

# Overview and Scrutiny Task Group - Chorley Community Housing

**Thursday, 11 September 2008**

**Present:** Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Councillors Alistair Bradley, Harold Heaton, Marion Lowe, June Molyneaux and Rosie Russell

**Also in attendance:** Peter Speakman (Devonport United Resident Group Chair), Christine Tyrer (Devonport United Resident Group Secretary), Gordon Farnworth (Devonport United Residents Group), Peter Hilton (Eaves Green Residents Group Treasurer), Ann James (Ryes Residents Group Secretary), Josie Snape (Ryes Resident Group) and Councillor Julia Berry

**Chorley Council officers:** Lesley-Ann Fenton (Assistant Chief Executive (Policy and Performance)) and Ruth Hawes (Assistant Democratic Services Officer)

## **08.25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Roy Lees, Kevin Joyce and Stella Walsh. The Task Group sent Councillor Walsh their best wishes.

## **08.26 DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS**

No Members declared any interests in respect of items on the agenda.

## **08.27 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

No members of the public requested to speak at the meeting.

## **08.28 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee Task Group – Chorley Community Housing held on 5 August 2008 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.**

## **08.29 FEEDBACK WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF THE RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS WITHIN CHORLEY**

The Chair welcomed the representatives from three residents associations within Chorley and thanked them for their attendance. The aim of the session was to receive feedback, about the change over from Chorley to CCH.

The Chair gave some background to the inquiry and advised the key areas being considered were the promises made to tenants when the housing stock were transferred from the Council to Chorley Community Housing.

Issues raised by the representatives included:

### Renovations

Newly installed kitchen units were not a standard size (930cm high rather than 900cm high), meaning the surface is not flush to the cooker creating a hazard. This was only resolved by putting a piece of work top under the cooker when residents continually complained. Other complaints included bath panels not being installed, small baths and toilets not flushing.

Jobs, by different trades people, have not been completed in the right order leading to a wall unit becoming detached from the wall.

The options for refurbishment are not always understood by residents, leading to a resident having a standard bath, rather than a walk in bath.

Generally communication with contractors is an issue, with difficulties in contacting the contractor during a job and workers do not always wear a ID badge. Residents don't know when contractors are coming and can't stay at home all the time.

There is a report sheet that should be filled in reporting progress and visits, these are not always completed. During a renovation a supervisor only visited the property 8 times in 44 days. It was agreed there should be more supervision.

One resident was without a kitchen for 9 days and was not offered alternative accommodation.

On Coniston Road there are properties in need of a rewire, but are not due for renovation for 2 years. It was agreed that the Council would inform CCH of this as representatives from Adactus had undertaken to prioritise properties if required to bring them up to the decent homes standard.

Generally once work has been completed residents are happy with it.

#### Maintenance

When problems are reported to CCH residents were happy because they were informed on the same day when a repair person would be coming. If the problem was urgent a repair person would come out the same day.

In most instances the service received was better than that received from the Council, however; an instance was outlined when clearing out gutters, sods were left in next doors garden and mess all over the residents' garden,

#### Role of the residents association

The Ryes, a long established residents association, have widened their role to try and improve things further. Rather than being issue based there is a concentration on community cohesion and social events and the association has received grants to for various projects. This is something that other associations could consider doing.

A representative from CCH attends the meeting of the Devonport association every month and members of a newly created residents association attended the recent Devonport meeting.

The difficulties in setting up a resident association were considered. The contact at CCH would be the tenant involvement officer. The person has been off sick for a few months and recently a person from Adactus has been covering the post. There is a monthly magazine and a buddy scheme to encourage new resident associations.

There is a meeting next Wednesday of all residents associations. It was suggested that the meeting would be more productive if the residents associations drew up the agenda, rather than CCH. A resource room for tenants groups has been set up, but is small and security issues mean all tenants are not able to use the room.

A really positive example of support and co-operation was where an association was paying for intercoms on bungalows and CCH had paid for intercoms for flats.

The representatives advised the most important aspect they needed help with was getting people involved, in particular having someone to lead the residents association. It also helped having the Borough Councillors involved.

It was noted that there isn't a residents association on Harrison Road and this was on the border of two Borough wards.

#### Anti-social behaviour

In the main a positive response was reported in the way that CCH dealt with anti-social behaviour. Every month there is a antisocial behaviour meeting in each area. It was reported that so far two cases had gone to court to evict tenants this year.

#### Litter / rubbish

Litter was an issue after the recycling collection. Ad hoc arrangements were in place for litter picking with various parish councils. Additional litter bins were requested, but with a plea for regular emptying.

#### Streetscene issues

There were pensioners gardens that have not been mowed for two months and with the cut and collect scheme. A request was made for trees and nettles to be pruned at

a path on St Gregorys Place. This will be reported to Lancashire County Council. The ownership of the land needs to be clarified, officers would take advice on this and report back to a future meeting.

The maintenance of footpaths was generally an issue. It was reported that repaving undertaken near the Ryes using a slurry surface as the weeds are now growing through it and older residents could slip on it.

#### Car Parking

There were several areas where additional car parking was required, including Eaves Green. The resolution of the issue would solve a number of related problems as tenants would be likely to take ownership of the parking area, leading to a reduction of litter.

#### In Conclusion

The Chair thanked the representatives for their time and feedback and noted that generally residents were happy with the service provided by CCH.

### **08.30 INFORMATION FROM CHORLEY COMMUNITY HOUSING**

The Chair advised that Richard Houghton had been appointed the Director of Operations at CCH.

Updated information on queries raised by the Group had been received and would be sent out to Members with the minutes of the meeting.

**RESOLVED – That the update be noted.**

### **08.31 COLLECTION AND CONSIDERATION OF EVIDENCE FROM MEMBERS AND THEIR CONSTITUENTS**

Members advised that the biggest problem raised over the last few weeks was about the grass and verge cutting and mess left by workers. Lesley-Ann advised that the weather had meant the grass couldn't be cut. A similar situation had occurred a few years ago and it had been hoped that the problem had been resolved with new machines. It was AGREED to invite Ishbel Murray, Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods) to the next meeting for an update on this and other issues relating to CCH.

### **08.32 THE WAY FORWARD**

The progress of the inquiry was discussed and Members advised they felt reassured after meeting with Paul Lees from CCH that changes would be made throughout the organisation.

It was AGREED that the next meeting be held on Tuesday 7 October and that the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation), Corporate Director (Neighbourhoods), Strategic Housing Manager and Executive Member (Business) be invited to attend.

It was AGREED that the Group have two further meetings on Wednesday 12 November and Thursday 11 December.

Chair