

Review Update (Initial response)

Review	Watford Community Housing Trust
Committee/Task Group	Watford Community Housing Trust Task Group
Chair	Councillor Asif Khan
Final report published	26 September 2013
Response	Received by email 30 October 2013 and by post 4 November 2013

Recommendation		Response
Communication		
1.	All new tenants should be visited by an officer of the Trust to ensure that they are satisfied with their living arrangements.	This is currently undertaken by staff. If there have been individual problems, please make us aware of the case(s) and we will investigate.
2.	To inform residents that their neighbourhood teams are available to clarify any issues.	This is undertaken on a regular basis via our quarterly newsletter, Gateway News.
3.	The handbook must be made more user-friendly, updated regularly and accessible to all residents.	We are currently in the process of reviewing our handbook and will take on board the comments made by the Task Group.
4.	To improve clarity in presentation of bills sent to residents ensuring that all charges are clearly itemised.	As explained at the meeting there is a legal requirement to provide information in a prescribed format. However, we work with our residents in a number of ways to make these more meaningful. We signpost our residents to our staff and also other agencies for assistance if necessary.

Recommendation	Response	
Communication (continued)		
5.	To provide a clear process for residents to query any charges with which they disagree.	We encourage customer feedback and any queries are dealt with via this process. Further details are available on request. If there have been individual problems, please make us aware of the case(s) and we will investigate.
6.	To reduce the waiting time for residents to an 'industry acceptable' service. The telephone should be answered within six rings.	As explained at the meeting we are currently reviewing the performance of our Customer Service Centre and this will be picked up as part of this process.
7.	A free phone number should be introduced for residents to call the Trust.	This is already in place, the number is 0800 218 2247.
8.	The Trust website must be updated daily to ensure its contact details are current.	Noted.
9.	The Trust website must reflect the needs of its tenants and its aims and strategies.	The current website was procured with a team made up of staff and tenants. There is no plan to replace the current website.
10.	Staff who communicate with residents must have regular training.	As noted in our recent Investors in People Gold accreditation we have a committed and well-trained staff team. We continue to provide training to our staff as necessary.
11.	A clear process needs to be put in place where vulnerable residents are recognised and services provided to them to meet their individual needs.	We have undertaken a significant amount of work on the profile of our tenants and are aware of the support needs of a number of tenants. We tailor our services as necessary.

Recommendation		Response
Communication (continued)		
12.	The process to communicate with vulnerable residents must be clear. Staff should be proactive in dealing with vulnerable residents.	See 10 and 11 above.
Service Charges		
13.	Service Charges must be constantly reviewed.	Already in place.
14.	Service Charges should be itemised for each individual property and items clearly defined.	Already in place.
Repairs		
15.	The 'first time' satisfaction rate must be increased substantially.	As explained at the meeting this is one of our "Top 5 KPIs" and the direction is positive.
16.	A much more vigorous monitoring of contractors by managers must be undertaken.	Our new Organisation structure ensures this now takes place.
17.	Residents to be positively encouraged to return satisfaction surveys.	Noted although as we are sure members are aware it is difficult to get people to complete surveys.
18.	The Trust must be much more accountable to its residents and stakeholders.	Noted, however the Board and membership have agreed our Business Plan 2012 - 2017, which clearly states our 4 corporate objectives.

Recommendation		Response
Performance		
19.	The Trust should demonstrate to tenants that they are working towards joining the top quartile group of its peers.	As indicated at the meeting, the Trust is working on its Top 5 KPIs.
20.	The Trust should reaffirm its commitment that the development of 500 new homes in the areas of Watford and Three Rivers by 2016 is a main objective of its business plan.	One of the Trust's Corporate Objectives is to deliver 500 new homes by 2017.

Appendix

Copy of response from Watford Community Housing Trust