

MINUTES OF RESIDENTS' FORUM

&

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY FORUM

Wednesday 17th March 2010



Present: Leigh Tate – Customer Services Manager
Clare Lawrance – Supported Housing Manager
Emma Cruickshank – Customer Services Advisor
Debi McAndrew – Customer Services Advisor
Mr W Frame – Chairman of Colne Housing
Mr G Ayres
Mr A Rogers
Mrs J Simmons
Mr J Simmons
Mrs S Woods
Mr F Woods
Mrs P Kemp
Ms R Beady

1. INTRODUCTION & APOLOGIES

Clare Lawrance asked all attendees to introduce themselves. Emma Cruickshank was introduced as the new Resident Involvement Officer.

2. THE SINGLE EQUALITY ACT 2010

Clare Lawrance gave a presentation on The Single Equality Act 2010 which is due to be come law in October 2010 and provided a resume of what the Act is, what it covers and how it will affect the way that Colne works. She explained that in future Colne will have to complete an Equality Impact Assessment when a new resident is signed up. The Act will cover diversity strands of age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and transgender. Clare explained that it is likely that in future Colne will ask residents their faith so as to offer a better service by not making appointments on their days of worship. Mr Simmons asked if the Act would come in regardless of a possible change of government and Clare said it would as it is so far down the parliamentary line.

3. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Leigh read a statement from Marnie Cameron, Community Development Officer, regarding the work she has been doing on the Forest Road Community Centre. Marnie explained that she hoped to have the hall ready and open by late Spring. Leigh added that a disabled toilet will be fitted.

Leigh told the meeting that a youth bus will be sited at Forest Park Avenue for a period of time to see if there is a need for a facility in the area and to find out what the youth of the area want.

Mr Simmons told the group that he had been talking to Tendring District Council about the possibility of setting up allotments in St Osyth and that he was interested in being involved in Community Development in the St Osyth area.

4. SHORT NOTICE INSPECTIONS

Leigh explained that Short Notice Inspections by the Audit Commission were to check that good or excellent services are being delivered to residents. She explained that the Audit Commission works with the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) in its regulatory role. Leigh explained that Housing Associations that had achieved a one star or 'fair' rating in a full Audit Commission inspection are likely to be targeted. Other triggers are Self Assessment Compliance Statements, Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and Associations who haven't been audited. She explained how it could be that the Society could get a phone call on a Monday morning to inform them they were being audited the following Monday. Following an inspection the Associations would work with the TSA to make a follow up action plan.

5. TENDRING DISTRICT COUNCIL MEETING

Leigh told the Forum that Tendring District Council had invited representatives from Colne Housing to attend one of their Forums. Mr and Mrs Simmons and Mr & Mrs Woods offered to attend.

6. RESIDENT 'ROUND UP'

Mr Woods told the Forum that St Osyth Parish Council and Colne Housing were going to have a meeting regarding the Parking Problems outside the school in St Osyth.

Miss Beady, a shared ownership occupier, voiced her dissatisfaction with the out of hours service when she had called Invicta at 9.15pm on a Friday evening when water was pouring through the roof of her top floor flat and they told her it was her responsibility. She said it was only that she persevered that someone came out and she was concerned about what would have happened if she hadn't. When someone did attend they told her it was an act of God. She felt that the out of hours service had been poor in an emergency situation. Miss Beady was also unhappy that she had received a survey letter showing an estimated completion date, but this date came and went without anyone telling her what was going on and she had to go to the Colne offices to chase it up.

Leigh apologised on behalf of the Society for the service Miss Beady had received and confirmed that there had been problems with Invicta phoning her to ask if they should send someone to certain properties, even though those properties were on the list that Leigh had provided to them of Colne properties. She said that she had not received a phone call of this nature of late, so hopefully the issue had now been resolved.

7. POLICY REVIEWS

Anti Social Behaviour

Leigh outlined that following feedback from a working party consisting of staff from each department, previous Residents Forums, Resident Surveys and desktop research it was found that Colne policy reflects good practice, but the procedures need improving in places and the wording of customer information leaflets were unclear. It was decided that Colne were good at involving appropriate agencies and their performance should be publicised, and it was not cost effective to employ an Anti Social Behaviour specialist. It was felt however that it was difficult to obtain meaningful feedback as this was currently done by the person who had undertaken the investigation. An action plan is to be implemented including training for Housing Officers, raising the profile by publicising successes and investigating alternative reporting methods for customers. Along with revising the customer feedback process and improving the resident database to ensure that the service remains cost effective.

8. GAS SAFETY:

Leigh informed the Forum that from next year Colne will be fitting carbon monoxide detectors at the same time as the gas safety check is undertaken. Leigh gave each person a copy of a leaflet she has been working on along with Hayley Owen on Gas Safety and asked everyone to read it and offer their opinion. Everyone who expressed an opinion at the time reacted positively to the leaflet.

9. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

6.00pm on 16th June 2010. The Linton Room, West Maldon Community Centre,
Sunbury Way, Maldon, Essex, CM9 6YH.