allocation regarding a project to improve letting space.

4.3 Service Offer

A Service Offer has been produced. The draft version of which was circulated to the group. A copy of the Sheltered Review Implementation (i.e. Action) Plan was also circulated to the group for questions and queries later.

4.4 Comments/Questions

4.4.1 Painters at Sloane Court did not clear up after themselves and had the attitude that it wasn't people's homes they were decorating but an institution.

Action: Peter to address both these issues with Mears and Hankinson's.

4.4.2 Some people are struggling to complete the 'Moving Down' application form.

Peter:

- There are people available to assist those who are struggling to complete these forms.
- There was no time before March to change the administration behind these but that this is a project. In the meantime people will assist those who are struggling to complete these forms.

4.4.3 The treads on some curtains at Elwyn Jones Court were damaged during some decorative work so now they can't be pulled. An EDB bid had been put in to fix this.

Action: Peter to arrange the replacement of said curtains/runners so that it doesn't have to be done via an EDB bid.

4.4.4 It was suggested that there should be a site meeting between tenants and contractors before the contractors start work so that tenants can be made aware as to what impact the works are liable to have and what disruption they are likely to cause.

Peter: Yes, Sheltered should write to or organise a meeting with tenants before any works by way of consultation.

4.5 Review of the Sheltered Housing Draft Service Offer

4.5.1 General Overview:

In general the unique 'selling point' of this is that it's being sold as a preventative Housing Service where the commitment is to the tenant.

4.5.2 Aims and Purpose:

- To provide well-designed and well-maintained housing to enable people to live comfortably as they age.
- To enable people to remain independent and be safe and happy at home.
- To create a vibrant and sociable community.
- To nurture people's skills, abilities and interests.
- Timely intervention when required.
- To work collaboratively with a wide range of people and organisations to improve the lives of people and their communities.
- To support the vulnerable and isolated.

Comments

A resident felt that it is a shame Scheme Managers can't let them know when someone is in hospital as they may like a visit and requested a list of people who would like to share this information

The Chair commented that not everyone who goes into hospital wants people to know about it.

Peter responded that it was a matter of *talking* to each other. We don't do enough listening /talking to each other and working together.

It was asked whether Scheme Managers could provide, for example, a birthday list.

Peter said that he wants to get back to involving the community in decision-making, to work more with the community, to make 'it' happen if people want 'it' to happen rather than having 'no' as the default position.

A group-member said that there wouldn't be a problem if everyone, tenants and council staff alike adhered to the Code of Conduct. The trouble is people are frightened of getting sued for 'doing the wrong thing' in the 'sue culture' in which we live and that this tends to defeat common sense.

Another group-member advised that Scheme Managers can't say when people are moving in, so she makes sure she welcomes people as soon as she can.

Peter responded that it is good that scheme-members regard each other warmly like this. This has been lost in rules and regulations. Trust needs to be built between the Council and the Tenants' Associations. A Tenant Compact is long overdue but it is a two-way street.

A third group-member gave a positive example, where Becky Purnell (Resident Involvement Manager)'s attendance at Tenant Association meetings had resulted in improved relations.

Cllr Randall commented that tone has a lot to do with relations and observed that customer focus and involvement was not in the aims and purposes of the draft service offer.

4.5.3

Our Service Approach:

- Each home will be let unfurnished, although an electric cooker and fridge can be provided.
- Each scheme to have a range of communal facilities e.g. lounge, garden, guest-room, car-parking areas, hobbies room varying scheme to scheme.
- Dedicated and named scheme managers.
- Opportunity of a well-being call from the Scheme Manager, Monday to Friday, personalised as to those who would like less contact and those who need more support.
- A simple 'Wellbeing Plan' for each resident, intended to improve their life. Less bureaucratic, with Scheme Managers sitting down with tenants and talking it through with them.
- Better co-ordinated and promoted activities and projects. Residents to be informed what's going on nearby and in other schemes. Activities to promote healthy, active living e.g. stopping smoking and cancer awareness initiatives.
- Events for new tenants

It was mentioned here how the Sheltered Tenants' Handbook needed revision.

