



Minutes of Tenant Disability Network Meeting

Held on Monday 11 August 2014 2pm-4pm
Hampshire Lodge, Hampshire Court, Brighton

Present: Alison Gray (Chair) (AG), Muriel Briault (MB), Joe MacRae (JM), Jason Williams (JW).

Officers: Chantel Cooper (Resident Involvement Assistant (RIA) – Minute Taker) (CC), Darrel Clews (Local Authority Designated Officer) (DC), Hilary Edgar (Housing Service Operations Manager) (HE) Keely McDonald (Resident Involvement Officer (RIO) – Observer) (KM). Rebecca Mann (Resident Involvement Officer (RIO) (RM), Robert Nayan (Housing Strategy and Performance Officer) (RN), Sarah Posey (Head of Collections, Interpretation and Learning)(SP)

Observers: Barry Kent (BK), Arlene MacRae (AM)

Apologies: Sue Andrew (Adaptions Technical Team Admin), Trish Barnard (Observer), Jean Davis, Sarah Potter (Operational Manager, Housing Adaptions).

1. Welcome and introductions

2. Minutes of the last meeting

- 2.1 (p1 2.1) AG spoken to Welfare Rights: they are awaiting a response from TDN regarding the group's requirements.

Action: RM to chase Welfare Rights regarding a tailor-made training session for AG.

- 2.2 (p2 2.2) Monica Brooks' e-mail regarding mobility scooter charges

AG again queried why there was a flat rate for these charges, not varying, individual charge rates based on the differing build/conversion costs of the storage units concerned as a result of differing needs.

A – HE: Finance calculated the mobility scooter charges on the following basis:

The 4 scooter stores across the city were built between 2010 and 2013 as part of a project set up to address the issue of fire risk caused by scooters being stored in the communal areas of flats.

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The cost to build the 4 different stores varied depending on whether they were purpose built or the conversion of an existing facility.

In setting service charges for the stores BHCC has considered the project costs as a whole, rather than basing them on the actual cost of developing and maintaining each store.

This is the same method of setting charges that the council uses for other services, especially where the level of service being given is the same wherever you live. We calculate individual service charges per block for those services where the level of service varies from block to block such as grounds maintenance, cleaning and common ways electricity.

In the case of mobility scooters the total costs of build, borrowing costs, maintenance, electricity and administration are pooled together. This ensures there is consistency of charges and that each store is offered at a reasonable rate. If costs were set per store, the charge for the purpose built stores would be higher than the converted stores and this was deemed to be unfair given that all sites offer the same service – a store for the mobility scooter.

The variation in charges for car park and garage spaces is due to their location in the city rather than cost of construction – those that are close to the town centre where demand for spaces is higher, are more expensive than spaces towards the fringes of the city and are linked to the market rates in the City.

Councillor Randall has made a commitment to review the charge for mobility scooter stores after 6 months and this will happen in the autumn. This will look at the electricity consumption and assess whether the charge needs to be varied based on costs to date.

Action: HE to go back to Monica Brooks to check Robert Keelan's points.

- 2.3 (p3/4/5) The Chair gave a brief resume of Carelink's visit to the previous TDN meeting for the benefit of those group-members who were unable to attend, describing some of the 'gadgets' Carelink had talked about and how the Carelink system works.
- 2.4 (p6 3.18) **Action:** RM to chase Joel Caines, Carelink Plus regarding contacting Paula Harte, Operations Manager of Adult Social Services about possibility of Adult Social Care fund being used to fund Carelink for certain individuals who had been assessed, as part of BHCC's 'duty of care'.
- 2.5 (p7 3.18) **Action:** RM to chase Joel Caines for his promised article for the TDN newsletter
- 2.6 (p10 9.1) The Chair clarified that actually a survey had been conducted at Essex Place regarding mobility scooter storage and there was found to be no demand for it: there is no point in building something if there is no demand for it.

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2.7 (p10 9.2) JW still awaiting response from his RIO re mobility scooter storage at Hereford Court. Chair advised that he could address this with Robert Nayan, one of today's guests, who is the Project Manager for mobility scooter storage, instead. Robert's contact details will be provided later in these minutes.

2.8 (p11 3) Anti-scam booklets.

Action: RM to ask the Police to send some of these to TDN for distribution.

Minutes – agreed as an accurate record.

3. Scooter Storage (Robert Nayan)

3.1 RN is BHCC's Project Manager for the mobility scooter storage project.

3.2 RN has a list of areas where a risk assessment has identified that a mobility scooter storage area is required. He then meets and consults with the Tenants' and Residents' Association concerned. After this, he will either seek planning permission for a new build or contact individuals affected if the collective view is that some garage space should be converted to mobility scooter storage.

