

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER CONSULTATION GROUP MEETING

Wednesday 17 March 2004

NOTES

Present

Tony Bodgin	Exeter City Council
Steve Deakin	Exeter City Council
Viv Thompson	Hamlin Gardens
Cec Murley	St Thomas
Mrs J Martins	Hamlin Gardens
Jim Swain	Shilhay
Margaret Swain	Shilhay
Joan Smith	Rennes House
Terry Anderson	Mincinglake
Roger Greenaway	Beacon Heath
David Payce	Rennes House
Alison Moore	St Loyes
Viv Phelps	Shilhay
Chris Symes	Beacon Heath

Apologies

Gladys Tyrrell, Moira Barker

Introduction

Tony Bodgin opened the meeting with a general introduction commenting that it was good to see new faces at the meeting and encouraging to see more people getting involved and having their say.

Choice Based Lettings - update

The group looking at the policy has split into 2 groups, one looking at policy and the other looking at implementation.

The team also has a new member – Rachael Humphries of the Health Forum who will be looking at the health and welfare impacts of the scheme.

A feasibility study was due to go before the full committee yesterday.

If the committee approve the report, the next step will be to draw up a proposal for implementation, which will include: -

The allocation policy,

Costs,

Time scales

The working group is already in place and meets monthly. It includes Council Officers, Tenants and Leaseholder Representatives, Registered Social Landlord (RSL) Tenants, the portfolio Holder for Housing Councillor Peter Edwards and

representatives from the partnering RSL's. They discuss issues, policies and implementation.

Whilst it would be nice to only include the wish list of local people in the lettings policy, the policy has to reflect our legal obligations and these will form the backbone of the policy.

Other issues, which have yet to be decided, are what software to use, whether to operate a free phone and how will this operate and if touch screens are used where to locate them.

The website will also incorporate links to the 'Up My Street' website, which gives information about the area in which the house is situated (you simply type in the post code).

The sequence of events will be as follows: -

- The proposal goes before Committee – If approved
- A Financial Viability Study will be carried out
- Policy and proposal is presented to Members, Tenants and Stakeholders for consultation
- Changes are made to reflect the views expressed during the consultation process
- Implementation

Options Appraisal

The main issue now is to get as many people as possible involved in the process through the Independent Tenants Advisor.

Independent Tenants Advisor (ITA) Selection

An interview panel has been selected from the Options Appraisal sub-group consisting of: -

Terry Anderson

Chris Symes

Roger Greenaway and

Viv Phelps.

On the evenings of Monday 1 and 8 March the interview panel received interview techniques training from Brian Hoyle of Hoyle Associates.

On Tuesday 9 March the panel interviewed the Independent Tenants Advisors (ITA) to find out: -

How they would reach difficult to contact groups/individuals?

Who are in the team?

What are their jobs/experience?

What are their team achieved results?

What levels of experience they had of working together and carrying out ITA duties in other areas?

What their contingency plans are should anyone fall ill etc?

No decision was made on the day of the interviews. The panel met on the evening of Thursday 11 March to discuss the candidates.

The successful candidate is DOME and they will be invited to a future meeting to meet the group and discuss the next step which will be the development of the Tenant Empowerment Strategy and the Communication Strategy.

The role of the ITA will be to: -

- Seek to increase tenant representation from the whole of the city
- Increase tenants knowledge and understanding of the process
- Find out what improvements tenants want both to their homes and levels of service and refer these to the council so that costings can be made. This process will inform the options available
- Verify that the information we give is accurate.
- Feedback to tenants.
- Report back the tenants' choice to the council.
- You set the specification – You choose.

A steering group will be set up which will consist of: -

- 4 serving Councillors
- 3 Officers (plus others as their particular expertise is required)
- 3 Tenants representatives (to include 2 general tenants, 1 sheltered tenant) and 1 leaseholder
- A trade union representative – to represent the interests of staff

The T&LCG will continue to have regular meetings; this group will work in parallel with the T&LCG and report back to them directly

No part of the Option Appraisal process will be deemed to be complete unless the Government signs it off as each step is completed.

The Community Housing Task Force has now been informed that DOME have been selected as the ITA for Exeter and they have endorsed this decision.

Status Survey

Every three years the council carries out a survey of tenants. The survey goes out to a random sample of one in four tenants and gives a good indication of how we are performing in the eyes of the people at the receiving end of our services.

Overhead Projection Slides were shown to the group depicting the answers to 11 of the questions along with the answers from the last survey as a comparison and these are included with the minutes.

Asbestos Survey

The government expects all councils to keep a register of all properties that contain asbestos. For this reason Exeter City Council must carry out a survey of our properties to highlight exactly where asbestos exists. This will not mean that we have to inspect

every property we have but it will mean that we inspect a sample of all the different types of property we have.

If we do find asbestos it is not necessary to remove it, simply register its location.

If it is left undisturbed it does not represent a problem but knowing it is there will make it easier to allow for working with it or removing it should the need arise during a repair for instance.

Environmental Improvements

The 1st April is the start of the new financial year and the date when this years budgets are allocated. Each Estate Officer will be allocated their own budget to allocate to environmental improvements within their area.

Estate based groups should be in contact with the Estate Officer for their area with regard to the allocation of the budget, if not, contact Phil Mills if not satisfied.

If you have any ideas, which would help to improve the area in which you live, you should contact your Estate Officer and discuss this with them.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of this group will be held at: -

7pm on Wednesday 9 June at the Civic Centre Committee Rooms A/B.

Report to Phase 1 Reception (Dix's Field entrance) where you will be met and escorted into the building.

A schedule of future meetings is included with these minutes.

Any items for the agenda to Steve (265698) or Tony (265738).

IMPORTANT!

Anyone requiring a taxi to attend the meeting should ring Z CARS directly and not the council. They will collect all the names and addresses of people requiring transport and arrange to pick you up from home.

This arrangement is **only with Z CARS** and will of course continue to be paid for by the council.

The telephone number for Z CARS is 422888

Simply telephone Z CARS and inform them that you require a taxi to the venue.

They will ask you where you want picking up from and what time you will be picked up.