



Minutes of the meeting of the MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL HOUSING FORUM held on THURSDAY 15 JUNE 2006 at 7.30PM

Members

Present:	Hazel Taylor (Chair)	- Greenleys Residents Association
	Charles Allum	- Downs Barn Residents Association
	Eamonn Bobey	- Netherfield Residents Association
	Janette Bobey	- Netherfield Residents Association
	George Byfield	- Conniburrow Community Association
	Margaret Burke	- Bradville Residents Association
	Terry Field	- Conniburrow Community Association
	Mark Healey	- Castles Residents Association
	Judy Kennah	- Tinkers Bridge Residents Association
	Jeanette Marling	- Lakes Residents Association
	Fred Smith	- Greenleys Residents Association
	Rita Venn	- Fenny Stratford Residents Association
	Pat Warner	- Bradwell Common Residents Association
	Lynn White	Lakes Residents Association
	Geoff Woolmore	- Beanhill Residents Association
Others:	Councillor I Hendersom	Milton Keynes Council
	Councillor A Latham	Milton Keynes Council
Officers:	William Marsden	- Senior Committee Manager
	Paula Mason	- Tenant Participation Officer
	Dave Siddals	- Building Services Manager
	Pam Wharfe	- Acting Director of Housing
Apologies:	Paul Bonarius	Bradville Parish Council
	Simon Aslett	Tenant Participation Manager
	Derek Beaumont	Partnering Manager, Development and Maintenance
	George Chennel	Fenny Stratford Residents Association
	Brian King	Bradwell Common Residents Association
	Pauline Prop	Tinkers Bridge Residents Association
	Councillor Hoyle	

1.0 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENT

ACTION

The Chair welcomed to the meeting Councillor Latham who was a newly elected Conservative Councillor for Fenny Stratford.

2.0 MINUTES

ACTION

RESOLVED -

1. That the Minutes of the meeting of the Milton Keynes Council Housing Forum, held on 18 May 2006 be approved as a

correct record, subject to the following alterations:-

- (a) Page 10 – John Bilson, not Pam Wharfe to be in Action Column regarding investigating the lighting at Bala Close; and Page 12 – Pam Wharfe was not to action the details of the address at Heelands, but would pass the message on.
- (b) Page 10 – under Resolution 5; the question Margaret Burke had asked was how many voids had there been in the past year in Bradville and why had Margaret Burke not been asked to attend any voids meetings.
- (c) M Roberts was no longer a Beanhill representative, and Beanhill did not have a Residents Association.
- (d) Page 11 – Item 9(1), the words “for Beanhill” to be added.
- (e) Page 12 – Any Other Business – Jeanette Marling had brought up an item for the next agenda, which had not been minuted and was not on this meeting’s agenda; it referred to Homeless and Waiting allocation.
- (f) Lynn White was not present at the meeting on 18 May 2006.
- (g) Page 10 – 2 items had been combined for Bala Close. The two items were regarding a play area at Bala Close being inappropriately located (proposed skateboard park was to go there) which was surrounded by elderly and disabled bungalows; and lighting at the Warren area (basketball/football court) where lighting had been erected partly around the perimeter and in the centre of the court.
- (h) Resolution 4 on Page 10 should read “Capability Chart” instead of “Capacity Chart”.
- (i) Page 10 – Eamonn Bobey asked regarding the re-let target of 35 days, did the figure of 136 voids include sheltered accommodation voids and major voids. He did not receive a reply, so this should be an Action Point. In addition there was a discussion about homelessness, and in particular was it true that homeless people did not always have to view the property before being allocated. Some tenants had explained they were offered the property without seeing it. They had accepted the property as it was their second offer.

3.0 MATTERS ARISING

ACTION

Margaret Burke assumed the reason she had not received an answer on her voids question was because it was not put in as an Action Point. She had now been contacted by the Voids Team.