3.3 Chair stressed the importance of making that initial contact with people and consulting with them regarding mobility scooter storage. She cited a fellow group member's experience where the first she heard about the intended conversion of what had been 'her' garage to mobility scooter storage was the 'notice to quit' she received. Understandably, said group-member was quite upset about this.

RN: Apologised for the above. It was not intentional. Mistake was taking the collective view. Next time will consult with the individual concerned, after the collective view has been determined (ideally before said individual receives their 'notice to quit').

3.4 Chair is aware that BHCC's funds 'pot' set aside for the mobility scooter storage project has not been all used-up. So, it's about alerting people to the existence of this 'pot of money' and sign-posting people to it.

3.5 Robert's contact details are as follows:

Robert Nayan, Project Manager Mobility Scooter Storage

Tel: 01273 293021

Mobile: 07771 389430

E-mail: Robert.nayan@brighton-hove.gov.uk

4. Darrel Clews and Sarah Posey, guest managers

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- 4.1 DC explained why he and Sarah were visiting TDN today. It is a response to the results of a BHCC staff survey, where it was felt that senior management needed to get more in touch with the grass-roots of the organisation, how it works in partnership with other bodies, how it engages with residents and how it 'lives' and applies its values. It is BHCC looking forward to changing how senior management operate. BHCC has directed that some senior managers should attend community group meetings like TDN to see how people work in partnership with one another and discover what senior management might learn from this in terms of devising policies etc. To this end, they would like to ask the group a few questions and get some feedback from it.

There are 2 other senior managers in their group. Plan is to write up feedback received, present it to the other two managers and then take two of the topics raised to work on.

- 4.2 DC introduced himself and gave the group a brief background of himself. His is a statutory role in safeguarding children. Basically, he helps BHCC deal with child protection allegations made against adult workers within the city eg within local schools, playgroups etc and works in conjunction with Ofsted and the local Safeguarding Children board etc. His colleague and 'opposite number' for safeguarding (vulnerable) adults is Michelle Jenkins, the Head of Adult Safeguarding.

- 4.3 SP introduced herself and gave the group a brief background of herself. She is the Head of Collections, Interpretation and Learning. She oversees the Royal Pavilion, the city's museums and art galleries (Preston Manor, the Booth Museum, Brighton's Art Gallery and Hove's Art Gallery) and local museum services. She is looking at reaching out to the local community via creative projects, hosted within the various venues and improving accessibility in venues to those with disabilities via consultation of advisory groups. Consultation like this has recently resulted in improved venue access for blind and deaf visitors. This is where TDN could come in....

Chair keen for TDN to get involved with this. Was involved in the Housing Adaptions Framework. Chair herself has been able-bodied and now is not so she can see things from both perspectives. As a disabled person she looks at things with different eyes to an able-bodied council officer so can spot things which they can't.

Echoed by another group-member who observed that when she was in a wheelchair for a short time as a result of a foot operation, suddenly everyday things which an able-bodied person takes for granted became difficult and people looked at her in a whole different light – some people just don't (or pretend not to) see you and some cut-across you as if you weren't there.

- 4.4 Question 1a) What is working well where collaborating with other partners (e.g. BHCC, Mears etc) is concerned?

- 4.4.1 Chair gave examples of where collaboration/partnership has worked well:

- The Adaptions Framework
- The Adaptions Leaflet

TDN have had someone from Allocations come in to talk to them. She would like to see properties which are suitable for conversion to accommodate a disabled person (e.g. ground floor flats) first advertised to people with disabilities when they become available.

Conversely, Home Move says that the Bristol Estate is disabled-friendly, it is *not*. It's up a steep hill and your mobility scooter batteries pack up before you get to the top. Moreover, the buses only run every 30 minutes.

4.4.2 Question 1b) What bits work well? The information received? Being listened to?

A – Chair: Being listened to. Being able to put one's own spin on things. Cited an example where BHCC was having trouble contacting a particular elderly tenant. This was because the elderly tenant concerned doesn't answer her phone and doesn't 'do' e-mail. Chair became this tenant's contact.

4.4.3 Question 1c) What is working well with this meeting/group?

A – Chair: Group started about 10 years ago. In past it looked at things like trying to get drop – kerbs put in etc but these things were outside its control because it had no control over planning laws, so now the group focuses on things it can change.

