

THREE OAKS HOMES TENANTS' FEDERATION

MINUTES OF ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BLABY DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, NARBOROUGH, ON 22nd MARCH 2010, AT 2.00 P.M.

Present: COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Joan Deacon	Chair, Member of TOH Board
Suzi Randall	Vice-Chair
Jim Humphreys	Treasurer, Member of TOH Board
Jean Humphreys	
Lesley Woodward	
Jackie Clarke	
Shirley Heggie	
Keith Posnett	
Reuben Reynolds	
Tony Mann	Member of TOH Board

OTHER ATTENDEES:

Colin Norman	Chair of TOH Board
Pauline Potterton	Tenant
Janet Looms	"
Gordon Looms	"
Judith Joyce	"
Len Cartledge	"
C.S. Taylor	"
A. Marriott	"
A.J. Hardy	"
Tom James	"
D. Leake	"
A. Leake	"
D. Theobald	"
E.E. Manchester	"
J.V. Brown	"
D. Sillitoe	"
M. Marston	"
Mary Thompson	"
D. Fitzhugh	
Bruce Kerr	Managing Director, TOH
Sue Lees	Head of Housing Services, TOH

Simon Yarwood	TOH
Richard Rae	Head of Maintenance, TOH
Peter Allen	TOH
Adam Chamberlain	Head of TOPS
George Waldram	Lovell Partnerships
David Sprason	Cabinet Member for Adults and Communities at Leicestershire County Council (LCC)

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Apologies for absence – had been received from Committee Members Jean Ricketts and Mary Hood.

2. Declarations of Interest – Colin, Reuben, Jim, Tony and Joan 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. Presentation by Mr. David Sprason

Mr. Sprason gave a very informative and interesting overview of the DALE (Decisions at Life's End) Project which started in Leicestershire in 2007 and is about giving people alternative choices about where they want to spend their final days e.g. in their own home, surrounded by friends and family, rather than in a hospital. The project was set up with a grant of £2,000,000 from the Government and has provided Community Nurses enabling more people to remain in their own homes than previously and saving space in hospital wards. There has been positive feedback from friends and family of those who have been helped by the Project which is now called the Gold Standard Framework and is being used as a model in other parts of the UK.

A question was asked about the personal care aspect e.g. when people are discharged from hospital and have no friends or family close at hand. Personal care, which is currently means tested, is still provided by the Adult Social Care Team. Health care is provided free. Extra-care schemes - which provide round the clock care, but tenants have their own accommodation with a front door key - as opposed to sheltered schemes, were discussed and it was confirmed that those who qualified for benefits would still receive them in this type of accommodation. LCC is hoping to provide 500 extra-care housing schemes in Leicestershire within the next 5 years. One benefit is that couples can go into extra-care schemes together whereas, in residential care homes, couples are often split up. Bruce Kerr stated

that TOH are currently looking into the feasibility of developing extra-care schemes in the future and that he would keep us informed of progress.

4. Approval of Previous Minutes - The Minutes of the Ordinary General Meeting held on 14th December 2009 were approved.

5. Matters arising from previous Minutes

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Item 3 – Question Time

- TV Licences in Sheltered Accommodation – This only applies to Cat. 2 tenants. It was clarified that, when Cat. 2 sheltered schemes had resident wardens, TV licences were free for tenants. When wardens' (HSOs) hours were reduced the criteria altered and now, new tenants moving into sheltered schemes have to pay in full for a TV Licence.

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- Electric Fire and Surround – Richard clarified that these are only being offered to tenants having a heating upgrade which required the gas fire with back boiler to be removed.

6. Financial Report – At present the high interest account stands at £400.92, the cheque account stands at £1454.16 and the Petty Cash has £44.14 . We are awaiting several invoices for transport, stationery etc. The Treasurer reminded Committee Members that expense claim forms need to be submitted by the end of the month.

7. Presentation by Lovells/TOH on The Investment Programme

Richard Rae and George Waldram gave a review of the Investment Programme to date and an update on the proposed programme for the future. Some key points were:-

- The Investment Programme will deliver the promises made to tenants before transfer from Blaby District Council to Three Oaks Homes (TOH) and in accordance with the Government's Decent Homes Standard.
- Properties in most need were dealt with in year 1.

- In year 1, Lovells have carried out 292 Bathroom replacements, 250 Boiler replacements, 448 Electrical upgrades and 340 kitchen replacements and some full central heating and electric heating systems. 4.76% of the 525 properties covered in year 1 provided no access and the current refusal rate, including no access, is estimated to be 13%. The costs of these refusals have been deferred for work to be carried out in the future. Year 1 is on schedule to be finished in a couple of weeks time.