Comments

Action: The welcome pack will be revised with the induction programme.

4.5.4 Valuing Ageing:

The sheltered service wants to take an active, positive attitude towards ageing:

- To make older people feel valued.
- To focus on what older people *can* do rather than what they *can't* do.
- To recognise that everyone has unique and different skills and abilities and encouraging them to use them.
- To value residents' friendships and relationships.
- To recapture the 'human' sense of ageing.

That it's not about being old but about coming into a community where older people are valued and enjoy life.

4.5.5 Social and Compassionate Community

Peter stressed the value of Sheltered Housing as a *community*.

There used to be too much focus on the individual which meant that we have lost sight of the community as a whole.

This move towards a social and compassionate community is to be facilitated by the Social Inclusion Team who will be encouraging tenant involvement e.g. via the following means:

- More remembering and celebrating e.g. birthdays (birthday lists).
- Linking sheltered housing schemes into their local community.
- Working with the isolated, supporting them.

Comments

The Draft Service Offer takes into account input from the tenant only closed session on 9 April 2014.

One of the group observed that so far, it seems like the Draft Service Offer is an excellent product. However, it all hinges on the allocations: once the allocations have been sorted out, all this should fall into place.

There has been a problem in the past with people's perception sheltered housing (e.g thinking it was a care home). The hope is that, now that the focus has shifted, the Service Offer will help create a more balanced community.

Another of the group advised that he has problems with people who won't join in with activities etc if they know certain other people are involved/present.

Peter responded that staff need to be clear in their approach to anti-social behaviour and people who undermine things. He is looking at how sheltered housing can work with other teams to act early to tackle this.

A third tenant expressed a concern where things seemed to be run around one person or at one particular person's convenience.

Peter replied that he had had a similar discussion with staff; about a small group of individuals taking up all their time and effort. He has looked at some of these cases and found that there are teams which could deal with the issues concerned

Peter has met with staff groups, GMB and Unison and is mapping out staff concerns. He wants to involve staff. He is aware of the problems some staff have with capacity and is looking at ways to free up their time e.g. he is working with Customer Services about freeing up the time they spend on the phone.

Interval

4.5.6 Customer Focus

One of the many ways in which the council is listening to and responding to what its residents are telling it about its services is by supporting house newsletters, particularly those produced by residents. These are tenant led (although the tenants have received no training) but produced at Moulsecoomb Housing Centre.

There was a suggestion that tenants could be involved in the induction process; that existing tenants could help induct new tenants.

4.5.7 Encouraging Good Health and Wellbeing

The idea is that this should be a preventative service. Peter is aware that there is

inequality in this city where preventative care is concerned. He wants to delay people having to go into hospital and to try to prevent people having to return to hospital.

4.5.8 Supporting Differing Needs

Peter advised that sheltered services needed to provide an adaptable, flexible service, an effective 'step-up, step-down service' where, as peoples' needs changed, services were 'wrapped around them'.

He added that just because someone had been given the same diagnosis as someone else, it did not necessarily follow that their treatment and the services 'wrapped around' that individual should be the same i.e. each case on its own merit.

4.5.9 Good House Management:

Simon Pickles (Housing Stock Review Manager) has finished the draft version of his Sheltered Schemes Housing Stock Review. He should have the final version ready in June.

Comments

One example of good housekeeping cited was that of having a cleaning checklist in the toilet. The question is however, who is going to inspect the toilets in the afternoon if the cleaner is only there in the mornings and not in the afternoons?

Peter replied that he wants tenants' views on cleaning. He suggested that Enviro could do more joint inspections with tenants. He added that if he sees tenant scores slip on cleaning inspections, he queries it with Enviro as to why this is.