It's about 'opening the eyes' of the able-bodied in the council and influencing them.

RM: role of the group is to help shape/influence housing from the perspective of the disabled.

Chair would like TDN newsletter to go out to all those listed as disabled on the Housing database, OHMS.

Chair advocated a 'buddy system'.

4.4.4 Question 1d) What is this group's relationship with councillors like?

A – Chair: Not good.

4.4.5 Question 1e) Issues which TDN reps have encountered?

Issue 1: BK is a Resident Assessor. He inspects void properties and the work done on them before they are re-let. Several times he has seen instances where carers or social services could've reported back to BHCC things they've spotted in people they've visited's flats which might be indicative of some kind of problem e.g. empty bottles lying around, a tenant's flat steadily filling with rubbish - a potential health and fire hazard – and not having done so. So BHCC is often unaware that these things are an issue until the property becomes void and is visited.

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Issue 2: Chair advised that has been known for BHCC to go in and ‘un-adapt’ a property which had been adapted for the use of a disabled tenant on said tenant’s death. This is crazy! Considering the cost, first of adaption and then of ‘un-adaption’ – a waste of money. Would make more sense to re-allocate the property to another disabled person.

4.5 Question 2: SP: What are the top 3 challenges to progressing this group’s aims?

A – Chair/BK: Communication, communication and communication. For example telling TDN/ disabled tenants when properties which are suitable for adaption e.g. ground floor flats become available. TDN are happy to help BHCC identify such properties.

MB: added that BHCC needs to get the word out to disabled tenants that there are areas/ways in which they can get involved with things e.g. via Homing In.

Chair: suggested setting up a ‘buddy system’, particularly in high-rises whereby a vulnerable or disabled person’s ‘buddy’ phones their charge once a week to check in on them and helps them with practical things e.g. helping them with their rubbish – getting them to leave their rubbish out for their ‘buddy’ to collect and take down to the bins for them. JM has done this for a neighbour and received a ‘thank-you’ card from her.

4.6 Question 3: DC: What do you think BHCC could do better in this current climate to improve for the future?

A – Chair: would like to see a more pro-active and speedier response from Adult Social Care. She cited an example where she acted as a ‘Dignity Champion’ on behalf of a vulnerable, elderly resident who was being taken advantage of by an unscrupulous person over a sustained period of time. She reported it to Adult Social Care on several occasions but didn’t feel that they were taking it seriously.

She also cited another example, where it had taken Adult Social Care *two weeks* to come back to her about a potential problem with her medication, during which time she resolved the issue herself (meanwhile something could’ve happened in the interim...).

Action: DC and SP to send group their presentation once it is finished and to invite themselves back, perhaps with their two colleagues, to feed back their findings to the group.

5. Chair’s feedback from Trafford Hall training

5.1 Chair was very enthusiastic about her recent tenant-training experience at Trafford Hall, Cheshire. This was her first experience of Trafford Hall and she can’t speak highly enough of it.

5.2 What is Trafford Hall?

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Trafford Hall is a government and national lottery funded institution, located in Chester, set-up to provide training to tenants and community groups.

5.3

The Resident Involvement Team has a 'pot of money' assigned to funding these residential courses and travel to/from them. Chair urged her fellow tenants to sign up for a course 1) because they are very good and useful and 2) over the previous 2-3 years, the budget set aside for this purpose has not been used. This is because it has not been well publicised, except at meetings and people tend to forget about it after the meeting. It needs to be publicised better.

Courses are £15 for tenants, including accommodation and meals, breakfast, lunch and dinner.

If you are travelling up the day before (which she did and which you would need to do if you were travelling long distance e.g. from Brighton to Chester) an extra night's bed and breakfast is available at £20 per person. They also make you a sandwich lunch. (She went up on the Sunday before her course and came back on the Tuesday).

Chair took her carer with her (carer had to pay £15.00 too, to cover accommodation and food).

Getting there: Train Brighton to London Victoria, Virgin train Euston to Chester, taxi Chester railway station to Trafford Hall. She booked her train tickets 3 months in advance to get as cheap a rate as possible – it cost £133.00 for two return tickets for her and her carer, Brighton-Chester.

5.4

Her report on Trafford Hall:

5.5

- It was very good.
- It was very disabled-friendly. There are two wet-rooms there which are allocated on a needs basis.
- Courses run 9am-5pm.
- There is wi-fi.
- She met other tenants from all over the country there and found out what tenants/local authorities are doing elsewhere.
- Seating is 'cabaret-style' so you can mix with and meet other people.
- She learned how to use 'Survey Monkey' as a tool to get feed-back from tenants who want to get involved but don't want to attend meetings. It's easy to set up.
- She also learned how to set up a web-site and how to set-up a Facebook page.
- At the end of a course, you receive a small grant application form for up to £500.00 which must be used for the course specified on the form and can only be used once by each group.

