

## NOTES

**Meeting title:** Residents' Panel

**On:** 13 October 2020

**Held at:** via zoom

**Present:** Chongo Shula, Celia Rowe, Cheyenne Greaves, Steve Southwell, Carol Gatford, Nik Bedwell, Michael Burke, Ann Humphreys.  
Observers Sharon Stevenson, Sarah Booker.

**In attendance:** Clive Cavanagh, Community Development Manager, Ruth Pollard, Resident Engagement Officer, Carolyn Silverthorne, Neighbourhood Manager (Central), Shawn Greenfield, Planned Programme Manager, Simon Anderson, Head of Customer Services (for item 7)

## Action

### 1 Apologies and welcome

1.1 Apologies were received from Frances Rainey, Lilian Birchall and Siobhan Capella. Cheyenne welcomed Chongo, Sarah and Sharon to the meeting. Cheyenne went on to introduce the Panel explaining who they are and what they do.

### 2 Chongo Shula, resident board member

2.1 Chongo explained he is quite new to the board and was appointed in January 2020. Chongo works for an energy company but has always carried out voluntarily roles for small companies. One of the key issues Worthing Homes (WH) has is looking to invest in social homes and he feels being on the Board is a great opportunity to champion the vision, values and goals of WH.

### 3 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

3.1 1.1 - Ruth enclosed a copy of Emily Water's presentation with the notes.

3.2 5.1 – Internal/external Christmas decorating competition that Jackie suggested will be advertised in the next issue of Home News.

Ruth

- 3.3 7.1 - Feedback on the value for money self-assessment. Clive has had some preliminary discussions with Ian Reed and Simon Anderson and will be discussing this in more detail.
- 3.4 7.2 – Feedback on value for money self-assessment. Under 3.10 procurement for cleaning Services, Steve asked at what point will residents become involved. Clive informed Steve that both Ruth and he have spoken to Gavin Ratcliff making sure residents are included early on in the tender process as it is key to have residents involved. Steve commented that the cleaning at Camborne Court has been significantly better and thinks the cleaners are using electric machines rather than a mop and bucket. Ruth will pass this compliment to Gavin. Steve asked if the contract will be a one size fits all cleaning contract. Shawn replied it depends on the area as we have areas as far as Chichester and Brighton, we may have two different companies doing the cleaning and maybe different contracts. **Ruth**
- 3.5 9.1 - Replacement of boilers and solar panels. This will be for a future meeting and Celia will keep the Panel informed of progress.
- 3.6 9.6 - Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. Ruth will publicise the neighbourhood watch scheme in the next Home News. **Ruth**

#### **4 Overview of the neighbourhood housing team**

- 4.1 Carolyn gave an overview of the housing teams, what their jobs involve and adjustments they have had to make due to the pandemic. A copy of the presentation will be emailed out with the notes.
- 4.2 Carolyn explained that for project work which had to be done through lockdown they looked at what procedures were in place and how those projects were prioritised and then communicated to the residents of those properties. Carolyn also explained there is some budget for planned works and this is a question Shawn's team have been asking. Areas where work is needed have already been identified as we were not able to do them previously. Carolyn stated that they have been compiling lists of those works and they have been passed to Shawn's team. From a planned point of view Shawn told everyone that undertaking kitchen and bathroom rewires was not possible during the lockdown so WH postponed much of that work but explained that the windows are now starting to be surveyed. All the properties on our list for 2020 will now hopefully be started in the winter. Shawn informed everyone that he has been looking at lighting,

flooring and communal windows. Nik commented that as work had not been done during lockdown when will residents be given a date and also said it would be nice if WH touched base with residents; letting them know time frames and that they haven't been forgotten. Shawn informed Nik that he would like to hear about his experiences with BSW.

- 4.3 Steve asked a question on tenancy monitoring visits during the lockdown, how had WH coped with new tenant visits. Carolyn informed everyone that this work has been carried out mostly over the telephone. Carolyn went on to say that a starter tenancy was an assured short hold tenancy and there is a probationary period of 12 months. During those 12 months WH would expect to have three contact points with a new resident and at least one of those would be a visit. WH usually makes a final decision at around nine months and would do an inspection of the property at this time. WH does still feel it is important to see the resident in their property before we convert it to an assured tenancy at 12 months.

## **5 Communal areas policy**

- 5.1 Carolyn stated that she didn't need to add much to this as she had captured most of it in her presentation and that the Panel had seen the policy. Carolyn informed everyone the main change is that in the past WH would have been alright with limited personal items in the communal hallway but WH is now exercising zero tolerance and this is because of the fire risk assessments and what our assessors have said. Carolyn also stated the policy is now in line with the tenancy agreement.
- 5.2 Steve mentioned that some signage up at Cambourne Court has been taken down by certain individuals. Carolyn informed Steve that she had seen his comments and this had been fed back to Simon.
- 5.3 Carolyn asked the Panel if they felt this was the right way to go and was everyone in agreement with the proposal. Panel members expressed that they agreed.

## **6 Safe and Sound – update**

- 6.1 Shawn stated that with the pandemic everything changed and the safety to residents and contractors was paramount. There will be Safe and Sound information on our website for example about buggies catching fire, why communal areas should be cleared of personal items etc. We

will try and keep this fresh with new and topical information as it arises for example information on fireworks, BBQs etc.

