

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

**Minutes of meeting held at 6:30pm, 29th August 2006
At the Cheetham Hill Community Room Local Services Office**

Chair: Sue Ratchford

Present: Sue Ratchford (SR)	Panel Member (Chair)
Charles Taggart (CT)	Panel Member (Vice-chair)
Sue Pemberton (SP)	Panel Member
Jim Burke (JB)	Panel Member
Melanie Beckford (MB)	Panel Member
Anne Heywood(AH)	Panel Member
Mike Bolshaw (MiB)	Panel Member
Joan Wilson (JW)	Panel Member
Ken Barnes (KB)	Panel Member and Councillor (Higher Blackley)
Naeem Ul Hassan (NUH)	Panel Member and Councillor (Cheetham)
Arthur Kay (AK)	City Council, Environmental Services
Anne Duffield (AD)	Northwards, PLSM (White Moss)
Mike Stevens (MS)	Northwards, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Diane Roberts (DR)	Northwards, Governance Support Officer
Nicola Holmes (NH)	Northwards, Resident Involvement Officer
Mark Bainbridge (MaB)	Observer

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>A full Quorate was in attendance.</p>	
2	<p>Apologies for Absences</p> <p>Apologies given by: Richard Lockwood, Mike Lee, Erle Gardener</p>	
3	<p>Training</p> <p>3.1 <u>Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance</u> Arthur Kay from Manchester City Council Environmental Services introduced himself and explained he was here to give the Panel an insight into the work carried out by street cleansing and grounds maintenance.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
3.1a	<p><i>He explained that each area is mapped using a colour coded system. In the north they cover 488.4 miles using 8 clean teams.</i></p> <p><i>Night working has now been implemented across the city. This service is still under review.</i></p> <p><i>Street cleansing have 177 staff for the whole city. Grounds maintenance have 88 staff for the whole city.</i></p> <p><i>The areas covered include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Passage clearing</i> • <i>Dog fouling</i> • <i>Litter bin round</i> • <i>Street washing</i> • <i>Emergency response</i> • <i>Litter picking</i> • <i>Bedding planting</i> • <i>Turf maintenance</i> <p><i>Work is affected by the weather and seasons. Blossom fall is an issue in the spring and pavement gritting happens in the winter. Only priority A and B pathways are gritted.</i></p> <p><i>Local events also affect the work schedules, e.g. festivals.</i></p> <p><i>Partnership working is important. Time is spent working with schools, Members and sheltered housing amongst other agencies.</i></p> <p>JB asked who checks if a void garden has been maintained properly. AD explained that it was the responsibility of the local housing team. SP commented that she believed the problem with void gardens can be due to the length of time taken to let a property.</p>	
3.1b	<p>KB asked AK where the money for environmental services comes from.</p> <p>AK replied that it was from Council funds. Schools pay individually from their devolved budgets</p> <p>KB asked if the grass cuttings would be collected if housing paid for that service.</p> <p>AK explained that yes that service could possibly be provided but it requires specialist machinery and would have significant cost implications. It is also not possible in wet conditions. The problem is better managed by cutting and dropping more regularly.</p>	
3.1c	<p>KB asked about composting. AK replied that all materials collected are recycled and no peat based products are used.</p>	
3.1d	<p>KB asked if apprenticeships were offered by Environmental Services. AK explained that they need to be a multi skilled service and many staff possess NVQ's and City and Guilds. However, they do not</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	currently offer apprenticeships.	
	<u>Rehousing and allocations.</u>	
3.2	Anne Duffield introduced herself as the Principal Local Services Manager for White Moss Road and was also responsible for the Rehousing team. She proceeded to present training on Rehousing and Allocations. (see appendix 1)	
3.2a	KB commented that he felt Homefinder disadvantaged people who are not able to phone up every week, don't have access to the internet or maybe go on holiday and miss a property that they been waiting a long time for.	
	MS and AD both explained that Homefinder would be subject to a review and these issues would be looked into. The review would look at better ways of advertising, and would also look at different ways of bidding for properties, e.g. an officer bidding on an applicant's behalf.	
3.2b	JB talked of a situation he had encountered whereby Local Services have not communicated with the Rehousing Team and a tenant that had been evicted due to anti-social behaviour was allowed onto the rehousing list.	
	AD replied that applicants do have to provide references which are checked along with the Rehosing Review List. Now that the new Rehousing Team is well established it should mean an improvement in this area.	
	MS added that the specialist Rehousing Team should also be better able to manage the imbalance of supply and demand, making sure that applicants are awarded the correct priority and properties are correctly offered in line with policy.	
3.2c	KB queried the system in place that requires an applicant to prove they have a community connection. He spoke of two instances where a relative had to present in person at Local Services. He asked why electoral roll or rent records could not just be checked.	
	AD replied that she would need to look into the specific advice given on the community connection and would feedback.	AD
3.2d	NUH commented that he often speaks to people in his surgery who have been waiting for housing for a considerable length of time but seem unaware that they need to bid on Homefinder. He suggested a service to help people bid for properties, e.g. a time allotted to attend the Local Service office and a designated person is available.	
	AD explained this issue would be looked at as part of the review. She made it clear that all Northwards staff and On Call should be using Language Line where necessary; and support and communication needs should be being identified at registration if not before.	
4	Break	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
5	<p>Declaration of Interests/Confidential Matters</p> <p>None Declared.</p>	
6	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting</p> <p>6.1 MS highlighted that Michelle Blakeley was spelt incorrectly as Blackley.</p> <p>6.2 MS explained that his apologies should have been given.</p> <p>6.3 KB pointed out that his comment 15.3 should read ‘<i>Officers</i> ‘ who come to the Panel meeting should be well informed.</p> <p>6.4 Minutes agreed, subject to the above changes.</p>	
7	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>7.1 MS explained that item 5.3, discussion of the Asylum Property system at the Board would be acted upon. The Board would be asked to consider a report on the issue. It was agreed that items put forward for discussion at Board level would be displayed in bold in the Panel minutes. It was also agreed that a progress report for these items would be put as a standing item on the agenda.</p> <p>7.2 MS pointed out that in Item <u>11, Voids Performance</u>, the figure of 137 days was incorrect and should have been 77 days. MS explained the 78.95% against a target of 98% when registering an applicant within 10 days on <u>Rehousing Performance</u>. He explained that there was a big increase in people registering for housing. He also explained that that particular indicator was not the only measure of rehousing activity, and was probably not the most important, particularly in a situation where rehousing times are much longer. Nevertheless, it is something which is being looked into as part of reviewing current performance.</p> <p>7.3 MS agreed that the issue of having a senior manager present at Panel meetings was an important issue as raised in item 15.3. He also agreed that Officers should be well informed and able to answer questions. He explained that it was his intention to attend the Panel meetings in the future. SP commented that the last meeting wasn’t the only occasion that Panel members felt they were being neglected. MS agreed with this, and gave his assurance that panel members’ comments had been taken on board. The issue will be brought to the attention of the Board.</p>	<p>NH</p> <p>DR</p>

