

**Tuesday, 10 June 2008**

Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Councillors Alistair Bradley, Harold Heaton and Rosie Russell, Kevin Joyce and June Molyneaux

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

The Task Group considered an extract of the report submitted to Executive Cabinet on 29 May 2008 on the performance of key partnerships.

The report monitored those promises made to tenants by Chorley Council and contractually agreed and delivered by Chorley Community Housing. The report for the year reported all 6 themes as being on target, but did not include evidence to back up these claims.

Members discussed the need to focus on key areas of the contract and evidence that customers are receiving the services they have been promised.

### **SCOPING EXERCISE**

Members discussed several areas where issues had been raised and these were fed into the scoping document.

The Group **AGREED** the following:

#### Objectives:

To investigate and evidence that the service promises made by Chorley Council and provided under contract by Chorley Community Housing are being delivered to tenants. We agreed to focus on:

- Delivery of home improvements, including the modernisation of empty housing and it's return to use.
- Service improvement,
- Tenant involvement in decision making and
- Regeneration, including the supply of 40 affordable / rented homes per year, in addition to those provided by windfall developments from private developers.

#### Desired Outcomes:

To have documentary evidence that the services delivered to our customers meet those promised by Chorley Council.

To make recommendations in areas where improvements are required, if any.

To identify any barriers Chorley Community Housing face in delivering their services and any solutions Chorley Council can provide.

#### Terms of Reference:

To consider themes within the objectives identified.

To make recommendations, if appropriate.

To report findings and recommendations to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

#### Documents/evidence:

##### Delivery of home re-improvements

Details of properties vacant as in need of refurbishment.

What are the timescale for getting the properties into habitable use.

Offers available and take up.

##### Service improvement

CCH actual targets and performance for repairs response, benchmarking information.

Equality and diversity issues: are customers' needs being met?

How are houses allocated?

##### Tenant involvement in decision making

Survey information from Chorley Community Housing and Councillors' contact with tenants.

##### Regeneration

Progress on the provision of affordable housing units.

Witnesses:

Chair of the Chorley Community Housing Board – Ann James.  
Managing Director of Chorley Community Housing.  
Chorley Council officers:  
Assistant Chief Executive – Gary Hall.  
Corporate Director of Governance - Andrew Docherty.  
Strategic Housing Manager – Zoe Whiteside

Consultation/Research:

Delivery of home re-improvements

How are the targets constructed i.e. if an offer for improvements isn't taken up.

Service improvement

What has been the impact on staff transferred from Chorley Council?

Tenant involvement in decision making

If there is no survey information available on the views of a cross section of tenants the Task Group may commission a survey.

To be considered: Chorley Community Housing newsletter to tenants and minutes of community meetings between Chorley Community Housing and tenants.

Regeneration

Progress on the provision of affordable housing units.

Site Visits:

Visit to properties where repairs and or improvements have been carried out.

## **Wednesday, 9 July 2008**

Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Councillors Alistair Bradley, Harold Heaton, Roy Lees, Marion Lowe, June Molyneaux and Rosie Russell, Pat Haughton

### **CONSIDERATION OF THE DRAFT SCOPING DOCUMENT**

The task group considered the draft scoping document drawn up at the last meeting.

Members highlighted the areas the inquiry would focus on. In particular Members were concerned about the number of properties currently vacant, including those requiring renovation. Another key area would be the strategy and progress on delivery of forty new properties to be made available each year.

### **INFORMATION ON THE CONTRACT BETWEEN CHORLEY COUNCIL AND CHORLEY COMMUNITY HOUSING**

The task group received written information from the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) on the contract between Chorley Council and Chorley community Housing, including the promises made to tenants.

The task group group took five minutes to digest the tabled report and it was AGREED that the papers be considered further at the next meeting along with the report presented to the first meeting of the group was requested as part of the agenda for the next meeting.

The members stressed the need for facts and figures supporting the promises made to tenants. It was AGREED that the information be requested from Chorley Community Housing for the next meeting.

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

The Chair invited Councillors to share issues raised with them by constituents.

Councillor Roy Lees advised that several concerns had been raised during meetings he had attended, including the provision of on-street parking. He undertook to send a note of the issues to the Democratic Services officer for inclusion in the minutes.

It was reported that a tenants questionnaire from Chorley Community Housing had been met with mainly negative responses. The details of this survey were requested, including details of the sample of tenants, questions, responses and any other survey information available.

Members heard that a particular neighbourhood officer was not attending meetings when invited or helping tenants when they had issues with neighbour tenants, even where the police have been involved. A dedicated anti-social behaviour team has been set up.

