

NOTES

- Meeting title:** Residents' Panel
- On:** 15 December 2020
- Held at:** via zoom
- Present:** Steve Southwell, Carol Gatford, Nik Bedwell, Ann Humphreys, Sarah Booker, Siobhan Cappella, Lilian Birchall, Frances Rainey
- In attendance:** Clive Cavanagh, Community Development Manager, Ruth Pollard, Resident Engagement Officer, Simon Anderson, Head of Customer Services

Action

1 Training – work of the Community Development Team

- 1.1 Clive gave an overview of the Community Development Team and informed everyone about how the team has grown and with it the areas that we now cover. Clive updated the meeting on the work of the Community House, how it has reopened after refurbishment and a change of personnel and that at the moment they are primarily involved with food donations. Two new members of staff work from the Community House, Helen Williams, the Engagement Officer and Alison Brett who is the Administrator. The Community House will provide at least 51 Christmas dinners to some of the most deprived families in the local area and MORE radio are collecting toys for the Community House to also give to families in need. There is also an exciting new project in Wick, Littlehampton and Felpham which is funded by the Community Lottery Fund as well as a range of engagement work.
- Additional Update:** We actually provided 56 Christmas dinners to 88 adults and 156 children with over 120 children also receiving presents

2 New Community Trust – logo and strapline

- 2.1 The Community Trust is a subsidiary of Worthing Homes (WH) amongst other benefits it allows WH to be in a stronger position when applying for

funding. Clive commented that we have been working on a new logo, which was shared with some of the proposed straplines. Some of the suggestions are: “empowering people working for change” “empowering people creating change”, “neighbourhoods together”, “communities leading change”, “neighbourhoods leading change and “creating opportunities, changing communities together”. Nik commented that he feels the fewer the words the better, Lilian liked “neighbourhoods together, Sarah liked “changing communities together” and Steve liked “communities driving change”. Clive will update the Panel on the final strapline at the next meeting.

Clive

3 Apologies

3.1 Were received from Celia Rowe and Jackie Herbert.

4 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

3.2 – internal/external Christmas decoration competition. This article is going in the Winter Home News.

3.4 – cleaning at Cambourne Court. This compliment has been passed to Gavin Ratcliff.

3.6 – Neighbourhood Watch Scheme. This advert will appear in the Winter Home News.

6.5 - Fire alarm testing. Shawn to send the document to the Panel.

7.3 - Copy of scrutiny presentation to Cheyenne and Simon. Done.

9.4 – Noticeboards outside. Clive to come back to the panel on this.

Clive

5 ASB scrutiny – recommendations (Simon)

5.1 Simon gave the panel an update. The majority of the recommendations have been completed with a few remaining, most are around the website and Simon has been informed by Suzanne that the outstanding actions will be completed in the next few weeks. Simon suggested giving the panel an update at their meeting in February and will be taking these actions and the actions from the most recent scrutiny to the Board in February.

Simon

6 Update on involvement and empowerment scrutiny, housing ombudsman and the white paper on social housing

- 6.1 Steve gave an update on the involvement and empowerment scrutiny, latest news on the housing ombudsman and also the HQN conference on the social housing white paper (presentation attached).

7 Involvement and empowerment scrutiny – recommendations

- 7.1 Simon thanked Steve for his good work in presenting the findings of the scrutiny to the Board. Simon has now identified a member of staff to drive each of these recommendations forward and allocate an estimated time of when they will be achieved. Simon handed over to Ruth who ran through the different recommendations with the action and who will be leading on each one. Some areas, like panel members holding surgeries, will have to be post-Covid. Simon informed everyone that the next bi-monthly managers meeting called 'What Matters Most' with the senior leadership team will be dedicated to the White Paper. Simon will keep the panel updated.

Simon

8 Tenant satisfaction measures - the white paper

- 8.1 Simon shared a table of recommendations that the government think all housing associations should be recording and reporting on. The big focusses are property safety, how we are engaging with our residents and neighbourhood management. Simon asked the panel if they think these are the right questions WH should be asking residents and how they feel WH is doing in respect to customer focus, engagement and health and safety. Are WH providing a good service. Ruth to send the table out with these notes. If anyone has any questions/suggestions please email Simon on sanderson@worthing-homes.org.uk. For Nik a complaint is when something hasn't happened. If someone says "I am fed up with WH" on the Facebook page when does that become a complaint and when is it a moan. If a moan can be dealt with quickly it no longer becomes a complaint just a moan. Simon agreed with Nik and informed everyone that WH gets lots of complaints that are perhaps a moan, for example if an engineer is 30 minutes late to an appointment, we can quickly resolve this. However we still need to record these moans as the same engineer could be 30 minutes late another time and then that becomes a problem.

