

**Wilton Area Panel meeting
(Cheetham Hill, Crumpsall, Higher Blackley)**

**Minutes of meeting held at 6.30pm, 25th April 2006
At the Cheetham Hill Community Room Local Services Office**

Chair: Charles Taggart

Present:

Sue Pemberton (SP)	Panel Member
Charles Taggart (CT)	Panel Member (Vice-chair)
Doris Leach (DL)	Panel Member
Irene Madden (IM)	Panel Member
Jim Burke (JB)	Panel Member
Melanie Beckford (MB)	Panel Member
Ken Barnes (KB)	Panel Member and Councillor (Higher Blackley)
Richard Lockwood (RL)	Board Member
Laura Gormely (LG)	Northwards Local Service Manager
Tony Budgett (TB)	Northwards Surveyors
Diane Roberts (DR)	Northwards Housing (GO)
Mike Stevens (MS)	Director of N/hood Services
Louise Mitchell (LM)	Northwards Housing (CO)
Nicola Holmes (NH)	Northwards Housing (TLO)

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>Introductions were made by everyone. A full Quorate was in attendance.</p>	
2	<p>Apologies for Absences</p> <p>Apologies given by: Sue Ratchford, Eileen Kelly, Anne Heywood</p>	
3	<p>Declaration of Interests/Confidential Matters</p> <p>None Declared.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
4	<p>Tenant Compact Update – Mike Stevens</p> <p>MS explained that a draft version of the Compact has been written and the Tenant Participation Task had met on the 24th April 06 to discuss it. They recommended a few adjustments and the follow up amended version will be discussed again on the 03rd May 06. The Compact is due to go to the Board on the 16th May 06. The amended version will be posted to panel members by the end of the week. Comments were invited ASAP.</p>	NH
5	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting</p> <p>5.1 MS apologised for the late circulation of the minutes. Explained this was due to a hectic schedule in getting ready for the inspection.</p>	
6	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>6.1 JB asked for an update on the empty asylum seeker properties. MS spoke of how he had met with the Asylum Team since the last meeting and they have explained that their contract with the Home Office is currently under review. This will see a reduction in the number of properties reserved for asylum seekers and properties will be returned to general management. There are currently 36 empty properties across the Northwards area, at one time this was over 100. This is less than 1% of Northwards housing. This is an historic problem but the changes should come into effect fairly quickly with properties starting to come back into general management in May. KB stated that he believed that the problem is with the whole system and that properties had become stigmatised as a result. He asked if he could have a list of the addresses that were being returned to general management. MS replied that he would need to check with asylum team.</p> <p>6.2 JB questioned why this panel meeting was being held at Cheetham Hill community centre when most members were from the north. MS explained that Hexagon Tower is a high security site and the health and safety issues make it difficult to hold meetings there. The group decided that the monthly meetings would be rotated between Cheetham Hill and White Moss.</p>	MS
7	<p>Board Meeting Minutes (for Noting)</p> <p>The panel noted the minutes held on 14th March 2006</p>	Noted

