



Minutes of the meeting of the HOUSING IMPROVEMENT TEAM ON NEIGHBOUR NUISANCE AND TENANCY AGREEMENT held on MONDAY 17 JANUARY 2000 at 6.30 pm in Room 2 at Saxon Court

Present: Councillors Burke, Saunders and Woodcock

Officers: D Nickless (Head of Neighbourhood Services - Housing), S Aslett (District Housing Manager), B McKay (Lakes Estate Housing Officer), R Callow (Community Safety Officer), C Jones (Tenants' Participation Officer) and W Marsden (Senior Committee Manager)

Tenants

Representatives: J Blake (Central Area Housing Board)
C Allum (Central Area Housing Board)
P Prop (Netherfield/Newport Pagnell Area Housing Board)
A Richardson (Netherfield/Newport Pagnell Area Housing Board)
H Taylor (Bradville/Greenleys Area Housing Board)

Also Present: D Hunt (Thames Valley Police)
N Finney (North British Housing Association)
D Payne (Community Mediation Service)

Apologies: G Greaves (Netherfield/Newport Pagnell Area Housing Board), A Laing (Bletchley Area Housing Board), J Marling (Bletchley Area Housing Board), B Moore (Netherfield/Newport Pagnell Area Housing Board)

1.0 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 1999 were approved as a correct record subject to it being noted that A Richardson did attend the meeting and Alan Richardson stated at the meeting that J Kenney had said Milton Keynes had one of the best Tenancy Agreements.

2.0 CRIME AND DISORDER ACT

Rob Callow, the Community Safety Officer, led this session. Rob had produced a handout on the Crime and Disorder Act 1988, which is attached as an **Annex** to the Minutes. The handout covered the 3 main aims of the Act, Sections 5 and 6 of the Act, some of the key players in Milton Keynes Crime and Community Safety Partnership, the recorded crime figures in Milton Keynes 1997/98 as part of the key findings of the Milton Keynes Crime and Disorder Audit, the aims of the Milton Keynes Crime Reduction Strategy, the objectives of the Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour and

Vandalism Strategy, key action areas and the Crime and Community Safety Partnership.

Rob said that a Strategy had been developed from the Milton Keynes Crime and Disorder Audit. Each of the aims set out under the Milton Keynes Crime Reduction Strategy, as indicated in the handout, had a delivery group with a responsible officer. Rob quoted the example of tackling anti-social behaviour and vandalism with John Best the Environment Director as lead officer. A set of objectives were listed under this particular aim.

Rob also drew attention to the key action areas of Parenting, Neighbour Nuisance Teams, Vandalism Pilot and Citizenship. Rob said that with regard to:

(a) Parenting

A number of practitioners from different fields for example, Health, Social Services etc had been trained to run parenting courses in Milton Keynes. Parenting courses are being offered to identify “vulnerable families” for example families whose children are involved in crime, persistent truancy, abuse etc.

(b) Citizenship

An initiative working with all middle and combined schools in Milton Keynes focusing specifically on children of ages 8 and 12. Children are invited to visit the Safety Centre where they will experience a number of “scenarios” in particular burglary and vandalism. Children will discuss the consequences of these issues at the Safety Centre and follow up work is undertaken at the school. the project is intended to raise the concepts of citizenship and responsibilities.

(c) Neighbour Nuisance Teams

Multi-Agency Teams set up in each police sector area. The Teams will be made up of practitioners, for example Housing, Youth Service, Social Services, Police, Environmental Health. Their role will be to develop collaborative interventions to prevent or stop the continuation of anti-social behaviour. They will also explore legal remedies including Anti-Social Behaviour Orders.

(d) Vandalism

A pilot initiative in Fullers Slade is being developed which will involve the local community and agencies working in the area. Lessons learnt will be used in other parts of Milton Keynes.

Alan Richardson asked how high was neighbour nuisance on the police agenda and referred to recent cases at Heelands and Tinkers Bridge. David Hunt from Thames Police said Neighbour Nuisance had a high police priority. There was a fear of retribution, however, the police were giving protection to people who had come forward with evidence regarding Neighbour Nuisance. Alan Richardson asked whether injunctions had been served against the family, and

D Hunt replied no, because injunctions must be served on an actual person.

Rob Callow said that none of the key action areas identified could be achieved without all partners working together, and the future could well be Multi-Agency Teams.

Alan Richardson said he was disappointed that there was no representative from the Area Housing Boards and Borough Wide Housing Board on the Anti-Social Behaviour Panel. Derek Nickless mentioned the accountability aspect of Members and officers, and said individual case work would not be reviewed. Rob Callow said the delivery group chaired by John Best, had only met once and a resident representative was possible on the Strategy Group.

D Payne said that it was important to involve Magistrates' Court users team for Anti-Social Behaviour Orders. Derek Nickless mentioned that this should be referred to in a report to the Housing Committee on 1 February 2000.

Derek Nickless referred to a ruling regarding a nuisance neighbour case in Milton Keynes. At Milton Keynes County Court the Judge had handed down his judgement to evict a tenant and her children from their Council home in Heelands. However despite acknowledging that neighbours had put up with nuisance, annoyance and intolerable conduct from this particular family for 4 years, the Judge had ruled the family would not have to move for a further 6 weeks. This meant that Milton Keynes Council could not send in the bailiff until after 1 March 2000. D Hunt from Thames Valley Police talked about the lengthy lead in time period regarding this case. He said the case had not been heard until December 1999 after some 9 months had been spent gathering evidence, and another 3 months had been spent on investigation. In addition some £3000 had been spent on additional equipment regarding two cases.

D Nickless referred to the Dundee Families Project which may give some pointers as to future direction. Dundee Families Project is a partnership between the Social Work and Housing Departments and NCH Action for Children. It provides outreach services, and residential and support services to families who are homeless or potentially homeless as a result of their anti-social behaviour. Working to an agreed Care Plan the aim is to help the family to develop the skills necessary to confront and change their behaviour, such as improved parenting skills, and to enable them to maintain a tenancy.

Alan Richardson raised the possibility of Curfew Orders being issued against children in the family and D Hunt said the degree of proof in the Civil Court was a probability. D Payne mentioned the necessity of protecting witnesses and mentioned the difficulty in getting witnesses.

Councillor Woodcock asked what would happen when the particular family in Heelands is evicted, and should that family not be housed by Milton Keynes Council. Derek Nickless replied that until the family make an application, Milton Keynes Council is not able to make a decision; and both cases at Heelands and Tinkers Bridge were complicated with the families coming from a travelling background. D Payne referred to a case at Peterlee where the family had a sea coal “background” and the children had to be occupied by Council Services from morning until evening.

3.0 REVIEW OF TOPICS TO BE COVERED IN FUTURE MEETINGS

Derek Nickless said that an update needed to be provided on what has been discussed and referred to the Dundee and Peterlee approach. The legal people to be invited to the next meeting.

John Blake asked that introductory tenancies be discussed at the next meeting, this was agreed, and he said that he intended to raise this at the next Housing Committee meeting. John referred to the Manchester Probationary Tenancy Agreement which had been discussed at the Borough Wide Housing Board some 18 months previously.

4.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting will be held on Wednesday 9 February 2000 at 10.00 am in the Training Seminar Suite, Level 3, Civic Offices.