

THREE OAKS HOMES TENANTS' FEDERATION

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT THE BLABY PARISH COUNCIL OFFICES, WESTERN DRIVE, BLABY, ON 7th JUNE 2010 AT 10.00 A.M.

Present:	Joan Deacon	Chair
	Suzi Randall	Vice-Chair
	Jim Humphreys	Treasurer
	Jean Humphreys	
	Lesley Woodward	
	Jackie Clarke	
	Keith Posnett	
	Tony Mann	
	Jean Ricketts	
	Shirley Heggie	
	Mary Thompson	
	Mary Hood	
	Pat Mills	Tenant Observer
	Marie Marston	" "
	Val Smith	" "

From Item 8 on the Agenda:

Bruce Kerr	Managing Director, TOH
Deborah Walthorne	Managing Director, DWA Consultants
Colin Norman	Chair, TOH Board
Richard Ward	Vice-Chair, TOH Board

1. Apologies for absence – None.

It was explained that, due to the Federation not receiving as much funding as they had hoped for, we could no longer afford to pay Sheila Chapman to take the minutes. Lesley has agreed to take back the task of producing the minutes for the foreseeable future.

Richard Rae, Head of Maintenance at TOH, came and introduced 2 new members of the Maintenance Team – Kiumars Kiana, Asset Manager, and Keith Mills, Asset Surveyor. Richard, Kiumars and Keith then left the Meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest – Joan, Tony and Jim declared an interest as Board Members of Three Oaks Homes and, as such, would refrain from discussing or voting on any matters which may conflict with this.

3. Approval of Previous Minutes - The Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on 10th May 2010 were approved.

4. Matters arising from previous Minutes

Page 2 - Regarding removal of items from Void Properties

A tenant who has installed their own stair-lift has been told it will be removed when the property becomes void. There was some discussion on this and it was thought that TOH is in the process of compiling a list of properties with adaptations – such as stair-lifts, bathrooms etc. – in order to match prospective tenants' needs with available properties. TOH would need to take on responsibility for maintenance of stair-lifts, installed by tenants, which would be passed on as a service charge to the new tenant.

Page 3 – Regarding Group Asset Management Strategy

When confirmation is received from Bruce Kerr that the Strategy has been approved by Subsidiary and Group Boards, a copy will be circulated to Committee Members.

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- Regarding the Report to TOH Board - A copy of the report was passed to Committee Members along with a response from Colin Norman, Chair of TOH Board.
- Regarding Communication with TOH/TOPS - A tenant reported on the excellent telephone response - and subsequent service - received when contacting TOPS to request the Handyvan Service. The new Customer Service communications system is now due to 'go live' on 9th June 2010.

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- Choice Based Lettings – A speaker is still being sought for the OGM on 21st June.
- Waiting List – The waiting list for Cat.1 and Cat. 2 Sheltered Accommodation is still open but the list for general needs properties is closed. This is because so few properties have been let over recent years; it would be unfair to take people on to the list with no hope of being able to house them. (See Page 8, item 2.2.6, of TOH Allocations Policy)
- Refurbishment Programme – One tenant had now had all outstanding jobs completed and thanked the Committee for their help in achieving this. Two other tenants' queries are still outstanding and will be taken to the next Steering Group Meeting. Another tenant praised the service received so far.
- 'Dash Board' – Copies are still awaited from Alpa.

- Neighbours' Day – A reminder was given that this event is on 9th June and several Committee Members said they would be attending.

5. Treasurer's Report

The funding has now been received from TOH and the cheque account currently stands at £6815.60, and there is £34.10 in petty cash. At the end of the last financial year, 31st March, there was an amount of £599.12 which was carried over to this financial year.

6. Secretary's Report – Nothing to report.

7. Tenant Representative Reports

A. Written reports were handed out on the Voids Meeting and the Steering Group Meeting. Jean and Shirley had attended workshops in connection with the Investment Programme. Joan and Jackie had attended a Supporting People Meeting and Jackie had become a member of the EMH Group Customer Council and will get the opportunity to observe a Group Board Meeting.

8. Any Special Business – A. Open Discussion

1. Jackie expressed her concerns regarding the following items which she read out.

- From David Cameron - "As part of the Social Housing Bill it (the Government) is considering making it a legal obligation for Social Landlords to keep a portion of their vacant homes empty for tenants who might wish to move into them from other parts of the Country".
- From BDC Housing Strategy – "The major social Landlord is Three Oaks Homes (TOH). As part of its Asset Management Strategy, TOH will consider current use and demand of sheltered housing stock to formulate re-configuration, re-development programme in partnership with the council's social services and the Homes and Communities Agency.
- From Supporting People Housing Strategy – (a) "The co-operation of District and Borough Councils is essential to ensure that Allocation Policies reflect and meet the housing needs of disabled people particularly into the move to Choice Based Lettings. Housing providers may not necessarily understand the issues around supported living and therefore may need re-assurance that providing such accommodation will be no more problematic than providing tenancies in general." (b) "Local Authorities, Private Sector Landlords and Housing Associations can all provide accommodation for supported living purposes for people with mental health problems - to meet the increasing future need for them to move on - and permanent accommodation for people with mental health problems."

There was a general discussion on the above with regard to the TOH

Allocations Policy and it was mentioned that all Policies have a review date and cannot be arbitrarily altered without consultation. When working on the Allocations Policy a clause was included on sensitive lettings. Concern was expressed over the suggestion that properties should be kept empty because this would result in loss of rental income unless the Government was prepared to make a financial commitment to compensate Landlords.

