

NOTES OF A SHELTERED HOUSING FORUM MEETING MONDAY 21 JULY 2008

Present: Josie Welham - Aldens
Margaret Winham - York Ho.
Ann Day - Flowerpot
Phyllis Knight - Bodley
Eve Clarke - Globefields
Stella Bath - Nelson Close
Gladys Tyrrell - Globefields
Joan Smith - Rennes House
Jackie Laskey - Rennes House
Teresa Burrow - Toronto House
Philip Tait - Grandisson Court
Viv Phelps - Shilhay
Barbara Staddon - Bodley
Vanessa Marles - ECC
John Menday - ECC
Cheryl Anderson - ECC
Yvonne Trude - ECC
Phil Mills - ECC
Lawrence Blake - ECC
Tony Bodgin - ECC
Jenny Berry - ECC
John Eyles - ECC

Apologies: Sheila McLeod - York Ho.
Sheila Saffin -
Josie Browning - Flowerpot

Notes of the previous meeting held on Monday 21 April 2008 were distributed

Introduction

Lawrence Blake introduced himself. He is the new Housing Operations Manager and comes to Exeter City Council from Swaythling Housing Association. Lawrence manages the four Landlord Services Managers: Tony Bodgin, Tenant Participation; Neil Shire, Repairs and Maintenance; Phil Mills, Tenancy Services; and Mike Hopton, Income Recovery. Lawrence reports directly to Steve Warran, Head of Housing, and his job was created to deal mainly with the Housing Service Improvement Plan, looking at ways of improving the Council's service to tenants and leaseholders and following the HQN mock inspection last year.

Tenancy Agreement Review

- Copies of the existing agreement ' These are your Conditions of Occupation' were distributed
- Review happening because of changes in the law and it is time to review again
- Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003 enables Council to demote tenancies, giving ASB tenants fewer rights and making the possession process easier
- HQN Audit in 2007 recommended separating rent charges from service charges and the tenancy agreement needs to take account of this
- New Agreement will be easier to understand and in larger type
- A page for signing up to the tenancy will be included in the Agreement.
- Viv Phelps (tel: 661505) and Joan Smith (467737) volunteered to join a working group to consider the changes
- Sheltered Housing tenants' views can be made directly in writing to Lawrence Blake, Housing Operations Manager, Exeter City Council , Civic Centre, Paris Street, Exeter EX1 1RQ, or by phone on 01392 265691 or through Viv or Joan.

ECC Unitary Bid

- Maps distributed showing the Boundary Committee proposal for one unitary authority for Devon (apart from Torbay and Plymouth) to replace Exeter City Council, Devon County Council and all Borough Councils, and the secondary proposal to have a separate authority for Exeter, Exmouth and surrounding areas.
- Currently just over 5,000 council homes in Exeter and there would be about 13,000 (including council properties in Mid Devon and East Devon) if there was a Devon-wide authority.
- Forum members are against Exeter being included in one larger Devon authority and concerned that decisions affecting urban Exeter would be made by councillors from rural areas.
- Agreed a letter to be sent from the Forum to the Boundary Committee, signatories Joan Smith and Viv Phelps and to be viewed by all members of the group.
- Information will be published in 'Chatterbox' and 'Insight'.

Status Survey

- Draft copies of the status survey were distributed and its importance stressed
- Results used for decisions about where the budget will be spent and for comparisons with provision of Sheltered Housing in other areas
- Four questions can be added to the 48 questions already set by Government
- The Forum suggested a question about satisfaction with access to local amenities, eg Post office, letter boxes, shops, doctor's, dentists, bus stops, library, off licence
- The final survey will be printed during the summer

Election of Tenant & Leaseholder Committee (TALC) rep

Jackie Laskey was elected to represent the Sheltered Housing Forum on the Tenant & Leaseholder Committee, following the resignation of Pat Brosnan on health grounds.

Warden Service Review (Phil Mills)

- The ECC Warden Service Review includes Phil Cuttell, Joan Smith and Viv Phelps from the Sheltered Forum. Minutes of Review meeting of 27th May distributed.
- Many tenants on sheltered sites do not need the warden service
- Devon County Council expects ECC to develop the Warden Service to offer floating support - visits to other residents (tenants and private owners) not living on sheltered sites and will monitor progress up to 2011.
- Consideration of the accommodation and costs of bringing it up to an acceptable standard
- Suggestions will be presented to the Review meeting in August.

Gardening/Decoration Assistance Scheme Review (John Eyles)

John Eyles has been working with the Repairs Review Board regarding criteria for both schemes. Contracts to be renewed this year and costs likely to increase so less work will be done for the amount of money available.

- The agreed criteria for the right to assistance are:
 - Tenants aged over 70 years
 - Registered disabled tenants with no spouse or partner who are in receipt of Housing Benefit
- Because of waiting list sizes the gap between each job is likely to increase from 18 months to 2 years.
- Couples who are disabled will be eligible for help with vouchers. People who do not meet any of these criteria, or those who would like to have a second room decorated will be able to pay the amount agreed in the contract and then the work will be carried out
- Forum suggestions made re. possibility of involving Community Service in garden and park work to reduce costs, and incorporating good neighbour schemes and offering prizes for well-kept gardens.

Tenant and Leaseholder Conference

The Forum agreed:

- Suggested draw prizes of hamper, meal for 2, garden vouchers, theatre tickets, health/beauty pampering, gym membership
- Article in 'Insight' regarding the Conference featuring information about the Unitary bid
- Invitation letters to be sent to tenants and leaseholders requesting responses on catering requirements, workshop choices and child care facilities needed.
- Steve Deakin will include information in the next 'Chatterbox'.

Next meeting -

Monday 27 October 2008, 2pm - 4pm at the Buckerell Lodge Hotel