

REGENDA LIMITED

Minutes of the Housing Services Committee Meeting held at
Regenda House, Enterprise Business Park, Northgate Close, Bolton, BL6 6PQ
on Thursday 21st May 2009

Present:	Mr P Coffey	-	Chair
	Mr E Jones		
	Mr R Burman		
	Ms C Cookson		
	Mr R Chadwick		
	Miss R Zammit		
	Mr S Howse		
	Mr B Gallagher		
Officers:	Ms T Heyes	-	Executive Director Operations
	Mr S Newsham	-	Regional Director East
	Mr A Szatkowski	-	Regional Director West
	Ms K Darracott	-	Committee Officer

1. Welcome and Introductions

Peter Coffey welcomed all members to the newly constituted Housing Services Committee.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs F Parkinson, Mr T Rogers and Ms P Waller.

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Terms of Reference

Tracy Heyes gave members a presentation on the Housing Services Committee Terms of Reference. Members were advised that the Committee is accountable for housing services, asset management, supported housing and resident involvement. The role of the Committee is to monitor standards and review and shape new services and policies for the neighbourhoods in which the Group operates.

Peter Coffey advised that hopefully the Committee has achieved the right balance of membership, however, this will be reviewed within the first 12 months in line with the other Committee's and further reviews will be carried out every 2 years going forward to ensure the Committee is fit for purpose.

5. RCC Feedback

Greater Manchester RCC

Steve Howse advised members that the Greater Manchester RCC has a core membership of 7-8 people and it has taken the committee some time to get to this stage. Members were advised that the committee acts as a point of contact for residents and assists them with any queries or problems they may have. In addition to this the committee has access to a Community Chest fund which members of the community can make applications to for projects to help improve neighbourhoods.

Steve Howse advised that the committee does not have any access to display boards or other promotional material which would be very beneficial when the committee is out and about trying to promote their work and recruit new members. Steve Howse advised that the main aim for the Greater Manchester RCC at the moment is recruitment and promotion.

Andrei Szatkowski advised that he would meet with Steve to agree a way forward in terms of provision of promotional material.

Cheshire RCC

Eric Jones advised members that the Cheshire RCC has been established for over 2 years and if observers who are attending the next meeting agree to participate the committee will be at full strength.

Members were advised that the committee has recently funded its own web site driven to engage better with residents. As a result the other RCC's are now interested in assistance to set up their own website's.

Rachel Zammit recommended a link be set up from Regenda's web site to the Cheshire RCC website.

Tracy Heyes advised that the Group is really pleased with the Cheshire RCC web site and would like to facilitate the development of web site's for the other

RCCs.

Merseyside RCC

Carol Cookson advised that she has been on the Merseyside RCC for 2 years, however, the committee has struggled to bond and embrace change. However, the committee has managed to secure £2k of funding from Trafford Hall for training to help bond and develop the committee.

Tracy Heyes advised that for the first time last week the resident involvement budget was shared with the RCC working group. The next stage of this process is to work towards the RCC involvement in shaping how the budget is spent, which could potentially include assistance with RCC promotional material etc.

Members requested that going forward RCC minutes be presented to the Housing Services Committee for information.

6. Executive Directors Overview

Tracy Heyes gave members a presentation on the following:

- External Context
- Our Plans 2008-2011
- An overview of the service provided
- A swot analysis of services
- Actions for 2009/10
- Future Agenda's

Tracy Heyes advised members that the Home & Communities Association (HCA) have advised that the Recycled Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) can no longer be used for disabled adaptations. This has meant the Group has had to significantly reduce the adaptations budget

Carol Cookson queried whether Local Authorities could assist with funding for disabled adaptations. Tracy Heyes advised that assistance from Local Authorities varies dramatically. However, the Group is working hard to obtain match funding and are campaigning heavily on this both nationally and regionally.

Tracy Heyes advised that the strengths of the Operations Department include the increased performance of the Shared Service Centre and the high level of customer satisfaction in respect of repairs and anti social behaviour. The weaknesses of the department include the high number of complaints and service failures. In addition to this there is a high level of turnover i.e. customers leaving properties, which has resulted in a rise in cost and volume of repair work.

