

THREE OAKS HOMES TENANTS' FEDERATION

MINUTES OF COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT THE BLABY PARISH COUNCIL OFFICES, WESTERN DRIVE, BLABY ON 10th MAY 2010, AT 10.00 am

Present:	Joan Deacon	Chair
	Suzi Randall	Vice Chair
	Jim Humphreys	Treasurer
	Lesley Woodward	
	Jean Humphreys	
	Jackie Clarke	
	Shirley Heggie	
	Jean Ricketts	
	Mary Hood	
	Mary Thomson	TOH Tenant Observer
	Pat Mills	TOH Tenant Observer
	Marie Marston	TOH Tenant Observer
	Ann Holmes	EMHA Tenant Observer
	Jerry Sykes	East Midlands Housing Group
	Alpa Patel	TOH Neighbourhood Officer
	Sheila Chapman	Minute Secretary

The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming two new observers, Pat and Marie. She also welcomed Mary on her third visit as an observer. Mary agreed to be co-opted onto the Committee after today which would be ratified at the AGM in September. The Chairman continued by announcing that unfortunately, Reuben Reynolds, one of the oldest and longest serving members of the Federation, had tendered his resignation from the Committee - and all associated working groups - with immediate effect. The Chairman has written to Reuben thanking him for his contribution and loyal service.

1. **Apologies for absence** – Apologies had been received from Tony Mann, Keith Posnett and Colin Norman
2. **Declarations of Interest** – Jim Humphreys and Joan Deacon 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. **Report from Jerry Sykes** – presented the draft Group Rechargeable Repairs Policy for consultation and comment. He was advised that this document, together with a Questionnaire, had already been circulated to all members. Several queries were raised by TOHTF:-

If the value of members' properties increases due to their own improvements, it was felt that tenants should be allowed the use of the repair services.

Costs for recharging. Previously a schedule had been available to tenants on request and the existing policy gave an example. Mr Sykes responded by saying that the new document will provide this information. However, in the past the policy and procedures had been one document but because this will be a group policy,

procedures will be separate from it with EMHA and TOH/TOPS working slightly differently. Mr Sykes was asked whether TOH will have their own charges? He intimated that the agreement needed to be completed then work on 'this area' could be finalised.

Item 3.3. (the last bullet point) referring to void properties and the clearing and disposing of tenants' possessions, rubbish etc. It was felt that this needed further clarification as, at the moment, TOH void properties are cleared as part of the Lettable Standard without charge. Mr Sykes reported that in the last year EMHA had to meet the cost for each clearance which amounted to several hundred pounds. He felt that due to legal reasons, the Housing Association should not be liable for clearance because tenant may later claim that his belongings had been taken without consent. This point is not made clear in this paragraph and needs to be more fully detailed.

Item 6.3 - "In such cases EMHG may invoke the Terms of Tenancy Agreement". It was felt that this should read " ...invoke the individual subsidiaries' Terms of Tenancy Agreement" as each subsidiary's Tenancy Agreement is different.

Item 4.1 (first bullet point) The e-mailed document circulated to the Committee prior to this meeting differed in to the one which arrived by post. The first document referred to *Support Agencies* but the second to *or other faith or religious adaptations grounds.....* Mr Sykes answered by saying that this was a working document and changes are continuously being made. He would however ensure that attention would be given to the corrections and agreed that different versions of the document should be numbered in some way for greater clarity. It was suggested that Policies which cross-refer with this one should be listed on the back page.

Members were concerned how the new policy will be explained to everyone and were assured that letters would be sent and a leaflet produced.

Mr Sykes thank the members for their time and left the meeting at 10:15 am.

4. **Approval of Previous Minutes** – The Minutes of the Committee Meeting held on the 12th April, 2010 were approved subject to Jean Ricketts' name being added to the list of those present as unfortunately this had been omitted. Also reference to the Steering Group Report being received had not been mentioned.

5. **Matters arising from previous Minutes**

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Voids – A form has now been produced for monitoring voids and accompanied viewings to be used in conjunction with Lettable Standard. The last page of the form is to be completed by Tenancy Services and/or TOPS, and returned to TOHTF for filing. The document was shown at a Voids Meeting and both Judy Dawson and Sue Lees agreed the document had been well produced.

The question of whether pendants in sheltered accommodation should be itemised as often these were missed and then often discarded when new tenants arrived. It was agreed that reference to pendants should be noted in the comments section of the form.

Handyvan Service – Leaflets had been given to all members requesting comments to Lesley before the next print-run. It was noted that on the eligibility list, the fourth item should read *Pensioner living in general needs accommodation*. Not, 'general accommodation'.

Members were also given copies of 2 documents – one giving the results of a questionnaire on TOPS repairs service times, and one showing the areas and years covered by the ongoing 'Door Replacement Programme'.

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Strategic Review of Housing Related Support Service for Older People on the 21st April - it was unclear whether Reuben had attended this meeting.

Wheldons - Problems are still being experienced regarding visits to properties. It was suggested that TOPS should be notified. To date there had been no response regarding confirmation of appointment dates.

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Grass Cutting - The cutting of grass, in some areas, did not start until 21st April and it was felt that this was rather late. The delay was mainly due to getting the new contracts in place for different areas following the consultation process. TOHTF has been assured that the required 15 cuts for this year will still take place and, hopefully, next year grass cutting will commence on time. Tenants who had chosen the enhanced service were pleased with the results.