He's looking at whether the required *standards* are being met *not* at the *frequency* of checks.

One of the group advised that the cleaners have a list of everyday tasks to be done. She doesn't expect them to do their job and then have to come back and clear-up after people in the later afternoon /evening. The rent would go up to cover this if this were the case.

Peter followed on from this with regard to concerns raised about getting something (e.g. sick) cleaned up once the cleaner has gone home or out of hours. He advised that there is scope within the cleaning contract for staff to deal with emergency situations e.g. if someone has been sick, and to deal with special requests i.e there *is* an out of hours mechanism.

One of the group cited an example where his cleaner was unable to clear some cobwebs away because they didn't have a long brush to do the job i.e. they didn't have the proper equipment to do the job.

Action: Peter will feed back to Enviro that something needs doing about the cleaner's equipment at Lindfield Court.

4.5.10

Cost and Value for Money:

Peter advised that this is about being clear with residents what they are paying for and what they're getting for their money.

Some of the ways in which tenants can be involved here are as follows:

- Involving them in and reporting to them on cleaning standards as discussed above.
- Tenant meetings.
- Newsletters
- Promoting the good work which the council are doing in *Homing In* magazine.
- Customer satisfaction surveys.

Cllr. Randall however, later commented that there should be an end of year report (the financial year i.e. each 1 April, commencing 1 April 2015) to tenants detailing how their money had been spent.

4.5.11

Sheltered Staff:

There hasn't been a lot of difference this section

4.5.12

Overall Perspectives:

Peter (Lloyd) gave positive feed-back on the proposed service offer.

Questions:

Peter (Huntbach) asked the group whether the service outlined in the proposed service offer felt right and whether it was something which tenants would be proud to talk to other tenants about?

One of the group replied yes, provided that it doesn't remain on paper but is translated into action.

Peter (Huntbach) responded that Area Representatives would meet with him and his staff to work on the action plan i.e a tenant 'working group' would be assembled.

Cllr. Randall observed that he couldn't foresee any political opposition to the proposed service offer from any party when it is brought to committee.

Action: Peter (Huntbach) to notify this group's Area Panel Representatives (Jean Carter, Kath Davis, Jean Davis and Alan Davies (via Rose Hill's Scheme Manager) when this meeting will be.

5. Sheltered Review Action Plan

5.1 Objectives are listed in priority order according to urgency.

5.2 It was observed that what's on the Action Plan is a lot of work.

5.3 Peter agreed. Yes, it *is* a lot of work but they are looking at accomplishing it via project management. There is a project plan. The key thing was not to get distracted by re-active demands.

5.4 Objective: To produce a sheltered asset review:

This is with Simon Pickles (Housing Stock Review Manager) who has finished the draft version and should have the final version ready in June. He will be invited to this group's next meeting.

The Chair reminded the group that this stock review is different from the draft service offer which the group had been discussing earlier and that the two were to be treated as two separate things.

Action: Simon Pickles to be invited to next Sheltered Housing Action Group meeting on 9 July 2014.

5.5 Objective: Recruitment of 4 new Scheme Managers:

This is still a 'work in progress'. The aim is to have the new Scheme Managers in post for September 2014.

Trained representatives will be involved in recruiting Scheme Managers.

Tenants will need a refresher as to how to do this.

5.6 Objective: To agree new service offer and consult prior to Housing Committee:
The aim is to have it taken to Housing Committee and made policy in September.

5.7 Objective: To agree protocols with internal housing teams following the Housing restructure to develop a more effective working relationship (including maintenance):

Peter is working on an internal project revolving around trying to free up staff time. He is looking at 'nailing down' some working relationships and structural revision involving other departments.

5.8 Objective: To revise internal procedures and working practices to reduce the burden and system failure, and increase value based work:

This is an on-going process.

Interim measures are being put in place e.g. at Jasmine Court. If these work, the plan is to replicate them across the city.

One of the ways of accomplishing this is to identify and avoid duplication to free up time.

