

**Fourways Area Panel
(Moston and Charlestown)**

**Minutes of meeting held at 1.30pm, 30th August 2006
The Community Room, White Moss Road Local Services Office**

Chair: John Ward

Present:	John Ward (JW) Grace Choularton (GC) Carol Downes (CD) Pam Angelucci (PA) Peggy Yuill (PY) Pauline Fenton (PF) Hazel Entwistle (HE) Charlotte Grant (CG) Ann Ash (AA) Tom Harrington (TH) Joan Fitzgerald (JF) Basil Curley (BC) Arthur Kay (AK) Anne Duffield (AD) Diane Roberts (DR) Nicola Holmes (NH)	Panel Member (Chair) Panel Member Panel Member Panel Member Panel Member Panel Member Crosslee T & R A (Cooptee) Kentmere Court TA (Observer) Kentmere Court TA (Observer) Crosslee T & RA (Observer) Dam Head RA (Board Member) Panel Member and Councillor (Charlestown) City Council, Environmental Services Northwards, PLSM (White Moss) Northwards, Governance Support Officer Northwards, Resident Involvement Officer
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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: John Biggs, Mavis Harris, Dorothy LeMoignan Earl Gardener, Cllr Hobin, Cllr Risby</p>	
3	<p>Training</p> <p>3.1 <u>Street Cleansing and Grounds Maintenance</u></p> <p>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> <p><i>He explained that the Wards are mapped using a colour coded system and that this was also heavily affected by the weather.</i></p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
3.1d	<p>Officer and they could arrange for the Dog warden to attend.</p> <p>GC spoke of how a local resource centre has a problem with snow and ice in the winter, making it unreachable for many elderly and disabled people. AK replied that the paths around the resource centre may not be on the gritting list. In order to get it considered GC would need to speak to John Brierley from operational services. BC said he would arrange for a walkabout to take place with John.</p>	
3.1e	<p>JF asked who was responsible for wheelie bins as she had an issue with people leaving them on the pavements. AK replied that GM waste were responsible.</p>	
3.1f	<p>JF complained that the quality of the grass cutting recently has been poor. AK stated that the supervisor should be picking up any problems with the quality of the cutting. No complaints have been made this year about the quality. Anyone with complaints should use the system.</p>	
3.1g	<p>CD asked why the grass cutters did not have a vacuum to suck up the cuttings as they went along (as they did 3 years ago). AK replied that they are no longer funded for that machine.</p>	
3.1h	<p>JF asked why the small sweepers were not used on the Dam Head estate AK replied that much of the Dam Head estate was not suitable for the small sweepers due to the amount of steps.</p>	
3.1i	<p>JF asked why environmental services don't mulch up all the leaves collected and sell it to the public as happens in Germany. AK informed the Panel that everything collected is recycled. He added that they are trying a new scheme to collect the leaves this year. The plan is to collect little and often.</p>	
3.1j	<p>PA asked why she saw grass cutting taking place on a Saturday. AK replied that this was one of the improvements they had made to the service.</p>	
3.2	<p><u>Re-housing and Allocations.</u></p> <p>AD presented training on Re-housing and Allocations. (see appendix 1)</p>	
3.2a	<p>PY asked in relation to Homefinder: what happens if a person cannot read? AD explained Northwards should be aware of literacy issues when an application is registered. In this case an applicant would be telephoned. The Re-housing team does try to do as many offers by telephone as possible in general. Also, Language Line should always be used where appropriate.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
3.2b	<p>BC criticised the policy that allows Group E properties to be offered properties city wide. He stated that it was antiquated, blunt and destroys children's lives.</p> <p>BC also asked why people were placed in emergency accommodation for 28 days before loading onto Homefinder. AD explained that those applicants who had Group E status were able to pick their areas of choice for the first 28 days of gaining the status but after this period were auto loaded for all suitable properties in all areas of the city. This is the policy of MCC which Northwards must follow. He stated that Northwards and Manchester City Council (MCC) should be running the system more imaginatively.</p> <p>AD informed the Panel that she and the Re-housing Manager would be meeting with Members to discuss these and other issues. This could lead to a review of the allocations policy if members requested this. Any review done would be carried out by MCC but Northwards would be a key partner in this.</p> <p>PY wanted it made clear that the Panel wished for the issues raised by BC to be brought to the attention of the board and dealt with ASAP. PA asked if the 28 days were used for any kind of checks to be done. BC replied that the system was not rigorous enough for proper checks to be done.</p> <p>GC commented that she found Homefinder to be unfair. She spoke of a few cases whereby people have been unable to bid because of work commitments (shift workers). She added that it was also difficult for people to find a copy of Homefinder.</p> <p>DR clarified that the following issues were to be put to the Board.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • That the members of the Fourways Panel found there to be major access problems with Homefinder. • That the policy of loading group E applicants on to Homefinder after 28 days should be looked at with MCC as a part of any review. 	
3.2c	<p>JF spoke of a situation where a disabled person was moving into a different property and that the new property was having adaptations. She asked why the original property could not be adapted.</p> <p>AD replied that it was hard to comment on individual cases but that it was probable that it was simply not possible to adapt the property.</p> <p>CD commented that she knew of a similar case and that a move was necessary due to the outside environment conditions, e.g. busy roads</p>	
3.2d	<p>CD asked how long it took for a void property to be ready to let. AD replied that it very much depends on the work required. One particular property might need major work due to asbestos. Structural issues etc.</p>	
3.2e	<p>PY asked why there were so many void properties when the waiting list for a property in North Manchester was 4000 people. AD explained that there will always be void properties due to movement through the system. Some of the long term void properties</p>	