Group Asset Management Strategy – the meeting held on the 7th May had been attended by Lesley and Jackie. The policy will be going to all the subsidiary boards this week and will be going to the Group Board on the 21st May. After adjustments and approval a copy of the final document will be sent to TOHTF for circulation.

6. **Treasurer's Report** – The money from the high interest account has been transferred to the cheque account which currently stands at £186.84 and the Petty Cash has £34.10. To date our funding has not been received from Three Oaks Homes.

7. **Secretary's Report** – Nothing to report.

8. **Tenant Representative Reports**

- Jim's report from the EMTPF meeting held at the Peepul Centre was passed to all Committee Members. Jim added that the first half was most interesting but the second half was governed by *pardah*. (Due to the imminence of the General Election, certain information was not available.) However, it was felt that the whole experience was worthwhile.

- Jean produced a report on the Steering Group which was circulated to all members.
- Joan issued a report regarding a Complaints Hearing she and Tony attended recently which they found interesting and very helpful. One case involved arrears and the other was on Service Charges.
- Joan also attended a Voids Meeting recently. She said the number of void properties had been reduced and she would report further in due course.

9. Open Discussion Time

1. Concerns were raised regarding TOH losing their autonomy within the Group. It had always been stressed that TOH would be a subsidiary company, with its own autonomy, and that the Group would only get involved if TOH got into difficulties. It was felt that, among other things, it appeared that eventually all policies would become Group Policies thus eroding TOH identity.

Following a lengthy and detailed discussion a unanimous vote was taken to send a formal report to the Board, with copies to Chan Kataria (EMHG CEO) and Michael Person (Chair of the EMH Group Board).

TOHTF could take their concerns to the TSA if they felt it necessary, depending on the response to the report. To date, there has been no acknowledgement or response from the Board to earlier reports submitted.

Members also felt strongly that there was no transparency between the organisations.

Alpa suggested that to alleviate this, maybe access to some items on Board Minutes, attendance at some Board Meetings may be possible. Also perhaps more information should be available on the web site. Alpa agreed to look into this.

2. The question was raised regarding who had responsibility for clipping a hedge which was growing over onto the pavement. Once ownership was established, it was felt it would be the responsibility of the Highways Department. Alpa Patel would pursue this matter.

3. Mary wished to thank Alpa and her team for providing tables and chairs at no expense for the Forryan Close Neighbours Day which had been a great success. The Chair expressed her disappointment at not being able to attend on this occasion but hoped to do so next time.

4. It was reported that Three Oaks Homes was a name that you can trust but this trust, it was felt, was gradually being eroded. Communication was seen as a major problem. Telephone calls were not being returned even though messages had been left on the answer-phone. The meeting had been told that the new telephone system would be set up by now but there had been issues with relocation

of staff and this is thought to have delayed this. Alpa would enquire further and report back although members felt that their concerns were not being 'listened to'.

5. Alpa reported on the outcome of a 'Health Check' in relation to Resident Involvement and said that the TSA has stressed the importance of getting this right. More residents need to be involved and independent consultation will be sought to ensure decisions are correct.

6. It was felt that the field staff i.e. Housing Support Officers (Wardens) were an ideal means of communication between tenants and the Landlord.

10. Any Other Business

- Choice Based Lettings. The Allocations Policy is due for review but this will be delayed in order to incorporate Choice Based Lettings. It is noted that EMHA operate a Choice Based Letting system. It was agreed to try and get an independent representative to attend the OGM in June to explain how CBL operates so that the Federation are well informed for when consultations take place later this year.
- The Federation has been advised that the Three Oaks Homes Waiting List has been closed and a prospective tenant has been waiting two months for an acknowledgement. The question was asked as to why the waiting list had been closed and whether it had anything to do with Choice Based Lettings. Alpa agreed to investigate and report back.
- The Refurbishment programme is ongoing and tenants will receive a letter informing them of the start date in due course. Apparently, one Committee Member has not received any information but Jean Humphreys will try to find out what is happening on their behalf. Other tenants, however, found that the service providers had been happy to make mutually convenient arrangements with them.
- Mary Thompson reported on a meeting she had attended on 22nd March to complain about four Investment Programme jobs that had been outstanding since July 2009. Jean Humphreys said she would take this forward to the Steering Group Meeting she will be attending next week.
- Alpa asked whether TOH would like a presentation of the 'Dash Board' (this is a reporting programme) illustrating key performance indicators across the groups, e.g. housing, maintenance, arrears, tenancy, contact and repairs management, recorded on a monthly basis comparing EMHA and TOH looking at targets that have been set. Alpa will circulate copies for everyone before the next meeting and the Committee will then decide whether a presentation is needed to explain the programme further.
- Alpa issued an Invitation to attend Three Oaks Homes' Neighbours Day to be held at Braunstone Civic Centre on Wednesday 9th June from 1.30 – 4.30 p.m. Refreshments will be provided. The Working Group will contact other participants to help and also other agencies to ensure that this is an

enjoyable afternoon to get together. An agenda will be compiled listing activities including an introduction from Adam Chamberlain of TOPS. All ideas are welcome. Please contact Alpa who is producing a flyer for information.

11. **Date, time and venue of the next Meeting** – The next Committee Meeting will be held on the 7th June 2010, in the Blaby Parish Council Offices, Western Drive, Blaby from 10.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m.

The next OGM will be held in the Council Chamber at Blaby District Council Offices, Desford Road, Narborough on Monday 21st June 2010 from 7.00 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

12. **Closure of meeting** – The meeting closed at 12 noon