

Cheshire Regional Consultative Committee

MINUTES

of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th March, 2010

Present: Eric Jones, Alan Winchester, Margaret Frain, Bill McQuinn, Philip Bradley, Rachel Shearin, Stan Snowdon, Brian Campbell, Jean Fagan, Janet Ellis, Grant McKenzie, Andrei Szatkowski, Alex Morrish, David Wride, Penny Waller, Geraldine Porter (Minutes)

Apologies: Bridie O'Reilly, Sheila Clarke, Bill O'Hara

		Action
1	Minutes - of the previous meeting were approved.	
2	Matters arising Stan asked about the painting at Greengates and Rachel said it was now complete. He also asked about the budget for future asset management projects in the neighbourhood. Alex said that once this year's budget was agreed he could share the details with the RCC. The Away Day discussed previously was in abeyance until the Chairs' Meeting have agreement on other matters. Eric reported that he had received an email from Andy Carberry asking for representatives from the RCCs to attend a meeting, Equalities Review of Resident Involvement, on 26 th March at Regenda House from 10 – 1 p.m. Eric circulated the email and asked member to consider whether they would be able to attend. There was some discussion about the content of this meeting at which point Eric introduced Penny Waller, Policy and Communications Manager at Regenda. She is Helen Shields Manager and has been in post since November, 2009. Penny explained that the meeting is to discuss the policies and procedures around Resident Involvement. Is it accessible to everyone regardless of age, race, disability, etc. Eric said the Chairs have been meeting to discuss Resident Involvement strategy.	AM All
3	Sale & Timperley – Grant said that consultation had taken place about the movement of Sale & Timperley properties to come under Templar rather than Maritime and, although he was happy he didn't know how everyone else felt. He said that the system had become stratified as he believed that leaseholders were now being dealt with separately. Alex explained that the neighbourhood team's dealings were with all residents, whether leaseholders or not. There are occasions when specialist support would be needed (e.g. for sales, etc.) but the day to day management would be by Helen Marks. Grant said it was good to meet Helen and they were thankful for Peta's involvement in the past, however he felt there should have been more detailed consultation as promised. Alex	

	<p>said that at the last meeting it was agreed that a letter be sent out to all residents in the Sale and Timperley areas explaining what was happening and asking residents to contact Alex with any concerns or questions. Approximately 90 copies of the letter were sent out. There were no responses. Alex had been keen to move on with the arrangements for getting Helen in to the area to meet the residents as the RCC were anxious for this matter to move on because it had been on the agenda for so long. Helen and Peta arranged to meet interested residents at the various schemes to introduce Helen and answer any questions. No objections or concerns were raised at these meetings. Grant thanked him for that information and it was good to know that people hadn't raised concerns. He said that the information should be available for all on the internet so that everyone would understand what was happening. It was likely to have an impact on Templar as they were taking on extra properties. Andrei said that it was agreed at the last meeting that the form of consultation would be a letter to all residents. That happened and there were no objections, It would have been possible to have local meetings but that wasn't agreed on this occasion. If a similar situation occurred in the future local meetings could be an option. Jean raised the point that she did not have a contact number for Helen and she did not know the dates of the future meetings. Alex said that the contact number was as previously 0344 7360066 and that the existing Maritime scheme visit dates previously arranged by Peta would stand.</p>	
4	<p>Chairs' Meeting – As nothing had happened since the last meeting there was nothing to report</p>	
5	<p>Staff Ratios – Stan reported that this matter had been raised because at an information meeting it was said that there had been an increase in the number of staff in Regenda. Stan was to do some work benchmarking Regenda against other Housing Associations. As he had not been able to complete this work he asked that it be moved on to a future meeting. A question had been asked about outsourcing of work (e.g. sending out Belong and rent statements) when the staff was increasing. It had been pointed out in reply that approximately 15,000 copies of Belong are sent out and it is cheaper to outsource this than to try to do this in house. Philip concurred with this saying that an organisation he is involved with outsource mailing and it saves them about 25% per year.</p>	SS
6	<p>Rent increases – A meeting had now been arranged for Monday 15th March at Macclesfield Library at 1.45 p.m at which Peter Crosby, one of the Heads of Finance would attend and explain the procedures and answer any questions</p>	
7	<p>Website News – Grant reported that a Photo Album had been added to the website and more inspirational photos were required</p>	