5.9 Objective: To improve the way in which sheltered housing is let:

This is a key work area, encompassing allocation and the allocations process.

He is looking at what changes in policy and procedures are required.

- An on-going process.
- Interim measures are being put in place e.g. at Jasmine Court. If these work, the plan is to replicate them across the city.
- Aim to identify and avoid duplication to free up time.

5.10 Objective: To improve the way in which sheltered housing is let:

- A key work area, encompassing allocation and the allocations process.
- Looking at what changes in policy and procedures are required.
- Is sheltered housing 'Older People's Housing' or 'Supported Housing'?

Chair's comments:

- Most Local Authorities now have 'Older Person's Housing' and 'Supported Housing' (for younger, vulnerable people). Is a name change needed?
- Need to revisit the entry criteria if the idea is to keep people fit and healthy. Moreover, there is some debate out there as to what age is considered to be 'old'.

A member of the group enquired as to whether this was a bigger issue to be addressed by Central Government on the national level.

Peter responded that this is a discussion which is happening within many local authorities as they deal with an ageing population.

Cllr Randall mentioned the balancing of need with availability, the need to re-visit the age limit now that people are living longer.

6. Election for Neighbourhood and Community Service Improvement Group

6.1 There were no nominees or volunteers from the group.

6.2 Hannah exhorted the group to go home, think about it and come back to the next meeting with nominations and suggestions. It would be a shame for SHAG to lose their voice on the Neighbourhood and Community Service Improvement Group.

Action: Group to bring nominations and suggestions to next meeting.

7. Guest Room Bids

7.1 Peter presented the Guest Room bids to the group. There was only one.

Agreed:

Lindfield Court: approximate cost £28.00. Wall cupboard for kitchen to store mugs and other kitchen equipment in.

8. Round Robin

8.1 Tomm Nyhuss asked about the impact of HMCSC's demise. Who represents the Area Panels at the Housing Committee now?

It was suggested that Area Panels, the High Rise Action Group (HRAG), the Sheltered Housing Action Group (SHAG), the Tenant Disability Network (TDN), and the Service Improvement Groups (SIGs) should have reports which someone would be able to present to the Housing Committee on their behalf.

Tomm also asked why HMCSC had been disbanded.

Cllr Randall responded that this was on the grounds of cost. There is already a large amount of tenant participation and tenant scrutiny e.g. newsletters, area panels, HRAG, TDN, SHAG and SIGs etc. Moreover, the Neighbourhoods Forum have budgets (they have been funded for three years) which they have been managing successfully i.e tenants controlling budgets.

8.2 Walter Sargison has set up a bank account for the gardening scheme. He needs 3 more volunteers.

8.3 Charles Penrose advised that the Involvement and Empowerment Group are holding an event: 'Love Our Level' on Saturday 14 June 2014 on the Level and asked whether SHAG wanted a stall there (said stall will be in the Resident Involvement Team's marquee).

Walter volunteered to man said stall.

Kath Davis wanted clarification on the vouchers mentioned.

There are vouchers for children for various activities like face-painting and apple-bobbing etc but that it had been decided to scrap them because they would've been difficult to administer. Instead they will accept children as and when they come.

Hannah distributed posters publicising the event round the group asking them to put them up in common areas.

8.4 Elizabeth Tinkler advised that Laburnum Grove has a stall at 'The Dip' market on Saturday 21 June 2014. Please come along and support them.

8.5 Hannah has made a couple of draft amendments to the group's constitution:

- Under the third section of the group's aims, she has included a mention of SHAG's gardening group.
- Under the 'Officers' section she has added that members who were elected to represent SHAG at Service Improvement Groups should feedback all relevant information to the full group, just as working groups etc should.

Agreed: The group agreed these amendments.

0. Next meeting will be held on Wednesday 9 July 2014 at Leach Court, Park St, Brighton. 10am-12.30pm.