



Minutes of the meeting of the NETHERFIELD/NEWPORT PAGNELL AREA HOUSING BOARD held on THURSDAY 15 JULY 1999 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor Clark

Tenants

Representatives:	J Cade-Wescombe	-	Peartree Bridge Residents' Association
	R Gibbard	-	Beanhill Residents' Association
	G Greaves	-	Hanslope Residents' Association
	B Moore	-	Hanslope Residents' Association
	P Prop	-	Tinkers Bridge Residents' Association
	A Richardson	-	Beanhill Residents' Association
	R Walton	-	Netherfield Residents' Association

Officers: J Bate (District Housing Manager), T Bevan (Senior Housing Officer), C Harris (Senior Housing Officer), C Jones (Tenants' Participation Officer), D Jones (Strategic Director), W Marsden (Senior Committee Manager)

Also Present: J Blake - Central Area Housing Board
H Taylor - Bradville/Greenleys Area Housing Board

1.0 ELECTION OF CHAIR

RESOLVED -

That Mr A Richardson (Beanhill Residents' Association) be elected Chair for the Council year 1999/2000.

2.0 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

RESOLVED -

That Pauline Prop (Tinkers Bridge Residents' Association) be elected Vice-Chair for the Council year 1999/2000.

3.0 QUORUM FOR MEETING

It was reported that the meeting was inquorate as there were insufficient Members of the Council present. Therefore, while the meeting would be able to comment on the various items, it would not be in a position to resolve any matters. Any matters of decision would therefore need to be referred to the Borough Wide Housing Board.

4.0 PROCEDURE - MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Area Housing Board held on 1 April 1999 be approved as a correct record.

A question was asked regarding approved security and lighting and landscaping works at Daniels Welch, Coffee Hall, and the District Housing Manager confirmed that the work was complete. Councillor Clark mentioned that a copy of the Heating and Maintenance and Repairs Contractor's Specification had not yet been sent to all Members of the Board.

5.0 BOROUGH WIDE HOUSING BOARD

The Board considered its representation on the Borough Wide Housing Board.

RESOLVED -

That the following representatives of the Netherfield/Newport Pagnell Area Housing Board be appointed to the Borough Wide Housing Board:

Representatives

A Richardson (Beanhill Residents' Association)

B Moore (Hanslope (Residents' Association)

P Prop (Tinkers Bridge Residents' Association)

Reserve

R Gibbard (Beanhill Residents' Association)

3.0 NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. R Walton mentioned an infill study and the fact that Netherfield was susceptible to infill. However, the Board felt that this was a matter for Ward Councillors and not for the Area Housing Board meeting.
2. Alan Richardson raised the matter of trees around bungalows in Beanhill, and it appeared that trees in gardens were too big. He thought that a tree removal programme would be necessary; and Councillor Clark asked that the Council's arboricultural officer be involved.

The Board requested that John Price, the arboricultural officer and Alan Prockter the Landscape Manager be invited to the next meeting.

3. The Board noted that the Housing Committee on 29 June had resolved that 62 Queensway be used as a Tenants Resources Centre on a trial basis for a period of 12 months. The Strategic Director stated that the 12 month period could be from the day the resource centre opens.

4. The Board noted that the Housing Committee established three Housing Improvement Teams, with an emphasis on customer care, to cover the following service areas:

- (i) Neighbourhood Nuisance and Tenancy Agreement
- (ii) Disabled Adaptations
- (iii) Voids and Repairs

Each Housing Improvement Team will comprise three Councillors from the Housing Committee, two Tenant Representatives from each Area Housing Board and one lead officer from Neighbourhood Services Directorate Team.

The following nominations were made from the Board:

Neighbourhood Nuisance and Tenancy Agreement - Barbara Moore

VOIDS AND REPAIRS - Barbara Moore

7.0 INTRODUCTION TO THE HEATING MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS CONTRACTOR

The Board expressed disappointment that Morgan and Fone the Heating, Maintenance and Repairs Contractor for Netherfield/Newport Pagnell Area, did not attend the Board meeting.

John Cade-Wescombe stated that he had been waiting for a part for his boiler for over one year from Morgan and Fone and this had not been delivered.

Alan Richardson requested that Board Members be invited to the regular Contracts Monitoring meetings, and John Cade-Wescombe be one of the persons to be invited.

Alan Richardson mentioned that boilers were generally in a poor state of repair, and Bruce Pratt, the Development and Maintenance Manager, be invited to the next meeting.

8.0 INTRODUCTION TO RESPONSIVE REPAIRS TERM CONTRACTOR

The Board was introduced to Mr Weir from Jeakins Weir Ltd, the contractor for the repairs contract for the Netherfield/Newport Pagnell area. Mr Weir stressed the importance of good communications and said that the contractor was achieving over 98% in all target areas.

Barbara Moore expressed concern that satisfaction cards were never left, and Mr Weir said that this was something that he would chase up. Alan Richardson requested a hard print for Board Members of contractors' figures and the District Housing Manager's figures; and John Bate the District Housing Manager said the figures were agreed and taken at the same point in time. The Chair requested that Mr Weir be placed at the top of the agenda for the next meeting.

