

**MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - QUALITY OF HOUSING PROVIDED BY SOCIAL LANDLORDS**

**MEETING DATE** Thursday, 19 July 2018

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Matthew Lynch (Chair), and Councillors Margaret Lees, June Molyneaux, Alistair Morwood and Steve Murfitt

**OFFICERS:** Fiona Hepburn (Housing Options and Support Manager) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic and Member Services Team Leader)

**APOLOGIES:** Councillor Kim Snape

**OTHER MEMBERS:** Richard Houghton (Jigsaw Homes)

**18.13 Declarations of Any Interests**

Councillors Matthew Lynch and Steve Murfitt declared a non-pecuniary interest in all items on the agenda.

**18.14 Discussion with Richard Houghton, Director of Operations - Chorley Community Housing (CCH)**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced Richard Houghton, Director of Operations for CCH, which is part of the Jigsaw Homes Group.

Richard explained that CCH comprises the former Chorley Council stock which transferred to CCH on 26 March 2007 following a vote by tenants. The transfer contract agreed that CCH would bring the properties up to the decent homes standard. CCH have invested £35 million on bathrooms, kitchens, boilers and car parking. At Longfield and Greenside other enhancements have been undertaken.

Following the transfer CCH maintained a local office in Gillibrand Street, then moved to St Thomas Road and now there is a presence within the Union Street Council offices until 2022.

Since 2007 CCH have continued to build new homes, and have committed to building 100 homes a year for next three years. Jigsaw is the biggest developer of social housing in the North West.

**Customer Service**

CCH housing standards are in line with other Registered Providers. Some Registered Providers rely on an annual survey, but CCH carry out quarterly surveys which are independent. When the contact centre was first set up 1 in 5 calls were chasing

repairs. This triggered a decision to deal with queries at the first point of contact. The target is to answer 80% of calls in 60 seconds to a person. Performance last quarter was 76.3%. The contact centre deals with queries relating to repairs, rehousing, rent and antisocial behaviour. Performance last quarter was 77.9% of queries were resolved at the first point of contact.

A call back from an automatic service is undertaken if a customer is not satisfied to find out why. CCH don't want frustrated customers – if there are problems with particular workman fitting the wrong components customer services need to know about it. If there is a service failure CCH try to sort it out, complaints go to the complaints team. There is a dedicated email address for Members, with a 5 working day response target.

If complaints get to the stage 2 process involves board members and the next stage is the panel including customers. If the complaint is still outstanding the tenant would be referred to the Ombudsman.

This proactive approach is popular with customers; CCH actively want to hear from the unhappy tenants. Some tenants prefer to contact CCH by phone, if they struggle to read for example. **Members requested figures on the % of complaints upheld, customers satisfaction levels.**

**Update since the meeting: there were 18 complaints in 2017-18, of which 9 were found to be service failures, ie. the tenant's complaint was upheld.**

CCH look at pattern of problem tenants and target support for these families.

### **Maintenance**

As part of the stock transfer CCH brought the houses up to the Decent Homes Standard. Since this assessment has been undertaken on planned work with a 3 year business plan. This is reassessed this as per customer requests.

The stock improvements were mostly internal at transfer, now CCH have a roofing and fencing programme. Kitchens and bathrooms are usually replaced when a property is void as this is easier for the workmen! Decorating is also undertaken and CCH find it quicker and easier to do decorating, although tenants do have the option to decorate themselves. The Lettings and DLO team work together to facilitate this. Long standing tenants have mostly already had their kitchens and bathrooms replaced.

If an emergency repair was needed to a boiler outside office hours there is a contactor on call. If the issue is a burst pipe the tenant would be referred to on call plumber. There is a 2 hour response time with an aim to fix the issue there and then. If the fault is with a boiler the plumber might not have the part with them, but CCH have a partnership with Dewsons. The target is to have the issue fixed in 2 hours.

### **Service Charges**

At sheltered housing there is a scheme manager and grounds maintenance. This was reviewed about 3 years ago, but no changes were made. CCH have high levels of customer satisfaction and find that people prefer to have in-house operatives.

CCH publish annually a report on the service charge. They received 2/3 a year complaints relating to the service charge.

## **Neighbourhoods**

Councillor Molyneaux raised a specific case of anti-social behaviour in Adlington. Richard undertook to discuss this outside the meeting.

CCH use a system called react to record data about complaints. They can obtain a without notice injunction within 2 hours when required. The officer in charge is Debbie Parkinson.

On average there are 7 or 8 cases per quarter taken to injunction, including anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse and drug dealing. Richard explained the cases cannot always be discussed with Councillors.

## **Engagement with the community**

CCH have a £50 community fund per year. This has facilitated a trip to the sea side and refurbished a scout hut. The money is not necessarily spent next to CCH estates. CCH organise and fund the annual fun day on Chorley Moor.

CCH have invested a lot on Chorley Moor, including new brick garden walls and cleaning up grot spots, which has made the area more attractive and tenants take pride in their homes. The aim is for customers to be happy and it is more efficient to fix problems as soon as possible.

CCH have estate caretakers, and organise individual and community tidy up sessions and encourage residents to take ownership of properties.

CCH have committed to supporting the Chorley Youth Zone with £25k a year over 3 years (£75K total).

## **Customer engagement**

CCH have a number of residents groups and a modest amount of funding, some are long established and perhaps more social groups. There is a tenant scrutiny committee; the last topic was damp and disrepair.

To increase engagement Jigsaw rewards were introduced, where a tenant signs up online to a menu of choices, including repairs and anti-social behaviour. When consultation is ongoing tenants are contacted online, but are also contacted by phone and paper surveys. Tenants can earn shopping vouchers. This change in approach was introduced as CCH were finding it was the same old faces at meetings and this was not representative. 197 CCH tenants who are currently members (total membership is 1164). Of those 197, 98 have taken part in at least one activity since April 18.

CCH consider they have tenants, rather than customers.

The bedroom tax has had an impact; along with the changes in affordable rents. The most sought after type of property are bungalows. There is the potential to build another Primrose Gardens type development in the Town Centre for retired healthy people to downsize into.

CCH provide social housing for the Council and affordable housing for the HCA. The Council normally specifies rents to be set at social rent levels on s106 agreements where it has a measure of control but Homes England (previously the HCA) expects properties to be built at affordable levels

Richard advised that, in the short term, there will be no impact on tenants following the merger with Jigsaw. The aim is to build more houses and to use natural wastage to build more. Adactus is already efficient.

CCH have an excellent working relationship with the Council and on delivery with social housing and this is something CCH want to maintain.

The Chair thanked Richard Houghton for his contribution to the inquiry.

## **18.15 Survey Results**

Members noted the differences in approach from Places for People and CCH.

### **Decision:**

1. To write to Sir Lindsay Hoyle MP, Help the Homeless and CAB for their views
2. The draft survey results and the results of the Member survey will be sent to the Task Group for their information
3. Set a date to present the survey results to the Registered Providers
4. To request a written response to the questions asked of Places for People and CHH to
5. That the next meeting commence at 6:30pm.

Chair

Date