2. Questions were raised on some anomalies on the Voids Meeting report e.g. a property stated as being ready to let but was found to have work still required when visited by a Housing Officer.

3. Tenants in College Road have, for years, had problems with the drains/sewers. Over the last 6 months, the problems have been occurring every few weeks and the tenants have now all signed a petition which has been sent to Bruce Kerr, MD of TOH, to try and get the problem rectified. No response has been received to date.

B. Co-Regulation

Colin Norman joined the meeting and introduced Richard Ward, Vice-Chair of TOH Board, to the Committee.

Bruce Kerr and Deborah Walthorne, Managing Director of DWA, a not-for-profit Housing Consultancy Company joined the meeting.

The Chair welcomed all of the above- Colin and Richard as observers, Bruce who had come to discuss Voids and Deborah who had been appointed to work on Resident Involvement and Co-Regulation.

VOIDS - Bruce advised that TOH has a lot of void properties which are difficult to let, particularly in Cat.2 Sheltered schemes. Tenancy Services are working in various ways to attract people to these properties. In order to speed up the turn round times on void properties, a Project Team has been set up comprising Officers only, at the moment. The purpose of the team is to go back to basics and question everything that TOH/TOPS are doing with void properties and a number of suggestions have been considered including TOPS having responsibility for the entire process from beginning to end. One meeting has been held so far and it is the intention to have a working group to include new tenants and tenants from the Federation to get a wide view of what is the acceptable condition of void properties. Lesley and Jackie volunteered to attend this group and Joan will act as sub. A copy of the procedure, followed when properties become void, was requested. Bruce anticipated the next meeting of the voids group would be held in mid-July, date to be advised.

CO-REGULATION - Bruce introduced Deborah who had been appointed to work with the tenants on the following:

- Election of tenant Board Members

- Taking into account the TSA standards set recently, on 'co-regulation' i.e. working with tenants to shape services for the future.
- To review resident involvement and discuss with tenants where they think the future offices of TOH should be located.

Deborah briefly outlined her company and the work it does and stated that this first meeting was intended as a 'getting to know you' exercise and that, as she is not from the Blaby area, she recognised the importance of listening to TOH tenants. Deborah would be working in partnership with TOH Staff, Board Members and Tenants to ascertain what is being done well and how it can be built on, and where improvements are needed. Deborah outlined several areas which will be discussed in future workshops - including holding landlords accountable - and confirmed that the wider tenants groups and communities will be included in the consultation exercise. A progress report will be produced for the September Board Meeting.

Some of the Questions/comments:

- ❖ There are some inaccuracies in the resident involvement section of the 'Health Check' report carried out recently for TOH and these need to be addressed. DW - These sort of anomalies will be discussed at the forthcoming workshops.
- ❖ Having been involved for over 6 years now, and trying during that time to get more people interested, there has been little response. DW - This is not uncommon across the Country.
- ❖ As there is an existing Resident Involvement Strategy and Action Plan in place with TOH will this consultation process be working in line with that and what more can be done than is contained in it? DW - The process is not to look at current procedures but to look to what can be done in the future to, for example, attract more tenants to get involved.
- ❖ The point was made that a large proportion of TOH tenants were older and less able to get involved.
- ❖ There was a lengthy discussion on election of tenant Board Members and it was confirmed that life skills are as important as professional skills when selecting Board Members. It is important that people understand the commitment they are making when becoming a Board Member. Bruce confirmed that TOH are also looking at the way Council nominees to the Board are made and how independents are selected. With regard to training, it was felt that tenants on the Board reserve list should be receiving training, as well as attending Board Meetings as observers - at the discretion of the Chair of the Board - to enable them to better assess, and gain confidence in, their ability to fulfil the role.

- ❖ What selection process was used to appoint DWA and why were the Federation not included in the process? Tenants should be included in the selection process of consultants they will be working closely with and the Federation were involved in the selection, prior to transfer, of EMHG and the Consultants and Contractors for the Investment Programme. BK - Wanted open-ended decision and felt that tenants may have pre-conceptions of what was required on this occasion. TOH consulted with several other Stock Transfer associations and DWA were highly recommended and were, therefore, appointed.
- ❖ Several other matters, including the proportion of men to women on Boards, were raised and briefly discussed and will be more fully addressed at the workshops/meetings to take place over the summer.

It was agreed to hold the first workshop/meeting on 21st June 2010 at 10.00 a.m., venue to be confirmed. Seven Committee Members were available for this. Alpa Patel, the Neighbourhood Officer, will be co-ordinating the project and will contact Joan with further details.

Joan thanked Deborah for her presentation.

9. Any Other Business

A question was raised regarding tenants being involved in consultations resulting in changes to the Allocations Policy which existed under BDC. It was confirmed that tenants were involved on the Policy Task Force prior to transfer to TOH when this Policy was addressed and agreed.

The list of Committee Members on sub-groups was raised and it was confirmed that no-one wanted to come off or go on to any of the groups. Mary Thompson is a member of the Safe as Houses group and her name will be added to the list.

Jackie has joined another group, outside of the Committee, the Blaby Central Community Forum, and she is still Vice-Chair of the Blaby Older Persons' Forum.

It was commented that the last meeting of the Aids and Adaptations Group had been cancelled and no further meeting dates had been advised. Clarification would be sought from Richard Rae.

10. Date, time and venue of next Meeting

The next Committee Meeting will be held on 5th July 2010 in the Blaby Parish Council Offices, Western Drive, Blaby, from 10.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

11. CLOSURE OF MEETING - The Meeting was closed at 12.23 p.m.