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3.2f 3.2g 3.2h	<p>do have major structural issues. However, it is something that Northwards does need to improve at. PF asked if any properties are kept back for use in an emergency. AD replied that no, properties are not reserved for emergency situations.</p> <p>GC asked why some single people were being allocated 2 bed properties. AD replied that this was due to historic low demand but may be reviewed under any review of local lettings policies.</p> <p>PY commented that some people seem to use their properties as 'holiday homes' or just come to pick up the mail once a month. AD explained the tenancy agreement states that the property must be their main home. She asked anyone who knew of situations where this was happening to pass the details on to their Neighbourhood Services Officer.</p> <p>BC explained that he and other Members for this Ward were unhappy at how the allocations system operated in regard to the Community connection. He highlighted that by offering properties 'in turn' to group 2E, 2X and 2C then in some instances people with no community connection are offered a property first. He spoke of how this practice destroys community spirit and it is not what was agreed originally between Members and the City Council. AD replied that Northwards operated Manchester City council (MCC) allocations policy and operated to the guidelines given by MCC. BC commented that he would be discussing the issue with MCC Chief Executive.</p>	
4	Break	
5	Declaration of Interests/Confidential Matters None Declared.	
6 6.1 6.2	<p>Minutes of Last Meeting</p> <p>10.3 PY again highlighted that the White Moss Rd car park display trailer did not have disabled access. She commented that it is important that Northwards gets this right. AD stated that she would pass the feedback on.</p> <p>12.10 AD reported that an injunction was granted in the May case.</p>	
7 7.1	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>AD announced that the Jargon buster was now available.</p>	

ITEM	SUBJECT	ACTION
8	Board Meeting Minutes (for Noting)	Noted
	Noted	
8a	<p>Area Panel minutes to the Board</p> <p>DR proposed that the minutes from the Fourways 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>Wilton Panel minutes from 27th June were noted.</p> <p>Riverways Panel were from 28th June were noted.</p>	Noted Noted
10	Complaints Activity	
	AD presented the complaints activity report.	
10.1	<p>BC asked if complaints from the town Hall are included.</p> <p>AD replied that if the complaints are forwarded from the Town Hall then they will be included. Complaints received at the Town Hall are now scanned and e-mailed for maximum efficiency.</p>	
10.2	<p>BC asked what happens when an ASBO is breached.</p> <p>AD replied that this was not a complaint but a request for service. BC commented that he believed there to be a confusing overlap of service between housing and the police.</p> <p>AD commented that Northwards does liaise with the police and that work will continue in this area.</p>	
10.3	<p>HE commented that she found it really frustrating when no feedback is given after a complaint is made.</p> <p>AD replied that this was definitely an area that Northwards needs to improve on.</p>	
11	Tenant Inspection quarterly report	
	AD verbally presented the report.	
11.1	JF asked if it was possible for the Tenant Inspection reports and updates to be reported at the Area Panel each month.	DR
11.2	<p>JF asked if Northwards could consider a tenant reward scheme, which would rewards tenants for good behaviour.</p> <p>AD replied that it could certainly be looked into.</p>	