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
7.4	<p>JW commented that she still wasn't clear of the role of the Panel and its relationship to the Board.</p> <p>CT explained that the Panel makes recommendations to the Board.</p> <p>KB explained that the Panel also acts as a voice for the local community.</p> <p>MS commented that maybe Northwards needs to get better at feeding back issues. This would be looked at as part of reviewing the panels' effectiveness.</p>	
7.5	<p>JB asked the Panel if they thought it worthwhile to vote on the effectiveness of Homefinder.</p> <p>SR thought that the Panel were probably not at that stage yet and would need to be better informed first.</p> <p>KB thought the Panel should see a recommendation or options in written form first.</p> <p>MB felt she would need to be better informed first.</p> <p>MS commented that there would need to be a further detailed discussion on the subject first in order to do it justice. This would happen as part of the city wide policy review, on which Northwards will be consulted. He also mentioned that Manchester City Council should be involved in any such discussion, which might even merit a dedicated meeting.</p>	
8	Board Meeting Minutes (for Noting)	
	Noted	Noted
8a	Area Panel minutes to the Board	
	<p>DR said that it had been suggested that the minutes from the Wilton Panel meetings get approved by the Chair and then go straight to the next Board meeting. Amendments could still be made by the Panel at their next meeting. This would make the process of feeding issues from the Panel to the Board a lot faster.</p> <p>There were no objections to this procedure being put in place.</p>	
9	Minutes of Other Panel Meetings	
	<p>Fourways Panel minutes from 28th June were noted.</p> <p>Riverways Panel were from 28th June were noted.</p>	<p>Noted</p> <p>Noted</p>
10	Complaints Activity	
10.1	<p>MS presented the complaints activity report.</p> <p>He explained that Northwards is conscious that as an organisation it needs to get better at learning from complaints. Northwards needs to work at using complaints to improve the service rather than just</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
10.2	<p>solving individual cases. An open and transparent quarterly report will hopefully help this process along.</p> <p>SP asked what the 'other' types of complaints were under subject area.</p> <p>MS explained that 'other' meant other tenancy management issues and that it was not intended to use that category for future reports.</p> <p>KB asked if staff attitude will be shown as a future subject area.</p> <p>MS explained that it is hard to show complaints about staff attitude as they do tend to be intertwined with complaints about other aspects of the service. He said that it can be shown as a subject area when complaints are made solely on staff attitude, but that this was quite unusual.</p> <p>MB commented that problems with service become very much worse when coupled with a bad staff attitude. She felt it should be shown as a separate subject.</p> <p>SP said she strongly believed staff attitude should be shown as a separate subject, even when it is tied into a service issue. She felt that once the staff attitude is correct then other complaints would probably diminish.</p> <p>JW commented that it may be difficult to complain about particular people because they do not give full name on the telephone.</p> <p>MS replied that the Service Standard requires people to give their first name on the phone and that he would like to be informed if this was not happening. He also explained that it would be easy to identify a member of staff just from their first name.</p> <p>MS noted the comments made about staff attitude, and agreed to look at how it can be better reflected in future reporting arrangements.</p>	<p>MS</p> <p>MS</p>
11	<p>Tenant Inspection quarterly report</p> <p>11.1 JW explained that she is a Tenant Inspector. She believes it to be a great idea and feels very encouraged as a tenant. She expressed a wish for compliments to go to Debra Dalton for organising the project so well. She added that all the Tenant Inspectors work very well together.</p> <p>SP asked who chooses the properties for the void inspection.</p> <p>JW explained that the Tenant Inspectors choose the properties themselves from a list of voids available on the day.</p> <p>11.2 MB spoke of an estate walkabout that had happened in her area recently. She explained that she had yet to receive proper feedback and that when she had enquired about it was told that there was no money in the pot to do the repairs/improvements uncovered on the walkabout. She was concerned that even the small issues, such as loose wires and pigeon waste had not been rectified.</p> <p>MS stated that he would look into the issue and ensure that feedback is given.</p>	<p>MS</p>