Tracy Heyes advised that future Housing Services Committee meetings will focus on the following:

- Financial Inclusion
- Vulnerability
- Annual Rent Review
- Scope of review of lettings policy
- Service Standards

In response to a question from Carol Cookson around the Annual Rent Review, Bernard Gallagher advised that the Group has not yet received any formal guidance from the TSA regarding the annual rent review, however, in the past the rent regime has reflected the Retail Price Index (RPI). In addition to this the Group has increased its maintenance budget by 40% to meet Decent Homes Standards and a rent freeze or decrease in line with RPI would have a significant impact financially on the Group.

Robin Burman advised that Neighbourhood Regeneration should be at the forefront of this Committee and in the current economic climate the Group should not lose sight of regeneration work. Peter Coffey advised that Regeneration funding is likely to be significantly reduced going forward and therefore this area will need to be looked at in some detail.

Rachel Zammit suggested that it would be very beneficial for the Group to have a breakdown of its partners within the geographical areas in which the Group operates and Housing Services Committee could be a good forum for bringing this partnership work together. Steve Newsham advised that this information is available at a local level and can be produced for the Committee. However, the Group operates within 29 Local Authorities and therefore the Group cannot

deliver a uniform service when working with such diverse Local Authorities.

7. End of Year Performance Overview

Members were presented with a report detailing the Group-wide performance at the end of 2008-09 against the agreed indicators and targets as set out in the Group Corporate Plan 2008-11.

Tracy Heyes advised members that since the report was produced the percentage of lettings to residents from BME backgrounds has moved to green and is now at 10.4%. In addition to this resident satisfaction for overall landlord services has also moved to green and is at 84%.

Robin Burman questioned what actions are being taken to address the re-let times and void costs and if deposits can be taken from residents to assist with these problems. Tracy Heyes advised that performance has increased and a project group has been set up to address these issues. In addition to this, performance should also improve now that the Group is working with a new repairs contractor in Templar and West Pennine. However, with regards to deposits this is not feasible for social rented properties from a regulatory perspective.

Bernard Gallagher commented on the high costs of void repairs for the year, however, each void costs the Group £700 as a minimum due to the essential works required of a health and safety nature.

Tracy Heyes advised that the Group is currently carrying out a pilot project on the impact of not boarding up void properties. Boarding up of properties costs the Group £100k per year and the pilot project will be looking at alternative ways of keeping void properties empty and procuring the work differently to get better costs.

Members discussed the Group's targets for 2009-10 and Tracy Heyes advised members that the shared ownership satisfaction target will be brought back to the next meeting.

Carol Cookson queried why waiting lists are so long and yet properties are left empty. Steve Newsham advised that these properties are often difficult to let and the Group is looking at a Clean Getaway Project, which advises tenants of the cost implications of leaving a property.

Steve Howse queried the 23% target for percentage of lettings to residents with disability when 54% of residents have limiting long term illness for general needs properties. Tracy Heyes advised that the low performance is possibly due to collecting the data at application stage. Staff have received training on assisting tenants at sign up so that illness can be correctly recorded.

Eric Jones queried the 80% target for Resident satisfaction with safety and advised that this target should be 100%. Tracy Heyes advised that we don't currently measure how safe people feel in their own home and therefore have nothing to measure this against. Targets also need to be realistic and SMART . Rachel Zammit agreed that a target of 100% is aspirational, reflecting what we should be working towards. It was agreed that when the Group has a greater understanding of people's perceptions, we can find ways of assisting people to feel safer in their own home.

Members recommended that the colours be made paler in future performance reports and that the inclusion of an additional column with the long term targets be considered.

RESOLVED that members:

- **Discussed the Group's performance on the indicators covered in the report and note the actions being taken or planned to deal with issues that are currently seen as a cause for concern.**
- **Approve the targets for 2009-10.**

8. Regional Directors Overview

Andrei Szatkowski and Steve Newsham presented members with the Regional Directors Overview on improving and delivering a first class service, focusing on the following:

- Vision for Local Services
- How we will get there
- Resident Involvement
- Partners

- Hot Topics including Turnover, Complaints, Tenancy Support, Financial Inclusion, Customer Expectations, Ageing Population, Visibility, Competition, Move from average to good to great, Regeneration, Decent Homes, Sheltered Housing, Worklessness and Neighbourhood Health.

9. Any other Business

Peter Coffey recommended that the Housing Services Committee visit some of the neighbourhoods in which the Group operates. Tracy Heyes agreed to come back to the Committee with a proposed schedule of visits.

10. Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 20 August 2009