8	<p>from throughout Cheshire. FixMyStreet was going well and details reported to it in Trafford generally get fixed in a short time. To improve communications information should be included such as the new partnership with Seddons and the fact that M & Y have joined the Regenda Group. Grant suggested a number of options for improving on-line communications at sheltered schemes. He reported that the site was receiving between 400 to 600 visitors a month. There would be no additional costs until August 2010. Andrei said that there was to be a pilot at three sheltered schemes this year with internet connection. Rachel reported that on her visit to Bakers Villas she had spoken to Beverley, the warden, who wanted to try to get computer access set up in the lounge for the residents. The residents would need some training but were keen. Stan pointed out that there was training in computers at the local library which was close to the scheme. It was also suggested that Age Concern be asked if they would go to Bakers Villas to run training courses. Stan suggested that a Community Chest application be made for computer(s) and Broadband. Rachel was due to meet with Janet Hardwick and Janet Ellis and the other residents at the scheme and these ideas could be discussed then. In the meantime Gerry promised to get some Community Chest forms to Janet.</p> <p>Care and Repair – Alex reported that Care and Repair were still up an running apart from the Care & Repair Plus (decorating and gardening service) which was due to cease at the end of March due to loss of funding. Care & Repair was in existence to help people in the private sector stay in their homes for longer by assisting with home maintenance and providing aids and adaptations. They also deliver aids and adaptations to all types of accommodation within the old Borough of Macclesfield.They also provide a handy man service which was under review at present. Brian Ring, the manager, is waiting for information about funding. Rachel pointed out how important the service was for older residents. The decorating service was a great help to older people as they were not able to decorate themselves and it was very expensive to get decorators in. Alex said that the good news was that the Tenancy Support service operated by Maggie Stordy for older persons which had also been due to end at the end of March had now been extended for another year. There was no reason why it couldn't be extended to Sale and Timperley residents. Grant said it should be put on the web site. Alex said we had to be careful as there was limited capacity and if we advertised it too much the service could be swamped with requests. Andrei suggested that Brian Ring be asked to attend one of the CRCC meetings in the future to explain about the Care & Repair service and how it operated. Alex said that the service that Brian managed covered Macclesfield and there were similar agencies covering other areas such as Congleton and Trafford..</p>	<p>GSP</p> <p>AS/EJ</p>
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9	<p>T.A.R.O.E – This item was to be deferred to the next Planning meeting. However, Stan said that there were two national tenant organizations. The TSA work with the landlord and tenant groups and have brought together Best Practice rules on Resident Involvement. Membership would be of benefit to the RCC and Regenda. Training programmes are available. Eric said that he didn't feel that training could be done fairly in house.</p>	
10	<p>Neighbourhood Action Plan – The main work in the neighbourhood was the fire risk assessment carried out at Mulberry Court and Heyes House. This covered fire safety, reminding residents of escape routes and checking of fire alarms, etc.. The planning application for railings at Paladin Place had been rejected and was to be re-submitted with additional information. Some time had been spent in discussing how to promote difficult to let properties. Some waiting lists were very short and the identity of Regenda was not as strong in the local area as it should be. People were more familiar with Templar than Regenda so there was to be a re-branding exercise. Currently people were confused as they are not sure if Templar has ceased to exist and may think that our waiting lists are so long they would not have much chance of getting a property. Also there was confusion about the age range for the older person's properties. Other RSLs were also struggling, e.g. Contour have built a new scheme for over 55's and have been advertising it in the local press. One would have expected them to have a waiting list of people eager to move in but they are obviously struggling. Alex was hoping to promote the Tenancy Support Service to applicants who sometimes leave it too late to move and then cannot cope with the upheaval of moving. Cheshire Home Choice, open from April, will cover rented, shared ownership and leasehold properties. This will open up our properties to people outside of our area. Eric reported that the Fire Brigade had been offering free inspections at Covington Place and had called the previous day and remarked that they thought there should be a rear exit in the properties as there was only one means of escape. The feeling of the meeting was that this was not possible and the majority of flats did not have a rear exit. David commented that if it was a requirement then it would cover over 2,000 properties in Regenda. Properties had been built to the planning regulations at the time and new properties would be built to different specifications. Eric Jones said that a company called World Wide Solutions had been visiting schemes and valuing the properties. Philip Bradley said that it was a good thing as they had done valuations at Nightingale Close and they ensured that funds were sufficient for the sinking fund and for future work.</p>	
11	<p>Resident Involvement Update</p>	