Ruth

9 Panel's thoughts on holding information on tenants eg ethnicity, disability, sexuality

9.1 Simon informed everyone that this is again linked to the White Paper as there is a big drive from the government that we get to know our tenants better and we are on top of issues around disability where residents may find it difficult to access our services and at the same time move away from holding lots of data on our tenants. WH has tended not to hold sensitive personal data as the Data Protection Act says we should only hold sensitive information if we have a valid purpose. Simon asked the Panel if this is something we should gather on a wider basis as the government has made it clear that we should be getting to know our tenants better. Steve commented that the more inclusive WH becomes the less need there is to ask the questions as we would have tools in place eg Browse Allowed for those where English is not their first language. Also if you had gender neutral toilets you would not have to worry about someone who was transgender having to make a decision or have a conversation. Simon said WH aspiration is always to be inclusive but if we don't truly know our residents how can we be. Nik feels WH does need to record this information as residents can choose not to provide the information but we can be unconsciously biased if we don't have or try to get the information. Simon thanked everyone for their thoughts.

10 Opening hours

10.1 Simon informed everyone that due to Covid WH has completely changed how they deliver their services. This has given WH an opportunity to look at how it operates. We will open the office to customers at some point in the future but in the meantime we have launched a portal and one of the things we need to think about is how WH makes themselves available to tenants. In the past we have been very traditional - Monday-Friday 9am-5pm. Simon referred to the call stats that had been circulated before the meeting stating that there is still a large volume of calls first thing in the morning.

10.2 Simon recommended extending the hours for a trial period, maybe open at 8am to phone calls. The CET find that between 4.45pm-5.00pm there is a rush of calls so maybe we extend opening till 6pm to be more flexible for

those who work. Simon will be trialling this for a few weeks to see how it goes. The Panel confirmed that they think this is a good idea.

11 **AOB**

11.1 Clive mentioned some time ago the panel looked at the HQN Together with Tenants Charter and it was felt that WH was already doing everything asked of us so we did not sign up as an early adopter. Clive wanted to know if the Panel feel that WH should now sign up to this. It backs up what has been mentioned in the White Paper and enfranchisement of the resident body. Clive asked the panel to get back to him by Tuesday 22 December if anyone has any comments otherwise he will take it the Panel are in agreement to join.

All

11.2 Ruth is looking into training as there have been quite a few changes in panel membership and been in touch with Michael Guest of The Housing Quality Network (HQN) who proposes three training sessions of 2.5 hours each starting with an introduction to social housing followed by the Residents' Panel working as a team and lastly scrutiny, why, when and how. It was agreed to do the first training session on 19 January.

11.3 Lilian mentioned that pre-Covid she had been working with Dementia Friendly Worthing and would like Worthing Homes to join the dementia alliance as this is a huge problem and does get pushed to one side. WH will receive lots of information on how we can help our residents. Clive asked Ruth to look into joining the alliance and training. We have been a dementia friendly organisation since 2015 but there is a need for retraining and a number of new people now in the business.

Ruth

11.4 Ann was recently sent a text with a couple of questions on grounds maintenance. The text said to follow the link but Ann does not have a smart phone so was unable to follow the link, there was no name to the text as if there had been Ann would have contacted them to ask for a written copy. We need to give residents as many ways as possible to respond. Ruth will try to find out who sent the text and inform other staff to consider this when sending texts out in future.

Ruth

11.5 Siobhan highlighted a recent issue she and the other residents have had to do with a fire risk assessment carried out 6 months previously which had culminated in residents having to pay £250 towards fire doors with very little correspondence and were threatened with legal proceedings if they did not pay. Siobhan asked when correspondence is sent out can we

please make sure it is in laymen's terms, a full explanation is given for doing the work, it is written in plain English and does not contain jargon.

- 11.6 Simon thanked Steve and the rest of the Residents' Panel for all they have done this year as it has been a far from straight forward year.

Signed  Chair Date: 18 January 2021