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
	<p>JB commented that this is happening everywhere. MS said he didn't think this was the case; but if it was happening at all he would want to hear about it.</p> <p>CT thought that the walkabout could have been one specifically for the environmental budget and that money has not been released yet. MS reiterated that feedback should still have been given.</p>	
12	<p>Sub Committee Updates</p> <p>MS drew attention to the fact that the Wilton Panel's recommendation on fences and gates had gone to the Sub-Committee, but due to an error in the report, the matter had been postponed to the next Sub-Committee meeting.</p>	
13	<p>PLSM Update</p> <p>MS informed the Panel that Nicola Jones had now left Northwards and had been replaced by Mike Lee. Mike could not be here tonight but will be here for future meetings.</p>	
<p>14</p> <p>14.1</p> <p>14.2</p>	<p>Performance Management Report</p> <p>MS explained that the text at the back of the report is a summary of activity to provide some context for the minutes.</p> <p>SP queried the fact that the Equality Performance figures related only to racial equality. MS explained that the statistics shown are the statutory requirement, but aren't the only way we measure performance. There will be a detailed review as part of setting performance measures for next year.</p> <p>The panel noted the report.</p>	
15	<p>HIP Environmental Works Update – PLSM</p> <p>MS explained that the schemes prioritised by the Panel are to go to the Board to agree in principle. The decision will still be subject to the usual considerations, including detailed costings, local consultation and planning.</p> <p>He added that the garden at Sandyhill Court will be incorporated into the existing programme in that area.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
<p>16</p> <p>16.1</p> <p>16.2</p> <p>16.3</p>	<p>Resident Involvement Agreement & Customer Care Action Plan</p> <p>MS explained that the Resident Involvement Action plan was a direct result of the Resident Involvement Agreement developed in conjunction with Northwards tenants. Both action plans have been considered by the Performance and Quality Sub-Committee and will also be presented to the Resident Involvement Task Group. MS requested feedback.</p> <p>KB asked if the Customer Care Action Plan contained any reference to staff attitude.</p> <p>MS highlighted staff training in customer care is included. No changes were proposed to either plan.</p>	
<p>17</p> <p>17.1</p> <p>17.2</p> <p>17.3</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>SP informed the Panel that she was resigning her position as Tenant Panel member.</p> <p>MaB confirmed that he would like to occupy the now vacant position of Tenant Panel member. He explained he was from the same tenant association as SP, The Pike in Higher Blackley. He was also part of the initial steering group during the ALMO consolation process. It was agreed that MaB should become a Wilton Panel member.</p> <p>JB expressed his concern that private landlords in the area were letting properties to tenants with a history of anti social behaviour. He asked if the Panel could do anything to educate them. MS informed the Panel that a representative from Private Sector Housing would be attending a Panel meeting in the near future and concerns could be expressed then. MS would brief in advance that this was an issue which panel members would like to be covered.</p>	<p>MS</p>
	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next meeting will be held on Tuesday 26th September at 6.30pm at White Moss Road Local Services.</p>	
	<p>End of Meeting</p> <p>The meeting closed at 8:50pm.</p>	