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
8	Minutes of Other Panel Meetings	
8.1	Fourways Panel 25/01/06 were noted. Riverways Panel 25/01/06 were noted.	Noted
8.2	SP asked what would happen in a situation where the 3 panels disagree. CT advised that the role of the panels is to recommend to the board and it is the Board that will make the ultimate decision.	
9	Communication Leaflets – Lou Mitchell	
9.1	<p>LM had previously sent the Panel members samples of leaflets intended for use in the new Tenants handbook. The final leaflets will be A5 in size and will be contained in a hard back folder. She asked the group if they would consider whether they found the draft leaflets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appealing • Informative • Easy to read • Easy to understand. <p>DL asked if the leaflet on how to settle in your community was for everyone or just black minority ethnic (BME) people.</p> <p>LM explained that the Tenants Handbook was for everyone but that there was a specific leaflet for BME people in order to address and include North Manchester's BME population.</p> <p>JB commented that he thought the leaflets were good. He would like to see a leaflet about home and garden maintenance. He realised it was in the tenancy agreement but thought it needed highlighting and reinforcing.</p> <p>MS explained that the staff checklist was being reviewed.</p> <p>MB commented that she found the leaflets to be very positive. She believed them to be welcoming that they show that Northwards cares.</p> <p>KB commented that he would like to see a leaflet detailing how to contact the various residents groups.</p> <p>LM explained that this will be included in one of the 34 leaflets that are being produced. The leaflets will all be colour coded as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green – Your neighbourhood • Pink – Rents and Benefits • Orange – Standards • Purple – Your home <p>LM requested people to contact her with any further comments.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
9.2	<p>Editorial Group</p> <p>LM announced that she will be producing a quarterly newsletter for tenants and needs to know what tenants would like the content to be. JB suggested that the newsletter include the announcement of events such as a Fun Day that is happening shortly. He would also like to see announcements and dates that show progress made by Capital Works.</p> <p>CT queried whether the newsletter would just contain Northwards information or may include some City Council information. It was decided that City Council produces its own newsletters so Northwards would not cover City council information.</p> <p>LM left her details and requested that anyone with ideas or would like to be part of the editorial group to contact her.</p>	
13 13.1	<p>Quarterly Repairs Performance – Tony Budget</p> <p>TB went through the Report to Local Area Panel and Northwards Local Performance Indicators. He drew attention to the following points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The first column of figures refers to Manchester City council. -The second column of figures refers to the Northwards area (Not specifically Northwards Housing) -NHL040, the target for non-urgent repairs is 6 days and not 9.1. -NHL081, the target for average repair cost has been set at £40 - NHL082, a variation order is an adage to the original job. The target is to be 26%. 	
18 18.1	<p>Tenant Reply Form</p> <p>TB talked through the Tenant Reply Forms process and explained that they will be looked at on a weekly basis.</p> <p>MB told the group about a complaint that she recently had to make to On-call regarding a missed appointment. MB commented that the contractor could simply have left a card to say that the work had already been completed. However MB praised the service she received after making the initial complaint.</p> <p>JB and SP also mentioned that they had had to make recent complaints.</p> <p>MS asked the group if they would like to make the issue of repairs an agenda item. This was welcomed by the group who would also like to have a representative there from City works.</p> <p>MS reported that a procurement exercise is in progress.</p> <p>JB commented that he found the City works contractors to be very</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p>respectful when attending people's homes. SP asked whether the group would be able to see the percentage of jobs where a complaint is received and the percentage of complaints resolved after the first stage. MS replied that this should be possible in the future. RL asked what percentage of the Tenant Reply Forms get returned. TB and MS both agreed that the percentage was fairly high but were not able to give an exact figure.</p>	
10	<p>Sub-Committee Updates – Mike Stevens</p> <p>The panel noted the Sub-committee minutes.</p>	Noted
11 11.1 11.2	<p>PLSM Update</p> <p>MS announced that the Performance Management framework figures had just been made available and are currently being checked. The report should be ready for the next panel meeting.</p> <p>Local Services Update</p> <p>LG explained that the Anti Social Behaviour Action Team has set up a training programme for local officers. This will run throughout May and June. The training is intended as a 'back to basics' exercise and will cover the whole process starting from the initial complaint. JB asked if it would make the process quicker. LB replied that because the local teams will now have more time for the issue of anti social behaviour then it is hoped so and it should be a really positive move. MS added that it is not necessarily about more action but the right action. KB commented that he believed the problem has historically been due to lack of intelligence during the initial investigation.</p>	
12 12.1	<p>HIP Environmental Works Update – PLSM</p> <p>LG explained that she had met with the Environmental Officers regarding the £250,000 Capital Programme Environmental works and circulated papers containing ideas for discussion.</p> <p>JB mentioned that the Plant Hill area was not mentioned. LG said they are welcoming all ideas and to ring her on 740 8332. JB mentioned that 2 greens off Morton road are in need of £5,000 to be turned into a car park. He also disagreed with the £5,000 for Cheetwood off road parking stating it was too much.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p>CG announced that the Riverdale flowerbeds have been approved by the relevant resident group.</p> <p>KB said that he believed that Northwards should write to each resident group and ask them for opinions.</p> <p>LG replied that this was a good idea. She also requested that people with ideas contact her..</p>	LG
14	<p>Area Panel Development – Mike Stevens</p> <p>MS explained that a Panel Development Plan will be constructed with the help of Enlighten consultants. The idea is to bring the 3 panels together to talk about various issues, such as how to be more effective and what type of support is needed. The date is 13th May 06</p>	
15	<p>Business Plan (Key Issues) – Mike Stevens</p> <p>MS talked through the development of the Business Plan and explained that this report has been to the Board.</p> <p>KB queried the section ‘The ballot of tenants produced very strong support for NH; this illustrates the high regard for the service locally’ KB felt that this was inaccurate and that the support for NH was simply due to the promise of new bathrooms and windows.</p> <p>MS commented that this was open to interpretation.</p> <p>KB also asked what provisions were being made for the possible shortfall of accommodation if Right to Buy applications increase.</p> <p>RL explained that some ALMO’s are able to provide new builds, especially in London.</p> <p>MS agreed that it is something that needs looking into and that Northwards needs analyse supply and demand in each area.</p>	MS
16	<p>Equality and diversity Action Plan</p> <p>MS told the group that the board needs to agree the plan in May. Northwards have a new Equality and Diversity Manager. He explained that Northwards would be compared to other authorities.</p> <p>The panel agreed to have a detailed discussion about this item at a later stage.</p> <p>SP asked whether the document mentions the Disability Equality Duty (DED) that will be coming in this year.</p> <p>MS replied that it would need to be clarified.</p> <p>Comments were invited to go to Olivia Stokes.</p>	MS

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
17	<p>Choice Based Lettings – Mike Stevens</p> <p>MS explained that Choice Based Lettings is required to be in place by social housing providers by 2010. The ethos behind Choice Based Lettings is to render the waiting list redundant and reduce the time being wasted due to the refusal of properties. When people register for housing they are allocated points according to their need, they are then able to bid for advertised properties. The system allocates points according to priority and still allows flexibility when needed. Some properties are held back from advertisement for priority need or decant but around two thirds of properties are let through Choice Based Lettings.</p> <p>JB suggested that properties could be advertised on Manchester TV. MS replied that advertisement is one of the issues that will be examined by Northwards. The current magazine that advertises the properties is well used resource.</p> <p>KB questioned whether the system could be putting people without access to a computer at a disadvantage as it appears that the best way to use Homefinder is through the internet.</p> <p>MS explained that the bids for properties are collated at the end of the week so if someone bids first on the internet it does mean they have priority.</p> <p>KB questioned whether tenants still have a Right to Exchange. MS explained that Right to Exchange has stayed the same.</p> <p>KB queried the fact that the information pack on Choice Based Lettings contained certain conditions to the Right to Exchange, for instance good garden maintenance. He felt that this was irrelevant as the tenants Legal Right to Exchange would override any conditions. He also asked if Housing Associations (HA) offer the Right to Exchange.</p> <p>MS replied that HA do offer the Right to Exchange and that you can exchange from an ALMO to a HA. There is a link on the Northwards website to the various housing organisation that are linked together in this way. He added that he would get clarification on the Legal Right to Exchange issue.</p>	MS
	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 30th May at 6.30pm at The White Moss Community Room, White Moss Road.</p>	
	<p>End of Meeting</p> <p>The meeting closed 9pm</p>	