

Northwards Housing Panel Meeting Minutes

Panel: Wilton

Date: 03 February 2009

6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m

Whitemoss Road Local Services Office, Community Room

Chair: Anne Heywood

Attendance:

Anne Heywood (AH)	Panel Member (Chair)
Charles Taggart (CT)	Panel Member (Vice-chair)
Mike Bolshaw (MiB)	Panel Member
Jim Burke (JB)	Panel Member
Mark Bainbridge (MaB)	Panel Member
Melanie Beckford (MeB)	Panel Member
Mavis Wilkinson (MW)	Panel Member
Cllr Naeem Hassan	Panel Member
Marjan Bazargan (MBz)	Board member
Steve Kirkham (SK)	Head of Home Improvements
Claire Tyrrell (CMT)	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Mike Stevens (MS)	Director of Neighbourhood Services
Danny Whitelock (DW)	Repairs Manager
Julie Goreham (JG)	Resident Involvement Officer

From 6.00pm refreshments were provided and officers were available to answer questions. The meeting commenced 6.30pm

Item	Description	Action
1	Welcome and introductions	
1.1	a) AH welcomed attendees to the meeting	
1.2	b) & c) Quorate was confirmed and meeting rules explained	
2.	Apologies for Absences	
2.1	Apologies had been received from Andy Wood, Cllr Ken Barnes, Joan Wilson, Jacqui Tomlinson and Sue Ratchford	
3.	Declaration of Interests/Confidential Matters	
3.1	No confidential items were discussed. No Declarations of Interest were made.	
4.	Minutes of last meeting 18 November 2008	
4.1	The minutes were approved.	
5.	Matters arising	
5.1	5.3 CMT explained that JG had sent out questionnaires about the study visit which is taking place on 23 February. CMT has invited Arthur Kay to attend the visit. The panel agreed that it would take place from 10.30am-1.30pm including lunch. Charles, Jim and Anne	JG

	will attend. All panel members welcome, including other area panels. JG to collate ideas for the visit and send out invites	
5.2	5.5 British Gas Partnership The panel has been allocated around £5500. The panel had agreed to spend this on an ice rink, and were considering working with the other panels to reduce costs of hire. Looking at Easter weekend, two days in Wilton, two days in Riverways: one day in Cheetham, one day in Higher Blackley. JG to liaise with Steve Kirkham following the Fourways Panel meeting	JG
5.3	11.1 Minutes are in the papers	
6.	Inspection Update	
6.1	MS reported that Northwards had received three stars with excellent prospects in the inspection by the Audit Commission. The report will become public when the report is published, along with a press release, on 12 February.	
6.2	The report was positive with Resident Involvement, including the panels and involvement of councillors, being described as strong. There were some areas for improvement around empty properties, communication with leaseholders and income management. An action plan is being created to address these.	
6.3	MiB asked what the implications of the three stars are for Northwards. MS explained that there was kudos and potential for pulling in any extra funding if it became available. Three star ALMOs are permitted to build homes, so this could be considered. The inspectors are likely to visit less often.	
6.4	AH was pleased to hear the good news on the inspection result	
7.	Repairs Update (Danny Whitelock)	
7.1	DW invited comments on the report circulated in the papers. JB reported that a tenant had been told that a repair job could not be finished because "we have run out of money". DW to look into this.	
7.2	AH asked whether operatives of the new hand-held systems would be given tenants telephone numbers, and asked whether these would be passed on to further parties. DW confirmed that they would know the numbers, but these would not be passed on to anyone.	
7.3	DW drew panel members attention to the proposed changes to the Empty Homes standard. CMT explained that this would be on the agenda for the March meeting, and someone would be present to discuss the comments and proposed amendments brought by panel members.	
8.	Major Environmental Works Update (Steve Kirkham/Claire Tyrrell)	
8.1	Major works SK invited comments on documents that had been circulated, and explained that the quarterly report would be brought next month.	
8.2	JB reported that residents on Longton Road had been informed that works would be starting in March and asked if this was true. SK will check, but explained that letters are sent out with a provisional date, and further details provided in writing and through a personal visit nearer the start date.	

