

**Sheltered Housing Forum
Meeting Notes
Buckerell Lodge Hotel
19 October 2009**

Attendees

Attendees from memory – someone (they know who they are) ‘pocketed’ the attendance list before it had done the rounds.

Josie Welham, Ray Paltridge, Ann Day, Gladys Tyrrell, Philip Taite, Stella Bath, Joan Smith, Phil Cuttall, Kathleen Mayne, Margaret Winham, Lawrence Blake, Tony Bodgin, Charlie Peace, Jenny Berry & Steve Deakin.

Apologies

Ron Elliott, Bet Sluman, William Bell, Josie Browning, Rosemary Jones & Viv Phelps

Introduction

The meeting was opened with a general introduction by Tony Bodgin.

Gas Safety – Charlie Peace

A presentation was given by Charlie Peace, the Heating and Gas Contracts Officer for Exeter City Council. Charlie outlined the legislation which governs domestic gas supply and appliances, what the responsibilities of the local authority are and those of the tenant or leaseholder.

A copy of the presentation have been included with these minutes.

Election of Deputy TALC representative.

An election was held to replace the SHF representative elected onto the TALC as an area representative. Due to recent changes introduced by the TALC there will no longer be two SHF representatives on the TALC. There will now be one representative and one deputy representative. To ensure there is continuity, the deputy representative will still be allowed to attend meetings but will not have voting rights unless deputising for the SHF representative.

Two people, Ray Paltridge and Gladys Tyrrell, put their names forward for the position of Deputy Representative for the SHF. Ray Paltridge of Faraday House was duly elected.

DTPG Conference Feedback

The SHF members who attended the Devon Tenant Participation Group Conference, featuring the Solomon Theatre Company, with performances of ‘Scambuster’ and ‘Trickster’ gave feedback to the rest of the SHF.

The conference featured two musical interactive plays performed by the Solomon Theatre Company. These were accompanied by talks from the Devon & Cornwall Police Crime Prevention Officer and also a representative from Devon County Council Trading Standards Office.

The tenants who attended the training found the day very rewarding, informative and entertaining.

In view of the favourable feedback we received, we will now look into the viability of setting this training day up ourselves and opening this training up to the whole of our sheltered tenants.

Feedback and Pictures from this year's Tenants Conference.

This years conference took place on Saturday 19 September at the Belmont Chapel, Western Way and Lawrence Blake gave a brief overview of the conference and showed a slideshow of pictures whilst giving feedback.

The conference was well attended and over 68 people: -

- were entertained by guest speaker Professor Carl Chinn's poignant and often amusing review of the history of social housing and tenant involvement,

attended workshops on

- the local government review,
- Antisocial Behaviour
- Gas Safety
- Exeter CVS 'Take Part' taster session and
- Feedback from the Resident Auditor Team;

Delegates took part in 'Let Your Fingers Do The Talking', an interactive consultation session using handset technology with general questions about the standards people would like to see adopted for the Council New Build Programme.

Several lessons were learned from the experience such as making sure enough time is allowed for getting to the workshops and making sure the workshops are well signposted.

One of the topics for next years conference could include this years tendering process for the new repairs contract and a chance to meet the contract winners.

Devon Home Choice.

The group were handed a leaflet about the new Devon wide choice based letting scheme, Devon Home Choice, which is due to be introduced on 13 January 2010.

Copies of the leaflet will be made available in Community rooms.

Under Devon Home Choice everyone across Devon will be assessed under the same policy and receive the same level of priority with each district. It should remove barriers which stop people moving between areas. Under Devon Home Choice all local authority and Housing Association properties available for rent will be advertised on the internet, in newspapers and on digital TV.

Christmas Meeting

The group were asked if they would like the Christmas meeting to include a quiz as has happened in past Christmas meetings and they were in favour of this.

Support Contract

Exeter City Council are currently undergoing a review of Sheltered Housing and support provision and Phil Mills is the main lead in this review. Supporting People funding pays for the warden service and the alarm call system. People will be asked to sign a contract and provide information for the single assessment, which is an assessment of their support needs. Currently all over 55's are eligible for the warden service or call alarm system although not everyone over 55 will need these services.

This is only a review and we have an undertaking from Devon County Council, that no services will be withdrawn as a result of this review.

People living in sheltered accommodation currently have two contracts running side by side, the Supporting People contract and the Housing contract. The single assessment will identify where the service is needed and to what level. Identifying where the service is needed and supplying the service to the person will mean that people will not need to move into sheltered accommodation to access the services. Age concern already offer a service to people across the city as do Guinness Trust.

We will also have to investigate how much time wardens spend doing work which is non support related. For instance the amount of time spent cleaning communal areas could be as much as 12% of their week overall.

From April next year we will be introducing service charges. The service charges will not be in addition to the rent people currently pay. Currently the rent everyone pays weekly includes the rent for the property and additional services such as grass cutting and window cleaning etc. If someone wanted to opt into a service there is currently no way of adding the charge for that service to their rent payments. By separating out the various service charges from the rent element rent payers will be able to access other services (where available) and have the appropriate charge for that service added to their rent. It is important to stress that separating out the service charges from the rent will not mean an additional charge, it is merely a de-pooling of the current rent charge into its various elements. All rent and service charges are liable for Housing Benefits so they will be covered.

InSight

If anyone has any 'Strawberry Tea' stories, old photographs of Exeter or the estates, or maybe even an Exeter City Council tenancy agreement from long ago, then why not submit them for publication in Insight. You could also include a human interest story to accompany the document, which we would help you write if required. We would, of course, return the document to you afterwards. Simply give Steve Deakin a ring on 265698 to arrange.

The next meeting will be on 14 December at the Buckerell Lodge Hotel 2.00 to 4.00 and will be the Christmas Special with buffet, wine, mince pies and the quiz.