



Minutes of the meeting of the CENTRAL AREA HOUSING BOARD held on THURSDAY 16 MARCH 2000 at 7.30 pm

Present: Councillor Fairweather

Tenants

Representatives:

C Allum	-	Downs Barn Residents' Association
J Blake	-	Central Milton Keynes Residents' Association
G Byfield	-	Conniburrow Community Association
B King	-	Bradwell Common Residents' Association
N Noel-Hill	-	Bradwell Common Residents' Association
P Warner	-	Bradwell Common Residents' Association

Officers: J Bate (District Housing Manager), L Ellen (Senior Housing Officer), C Jones (Tenants' Participation Officer), P Fenwick (Development and Maintenance Section), M Harvey (Maintenance and Monitor Officer), L Reid (Benefits Officer), A Vick (Benefits Officer) and W Marsden (Senior Committee Manager)

Also Present:

I Fraser	-	Fishermead and Oldbrook Residents' Association
D Donovan	-	Wheldons
D Chandler	-	Eclipse (UK) Ltd
D Steadman	-	Eclipse (UK) Ltd

Apologies: Councillor Conchie, J Worrell and T Roberts

28.0 PROCEDURE - MINUTES

RESOLVED -

That the Minutes of the meeting of the Area Housing Board held on 16 December 1999 be approved as a correct record.

29.0 INTRODUCTION TO RESPONSIVE REPAIRS TERM CONTRACTOR

Mr D Chandler and Mr D Steadman from Eclipse (UK) Ltd attended the meeting. Performance data from Eclipse (UK) Ltd had been circulated to Committee Members prior to the meeting being held. Mr Chandler stated that Eclipse (UK) Ltd wished to continue working with the Council and were currently looking at a contract extension. The District Housing Manager stated that Milton Keynes Council was happy with the recent improvement in the performance of Eclipse (UK) Ltd.

C Allum asked whether voids were being made ready, Mr D Chandler said that a number of voids were currently being carried out and the District Housing Manager stated that the voids turnaround period was currently 4 - 5 weeks. Linda Ellen stated that the figures may be distorted because a substantial number of properties had been abandoned and a 4 weeks notice must be served.

30.0 HEATING CONTRACTOR

The Board met with Mr D Donovan from Wheldons, the Heating, Maintenance and Repairs Contractor for the Central Area.

Mr Donovan stated that Wheldons have a system whereby access could be gained to voids and problems sorted before people moved into the void. Paul Fenwick, from the Development and Maintenance Section, said some 150 break-ins had been attempted to gain access into properties and these had been successful.

31.0 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 Central Area Office.

The report confirmed figures for rent arrears, housing benefit figures and repairs, and empty property information for February 2000.

The Board noted the District Housing Manager's comments that this week's figure regarding rent arrears was £207,000.

Charles Allum asked, with regard to rent arrears, whether people needed to have a clear rent account before moving. John Bate replied the rule of thumb was they would not move if rent arrears were outstanding, however individual cases could be examined if there were medical implications etc.

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

The Board was pleased to note that the benefits caseload was decreasing.

The District Housing Manager provided an update on the schemes. He said that the netball court at Conniburrow was nearly completed with lighting to be installed next week; the parking bays scheme was completed, the lighting in Blackheath Crescent was completed and the bollard would be installed in the next fortnight.

Isobel Fraser asked whether money was still available under the Minor Estate Improvement Grant, for the defensible space project in Fishermead. John Bate, the District Housing Manager, said that he thought this was part of the Capital Programme; he would investigate and respond to Isobel Fraser.

Isobel Fraser also mentioned the possibility of provision of two bus shelters in Fishermead/Oldbroom. John Bate to determine how much money was left and forwarded the scheme to the Borough Wide Housing Board.

George Byfield, on behalf of the General Management Committee of Conniburrow expressed thanks to officers who had given technical help to Conniburrow. Brian King mentioned the problem a resident was having regarding his bungalow windows, which were literally falling out. He said this was a priority case, the builder had been on site for 4 weeks and the necessary work had still not commenced on the bungalow windows. Brian King asked for the contractor to be chased up on this job, John Bate the District Housing Manager thought this was part of programme maintenance and he would raise the issue with the surveyor.

32.0 ELIGIBILITY TO REGISTER ON THE HOUSING WAITING LIST

The Board considered a report of eligibility to register on the Housing Waiting List which had been discussed at the Housing Committee on 1 February 2000.

The Housing Committee had agreed the recommendations, however this was subject to consultation with the Area Housing Boards and registered social landlords.

The Board noted the report.

33.0 TENANTS COMPACT

The Tenants Participation Officer provided a position statement on tenant participation, a copy of which is attached as **Annex B** to the Minutes. Brian King expressed concern that if future Borough Wide Housing Board meetings were held during the daytime, then Bradwell Common and Fishermead/Oldbroom Residents' Associations would not be represented at the meetings.

George Byfield stated that there must be a central policy decision as to what everybody is working towards, and Isobel Fraser said that as part of the new Democratic Structures, there would be a need to look at area consultation processes.

Brian King asked who could sit on, and have an input into, the future Borough Wide Housing Board. Councillor Fairweather stated he was a Member on the Democratic Structures Working Group which was looking at different forms of consultation, and it must be laid down as to where Members of the new Borough Wide Housing Board would come from.

Isobel Fraser stated that a good way to consult was through avenues such as Messenger. There was currently an input for people into the present structure of Area Housing Boards and Borough Wide Housing Boards, but it was extremely important that

any matters regarding consultation and representation be resolved as quickly as possible.

John Blake commented that currently the 4 Chairs of the Area Housing Boards were co-opted Members on to the Housing Committee and had therefore an input into the proceedings, he was concerned that this voice might be lost in the new structures.

John Bate said that Tenants Compact was something that the Government had brought in and said that the Area Housing Boards could not have achieved what they had done without the input of non-tenants. Isobel Fraser stressed the importance of finding ways of broadening Tenants Compact.

The Tenants Participation Officer also handed out a Tenants Participation Compact Action Plan, a copy of which is attached as **Annex C** to the Minutes.

34.0

NOTIFICATION OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. Brian King expressed concern at the number of beggars in the City Centre and asked if a policy existed concerning this.

Isobel Fraser said there was not official Council policy but there would be laws regarding beggars and suggested that the police should be contacted. She expressed concern at the number of illegal immigrants who were begging in Fishermead and Oldbrook.

2. Charles Allum asked whether the room for the crèche at the resource centre was insured. Clare Jones to check on the position.
3. Charles Allum also stated that he was waiting to hear the position regarding smoke alarms in flats. John Bate the District Housing Manager to chase this up.
4. Isobel Fraser said that MK DASS were trying to have a drop-in centre for drug users on Fishermead, and Fishermead were going to fight this proposal.

35.0

CHAIR'S SPEECH

John Blake, the Chair of the Central Area Housing Board, thanked everyone for their co-operation during his term of office.

Jon Bate, the District Housing Manager, stated that the Central Area Housing Board had functioned well.

George Byfield thanked John Blake for this excellent chairmanship.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING AT 9.10 PM