8.3	<p>MiB asked if tenants are able to refuse home improvements works. SK explained that tenants can refuse to have improvement works carried out to their homes unless the improvement was related to Health & Safety or could impact on the structure or fabric of the building e.g. rewire, boiler replacement, brick pointing. MiB asked if leaseholders have a choice on similar works. SK explained residents did have the option to have none essential works done e.g. replacement window frames and costs for this would be provided. Where essential repairs/works were identified that impact on the structure or building fabric e.g. roof replacement or were Health & Safety related then these works would be recharged via their sinking fund.</p>	
8.4	<p>Environmental works SK reported that the arboricultural study was still being completed on the Centaur Way scheme. The works will hopefully begin in March and last four weeks. Funding for the project will be carried forward. MeB asked if anything had been decided about what would happen on the site. CMT explained that the work will start with the trees, then continue in line with the results of the two rounds of consultation.</p>	
8.5	<p>SK explained that planning permission had been refused for the Finningley Road scheme. They had been asked to reduce the number of parking spaces from ten to five, and resubmit the application with further alterations to meet planning criteria. It is hoped that a response will be received in February, so that work can be completed in March. MaB asked whether it was worth spending the same amount on half the number of spaces. He felt that the scheme was needed, but that it was expensive. MS asked if further discussions could take place at the next meeting. AH sought agreement from the panel, and it was decided to discuss this at the March meeting. MaB asked if it might be possible to reduce the costs. SK explained that this could be considered e.g. using grass matting, but the planning application would have to be resubmitted.</p>	
8.6	<p>SK reported that planning permission would have to be sought for the Hendham Vale sign, and this process was underway.</p>	
9.	Environmental Works Programme	
9.1	<p>CMT distributed a breakdown of the projects which the panel had considered at the previous meeting. CMT asked the panel if they would agree an additional £5000 for the Waterloo Road East scheme, which was agreed to. JG explained about a potential consultation project which would involve creating a computer game of the area which young people could play and use to give their ideas for changes to the area. CMT added that it could be a way to support a new struggling tenants group nearby and asked the panel to consider setting aside £12,000 for the process. A decision would be made at the March meeting. NH felt that it could help the young people at risk of committing ASB to become involved in something positive. CMT felt it could help to break a vicious cycle where tenants do not engage because they do not feel Northwards offers anything to them. AH asked if the planned expenditure on the estate could alter as a result of the consultation. CMT confirmed that the consultation would take place before the plans were carried out, and would inform which works were completed.</p>	