	<p>Penny said that the report presented in the papers had been sent to all RCCs. She had included tables showing what is happening and the ongoing routine resident involvement. The training programme for RCCs is being further developed with RCC Chairs. VIP awards - She asked that all RCC members use their knowledge of the neighbourhood and the residents within their community to recommend people for VIP awards to their Neighbourhood teams – who can also provide nomination forms. Penny asked the meeting whether the format and content of the report was acceptable. Did the RCC want more information specific to the neighbourhood area. She asked for feedback. Stan said that the whole problem with resident involvement was poor communication. When asked Penny said that only a small percentage of residents were involved. Stan said that residents were not used to being consulted or involved and education was required to show why they needed to be involved. Penny said that her role was to develop a strategy for communication, websites, etc. Stan suggested it might be useful to use the TPAS consultative service. Penny said that this option would be considered and her job would involve benchmarking against other organisations. Brian asked how we would be able to educate people so that they realised that they were entitled to a say in Regenda and the decisions made. Penny said that the specifics have not been put into place yet. She would be designing a range of mechanisms including residents championing resident involvement; roadshows, working in partnership with local teams rather than general levels of service. A status Survey would soon be sent out to all residents and this should give quite a few answers as to whether they are aware of resident involvement and how they can be involved. Eric said that they were up against a brick wall and she would have an upward struggle because of the policies in place at present. He said that much of RI was a box ticking exercise. He said that the RCC Chairs are discussing a wide range of strategies and both parties will have to sign documents to agree the way forward. Andrei said that the meetings that had been held so far had been productive and the general direction is helpful and positive. Penny said that she had been accused of box ticking and this was not the case. Regenda were trying to understand what residents really want. Bill said that people have to be convinced that they can be involved. This was very difficult as most people didn't want to be involved. Members of the RCC were people who wanted to be involved and probably had a history of involvement. Brian remarked that if the structure was put into place by residents then they will want to take part. Eric said that residents should be involved with the running of the business. Grant asked about the item which highlighted the use of interpreters in one of the subsidiaries and asked if there was much need for this service in the Cheshire region. Penny said that there was a high proportion of Asian residents in the Wardleworth district which had been mentioned but the service was not as essential in</p>	<p>All</p>
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	<p>the CRCC area. She went on to say that the Status Survey and Profiling will bring more information about what residents want according to their needs, as the Regenda records had some major gaps in them. Penny would give more information of customer profiling at the next meeting.</p>	<p>PW</p>
<p>12</p>	<p>Community Chest</p> <p>There were no current Community Chest applications. It was suggested that Bakers Villas submit an application for computer(s) which could be used by the residents in the lounge area. Beverley, the warden, was keen to encourage the residents to have access to a computer. Some of the residents would need lessons. Bill told of the elderly lady at Paddock Close who had bought a computer and had lessons and now was quite expert on the use of it, and it give her a lot of pleasure. Stan pointed out that earlier minutes had mentioned a review of the Community Chest procedure. Alex said that it had been hoped to do this but it needed to be done as part of a much larger piece of work. Gerry would let Janet have a Community Chest application form.</p> <p>Stan raised the matter of an application that had been made for Priesty Fields and which he claimed had not been completed satisfactorily. Alex said that there had been two applications: the first one had been rejected as it did not fit the criteria for a CC application. A second application was submitted which Stan said that some residents assumed would include the work from the original application, but the neighbourhood team were unaware of any link between the two applications. The two applications were separate and the second one was a replacement - not in addition to the first application. The application was submitted by a resident and approved by this Committee. Alex had spoken to the residents at Priesty Fields and the second application had been signed by them all. If they wanted the work on the original application to be done then the applicant would have to submit a further application. Stan said that it was up to the Neighbourhood Officer to contact the other residents to find out if they understood that the second application would include the work specified in the first, or were content with the work which was done as a result of the second application. Alex said he would try to get this information by the following Monday when the Committee were due to meet again. If the response was that they were happy for the original work to go ahead then a new application would need to be submitted by a resident and signed by the majority of the residents of Priesty Fields.</p>	<p>GSP</p> <p>AM</p>
<p>13</p>	<p>Gas Servicing Minutes – Minutes were included in the Papers circulated</p>	
<p>14</p>	<p>Core Group – information was included in the Papers circulated. Brian commented that he had been very impressed by the meeting</p>	