Councillor June Molyneaux advised she had spoken to a gentleman called Bert, who had helped to set up residents groups in the Adlington area in particular. It was reported that tenants could be supported better in creating their residents groups. Information on the attendance of Chorley Community Housing representatives at residents meetings, the process for meetings to happen, any buddy schemes for new tenant groups their frequency and future plans in this area was requested. Also, details of any meetings with residents that the task group can attend.

The task group discussed specific questions to ask a Chorley Community Housing representative who would be invited to attend the next meeting. Updated information on the promises tracking report was requested with supporting facts and figures that these have been delivered and progress on those not completed. Copies of recent newsletters to tenants were also requested.

1. Residents car parking spaces

- Where and when will the spaces be completed?
- Who decides where the spaces are located?
- How will the strategy for parking within 5 years be delivered?

2. Vacant properties

- How many were uninhabitable when Chorley Community Housing took over?
- How many are habitable now?
- How long and why are properties vacant?
- When they will be ready to let?
- What is the strategy for completing the renovations?

3. Residents associations

- How many now are there now?
- How do you know if they are working well?
- How do you plan to support them in the future?

4. Anti social behaviour team

- How does it operate?
- How do tenants know about this service: who to contact, services available?
- How are tenants vetted to reduce the risk of anti social behaviour?

5. Allocation of properties

- How are they allocated pre and post tenancy?

6. Renovations

- What is the policy to rehouse tenants whilst work is being done on their property?

7. Partial renovations

- If a tenant is offered a new bathroom or kitchen and refuses how is this recorded by Chorley Community Housing?

8. Feedback from tenants

- How do you collect, monitor and take action on feed back from tenants on work done their properties?

9. Affordable housing

- What is the strategy and progress on the delivery of 40 affordable homes each year?

10. Neighbourhood caretakers

- What are these and what do they do?

11. Rent

- Do tenants pay increased rent after refurbishment?

Question for Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation)

- How can Chorley Council help Chorley Community Housing to deliver their annual target of 40 new affordable homes per year.
- What is the definition of affordable homes?

**THE WAY FORWARD**

**RESOLVED –**

1. **That a representative from Chorley Community Housing be invited to attend the next meeting to respond to the questions identified.**
2. **Details of any residents meetings scheduled would be given to members to enable them to attend prior to the next meeting.**
3. **The minutes of meetings be emailed to members as soon as possible so that they can action any points allocated to them.**
4. **Copies of previous reports would be presented on the agenda for the next meeting.**

**Tuesday, 5 August 2008**

Councillor Mike Devaney (Chair) and Councillors Alistair Bradley, Harold Heaton, Kevin Joyce, Roy Lees, Marion Lowe, June Molyneaux, Rosie Russell and Stella Walsh, Julia Berry and Pat Haughton

Paul Lees (Group Chief Executive), Annabelle Robinson (Group Housing Management Director) and Morna Maines (Project Manager)

**INFORMATION ON THE CONTRACT WITH CHORLEY COMMUNITY HOUSING, THE FORMAL CONSULTATION ON THE TRANSFER OF COUNCIL HOMES AND STOCK TRANSFER MONITORING REPORT**

Members noted the documents enclosed with the agenda:

- a, inquiry scoping document,
- b, briefing note from the Assistant Chief Executive (Business Transformation) Chorley Community Housing contract and promises to tenants,
- c, Delivery of promises to tenants one year on from stock transfer (26th April 2008).

**INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM CHORLEY COMMUNITY HOUSING**

The Chair introduced Paul Lees, Annabelle Robinson and Morna Maines from Adactus to the meeting and thanked them for the information received so far.

It was considered that several of the concerns listed as questions had been adequately answered within the information CCH had supplied.

Reorganisation

Paul outlined the recent reorganisation of CCH which made the organisational structure more like the Adactus model, with a reduction in the management tier and increased staffing on the service delivery front. It was noted that communication had previously been an issue for customers both with CCH and contractors used. Assurances were given that this issue was being addressed and if there were any specific cases Members could contact Morna.

Performance

In response to a queries it was clarified that the performance statistics reported as year 0 were for 2007 2008 and the year was mainly fact finding. Surveys were completed, the

contractor was appointed and consultation was underway. The figures within the report were work achieved and based on the first quarter of 2008 2009 (year 2).

