

Northwards Housing – Riverways Panel meeting

Minutes of meeting held on 28th June 2006

Monsall Street Local Services Office

Chair: Vera Salvatore

Present:

Vera Salvatore (VS)	Panel Member
Alice Needham (AN)	Panel Member
Pat Glazebrook (PG)	Panel Member
Ivy Graham (IG)	Panel Member
Sue Abbott (SA)	Panel Member
Barbara Grey (BG)	Panel Member
Kath Hope (KH)	Panel Member
Marlene Garnett (MG)	Panel Member
Anne McBride (AM)	Panel Member
June Hitchen (JH)	Councillor
Mick Loughman (ML)	Councillor
Emma Foster (EF)	Principal Local Services Manager
Rob Doherty (RD)	Local Services Manager
Diane Roberts (DR)	Governance Officer
Siaran Coleman (SC)	Resident Involvement Officer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	Welcome and introductions	
1.1	Chair welcomed all attendees to meeting. Meeting was quorate.	
1.2	JH wished a note to be made that perhaps people who want to observe a meeting put their request in writing in advance of the meeting where possible and that Northwards will make checks to ensure that these observers are suitable to attend i.e. they must be able to prove they live in the area. SC to check rules re: attendance by observers and report back to panel at the next meeting	SC to check rules re: observers
2	Apologies for Absences	
2.1	Michelle Blackeley and Raymond Eaton sent their apologies.	
3	Declaration of Interests/Confidential Matters	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
3.1	MG read out a letter from a satisfied tenant and gave it to EF for forwarding to Operational Services	
4	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting</p> <p>4.1 EF updated on several actions from the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIP environmental works – RD has put together the pack that was promised. • Funding opportunities from Housing Market Renewal (HMR) for the environmental works – EF has spoken to Private Sector Housing but they cannot indicate the level of assistance they can provide without firm details of the schemes. EF will go back to them when a decision on the works had been made. • Tenants newsletter – arranged for IG and MG to receive several copies. MG confirmed she received them, IG did not recall but needed to check with the Treasurer of her TA. <p>4.2 VS asked if £30K was definitely going to Scotland Hall Road. EF replied that it was just a proposal at the moment.</p> <p>4.3 EF proposed to take the Area Panel members out to see the sites for themselves so that they will have better information on which to base their final decision. Members agreed that this was a good idea.</p> <p>4.4 BG asked whether more specific information was available on the capital works programme as the previous meetings' minutes states only that 'something' will be done within 2 years. SC stated that a draft copy of the planning schedule was available on the Internet, if KH does not have access to the Internet she will provide KH will a copy.</p> <p>4.5 AM stated that at the moment she cannot say anything specific to people about the improvements. ML stated that capital improvements works will be over 5 years, in his experience in the Clayton area nothing will be done until the money has been received and someone has to be first, unfortunately someone has to be last. EF added that the funds have not been received yet but AM could tell her residents that Northwards will be meeting all the promises it made during the ALMO vote. JH recommended that TA representatives are told of the improvements programme prior to the information being made public so that when residents ask the reps questions they will have the information. KH agreed that it would be beneficial</p> <p>4.6 Minutes were agreed</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>EF to arrange prior to next meeting</p> <p>SC to send copy to KH</p>
5	Matters Arising	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
5.1	None	
6	Minutes of Board Meeting 11/04/06	
6.1	<p>DR mentioned that the Wilton panel had asked the Board to look at whether fences/gates could be provided for voids (page 3 of board minutes). As a consequence the sub-committee will look at it. In future any points raised by the area panels will be put on the agenda of the relevant sub committee.</p> <p>Panel noted the minutes of the meeting</p>	Noted
7	Minutes of Other Panel Meetings	
7.1	The panel noted the minutes of Wilton Panel meeting for 25/04/06	Noted
7.2	<p>JH asked about the Choice Based Lettings (CBL) scheme discussed at the Wilton panel and whether Northwards have to do it EF replied that Northwards is required to have a CBL scheme and she believed that it had to be in place for all lettings by 2010. She added that Homefinder, as Northwards' CBL scheme, was now in place for the majority of lettings and that she believed that target was 90% of lettings to go through Homefinder. JH requested that CBL be added to next month's agenda. However EF replied that there were already plans for a member of the rehousing team to attend the area panel meeting and this is likely to be in August. DR confirmed this.</p>	
7.3	<p>ML raised concerns about unsuitable homeless families being put in properties due to lack of communication between the Local Services Team and Homeless Families. EF agreed that there is often little communication between Homeless Families and the Local Services Team. RD stated that there lots of support is now in place for vulnerable tenants such as the resettlement officer that is based at Monsall Street and communication is improving. MG stated that in her experience tenants that may have issues that make it difficult to maintain their tenancy cannot be required to accept help from resettlement/tenancy support. EF confirmed that Northwards could not insist tenants accept support, where support is refused and problems persist the Local Service Team take enforcement action.</p>	