	<p>that he had attended. Membership of Fusion 21 increases the buying power of the Group. He was impressed by the care that the Company took in dealing with residents, He told the story of an old man who was living in squalor and the efforts the company went to to help him. Stan said that there had been a problem with the central heating at Bakers Villas when the cold snap was on and the residents were left without heat for a long time. David Wride said that the response time for an emergency should be four hours. David would investigate. Brian said that M&Y had reported that they had underspent but completed more jobs. David explained that they received a percentage of any profit as part of the contract. There was also a saving of 17 ½ %. In future the electricians would be employed in house. Bill said that he felt they should have someone at the Shared Service Centre who had a knowledge of building works as it would be a help if someone with such a background could be spoken to if necessary. It would help with allocation of workmen.</p>	<p>DW</p> <p>DW</p>
<p>15</p>	<p>Budget Service Charge - Leaseholders</p> <p>Philip reported that he had received a Rent and Service Charge Review with a Service charge budget which lists all services. There is an estimate and then that is broken down month by month. He has been told that management fees will rise substantially next year. There is a sinking fund at Nightingale Close. Five or six of the properties are currently up for sale and 0.75% of the sale price goes into the sinking fund. The residents are told every year how much is held in the sinking fund. If it is underfunded then residents will pay the shortfall but get it back if it is over. He said that mistakes could be made and one had to watch it closely. However, the document is very clear. The residents at Nightingale Close had received a letter on 23rd February about the insurance services (Zurich.) Philip wanted to know why, if insurance rates were dropping, that the Buildings Insurance had shot up by £600. Philip is waiting for a reply from Matthew Reynolds. Jean said that she didn't think they had a sinking fund at her scheme. Philip said that the information should be in the Lease which she should check – or ask someone to check.</p>	<p>JF</p>
<p>16</p>	<p>Sheltered Housing Group update</p> <p>Discussion about the need for computer access had been discussed in items 7 and 13 above. Gerry would let Janet have a Community Chest application form.</p>	
<p>17</p>	<p>Director's Overview</p> <p>Andrei had nothing to report that had not already been covered.</p>	

<p>18</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Brian wanted to know that Peter Crosby was attending the forthcoming meeting on Rents and Service Charges with all the relevant information. As the rent structure should have a flexibility of -5 to +5 the Committee would need to know what the rents had been based on. Andrei said that Peter won't be discussing individual schemes. He suggested that members of the committee email any questions they may have to Andrei and he would pass them on to Peter so that he was well prepared.</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>19</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The dates of future meetings were as follows:</p> <p>Rent & Service Charge Special Meeting – Monday 15/3/10 at 1.45 p.m. Informal Meeting – Tuesday 27th April 2010 Wilmslow Library – 11 a.m. Formal Meeting – Tuesday 8th June 2010 Macclesfield Library – 10.30 a.m.</p>	