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11.3	<p>BC suggested inviting Tom Manion from Irwell Valley Housing Association to talk about their Gold Service award.</p> <p>PY suggested that the Tenant Inspectors carry out inspections on the communal areas of walk up flats as well as multi-storeys.</p> <p>NH replied that she would speak to Debra Dalton who is co-ordinating the scheme.</p>	NH
12	<p>Sub Committee Updates</p> <p>The Sub Committee updates were noted</p>	
13	<p>PLSM Update</p> <p>AD verbally presented the report.</p> <p>13.1 BC asked if an impact assessment had been done to see if enabling an EO to go part time would improve the service. He also asked why the Panel had not been involved in the decision.</p> <p>AD explained that the impact will be carefully measured and managed as a job share. She also explained that the decision was an operational one and that it was not necessary for the Board or the Panel to consider. The procedure for job share is already in place and would have been approved by the Board initially.</p> <p>DR added that the Fourways Panel does work to a set schedule of items and terms of reference and that work of the Panel is done according to priority.</p> <p>13.2 GG asked what would be happening to Whitebeck Court.</p> <p>BC informed that Panel that Whitebeck Court had originally been declared surplus to requirements. However, society and community has changed since then. It is hopefully to be used as a community centre in part of the block.</p> <p>13.3 JF asked about the situation of illegal occupiers.</p> <p>AD replied that currently there were 6 illegal occupiers and the cases would be going to court if they did not move out.</p> <p>PA asked what constituted an illegal occupier.</p> <p>AD gave an example of a relative occupying a property after a person's death. If the relative was not a spouse and had not been living in the property for a long time then it is probable that they would have no right to succession. Each case was looked at individually to ensure that circumstances were taken into consideration inline with the policy regarding this issue.</p>	

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<p>14</p> <p>14.1</p> <p>14.2</p>	<p>Performance Management Report</p> <p>AD highlighted the following from the report:</p> <p>14.1 Voids Performance: MHL045, Northwards recognises that this is very poor performance. This is due to a number of reasons including the historic no demand situation, no specialist re-housing team. BC mentioned that there is a new computer system being brought in but that may not necessarily improve void performance. He added that in his experience, new computer systems often fail to live up to expectations. PY asked when Northwards expect the voids performance to improve. AD explained that it is a big issue and that every single aspect of the voids performance needs analysing.</p> <p>14.2 PY commented that void garden maintenance is poor. She highlighted a particular property in need of gardening. AD replied that it was also an area for improvement and that she would investigate that particular property. Work is ordered through environmental services. TH mentioned that he had turned down a property in the past due to the condition of the garden. JF wondered if Northwards could put out a tender for services if not satisfied with service provided by Environmental services. AD replied that Northwards first needs to investigate what the root of the problem is and then look at ways of resolving it. HE asked what would happen if a private resident failed to maintain their own garden. AD replied that this would be an issue for environmental health to look into if it posed a health and safety risk. ie; dumped rubbish. AD mentioned that Northwards could look at offering an incentive for people to leave their property and garden in good condition on vacation.</p>	
<p>15</p> <p>15.1</p>	<p>HIP Environmental Works Update – PLSM</p> <p>AD verbally presented the update. She explained that the schemes would have to be placed in priority order.</p> <p>BC asked how priorities would be decided. AD explained that priority would be decided on a number of reasons;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Number of people affected ○ Environmental effects ○ Sustainability ○ Ongoing cost ○ Crime and disorder impact 	

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16	Resident Involvement Agreement & Customer Care Action Plan	
16.1	AD 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.	
16.2	BC asked if any work was done with the Regeneration Framework. AD replied that Greig Lees, the Investment Strategy Manager works very closely with MCC regeneration.	
17	Any other Business	
17.1	CD asked about the results from the inspection. AD replied that Northwards was yet to be informed of the final result.	
17.2	PY asked suggested publicising the Panel AGM in the free newspaper, the Advertiser.	
17.3	GC asked if Tenant Associations could use the freepost address in communications with Northwards. NH replied that yes this was acceptable.	
17.4	BC mentioned that it was often difficult for him to attend Panel meeting because Wednesdays are very busy for meetings at MCC. He requested that the Panel consider changing the meeting time/day in order for him to attend regularly in future. AD requested that BC send his diary to her for consideration.	
	Date of Next Meeting	
	The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 27 th September at 1.30pm at White Moss Road Local Services.	
	End of Meeting	
	The meeting closed at 4:40pm	