

LEASEHOLDER FORUM – 23rd September 2009

MINUTES

AGENDA ITEMS

Minutes of last meeting Item 1

Agreed as a correct record

ITEMS RAISED:No issues

Agenda Items

Item 2

ITEM 2 – Dealing with ASB

Sue Hird (SH), Head of Tenancy Compliance, attended the meeting at the request of leaseholders and delivered a presentation on the ASB service New Charter (NC) provides. SH circulated a pack of information for leaseholders to take away with them. The presentation covered the following points:

- The service is provided to communities and community groups so is not restricted to tenants
- Tenancy agreement gives NC the authority to take action against tenants causing ASB. This can lead to court action in serious cases
- Process to try and work with tenants along with partners such as Police, other landlords, specific services for example, alcohol dependency services. This could involve mediation however if the person causing problems will not work with us, will then have to revert to legal action. Some of these actions have the power of arrest
- Mediation service is free and leaseholders can access if at least one tenant is also involved
- Where young people involved, attempts made to change behaviour via football, and other activities
- Advocate service provided for domestic violence and Sanctuary support to target harden properties – all of Tameside not just New Charter
- Work to stop hate crime – this can be difficult as people affected can often be very scared
- Use cameras/surveillance equipment in some cases
- There are 21 PACT groups (Police and Communities Together) that meet on a monthly basis to look at local issues. Anyone is free to attend the meetings which are advertised locally
- Sue attends strategy meetings with the Police and the Council to look at current issues on the area and around the Borough to see what we can do to help. For example, may provide window locks where there are a lot of burglaries
- The team visit schools to educate children on how their behaviour can affect other people. All children leaving primary school are part of the *'Who wants to live over there'* which is a game to demonstrate the issues. Older children about to leave school attend *'Crucial Crew'* a joint project with the emergency services and New Charter which promotes responsibility and respect
- Family Intervention Team is available to parents who need some help with parenting skills

- Work with ex-offenders to promote a better lifestyle to stop reoffending
- Sue explained new measure that is starting to be used which is a closure order – the Police can close a private property for up to 3 months to exclude the occupants in the most severe cases

Item 3

ITEM 3 -Relets Service

Janet O'Connor (JO), Operational Manager (Policies), and Lynn Sandelance (LS) Relet Manager, attended the meeting at the request of leaseholders and delivered a presentation on Allocation Policy that New Charter (NC) has in place. The presentation covered the following points:

- NC operates a Choice Based Lettings service which started in 2007
- People apply to go on the housing waiting list, they are assessed and awarded points and once accepted can bid for a property. Properties are advertised weekly in the paper and on-line
- Bids are sifted to ensure there is a need, for example, a bid for a sheltered flat by someone who is 18 years old would not be allowed
- Successful bidder contacted and viewing arranged
- The process means that fewer people refuse the offer as they are choosing where they wish to live and will therefore stay in the tenancy longer
- Currently 8,749 people on the waiting list from a mixture of households. Lots of them want houses. There are only 30 new vacancies a week so difficult to meet everyone's needs
- Everyone is treated fairly and equally via the Lettings Policy and this is monitored internal and external audits
- Process is subject to regulation. This is monitored via the Tenants Services Authority (TSA) which has replaced the Housing Corporation.
- Legislation has to be adhered to and this is incorporated into the policy
- Access streams introduced in 2004 which aims that households with similar needs are spread across the Borough to address diversity in neighbourhoods (e.g. homeless families are not all placed in the same area)
- Property let on a housing needs basis and this may include things like medical conditions, overcrowding and is point based. If 2 people have the same amount of points and they each want the same property, the person who has waited the longest will have priority
- Groups who have no access to public funds and not allowed to apply as this would be outside of the law as it means they have no right to remain.
- There is no blanket policy and each case needs to be assessed on its own merits so if an applicant has a history of debt or ASB or criminality, then a risk assessment must be made to see if the individual is capable of sustaining a tenancy which may require some support. The policy allows an applicant to be suspended from the list for a period of up to 2 years

Any other business

- None raised however the meeting was poorly attended

DATE OF NEXT MEETING 10th March 2010 at 6.00pm at New Charter Housing Trust, Cavendish 249, Cavendish Street, Ashton-under-Lyne