

# Northwards Housing Panel Meeting Minutes

## Panel: Wilton

**Date: 03 November 2009**

**6.30 p.m. to 8.30 p.m**

**Cheetham Hill Local Services Office, Community Room**

**Chair: Anne Heywood**

### Attendance:

Anne Heywood (AH)	Panel Member (Chair)
Charles Taggart (CT)	Panel Member (Vice-chair)
Sue Ratchford (SR)	Panel Member
Jim Burke (JB)	Panel Member
Mavis Wilkinson (MW)	Panel Member
Mark Bainbridge (MaB)	Panel Member
Cllr Ken Barnes (KB)	Panel Member
Brian Nuttall (BN)	Panel Member
Mike Stevens (MS)	Director of Neighbourhood Services
Claire Tyrrell (CMT)	Head of Neighbourhood Services (Wilton)
Jacqui Tomlinson (JT)	Local Services Manager
Danny Whitelock (DW)	Repairs Services Manager (Wilton)
Steve Kirkham (SK)	Head of Home Improvements (Wilton)
Lee Dobbins (LD)	On Call Manager
Tara Kelly (TK)	Equality and Diversity Officer
Susan Crawshaw (SC)	Rent Recovery Manager
Tracey Panesh (TP)	Northwards Money Advisor
Diane Roberts (DR)	Governance Manager
Julie Goreham (JG)	Resident Involvement Officer
Pat Thorpe (PT)	Board Member
Carol Connolly (CC)	Observer
Tunde Martins (TM)	Observer
Samuel Jacob (SJ)	Observer

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

Item	Description	Action
1	<b>Welcome and introductions</b>	
1.1	a) AH welcomed attendees to the meeting.	
1.2	b) JG explained that nominations had been received for Chair and Vice Chair. Sue Ratchford had been nominated for Chair, but it was explained that she could not take the post due to her Board position. Anne Heywood was also nominated for Chair. Charles Taggart and Mavis Wilkinson were nominated as Vice Chair but MW declined the nomination, so CT stood unopposed. There were no objections and so AH was appointed as panel chair and CT as vice-chair.	
1.3	c) Quorate was confirmed.	
1.4	c) AH explained the meeting rules.	

<b>2.</b>	<b>Apologies for Absences</b>	
2.1	Apologies had been received from Melanie Beckford and Councillor Hassan.	
<b>3.</b>	<b>Declaration of Interests/Confidential Matters</b>	
3.1	There were no declarations of interest and no confidential items would be discussed.	
<b>4.</b>	<b>Minutes of last meeting 06 October 2009</b>	
4.1	MaB asked that the wording be changed for 5.4 to include that the operative had alleged that the tenant had given them abuse. The minutes were approved with this amendment.	
4.2	The AGM minutes were noted.	
<b>5.</b>	<b>Matters arising</b>	
5.1	5.1 – CMT has asked Arthur Kay for the maps and he will bring these to the next meeting he attends.	<b>CMT</b>
5.2	5.2 – Completed.	
5.3	5.4 – SK reported that the email had been quarantined which had caused the delay in responding to it. A written apology had been received from the operative and this will be sent to the tenant with an additional letter from Northwards. Northwards have reinforced their procedures and expectations around operative conduct with contractors.	
5.4	11.1 – SK confirmed that extensive tree pruning and cutting back had taken place on the Centaur Way scheme. SK to ring Melanie Beckford to update her.	<b>SK</b>
5.5	11.3 – CMT had spoken Pat Scappaticci and arranged for the benches to be moved.	
5.6	11.10 – CMT explained that the proposed sites had been looked at but she was awaiting costings.	
5.7	11.11 – CMT reported that there will be an article on Mirfield Road Community Garden in the next issue of the Natter coming out in December.	
5.8	11.12 – CMT confirmed there will not be housing put on the Torcross site	
<b>6.</b>	<b>On Call Update (Lee Dobbins)</b>	
6.1	LD thanked the panel for the invitation and distributed some information on performance of the On Call centre. Overall customers are not waiting as long to have their call answered, the number of abandoned calls has decreased, and the call handling times have decreased.	
6.2	LD reported that the call centre now have a facility to alert customers if there is a long wait time and the option for customers to leave a message if that is the case.	
6.3	LD reported that the out of hours service needs to improve performance and there are measures in place to make improvements.	
6.4	LD reported that Customer Satisfaction surveys have been undertaken in September and October and out of a score of 5 the	