9.2	CMT explained that there may be an issue with the release of funds for the play area on Riverdale. She also explained that there were some concerns about the parking at Printon Avenue and would need to check with the Planning Department about this scheme.	
9.3	Joan Wilson and Steve Shaw are liaising on the Acre Top/Munn Road scheme which had been allocated £20,000.	
9.4	CMT explained that she would be discussing the maintenance of Torcross Road play area scheme with the Leisure Department, as there are not the funds in the revenue budget for Northwards to maintain this. A consultation would be carried out for this area.	
9.5	CMT explained that she had received a new, lower, costing for the works in Cheetham Hill around Inworth Walk. She asked if the panel would agree to fund this scheme at the new costing. MS and NH expressed support for the scheme and felt it would boost the fairly new tenants group in the area. MeB felt that with the improvements in Waterloo East in addition to these it would make a great difference to the area. MW felt that Northwards should put it's money where it's mouth is! A vote was taken and five voted in favour, two against, with no abstentions.	
9.6	CMT invited panel members to suggest other schemes as there is currently an underspend. She asked the panel to think about the budget share for the funds, and NH encouraged the panel to remember that it was there for the entire Wilton area.	
10.	LSM Update (Jacqui Tomlinson)	
10.1	MW asked what happens to equipment seized during noise abatement proceedings. CMT explained that they are stored for 28 days and then the perpetrator can ask to have them returned, but will have to pay court and storage fees.	
10.2	There are currently eleven ready to let properties, which is higher than usual and so being looked into. A full report will be brought in March. AH asked where the ready-to-let properties are. CMT replied that they are spread out over the Wilton area.	
10.3	JB asked if the decent homes works could be carried out while properties are empty. SK explained that where this was possible it was carried out but was not always cost effective to programme it in. The voids team bring properties to specification. MS added that when works are completed this way properties are emptier for longer and the new tenant will not have had a choice about the works.	
11.	Community Update and Governance (Julie Goreham)	
11.1	a) JG explained the background to the Northwards Conversation event and encouraged panel members to attend.	
11.2	b) CMT explained that the Constitution Review group would be asked to look at the Area Panel Action Plan, and Moving Forward and Removing the Barriers. Other volunteers for this group would be welcome – panel members should phone CMT if interested.	
11.3	c) CMT asked for volunteers for the Resident Involvement Agreement Review Group – JB and AH volunteered.	
11.4	d) JG circulated copies of Revolve	
11.5	e) There had been no requests for Observers.	
11.6	f) JG explained that there is currently a vacancy for an Owner	

	Occupier position on the panel. JG asked panel members to assist in recruiting for this vacancy by spreading the word and passing on details of anyone who might be interested. JG also mentioned that the new Tesco would permit them to hold a stall in store which could be used to recruit panel members and asked the panel to consider this. CMT explained that Northwards now has a trailer which they could ask to be placed on the car park. AH asked that it be brought up at the next meeting so panel members could think about it. NH stated that Tesco have a training suite which can be used by community groups.	
11.7	g) CMT explained that this year the gardening competition would be run independently by Northwards and they would like to see panel members as judges. Panel members would be asked for ideas for categories etc in March and April. The competition would be more local and could include street and area awards. MW expressed interest in getting involved in this. JB asked if anything could be done about owner-occupiers with untidy gardens. CMT explained that it could not, unless they were causing ASB, but they could consider an owner-occupier category in the gardening competition.	
12	Customer Satisfaction	
12.1	MS invited comments and suggestions on the customer satisfaction results. He explained that the study will be able to be repeated so that the results can be compared over time. The results did not show any major differences, but Wilton came out as slightly more satisfied in some areas.	
13	Neighbourhood Wardens	
13.1	MS explained that wardens are now out and about in the Wilton area. JB and CT felt that they seemed very keen. CMT explained that at the moment they are attending LTMs and finding their feet and encouraged panel members to introduce themselves if they saw them. MW stated that the wardens had attended one of the tenant group meetings.	
13.2	The panel asked for a representative from the Wardens team to be present at the next meeting, with at least 15 minutes allocated on the agenda.	
14	Community facilities review	
14.1	CMT explained that Northwards has three community facilities – two in Riverways and one in Fourways. The review is looking at how to increase the usage of these. A report will be brought back around April. MS explained that the facilities cost Northwards to run and issues like getting the most out of them, and DDA compliance need to be considered. Northwards is not looking at bringing more facilities online.	
15	Any Other Business	
15.1	AH reminded all panel members to read the papers in advance of meetings and come prepared with questions/suggestions/issues.	
15.2	CMT reported that AH had secured £3000 funding for panel training. This has to be related to the chair course she had attended i.e. around managing meetings. The panel agreed to hold a two day	

	course (non-residential) at a local location, to be held during the May half-term break. Other panels can be invited too.	
16.	Date and time of next meetings	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Area Panel Meeting 3 March 2009, Whitemoss Road b) ASB and crime – Saturday 7 February 2009, 9.30-12.30, Waterloo Centre 	

Meeting closed at 8.25pm