4.0 NOTICE OF ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ACTION

- Award from Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council (Fred Smith)
- Tenants Conference, the way the Council picks Focus Groups, CRB vetting, and the growth of Milton Keynes and any proposed demolition. (Margaret Burke)
- Decent Homes Announcement made by the Government (Pam Wharfe)
- Decent Homes Standard (Eamonn Bobey)

5.0 AURORA UPDATE

ACTION

Dave Siddals (Service Delivery Manager) stated that a contract had been entered into with Aurora who was one of the window replacement contractors. The council used two window replacement contractors, Potton and Aurora. On the 23 May 2006 Aurora had announced that the parent company 'Arden Group' had some major concerns about the financial position of Aurora and had decided to put that company into liquidation. The Council's concern during the first few days was to assess what the impact would be on the tenants who were due to have windows replaced or were having windows replaced by Aurora. Surveyors visited all the properties that were on the programme to provide a full update of the current position.

Discussions took place with Potton to determine whether they would pick up additional work from Aurora. Meetings took place with the Arden chairman, Potton and HBS, and outstanding works were identified together with programmed works to be completed by Aurora. Potton and Arden have held their own negotiations about Potton taking over made up stocks and materials and windows.

Three priorities were identified as needing to be put into place;

- a) identifying properties that were having work done,
- b) where work was due to start shortly,
- c) re-programming batches of work that Aurora was due to undertake later this year.

Potton were confident they could undertake all of the work that was due to be done by Aurora. David Siddals said it had to be determined whether any commercial compensation was due to Milton Keynes Council, (HBS?) Eamonn Bobey said there were reservations about Aurora, particularly in Netherfield. Aurora had a contract for a year, they had rushed the contract and were almost finished by December. Aurora had missed out houses, putting in bits and pieces, Eamonn asked how long ago was the contract negotiated with Aurora, and were there any financial misgivings.

David Siddals replied that financial checks were carried out as part of standard procurement. Financial checks under the Council's procedure would have been very thorough, however Aurora had gone into liquidation for other reasons as well as financial.

Eammon Bobey asked if there were any financial implications to the Council through the Housing Revenue Account? David Siddals replied that it would have cost money to negotiate a contract, however there was an option when awarding the contract to one or two suppliers. However there was no intention to go to another contractor.

The Forum thought that Potton's had done a very good job.

6.0 DECENT HOMES UPDATE

ACTION

David Siddals provided a decent homes update to the Forum. A copy of a briefing note from Dave which summarised the decision and information provided regarding the decent homes programme is attached as **ANNEX A** to the minutes.

Forum members asked the following questions and Dave Siddals replied.

Q Was the kitchen design now planned with tenants .

A The kitchen designs were difficult, as the kitchen had to be designed as best as possible to suit the tenants needs, but at the same time to be fair in the distribution of money. There was a relatively standard kitchen layout but each kitchen was designed individually.

David Siddals said the process should be that the customer received the kitchen design before installation.

David Siddals to check whether a copy of the kitchen design is left with the tenant before the kitchen is fitted.

Dave Siddals

Q What was happening regarding the windows on Serpentine Court?

A The windows on Serpentine Court would have probably failed Decent Homes, as they were similar windows to those in Fishermead and Conniburrow, except that they were in a timber frame that made them worse. It was unlikely that the windows in Serpentine Court would be done this year. David Siddals to inform Jeanette Marling when they would be done.

David Siddals to come back to Jeanette regarding access to properties on each estate. David Siddals to come back to Jeanette regarding access to properties on each estate.

Dave Siddals

Dave Siddals

Q What is the position regarding properties being surveyed in Bramley Grange and not being included on the Decent Homes as they may be demolished.

A Pam Wharfe replied that there were issues around Bramley Grange, but no decisions had been made and nothing at the moment was happening. About 50% of the properties at Bramley Grange had been let to older homeless applicants, but there were no plans to demolish at the moment.

Pam Wharfe to check where Bramley Grange is on the Decent Homes Scheme.

Pam Wharfe

Q For HBS surveys for the 2007/08 Programme will they be surveyed on 19 June 2006 or 2007, and what is the work in Bradville, are they outstanding Decent Homes work in Kingfold?

A The survey is 19 June 2006. Kingfold was part of a 5 year detailed

Decent Homes rolling programme which has not continued.

Q What are the works in Bradville, and what will happen to the last 50 houses left off from having new windows and doors?