	call handlers knowledge of the subject scored 4.2, the perception that the call handler cared about the customer scored 4.2 and whether the customer would recommend the service to a friend scored 4.3. An automated customer survey will be carried out in the new year. Northwards can select the questions to be asked. The tenant inspection was positive.	
6.5	LD invited panel members to visit the facility whenever they wished to: 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor, Universal Square, Ardwick.	
6.6	MaB asked about the costs of phone calls which seemed to vary widely. LD explained that as it is a 03000 number it should cost the same as a local call but it will depend on the tariff of the phone company. LD invited MaB to phone him to discuss it.	MaB
6.7	AH asked the panel how often they would like to see the data for On Call performance. The panel agreed to monitor it quarterly.	
<b>7.</b>	<b>Equality and Diversity (Tara Kelly)</b>	
7.1	TK explained that the equality actions had been put into the team plans in order to embed equality into all areas. TK had no concerns about outstanding actions as these were online to be completed.	
7.2	TM asked who has ownership of the business plans. TK explained that the teams have their own individual plans. MS explained that the board has overall ownership. TM asked how the business plan is cascaded to ground-level staff. TK explained that this is through the team improvement plans. MS explained that updates on team improvement plans go through the panels and/or board.	
7.3	TM asked how the impact of these plans was assessed. TK explained that as new policies were introduced an impact assessment process was carried out. There are also retrospective impact assessments. MS explained that all reports to boards and subcommittees have a section on their relationship to equality and diversity. TK explained that there is also an Equality Review Group.	
7.4	TM asked why business services have more actions than other teams. TK explained that this is because the directorate includes teams with ownership of a lot of the equality actions such as the Equality and Diversity Officer role, and the Communications team and Human Resources. MS explained that the work may be carried out across the organisation but ownership of the actions may sit with that directorate.	
7.5	MW thanked TK for the enjoyable workshop on the equality theme held in October. TK explained that she is looking at the results and feeding them into the action plan.	
<b>8.</b>	<b>Rent Team (Susan Crawshaw and Tracey Panesh)</b>	
8.1	SC gave an overview of the rents team. The team tries to balance enforcement with looking at the individuals circumstances and needs. They work with partners who can offer support. Collection rates are meeting targets. They promote the work of the team through publicity and are piloting attending school parent's evenings to promote the service. They offer a money advice service.	
8.2	TP reported that on the 20 November the rent team would be holding a tea-mobile event outside Riverdale shops between 9am-12pm. They have also started organising budgeting workshops.	

8.3	JB asked who sets the rents. SC explained that Manchester City Council set them according to a formula based on: the average earnings in Manchester, property values, and number of bedrooms. JT explained that there might also be a heating charge or a warden charge applied.	
8.4	MaB felt that it can be difficult to obtain help as there are long queues at the Citizens Advice Bureau. TP reported that the queuing system has changed. MaB felt there should be more independent advice services available. KB advised that he would look into the problem of over demand at advice bureaux in the area. SC explained that the team is trying to be proactive in getting the credit union publicised, providing comparisons in the costs of commercial loans and credit union. They also had an article in the Natter about free things to do with young people during the holidays.	<b>KB</b>
8.5	MaB did not feel that the No Rent No Home publicity was helpful as it made people more nervous about contacting the service. SC encouraged panel members to contact her with any other comments or suggestions.	
<b>9.</b>	<b>Community Update and Governance (Anne Heywood/Julie Goreham)</b>	
9.1	a) JG distributed copies of Revolve and invited articles for the next edition.	
9.2	b) DR asked for feedback on the panel AGM. Panel members felt that it had gone well.	
9.3	c) DR invited questions or concerns regarding the area panel rotation. She explained that there had been an error in the copy distributed in the papers but this had been corrected.	
9.4	d) JG explained that there was a vacancy for a tenant panel member and two tenants had expressed an interest in the position – Janice Fitton and Tunde Martins. JG gave some information about the candidates and distributed ballot papers to all panel members and asked them to select their preferred candidate. Each candidate received an equal number of votes and the Chair’s casting vote elected Janice Fitton as the new panel member. JG explained that the position would need to be confirmed at the next panel AGM. JG suggested that Tunde Martins could be co-opted onto the panel. The panel agreed to co-opt him on. JG also explained that two of the observers – Carol Connolly and Samuel Jacob had expressed interest in being co-opted onto the panel. Both were co-opted onto the panel.	
9.5	e) DR asked for comments on the Northwards AGM and ballot process. She explained that there had been a 22% turnout for the ballot. SR had received lots of feedback about tenants not knowing the candidates they are voting for. Some had suggested that a photograph be included but SR had some concerns about this. SR wondered about whether a system of succession from Area Panels could be introduced. However only one area panel member had put themselves forward. CMT asked the panel for feedback on this idea. DR asked for feedback on the idea of having a public platform for people to get to know the candidates. She also shared other panels ideas that candidates could be asked standard questions to make the process fairer. She also asked if the panel felt it would be useful for candidates to visit area panels before the ballot opened. SR and	