Trafford Hall also does courses on the following subjects, amidst others:

- Money mentoring

- Energy Saving
- Gardening
- Courses for young people – suggested the group encourage younger tenants in their respective areas to sign up to one of these courses to recruit some ‘young blood’ to the tenant movement’s cause and reinvigorate it.

5.6 She is doing another course with them in September, on anti-social behaviour (ASB).

RM suggested that she should speak to November’s City Assembly about ASB after attending this course.

She is also doing a course on ‘Engaging Your Local Community with them in September.

She has booked another member of this group, AP, on to a course there.

She urged the group to have a look at Trafford Hall’s web-site (details below) and ‘go’.

5.7 Trafford Hall’s contact details:

Web-site: www.traffordhall.com

Telephone: 01244 300246

E-mail: info@traffordhall.com

6. Newsletter

6.1 Chair reiterated that she is no longer prepared to produce it on her own. This means either:

- People help
- Or, newsletter is scrapped
- Or, have an editorial sub-group, perhaps including BK and AP (Ann Packham) amongst others.

Basically she needs people to do articles, she can’t do it all herself.

6.2 RM: For the benefit of visiting senior managers, DC and SP: this newsletter exemplifies how Resident Involvement have empowered BHCC residents. This newsletter is tenant-led. There is no officer involvement. The Resource Centre print it for them. (The Resource Centre is a voluntary body, which BHCC pay to print of this newsletter on behalf of their residents).

6.3 RM: Suggested that JM, who has a wealth of nursing knowledge and a nursing background which could be drawn on (e.g. observations, and anecdotes, stories from his experience) could have a column.

JM: Trouble is, has too much on plate already.

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BK: A small article?

JM: Sorry, no time. Too much on. Doesn't want to let people down.

Chair: This is the whole problem. People say they don't have time.

6.4 Chair: Just need the information, the copy to put in the newsletter.

MB: Advised that when she is out and about, she tends to size the places she visits up from a TDN perspective and gather information about them.

RM: Asked MB whether prepared to write an article in that case.

MB: Yes. Will write an article and pass on to Chair.

6.5 Chair reminded the group that generic contact details for TDN are provided on the newsletter. An answerphone picks up messages left on the group's mobile which 'pings' an e-mail across to the group's generic g-mail account to notify the group about said message. She advised that everyone in the group needed to get themselves set up with a g-mail account. With generic contact details, it doesn't matter whether individual group-members for whatever reason are unable to respond to messages or move-on, others within the group can pick them up and action them.

6.6 Chair asked what the group thought of the idea of having an editorial sub-group for the TDN newsletter.

The group supported this idea. BK, JW and MB volunteered to be on this group. It was suggested that AP (who was absent from today's meeting) should join them. Group will self-facilitate via the Resource Centre.

6.7 Newsletter meanwhile will be on the agenda of each meeting.

8. Any other business

8.1 Repairs

Further to the action on p11 (11.1.2) of the previous meeting's minutes, James Cryer, Mears could not be present at this meeting. Tracy Horner, Mears, however has provided the following statement: there is no policy on repairs for the disabled, each case is assessed on its own merit.

8.2 Light-bulb replacement

A hand-out on light bulb replacement was distributed to the group. To summarise it:

- As per p7 of the Tenant's Guide to Repairs, replacement light bulbs are, and always have been the tenant's responsibility.

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- Agreed that Mears will install new 2D bulbs in kitchens and bathrooms where a bulb is under warranty (less than a year old).
- Estates Services will supply and fit a new bulb for residents identified as living in sheltered housing, elderly, vulnerable or disabled (there may be a minimal charge of £5 for the cost of the bulb for this if the resident doesn't have a spare bulb).

You therefore need to let Mears know that you are disabled so that they can put it on your record.

- Communal lighting bulbs are still replaced by Mears and BHCC (unless they are individual security lights which tenants themselves have had fitted, in which case it is the tenant's responsibility).

8.3 TDN Web-site

Action: RM to set up a meeting one Friday between Chair and Alex Allsworth, BHCC's Social Media Officer to help her set up TDN web-site

0. **Next meeting will be held on Monday 6 October 2014 at Hampshire Lodge, Hampshire Court, Brighton between 2pm & 4pm**