A The works that will be done are minimum Decent Homes works that have been discussed before at the Forum. Windows will be replaced if they fail Decent Homes.

Q Electrical work has not been carried out in Beanhill.

A I understand that where people need electrical work and sockets, that work is being carried out. David Siddals to investigate.

**Dave
Siddals**

Q Properties in Corfe Crescent were still waiting for roof insulation after 3 years. A programme had been received for the painting of all exteriors, however two bungalows had not had their back windows painted. Is the work checked before the bills are paid?

A The work is inspected by the contractors' own inspectors, and by HBS, although not every property is inspected. David Siddals to contact M Healey regarding this.

**Dave
Siddals**

Q When will the survey of Greenleys be undertaken?

A This will be undertaken in 2009/10.

Q Estates involved in the first phase are at a disadvantage because they will not receive the same standard that will be rolled out for the next one, which is unfair. Everyone should be treated the same and get the same standard. Tenants did not vote for the Decent Homes to be over 10 or 20 years, they were voting to stay with the Council.

A The problem is that to try and set a standard at the beginning that remained the same throughout meant that nothing was learnt from what was being done. Early in the Decent Homes Programme, particularly in Netherfield and Beanhill it was identified that there were issues with electrics and additional electrical sockets were put in (up to 3 additional sockets).

David Siddals said he had come to the Forum to present what his teams' plans were at the moment. However he needed to take back to his team to discuss what appeared to be small adjustments in terms of
a) how that is consulted with the tenants,
b) look at what the implication were commercially as we are still facing a big hole in the budgets in terms of Disabled Adaptation.

7.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ACTION

Eammon Bobey said he had examined figures for Decent Homes work undertaken on the Netherfield, Coffee Hall and Beanhill estates. Netherfield was the first to be surveyed but the last to have the work done, and there was a disproportionate amount of work happening in Netherfield as compared to the other 2 estates. In Netherfield there was no electrical re-wire and there were still sockets without any switches.

Eammon said once all the houses are finished on Netherfield, he would

check the figures. Surveys had started on Netherfield, standards were stringent and people were not given bathrooms and kitchens, but when they moved on the standards appeared to be more relaxed and more work appeared to have been done. Everybody should be treated fairly and equally and to the same standard.

Dave Siddals said there was a very strict standard for surveyors, it was recognised that we end up with some interpretation to those guidance notes for surveyors, the surveyors are changed around on the estates and work with the senior surveyors who see their standards. HBS were very clear they have embarked on a programme that was looking at individual kitchens based on the modernity and fitness of the kitchen and bathroom that is in there. The situation is that one person who has looked after their property next door does not get a new kitchen and bathroom, and the other person does. Still have to look hard at our budgets, If we identify more issues on certain estates eg windows, electrical rewires; that money has to come from somewhere.

Trying to keep everybody having the same level of standard . Cannot have set a standard at the beginning and stay still- it would not be the right thing to do, (talking about small changes to be made).

Jeanette Bobey – right from the start the criteria changed. When Netherfield was surveyed tenants were told whether they were getting a bathroom or a kitchen. On Netherfield only a few tenants had a choice, the remainder were told they were getting a bathroom. Jeanette felt that Netherfield was treated unfairly and a lot of homes on Netherfield have not had any Decent homes work done. When the surveyors came round they were very stringent as to what they were giving, but appeared to get more lax as they went on.

Dave Siddals- That is not the way the surveys work; they can only say whether or not the kitchens and bathrooms failed. Data collected was compared against prices of Appollo, where tenants could only have a kitchen or bathroom; money was identified for the kitchen even though that was more expensive. The decision was made before the programme was started. The surveys do not say what does and does not meet Decent Homes; from this the data could be analysed and pull out which was the most advantageous to do; also based on the fact that one of the key areas we have in terms of repairs spend is on carpentry and painting towards kitchens.

Geoff Wadmore said the main issue that came out of Beanhill was insufficient electrical sockets.

Jeanette Marling asked what would happen if monies ran out before the end of the year. If surveys come in and a lot more work was required than was first thought, would the programme roll over?