	PT agreed that it was difficult to go straight onto the board. MW felt it would be beneficial to have 12 months membership of the panel before going on the board.	
9.6	f) MW explained that attendees of the Effective Meetings course had come back with lots of ideas and explained some of these to the panel, including holding an Open Forum. AH asked panel members to think about the ideas and bring their comments to the next meeting.	<b>ALL</b>
9.7	g-h) AH explained that there would be an induction session for all new area panel members and co-optees on Wednesday 2 December. Details will be sent out. RIOs will be setting up reviews for area panel members with the panel Chairs.	
9.8	i-j) DR explained that the group which had been meeting about Resident Scrutiny had decided to set up an Excellence Committee. This will meet 3 times a year. Resident forum members will be asked to elect one member to sit on this Committee. At least two panel members were required to attend and one from each forum. All panel members are invited. Terms of reference and dates were to be set in consultation with the committee members. DR asked if there was agreement with this proposal. SR asked if board members can attend. DR explained that they cannot as there would be a conflict of interest. KB expressed concern that the panel would be meeting only seven times a year under the proposal and felt that it should continue to meet ten times a year. The panel discussed this issue and whether members would commit to the Excellence Committee and panel meetings. KB proposed that the panel continue to meet ten times a year, SR seconded the proposal. The panel voted with six in favour of keeping ten meetings a year and one against with one abstention. It was agreed that there would be no meeting in January or August.	
<b>10.</b>	<b>Repairs Update (Danny Whitelock)</b>	
10.1	DW reported that there had been good results from the satisfaction survey.	
10.2	MaB thanked DW for doing a good job.	
<b>11.</b>	<b>Major Works Update (Steve Kirkham)</b>	
11.1	SK reported that the data was excellent for the major works programme.	
<b>12.</b>	<b>Environmental Works Programme (Claire Tyrrell)</b>	
12.1	KB suggested the panel visit the programmes it had paid for. CMT suggested this be done next year when more of the work had been completed.	
12.2	SK reported that he had confirmed that tree works had been undertaken on the Centaur Way scheme. SK would phone Melanie Beckford to update her.	<b>SK</b>
12.3	SK explained that the Hendham Vale sign is with Corporate Property Services for approval as it will be sighted on their land.	
12.4	SK reported that Mirfield scheme is completed..	
12.5	SK circulated plans for the Babbacombe scheme. Because of site lines planning would only permit 2-3 spaces, at a cost of around £10,000. MaB felt that those who lived there should decide if the	

	scheme should go ahead. The Panel decided not to go ahead with the parking scheme as it would be likely to create more parking problems than solve. KB asked that the land be cleared anyway.	
12.6	SK explained that there are some issues around tree removal for the Boothroyden scheme. KB suggested a tree lined street would look attractive and replace more trees than it removed. SK will take back to planning but informed the panel that it may not be approved.	
12.7	SK explained that the Printon scheme is more straightforward and asked if the panel wanted it to be submitted to planning. The panel agreed.	
<b>13.</b>	<b>LSM Update (Jacqui Tomlinson)</b>	
13.1	<b>ASB</b> JT distributed a report JT explained that the warrant had been executed on the property where possession had been obtained.	
13.2	<b>Voids</b> JT reported that in the previous week the team had let 18 properties.	
<b>14.</b>	<b>Any other business</b>	
14.1	AH informed that panel that Grace Choularton who was a member of the Fourways Area Panel had passed away. On behalf of the panel she expressed her condolences to Grace's family and friends.	
<b>15.</b>	<b>Date and time of next meetings</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Allocations Policy Consultation, Saturday 14 November</li> <li>b) Tuesday 1 December, Whitemoss Road Local Services Office</li> <li>c) Area Panel induction TBC</li> <li>d) Joint Board/Panel event TBC</li> <li>e) Business Plan Event – It's Your Business – Saturday 30 January 2010</li> </ul>	

**Meeting closed at 8.40pm**