

Five Sisters and Cairn Brock Joint Housing Network Meeting – 16th June 2010

Present:

Cairn Brock – B. Townley [Chair] J. Aitken, V. Robertson, M. Mighton, S. Romanes, J. Schooling, A. Ryce, I. Callaghan, J. Thomson, J. Duncan, W. Kirk and J. Kirk

Five Sisters – D. Mullen, I. McCabe, J. Steel. M. McFarlane, A. Kerr, J. Moore, S. Holmes, M. Earl, E. Rhodes, D and J Ferguson.

Apologies: J. Faulds.

Guests: Dyann Weir T.P Officer, Kate Ward Housing Manager, Ann Marie Carr Customer Service Manager for Housing Need, P.C Stuart Neilson Lothian and Borders Police [Part meeting]

Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1) Previous minute from joint meeting 19th May 2010 was proposed as a true record by J. Thomson and seconded by V. Robertson.

2) Matters Arising – A. Kerr advised that she met with Sgt Gordon Latto as promised and that from this there is going to be a meeting arranged for Chairs of all Community Councils to attend to discuss how communities can become involved in the development of the Community Engagement Model that Gordon spoke about last month. Dyann will also provide a list of all community groups so that they may be invited.

A. Ryce advised that the invite given for members of the network to attend a review meeting of Aids and Adaptations was not clear as this was intended only for tenants. It was then explained that if a person is a home owner then Housing would have no involvement on behalf of the owner for aids and adaptations as this would be arranged by the Social Work department. Also the review was looking at this service from a Housing perspective and therefore only tenants receiving the service could attend the meeting.

Dyann apologised for any confusion.

3) TPAS Accreditation – The criteria framework for the accreditation has 11 sections that require to be evidenced as part of this process A. Kerr and J. Moore from the TLI met with Dyann and Gillian to put together an evidence box to give to Jamie Ballantine from TPAS which he collected. The collecting was a valuable and very worthwhile experience.

Jamie will now begin to look through this evidence with a view to awarding the accreditation and if successful then this would be presented at our Tenant's Information Day in October.

4) Treasurer's Report: S. Romanes gave a balance sheet to the secretary for the minute

Total Income – 2 x £500 = £1,000

Expenditure - £359.82

Balance - £640.18

Actual Balance - £646.93 – A. Ryce cheque for £6.75 not cashed

5) P.C. Stuart Neilson attended the meeting to give a presentation about a new security marking system which the Five Sisters has bought to mark the equipment in the Resource Centre. Stuart is a Crime Prevention Officer and part of his role is to empower people to be aware of home safety as the more people who factor this into their daily lives then the less draw there is on police resources.

Enigma Tag is a forensic property marking solution that can be put onto moveable items of value; it glows under UV light which means that stolen items can be recovered and identified to their owner. This is done by shining a flashlight onto the item. The solution has a unique number within the micro particles in the bottle which has a unique reference registering your name into a data base; it costs £10.00 per bottle and can

cover up to 100 items. Lothian and Borders now have 30 flashlights that are used by officers on the shift when they stop and search vehicles; any stolen property in the vehicle will glow. Anyone can request a home visit from the Crime Prevention team and will be given home safety advice.

Dyann asked about Neighbourhood Watch Schemes and was advised that the police fully support them and if further information was needed then residents should speak with their Community Beat Officer.

Anyone who would like more details about Enigma Tag should speak to Dyann.

Stuart was thanked for attending.

Members expressed their disappointment with regards to the way in which Stuart portrayed certain individuals and the way in which he made clear which political party he favoured; members didn't agree with his subjective comments on society as a whole nor did they appreciate him bringing his personal opinions into this forum as this made some members uncomfortable with a few saying that if he had not left they would have.

6) Ann Marie Carr was invited today to give an update on the community consultation 'Tough Choices' she explained that there are 2 budgets within Housing the Housing Revenue Account which comes from the rents paid and the General Fund which come from the payment of Council Tax. The savings have to be made in all of the 9 Policy Development Scrutiny Panels which cover all service areas within the Council. Ann Marie was covering the Services for the Community which is the PDSP that covers Housing. There has to be significant efficiencies made in this service area; proposals made by Councillors in the PDSP are being made to save £636,000 from this budget while ensuring that a good service provision is retained. Ann Marie's service area comes into this budget and she has looked at ways to make efficiencies while keeping an eye on the Voluntary Sector as they help to deliver the support to the homeless group. Areas where direct funding can be reduced in proposals is posts for redundancy – 1,000 overall within the Council with Ann Marie potentially losing 5 posts within her service, she is looking at the staffing structures following a Rapid Improvement Event recently carried out into her service area to become more efficient.

Legislation placed demands for homelessness in the 2012 date for the reduction in numbers of homeless and the need to house them. Prevention plays a big part in this with a need to be cost effective in their role but the budget is already very tight. Ann Marie advised that her service is doing everything that it can to maximise the provision for customers and that they may need to re-shape to ensure that the customer doesn't suffer. It may be that some things done at the moment may stop but she is hopeful of a different delivery method to save costs and maintain benefit to the customer.

The Council are currently consulting with communities and members were urged to complete a response as this will help to shape local need.

D. Mullen commented that he is surprised that there is no political strategy to guide communities and that he is concerned that the proposals discussed today appear to be frontloaded cuts into years 1 and 2 and if they were included into the 3rd year then they may not be so severe.

Ann Marie advised that the figures are pre-determined but that there is freedom of movement over the 3 year period and that she would support the idea of a political strategy to ensure services for the vulnerable should have a protection built in.

J. Moore raised a point that the consultation document's timescales are not realistic and he questioned how representative are the reps involved in this as there is still a massive part of the population of West Lothian still to be consulted.

Ann Marie said that this had been raised previously at the Tenant's Panel and to be reflective of all residents the document is out for wider consultations and that it is also available for viewing in CIS and Area Offices.

7)A.O.B; Dyann gave copies of the TLI reports for Enhanced Estates Management and Equal Opportunities, both will be presented to inspectors and senior manages on Friday 9th July -10.00am in Whitburn Resource Centre. Dyann also advised that Ken Littlejohn would like tenants to help review the Tenants Repair Handbook – meeting arranged for 22nd June 10.00am in the same place.

The meeting was closed with guests being thanked for attending.

Date of the next meeting – Tuesday 17th August – joint meeting Whitburn Resource Centre – 11.00 – 1.00pm

If you require transport please contact Gillian 281882 or Dyann 281885

TLI – Tennant Participation and TPAS Accreditation will be asking members to help with the TLI by filling out a questionnaire.