- For year 2, it is estimated that Lovells will carry out 354 Bathroom replacements, 259 Boiler replacements, 39 Electric Heating systems, 279 Electrical upgrades and 474 Kitchen replacements. Some of the necessary surveys have already been carried out.

- Some kitchens have been made larger and 86 bathrooms to date have been fitted with level access showers whilst some bathrooms have shower cubicles.

- Lovells have visited the homes of more than 1000 tenants of TOH so far and have received some compliments as well as some complaints.

- Tenant satisfaction varied from 81% to 97% over the 6 month period from August 2009 to January 2010. The target for year 1 is 90%.

- After listening to tenants, Lovells now have a freephone number for phone calls.

- Reviews of the processes involved are being carried out regularly in order to provide continuous improvement to the service. Representatives of the TOHTF are included in these reviews.

SOME OF THE QUESTIONS

Q. When properties become empty, but are not due to be upgraded for another year or two, will the works be carried out before a new tenant moves in?

A. The opportunity may be taken depending on issues such as budgets, etc.

Q. Is Year 1 on budget?

A. Yes, and the money which would have been spent on properties where tenants have refused the work has been put aside for the work to be possibly carried out in the future.

There were specific questions asked by some tenants, relevant to work required to complete their properties. George would speak to the tenants concerned at the end of the meeting for more information.

Q. Several tenants have been upset and distressed by the amount of time taken to carry out the work e.g. why does it take 3 weeks to fit a kitchen or bathroom?

A. The time factor is one of the things currently being reviewed. George would speak to the tenants concerned at the end of the meeting for more information.

Q. In view of the above question, is this being looked at in the current review?

A. Yes.

COMMENT - Bruce Kerr stated that he was concerned to hear the problems apparently being experienced by some tenants. He advised the meeting that TOH and Lovells work in partnership, in order to get the best service for the tenants, and will continue to improve the service and, hopefully, eliminate the problems as the Investment Programme proceeds.

8. Any Other Business

- Bruce took the opportunity to introduce Adam Chamberlain who is the new Head of TOPS.
- Bruce had been requested by the finance dept to discuss the auditing of service charges. It was agreed, after discussion, that service charges should only be audited, on demand, if a tenant specifically challenges them.
- A tenant from The Green, Blaby, raised the question of service charges in connection with the grounds maintenance of the green space in front of the flats. The green is a public right of way and, therefore, is it subject to TOH service charges? Also, was it legal for BDC to transfer the green to TOH?

Bruce commented that the legal question was already being discussed at TOH. With regard to the service charges for grounds maintenance, these will be reviewed - with further consultation with tenants - when the current contract comes up for renewal in 2 years time. As TOH operates variable service charges, the first reconciliation will be carried out in September 2011 and any refunds due will be dealt with at that time. Bruce confirmed that there is an appeals procedure available.

- Bruce was asked to clarify the “telephony” item on the service charges. The warden call system in Cat. 1 and 2 properties connected, by a telephone line, to a call centre. The service charge under “telephony” is for the hardware and telephone line of the system.
- A tenant had been trying to get someone to explain the breakdown of the service charges to him but had not been successful. Bruce apologised for the problems the tenant had encountered and Simon Yarwood agreed to speak to the tenant at the end of meeting to clarify the situation.
- The question was asked as to when Spring Gardens, Littlethorpe, will be getting new doors. Apparently, several years ago, it was recommended to BDC by a Crime Prevention Officer that all the doors were fitted with new locks for security purposes. This has never been done. Richard confirmed that new doors will be fitted as part of the Investment Programme but, in the meantime, he will investigate the question of new locks.
- Adam Chamberlain introduced himself and explained that he was taking over as Head of TOPS from Tony Giaccobe who leaves at the end of the week. From 1st April, TOPS will be doing work not only for TOH but also for East Midlands Housing Association and Foundation Housing. Adam stated that he was happy to speak to tenants at the end of the meeting if they had problems they wanted to discuss.

10. Date, time and venue of next meeting

The next general meeting will be the OGM to be held on 21st June 2010, in the Council Chamber, BDC Offices, Narborough, at 7.00 p.m. All tenants and leaseholders are welcome to attend. If transport is required, please phone the TOHTF on 0116 2787187 a week before to arrange.

11. CLOSURE OF MEETING - The Chair thanked everyone for attending and the Meeting was closed at 4.00 p.m.