

WATFORD COMMUNITY HOUSING TRUST TASK GROUP

3 SEPTEMBER 2013

Present: Councillor A Khan (Chair)
Councillors J Connal, A Joynes, K Collett and S Johnson

Officers: Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer (RW)

16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies had been received.

17 DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS (IF ANY)

There were no disclosures of interest.

18 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting of 21 August 2013 were submitted and signed.

19 RECOMMENDATIONS TO PUT FORWARD TO OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Members discussed the meeting with the Watford Community Housing Trust's representatives and the answers they had received.

Members agreed that involvement with the community appeared to be a major focus of the Trust's work to the detriment of basic housing services. The Task Group noted that tenants had frequently complained that repairs had not been completed and that they had had no feedback slips to record their dissatisfaction.

The Task Group then considered the question and answer session with the Trust and decided on recommendations regarding areas of concern. These focussed on Communication, Service Charges and Repairs and were based on evidence resulting from interviews with residents and from the survey form on the Repairs Service. The following draft recommendations were proposed:

- All new tenants should be visited by an officer of the Trust to ensure that they are satisfied with their living arrangements
- Residents to be informed that their neighbourhood teams are available to clarify any issues

- The handbook must be made more user-friendly, updated regularly and accessible to all residents
- Improve clarity in presentation of bills sent to residents ensuring that all charges are clearly itemised
- Provide a clear process for residents to query any charges with which they disagree
- Reduce the waiting time for residents to an 'industry acceptable' level. The telephone should be answered within six rings.
- A free phone number should be introduced for residents to call the Trust
- The Trust website must be updated daily to ensure its contact details are current
- The Trust website must reflect the needs of its tenants and its aims and strategies. The website must be easy to navigate and accessible to all residents.
- Staff who communicate with residents must have regular training
- A clear process needs to be put in place where vulnerable residents are recognised and services provided to them to meet their individual needs.
- The process to communicate with vulnerable residents must be clear. Staff should be proactive in dealing with vulnerable residents.
- Improve the relationship between Councillors and the Trust and to work more co-operatively
- Service Charges must be constantly reviewed.
- Service Charges should be itemised for each individual property and items clearly defined.
- The 'first time' satisfaction rate must be increased substantially
- A much more vigorous monitoring of contractors by managers must be undertaken
- Residents to be positively encouraged to return satisfaction surveys
- The Trust must be much more accountable to its residents and stakeholders

AGREED:

- The Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer to email draft recommendation to the Task Group.
- The Task Group to comment on the recommendations to all other members via email; all comments to be returned to the Committee and Scrutiny Support Officer by 9 September 2013.

Chair

The Meeting started at 6.30 pm
and finished at 7.50 pm