David Siddals replied that a very large percentage of surveys were done in order that the data could be analysed and make sure there is sufficient funding before work is started.

Pam Wharfe said if there are going to be programme improvements we need to think about how to deal with those areas that were earlier in the programme, and if there was a benefit they did not get it. If we offer improvements to people in this point in the programme eg; additional

electrical sockets we have to offer it to people who were at the beginning of the programme.
Pam would not expect us to rigidly stick to a standard as we could deliver more, but we would have to deliver more to everyone.

Pam said this week there was an announcement by Ruth Kelly, the New Secretary of State for the Department of Communities and Local Government about the future of Decent Homes. A copy of the announcement is attached as **ANNEX B** to the minutes.
Ruth Kelly said that whilst they still expect the vast majority of Authorities to ensure all homes are decent by 2010 they are prepared to negotiate with individual authorities around delivering timescale if there are strong extenuating circumstances about extending the work. Supporting the criteria of mixed communities was one set of circumstances.

The place we would go into that negotiation was a Local Area Agreement which was an agreement between the Local Authority and Government on a range of issues, particularly about healthier communities, helping older people, young people, having safer and stronger communities and Economic Development.
The hand out includes officer suggestions about what could be done if we extended the period of doing Decent Homes to 2013. About £2 million a year would be released if we extended the Decent Homes standard to 2013.

The Chair stated that there would be a special meeting between officers and Forum Members to take the matter forward.

**Paula
Mason**

8.0 REPORT FROM ASSOCIATIONS

ACTION

1. GREENLEYS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Fred Smith said the Greenleys Residents Association had received an award from Wolverton and Greenleys Town Council. Fred handed the award over to the Forum

2. BRADVILLE PARISH COUNCIL

Margaret Burke stated that there was a meeting on the 22 June 2006 of the Bradville/North End Residents Association.

3. NETHERFIELD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Eammon Bobey stated that Netherfield had its monthly meeting last night. A letter was required from the Council to say that tenants will not be moved from Netherfield.

4. NETHERFIELD RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Jeanette Bobey said there was a serious condensation problem regarding houses on Netherfield. Dave Siddals had been looking at ventilation in houses in Netherfield.

5. CONNIBURROW COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

George Byfield said the Community Association had been involved in renovating the play area in Conniburrow without any outside financial help.

9.0 OFFICERS REPORTS

ACTION

RESOLVED-

That the minutes of the officers meetings held on 2 May 2006 and 30 May 2006 be noted.

10.0 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

ACTION

1. Certificate for Emergency First Aid

The Chair handed out 6 certificates that had been awarded to tenants who had attended an Emergency First Aid Course. In addition the chair stated vanguard sessions had been well attended and Housing Forum News letters were handed out.

2. Conferences

Margaret Burke asked why there was so little input from the Tenants Forum into the Tenants conference.

Paula Mason replied and said the Housing week will run from 31 July to 5 August 2006, instead of the usual tenants conference in September/October 2006. Housing officers will contact Tenants Representatives to get them involved.

Paula to produce a sheet regarding activities/future dates etc.

P MASON

3. Focus Groups and Vanguard Meetings

Margaret Burke said that Housing Forum representatives should sit on Focus Groups, and Tenant Representatives thought the Council was sidelining the Forum.

Pam Wharfe replied that there were different levels of engagement and the matter including checking current groups to see what is useful and what is not, needed to be resolved by discussions with tenants representatives.

4. CRB Vetting

Margaret Burke asked if Tenant Representatives could have this vetting and would the council pay for this? Pam Wharfe replied that she would ask colleagues in Children Services what the position was.

**Pam
Wharfe**

5. Demoliton of Properties

Margaret Burke said she had received a number of telephone calls regarding demolition of properties, and asked if any houses would be demolished and if so, when and where this would occur.

Councillor I Henderson replied that demolition numbers of 3,500 houses had come from a consultants proposal. There had been a Milton Keynes Partnership Committee meeting on 12 June 2006 which resolved that housing numbers will be provided without demolition.

There were no plans for demolition on any of the estates.

THE CHAIR CLOSED THE MEETING 10.15 PM