#### Partial renovations

Members received assurances that CCH was anxious to consider alternative accommodation needs when properties were being renovated and acknowledged past shortcomings had been addressed. The importance of recording renovations, including where tenants requested that certain work should not be done was accepted and recorded. It was also established that there had been little feedback from tenants and it was therefore assumed that the work done was satisfactory. However, some concerns were expressed by Councillors. Officers from CCH were also concerned that any dissatisfaction was passed to them for investigation.

A particular issue was the state of the central heating systems, including boilers over 10 years old and the compatibility between the actual heating installation and the central heating unit. CCH stated they were aware of the problem and were working as quickly as possible to upgrade older heating systems. This work was being undertaken in a well programmed manner, but this was being made more difficult by having to react to older boiler breakdowns.

It was clarified that if tenants do not take up the offer of a new kitchen or bathroom (for example as they have just redecorated) and the work being offered is being done to all properties the money not spent on a particular property will be ring fenced to keep the money in the renovations account. Accurate records are kept about work done to each property for the decent homes standard.

The appointment system for maintenance was still in place. CCH have their own maintenance workforce and felt this was important as experience showed a better quality of work than contractors. Despite a restructure, the maintenance staff were very positive and it was promised that a marked improvement in performance would be seen over next few months.

Some partial renovation has been done in all areas of the Borough, though going forward the focus will be area by area. It was acknowledged that if there are houses requiring work to bring them up to standard, but not in the programme of work for this year, these would be reviewed on a case by case basis. A project manager monitors the performance of the contractor and quarterly key performance indicator reports will now be presented to the CCH board for monitoring purposes.

#### Total refurbishment

It was confirmed that the three houses requiring total refurbishment in Charnock Richard would be subject to a survey soon although the project was not in the budget for this year. It was confirmed that it was not in the long term plan to sell them, although shared ownership could be considered after refurbishment.

#### Residents' car parking spaces

One of the areas highlighted by the survey carried out by CCH is a lack of residents car parking spaces. 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. 168 car parking spaces had been identified through providing hard standing areas for residents. It was recognised that car parking issues would never be resolved to satisfy everyone.

#### Residents associations

Members were surprised that there are only three formal residents associations. CCH do give assistance when requested, including attending meetings, finding venues for meetings, setting up constitutions etc. Residents could invite the ward councillor if they wished. Councillor Walsh advised that a residents association was in the process of being set up in Longfield, Coppull.

### Affordable housing.

It was reported that 38 houses currently on site to date and that the target of 40 would be achieved, with the probability of 2 or 3 more. CCH were committed to providing affordable housing and it was acknowledged that Adactus are an experienced builder. There was potential to acquire land to build more easily in the current financial climate. Adactus are also in discussions with the Council regarding any suitable land.

### Antisocial behaviour

Concerns were expressed about anti-social behaviour and clarity was sought in the difference in criteria applied to new tenants (up to 12 months) and tenants of longer than 12 months. After this point tenants have assured tenancy and therefore more rights. Assurances were given that it was the policy of CCH not to tolerate anti-social behaviour and that a dedicated team was in place to combat this. There were currently around 90 cases, ranging from garden disputes to drugs issues.

Lesley-Ann queried whether CCH felt they were receiving sufficient backup from other agencies, in particular Lancashire County Council, and it was agreed that she would have further discussion with Annabelle to see if any further improvements could be made. Discussions would also consider how partnership working could be improved over issues like anti social behaviour and residents car parking.

After the question and answer session, Paul Lees explained the current policy of the reorganised CCH and how this would improve their service to tenants and make them more accessible to tenants. Members were assured that a marked improvement would be seen in the next few months and years. CCH will be based in Chorley for the next five years at least.

Paul explained that talks were in progress to increase the number of properties within the remit of CCH to make the organisation more of an equal partner in the Adactus group. This would increase resources in areas such as anti social behaviour, maintenance team etc. Services such as human resources would be provided elsewhere in the Adactus group to allow CCH to focus on delivering the service to the customer.

The Chair, on behalf of the Task Group, thanked the officers for the honest and open discussion.

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

Members noted the positive response to queries by the CCH representatives.

Councillors Walsh and Lees outlined issues raised with them in relation to anti social behaviour. Contact had been made with CCH and the problems were in the process of being resolved.

Members discussed the importance of partnership working on issues such as anti social behaviour, car parking, speeding motorists and litter.

It was queried how long the Council would receive a percentage of the funds made from the sale of houses. This would be reported to a future meeting.

Members AGREED to continue to gather evidence from their constituents to be reported back at the next meeting.

### **THE WAY FORWARD**

Members requested the following for the next meeting of the task group:

- Representatives from the three residents associations be invited to receive feedback on their experiences.
- An up to date contacts list from CCH.