

Tenants Panel Meeting

Conference Room 1, Ground Floor, Civic Centre

Thursday 2nd September 2010

Present: Present- Tenants Panel Reps-Danny Mullen [Chaired] Alison Kerr [minute] Jean Faulds, Joan Thomson, Vera Robertson, Maureen Mighton, Frank Anderson [part meeting] Derek Cornwall, Ann Marie Carr, Douglas Marr, Gillian Stewart, Alison Mann and Elaine Nisbet Adult Basic Education

Apologies: Siobhan Mullen, Dyann Weir, Ann Gee

1. Previous Minutes

Agreed as a true record.

2. Matters Arising

None

Previous minute

Agreed as a true record, moved by Jean Faulds and seconded by Joan Thomson after a slight correction, Councillor Frank Anderson was at part of the meeting but was omitted from the minute.

Business Arising

Action points- Gillian Edwards has sent the required information to Danny for the tenant's website she also confirmed that the question raised regarding the rails inside the wardrobes in the new builds has been passed to the developer of Phase 2 for consideration. Gillian Edwards has also passed relevant information to the developer with regards to the upgrade work that is being carried out at King George V Park in Blackburn in order that the new builds near this area are carried out in a way that will minimise disruption to the new play area. She updated the Panel on the proposed Open Days that will be arranged in June 2011 for key planning and further information will be made available nearer the time. Gillian will also send a link to Danny for the website when the final detail is available for Phase 2.

Street Environmental Improvement Projects

Next year's applications were circulated for information. Tenants' panel reps will meet 22nd Sept to go through these to ensure that they individually meet the criteria. If they are successful Albert Hughes will cost the projects and feed back to the Tenants Panel. Frank Anderson advised that applications received for speed bumps should be sent to Transport Dept as this should not meet the criteria, Douglas Marr commented that the applications have come through the Tenant Participation route but any like this one would be passed to the particular department. Alison suggested that the criteria be circulated again. Action Gillian Stewart

Contingency Strategy

Ann Marie Carr advised that the closing date has now passed for the first rounds of this consultation with special Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels being held on almost a daily basis to discuss the responses received. Frank added that suggestions made are now being considered and that there is now an indication that the original amount that has to be saved in efficiencies - £45M may now be £58M. Housing has very little efficiencies to make as the Housing Revenue Account will not be affected. Danny suggested that the Administration would consider coming out into local communities for the second round of this consultation to gather the views of local people rather than doing this in the formal setting of the PDSPs. Frank will take this into consideration as it seems like a good idea but he was not in a position to commit to this at the moment.

Tenants Information Day

Alison updated the Panel on the progress made by the Working Group, copy of the notes were given.

Adult Basic Education

Alison Mann and Elaine Nisbet attended to give a presentation on this. Elaine explained that Housing Construction and Building Services are keen to have a literacy and numeracy strategy in place at the launch of their Development Plan, with this in mind ABE are working to develop this particular to the needs of the service delivery areas within HCBS. 1.5 M adults have literacy skills at a level which impact on their life chances and employment opportunities. 2.9 M have numeracy which similarly negatively impacts on their lives. These two points can affect your ability to sustain a tenancy and make it difficult for tenants to be able to read any communications that they may receive from West Lothian Council and they can also make it difficult to pay bills and manage your finances.

The strategy will have 2 strands –how to help staff relate to individuals as we all have a responsibility to help those with numeracy and literacy skills difficulties. Staff will take part in 2 hr sessions that will raise an awareness of communication with a view to making sure that individuals will understand things easier. Readability and plain English are the key points that are needed to get across to staff. Alison Mann is working with a group of staff on how tenants can be helped. Training for staff will be thorough and cover aspects of working with adults with literacy and numeracy skills difficulties.

Alison Mann attended a session to discuss what the Editorial Panel can do to take account of the difficulties that readers may face who could have literacy and numeracy difficulties. One session was not enough and arrangements will be made for more training to be put in place.

The second strand is for tenants to help offer assistance to sustain their tenancies by helping them to gather the skills that are essential to effectively manage their tenancies.

Ann Marie Carr asked if ABE have involved the homeless groups and people who may apply for this but not through the homeless route.

Alison Mann assured the Panel that ABE have a joined up approach and by working with this particular group ABE have discovered that applicants have found information difficult to understand.

Danny asked if ABE have considered asking service users to become involved in their Focus Groups as who would better to let you know the difficulties than those experiencing them.

Alison Mann advised that they have not extended this to clients as yet but it is certainly worth considering this because there are parallels between things that staffs are saying and what service users are saying.

Elaine Nisbet advised that there is a bank who ABE currently work with along with other partner agencies

and therefore there are clients that they can tap into for this suggestion.
Danny thanked ABE for their presentation.

A.O.B.

Derek Cornwall gave members an update on the new IT system which will be introduced within the Council. The present systems are old and there is a need to replace them with a modern integrated IT system. This has been through the tendering process with 5 bids having been received back and a report will be going to the PDSP covering finance in September with a report going to Full Council on 10th September. Derek advised that the new system will cope with modern flexible working for the next 10 years and that it will be easier to access web based services which will benefit tenants. Other solutions have been looked at with the Senior Management team recommending this new integrated IT system which will be better for customers and staff.

Jean Faulds asked if the Council expected to encounter problems when changing systems.

Derek advised that they may experience a few teething problems as it was not every year that you would change your full system. The planned change for IT was in the 10 yr Corporate Plan and the funding was secured for this modern approach which will work on 2 key models – customer and property.

Gillian Stewart commented that this was a huge task and asked how it was going to be resourced from a staffing point of view.

Derek agreed that this was going to take up a lot of staff time and this has been recognised therefore this cannot be done unless staff come away from their existing day job and form a dedicated team to do this.

Danny asked who was paying for this and Derek advised that this would come from the Housing Revenue Account as 90% of the Council's business is for Housing.