7.4	The panel noted the minutes of Fourways Panel meeting for 26/04/06	Noted
8	Sub-Committee Updates	
8.1	<p>EF reiterated the promise to provide full minutes of the sub-committee meetings if anyone required them.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
8.2	Sub-committee summaries were noted	Noted
9	<p>PLSM Update</p> <p>9.1 RD ran through top line figures for the area covered by the panel (see attached document).</p> <p>9.2 MG asked why so many properties are offered through Homefinder and whether it was because people did not want these properties. RD replied that the properties are offered through Homefinder because it is policy. EF stated that properties used to be passed to Homefinder when they were hard to let, but that this was not the case anymore. She informed the panel that the way Northwards use Homefinder is being looked at by Anne Duffield (Rehousing Manager) who is looking at how Northwards advertise properties and how we clearly Northwards communicates the process of using Homefinder.</p> <p>9.3 JH asked what would happen if a prospective tenant who had been queuing for a property didn't call Homefinder? Would they get left behind? EF replied that Group E applicants are automatically registered for properties. In addition the top ten applicants on the list in Group 2 are sent a letter to inform them of their position and to encourage them to register for properties on Homefinder.</p> <p>9.4 JH stated she was not happy with the CBL system if people who had queued for several years were being denied a property because they were not calling Homefinder. She stated that she felt, whilst the queues for areas were large, properties should not be on Homefinder. EF replied that she would take concerns to the Executive Management Team. SC suggested that any action be deferred until a member of the rehousing team attends the area panel meeting and issues/concerns can be discussed fully. SA asked attendees to give others the opportunity to speak at the meeting. She also stated that the concerns of the area panel on this issue could be passed to the Board in the first instance, but no further action be taken until a full explanation is provided by the Rehousing Team.</p> <p>9.5 ML asked if it was Northwards policy to let up to 90% of empty properties through CBL or are other Registered Social Landlord's doing it? RD replied that his understanding was that Homefinder may become a North West initiative, not just Manchester. He suggested adding CBL to the agenda for the next meeting. ML asked if Area Panel members could receive more information on CBL is general, i.e reports etc. SC agreed to source reports.</p>	<p>EF to forward concerns</p> <p>SC to source reports on CBL</p>
10	HIP Environmental Works	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
10.1	A 'pack' of photographs illustrating the proposed schemes was handed out to attendees. EF asked any attendees that did not receive a pack of their own to let her know and she will arrange for one to be delivered to them. RD went through the proposed schemes and stated that he was still awaiting feedback about the Scotland Road environmental works	
10.2	JH mentioned that the piece of land behind Ten Acres Road, which has been put forward as a proposal, is a very large piece of land that has been neglected and is known as a crime & disorder hotspot. There is also a problem with infestation. JH added that she didn't agree with the proposal for the widening of someone's drive. Why should some people have to pay to have a drop kerb etc yet this proposal will be giving some tenants a wider driveway. RD replied that this proposal was more about ensuring that cars are taken off the road.	
10.3	EF reiterated that all the projects were just proposals at the moment and asked members to put forward any other projects if they wished. She also updated panel members on the Pitsford Road suggestion as it has been decided that the cost of improving the area was prohibitive given that it is not owned by Northwards nor MCC. EF stated that this decision had been discussed with the panel member who had proposed the scheme. RD asked the panel members to remember that the sums of money for environmental works were going to be made available over three years so schemes that were unsuccessful in the first year could be proposed again in the subsequent years. IG stated that although she had requested £90K for the scheme she proposed, if she was awarded a smaller sum she could then approach other funders for 'match funding'. AM asked if cash grants were different. EF replied that they were.	
10.4	KH stated that from the photographs provided by RD, Primley Walk looked to be in a terrible state and needed more than fencing and gates. RD replied that the windows and doors etc would be part of the improvement scheme and that the proposal covered more than just fences and gates.	
10.5	JH asked how quickly something can be implemented when a decision has been made. EF stated that she would like to see decisions made in the next area panel meeting. She added that the Local Services team hoped to arranged a tour of the proposed schemes prior to the next meeting so that when the money is awarded to Northwards (from the Audit Inspection), the schemes can begin to be implemented.	
10.6	MG asked if the costs specified so far have been put out to tender. EF replied that Northwards has to use certain contractors. RD added that some of the figures were approximate.	