DISTRICT HOUSING MANAGER'S REPORT INCLUDING MINOR ESTATE IMPROVEMENT GRANTS

The Board received a report from the District Housing Manager which outlined activities and performance in the Netherfield/Newport Pagnell area. The report confirmed the current figures for rent arrears, empty properties, benefits and repairs with those from one year ago.

Alan Richardson stated that the rent arrears figures had increased by over 100% at Newport Pagnell. The District Housing Manager replied saying that when IT and benefits had improved then better figures were expected. Alan Richardson asked that the District Housing Manager check the rent arrears figures for the Christmas periods for 1997/98 and 1998/99 regarding rent arrears increase.

The District Housing Manager stated that some difficulties had been experienced in tracking down payments, and there had been problems with the information technology system in housing benefits. The District Housing Manager was confident that by the next Board meeting, rent arrears would be showing a decrease. In addition, with regard to benefits, accurate figures should be ready for the next meeting.

The District Housing Manager referred to the Netherfield Housing Office which had been damaged by fire and said it had been difficult for tenants to access service.

The District Housing Manager presented a list of works under the Minor Estate Improvement Grants which are attached as an **Annex** to the Minutes.

The following was noted with regard to the list:

1. That planting would be done by autumn at Jacks Close, Lavendon and the scheme would then be complete.
2. That with regard to the provision of Ascot Railing, the District Housing Manager to ask the Environment Directorate and any other suitable Directorates for a contribution towards the £5000 outstanding.
3. That with regard to life preservers to the canal side, that 5 further life preservers be provided at an estimated cost of £1210.

RECOMMENDED -

That the proposal by Peartree Bridge Residents' Association to provide 5 further life preservers to the canal side at an estimated cost of £1210 be approved.

10.0

REFURBISHMENT WORK AT NETHERFIELD LOCAL OFFICE

The District Housing Manager stated that the Netherfield Housing Office had been badly damaged by fire and the office had been relocated to Saxon Court. An information office had opened at the Woughton Action Centre between 9 am to noon every day, and it was hoped that the office would re-open in November 1999. Netherfield Benefits staff had moved to the Benefit Core Unit where they will be located following re-centralisation of benefits on 1 July 1999. John Cade-Wescombe felt that this was not a satisfactory arrangement and had concerns regarding attitudes by certain staff. The District Housing Manager replying said that staff were based at Saxon Court, and there was no IT line, and also there was an additional problem with confidentiality. It was important for residents to realise that under the circumstances, full service could not be given. Alan Richardson stated that two houses were empty on Beanhill, and there was the possible use of SRB shop on Netherfield and he felt that these should be put to use. R Walton asked what was the programme for Netherfield, and the District Housing Manager said that he expected everything to be complete around late November 1999. Netherfield staff were moving temporarily to West Bletchley before moving back to Netherfield.

The District Housing Manager asked for any further comments from the Board Members as they would be welcome. John Cade-Wescombe thought that the reception area could be more welcoming; and Pauline Prop thought that there was a problem for people in wheelchairs as they could not see over the counter. Alan Richardson thought it a good idea that staff should wear name tags at all times.

11.0

TENANTS COMPACT WORKSHOP

Claire Jones introduced this item. Board Members were aware that local authorities needed to implement Tenant Participation Compacts (TPCs) by April 2000.

Tenant Participation Compacts are locally negotiated agreements between local authorities and their tenants, and they will involve tenants and strategic and local decisions on housing issues. National standards will mean that, for the first time, meaningful comparisons between local authorities nationwide will be possible. Tenants rights to true. involvement will be enforced by annual inspections from external auditors.

Progress towards the implementation of TPCs will form part of the Government Office's assessment of performance under the Housing Improvement Programme (HIP) process. It was thought that 10% of next year's HIP allocation would depend on how well MKC was doing on Tenant Compacts. Local authorities and tenants were therefore required to begin planning for this introduction of Tenant Participation Compacts, and it was essential to prove to the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) and the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions (DETR) that we are undertaking a fundamental review of existing systems.

The Area Housing Board was also asked to consider what they want to gain from the TPC, what the strength and weaknesses of the present structure are, and the possible changes to the present structure to improve it.

We must review its aims and objectives, and review the existing arrangements, and how these meet, or do not meet the aims, and draw up an Action Plan together to implement TPCs. Hilary Armstrong said that she recognises that some Councils may not be able to put formal agreements in place by April 2000, but we must at least have an agreed objective and Action Plan.

The Board agreed to the formation of a group to review the present structures, and Barbara Moore expressed interest. It was felt that the four Chairs of the Area Housing Boards should be involved in this group, and the Tenants Participation Officer would convene as soon as possible.

Alan Richardson said there was a need to go on to estate compacts, and it was vital that local authorities should listen to tenants and that tenants needed to be trained.

John Cade-Wescombe said that there should be Compacts for other groups, ie shared owners and leaseholders. Some 60% of his houses are within that particular group, and it was difficult to interest tenants when they were in a minority. It was vital to look at how you bring groups together and make sure that none of the Compacts are being destroyed.

Alan Richardson said that non-tenants should not have a say in how Housing Revenue Account money was being spent.

In response to an answer from John Bate, the District Housing Manager, Alan Richardson asked if there was an attachment made to the property of an owner-occupier where there had been a pitched roof put on to that property. John Bate to provide the necessary information for the next Area Housing Board meeting.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.40 PM