- 6.2 Shawn went on to talk about reviewing how WH does its safety checks and as part of the review Shawn wanted to propose a change in the frequency of the fire alarm testing in low risk blocks of flats specifically for any blocks under 6 floors or any converted property that has 2 floors. The building regulation requirements for fire alarms are to have weekly tests and this is aimed at workplaces where there is lots of footfall. WH propose to test weekly all bigger blocks of flats and sheltered schemes and any blocks they think are at risk and make these weekly. The rest of the blocks WH would like to move to a monthly testing schedule. WH is also going to appoint an independent fire safety consultant to review the existing fire alarm systems with a view to upgrading the alarms and replacing them. We would also like to use remote technology with a blue tooth connection then we can monitor the alarms remotely. If there is a fault on an alarm panel we will be informed.
- 6.3 Shawn informed everyone that there will be a small cost saving from going from weekly to monthly testing. Shawn also commented that WH wants to do assessments of fire doors to every property and check on them at least once a year. Shawn then asked the Panel what they think of this proposal and if the Panel are in agreement how they think WH should communicate this to the residents. Shawn said that he will put something in the Home News magazine and knows that this is a tight turnaround and was willing to catch up with the Panel at a later date.
- 6.4 Shawn noted that a fire door is more important than a fire alarm as a fire door is going to stop the spread of flames the fire alarm is just going to tell him there is a fire. We are not going to stop testing just vary the frequency. Steve suggested that may be create an excel spreadsheet per neighbourhood like WH do on the website for the housing teams and put a column for frequency of test and if residents want to use the website they can look it up. Shawn liked that idea and stated that what he wants to do is make sure that the fire alarm test is done at the same

time every month, so residents are aware that on Monday at 10am their fire alarm is going to be tested and we publish that.

- 6.5 Cheyenne asked Shawn if he could send the document to the Panel. **Shawn**  
Shawn agreed that he can do that. Chongo commented that residents look at social media so maybe put the information on there. Michael commented that putting a message out to the whole community on social media might cause confusion when it was only for specific blocks. Shawn said that what he might do is write to each block as this can be done quickly, get feedback from residents and just target the blocks that are affected.
- 6.6 Steve asked that in the event of an evacuation whose responsibility is it to check residents that are on a 'stay put' policy. Shawn informed Steve that in each block there should be a fire box in the communal area which should contain all the information about vulnerable residents in that block eg bedbound, hard of hearing, in wheelchairs etc. We have many residents who are deaf and can't hear the alarm but we could fit vision alarms in their flats so we can upgrade that as part of this. Also in the fire box there will be information about where all the fire alarm points are, if there is any asbestos in the block, anything that is vital during an emergency should be in the fire box. It can be challenging to keep it up to date but we have to rely on the residents to tell us if their circumstances change.

## **7 Resident involvement and empowerment scrutiny**

- 7.1 Steve gave a presentation on the findings of the recent scrutiny. Ruth will include a copy with the notes.
- 7.2 Steve commented that it was getting very close to becoming a scrutiny on communication. Many other housing associations use the Crystal Mark but WH don't use this and instead have the Resident Approved Stamp. Steve mentioned the white wall in reception and that it would be nice to have 'hello' or 'welcome' in numerous languages across the wall as a graphic. Steve also said that WH literature for residents is very corporate looking.

Steve compared WH literature to other companies and they have graphics on the front cover.

7.3 There were no questions for Steve but Cheyenne said if anyone did have a question to email Steve. Simon and Cheyenne asked Steve if he could send them the 64 page document.

**Steve**

7.4 Clive thanked everyone that was involved in the scrutiny as it has not been an easy time to undertake scrutiny research during a pandemic.

## **8 Election of new Chair**

8.1 Ruth reminded everyone that they had discussed the election of a new Chair at the previous meeting as Cheyenne has now served for 3 years and Ruth asked Panel members to put themselves forward for the role. Only one Panel member had, which was Steve Southwell so as there were no objections Steve will take over as Chair of the Residents' Panel at the next meeting on 8 December.

8.2 Ruth thanked Cheyenne for her time as Chair as did other members of the Panel who also congratulated Steve on his new appointment.

8.3 Ruth noted that at the last meeting we discussed having a vice-chair for the Panel but no one has come forward, if anyone is interested in the position to talk to either Ruth or Clive.

8.4 Chongo thanked everyone for inviting him to attend the meeting saying it had been very informative.

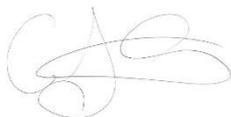
## **9 AOB**

9.1 Ruth had sent out the Pet Policy with the meeting documents and stated that there hadn't been time at the meeting to go through the policy but if anyone has any comments to let Jenny Bojczuk know by email [jbojczuk@worthing-homes.org.uk](mailto:jbojczuk@worthing-homes.org.uk)

9.2 Carol asked if new tenants get a copy of the Pet Policy when they move in. Simon informed Carol that new tenants don't get a copy of the Pet Policy but it is covered in their tenancy agreement and in the residents' handbook. Carol commented that many residents probably don't realise that if their pet dies they would need WH permission to get a new one. Carol also asked how many pets WH allow, because when reading the policy it does not state about the quantity of pets. Carolyn said that these are all comments to

put to Jenny and if members feel anything has been missed out it is a good opportunity to feed this back.

- 9.3 Steve informed everyone that he has 3 people with him now on neighbourhood watch at Cambourne Court.
- 9.4 Steve asked about noticeboards and whether they could be placed outside if there was no room inside. Clive said he will look into this and come back to Steve at the next meeting. Clive mentioned that if the notice board is outside then planning permission may be needed. **Clive**
- 9.5 Celia mentioned that when she goes to her next development meeting she will convey to the development committee that the Panel are interested in becoming involved in sustainability with regard to solar panels and that they are aware of that. **Celia**
- 9.6 Clive suggested he does the next training session at the 8 December meeting as there has been a lot going on in community development. **Clive**



Signed

Chair

Date: 10 November 2020