

NOTES FROM THE MEETING BETWEEN PAM WHARFE, DIRECTOR OF HOUSING, AND THE MKCHF EXECUTIVE

Held on 14th December 2006 at the TRC

Present: Eamonn Bobey, Margaret Burke, Pauline Prop, Rita Venn, Jeanette Marling, Pam Wharfe, Simon Aslett.

1. Matters arising from last meeting

- No feedback from Derek re contacting Weldons – Simon to chase.
- Tenant involvement in systems thinking – Pam explained that it was not possible to keep reps informed of every new practice or innovation introduced by housing staff. The approach of systems thinking encourages staff to use their own common sense to solve problems and not rely on detailed procedures. Pam invited the Executive to get involved in the work, to call into their local offices and chat to staff. Recently workshops in each office had explored the void process & the Exec is welcome to come in and look at the results.

Overall, Pam said that a more trusting relationship could develop with more partnership work and a positive outlook to the future.

The Exec felt that the purpose of the Vanguard sessions was unclear. There would be a final session that would link the Vanguard outcomes with the TP Compact.

Pam explained that a new lettings procedure was in place where applicants chose property from a pool. There will be more flexibility so new tenants can view properties before the old tenants have moved out and some non-standard items could be 'inherited'. Each case will be dealt with separately bearing in mind the circumstances.

The Exec pointed out that the problem with using common sense is that it can lead to inconsistency, as has happened with some Decent Homes inspections. Also can we stop using woodchip wallpaper when decorating?

- Decent Homes work – All agreed there needs to be good liaison between local reps and contractors. It would also be helpful if reps could meet the sub-contractors used by Apollo.
- Rent increase – Pam expressed disappointment that the preparatory work with the Exec she & others had put in in the weeks preceding the Forum seemed to be ineffective as some Exec members had voted for a lower increase on the night. All agreed that preparatory work, including finance training, should start much earlier in the year so that reps can fully understand the issues and assess the opinions of their tenants.

Pam said that there is a financially difficult period projected for 2012 to 2015 when Decent Homes funding stops but with 'clawback' to Govt still in operation.

- HRA/GF split – some financial information was tabled that showed the funding contribution to the lettings teams. The Exec need some time to consider this in detail.
- Simon to contact Anth re feedback on ASBO costs & funding for extra rubbish collections.

2. Role of the Forum

Eamonn said there were different interpretations of the role.

From a council perspective Pam said the Forum seemed confrontational and antagonistic & some staff who attend were demotivated. The chair set the tone & should take responsibility for this.

Eamonn said that no offence was intended to any staff attending & that they should not take comments personally. The lack of information from the council can lead to frustration amongst reps.

3. Digital TV

Derek is leading on this and will present a report to the Forum. The implications of switchover are huge.

4. TP Healthcheck

No steps have been taken to arrange this so availability and cost is not known. Pam confirmed there was no charge for the TP Vanguard sessions. The Beacon authorities are running some open days to share good practice – Croydon are having one in the Spring & we could all attend.

5. Discount card

There was a meeting yesterday & Wolsey are considering options. Some goods will be excluded. Could the scheme be piloted on an estate?

6. Spring Conference

Has been arranged to promote MK & raise the profile. There are 3 themes – homelessness, partnership working with contractors (opening of Denbigh site) and growth. It will be held at the Hockey Stadium and should be self funding. Phil Woolas, Local Govt Minister, will be opening Denbigh. Tenant reps will be invited and can have an information stand.

7. Date of next meeting

To be arranged