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10.7	JH asked if the area panel were going to use a pointing system when deciding which scheme to award cash to. SC agreed that the panel need to assess on given criteria to ensure fairness. EF stated that the area panel should advice SC of the criteria they would like to use before the tour.	AP members to provide ideas. SC to produce document.
10.8	ML stated that the area panel would need to be careful about where they spent the money as a number of proposed schemes were around the same area in Newton Heath and the spending of the money should be seen to be fairly distributed.	
11	Area Panel Development	VS to speak to Sue Ratchford SC to contact VS to set a date
11.1	DR passed round performance indicators for Northwards, advance copies of the tenants newsletter and the area panel work plan. She stated that there is a meeting booked for August 30 th and asked if this was convenient for panel members. Three area panel members would not be available on that date. An alternative date was suggested of September 6 th and just one panel member could not attend. Consequently the 6 th September was agreed; venue to be confirmed.	
11.2	DR went through the work plan and the action plan from the Together We Can event. DR asked area panel members to bring back work plan/action plan to the next area panel meeting.	
11.3	DR also mentioned the visit to On Call and that a date had not been fixed as yet. VS agreed to speak to Sue Ratchford about the visits.	
11.4	DR mentioned the visit to the Riverways area for the other area panels, which is to be held at Croyden Drive Community Room and asked VS when would be convenient. VS was not able to say at the meeting and agreed SC to liaise with her to set a date.	
11.5	ML noted that the agenda for the Area Panel meeting was lengthy and DR agreed that the agenda items needed to be prioritised.	
12	Inspection Update	
12.1	EF stated that the inspection was now finished and that Northwards were in the process of forwarding the last bits of information to the Audit Commission. She stated that the last feedback session from the Inspectors was very positive and that Northwards was now awaiting the results in August.	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
13	AOB	
13.1	EF mentioned that the Tenants Handbook was in the process of being distributed to all new tenants.	
13.2	JH asked that Northwards provide area panel members with computers to enable them to communicate between each other effectively.	
13.3	SC passed round details of a focus group for disabled resident and their representatives. SA asked if the Riverways panel had a member who was able to speak from the viewpoint of disabled residents. VS stated that RJE may be able to do so.	

	Date of Next Meeting	
	Wednesday 26 th July 2006 at 6.30p.m. Monsall Street Local Services Office.	

Riverways Panel Information – 28th June 2006

Voids	
1	Harpurhey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35 Voids in total (reduction of 2 from last month) • 6 in notice period • 20 are with contracting services – 2 are late • 2 let • 3 ready to let – provisionally accepted to be signed within 5 working days • 4 ready to let awaiting Homefinder offers • 1 adapted flat awaiting suitable applicant
2.	Ancoats and Clayton Ward
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 voids in Victoria Square and Anita Street • 3 flats with contracting services – with 2 late back • 1 let • 1 to be signed within 5 days • 5 being advertised with Homefinder
3.	Miles Platting and Newton Heath Ward
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 59 voids in total (reduction of 8 from last month) • 5 notice voids • 3 currently under survey • 2 awaiting removal of furniture • 26 voids with contracting services – which 11 are late • 10 let • 5 ready to let – accepted with sign ups due within 5 days • 8 ready to let offered to Homefinder

Neighbour Nuisance Information	
1	Harpurhey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 ex-parte ASBO's gained with 2 full trials in October • 1 case being pursued for eviction – hearing date in July (Monsall Resident) • 4 cases referred to Mediation
2	Miles Platting and Newton Heath Ward
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 possession result for a case in the Acot Road area due on the 7th July • 1 ASBO being pursued • 3 cases referred to Mediation