



NOTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY GROUP
WEDNESDAY 15 OCTOBER 2014

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road
West Bridgford

PRESENT:

Councillors Mrs J A Smith (Chairman), Mrs D M Boote, H A Chewings, J E Fearon, J E Greenwood, E J Lungley, B Tansley (substitute for Councillor J A Wheeler), T Vennett-Smith, D G Wheeler (substitute for Councillor Mrs M Stockwood)

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:

Councillor S J Boote

M Clifford Positive Futures Co-ordinator
T Francis Head of Community Sport –Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club
R Walker Metropolitan Regional Director North

OFFICERS PRESENT:

D Dwyer Strategic Housing Manager
K Marriott Executive Manager - Transformation
C Taylor Community Development Manager
E Walters Democratic Services Assistant

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:

Councillors Mrs M Stockwood, J G A Wheeler

7. Declarations of Interest

There were none declared.

8. Notes of the Previous Meeting

The notes of the meeting held on Tuesday 8 July 2014 were accepted as a true record.

An update was given on the actions arising from the previous meeting. The issues regarding the East Midlands Ambulance Service had been raised at the Scrutiny Chairmen and Vice Chairmen's meeting on 28 July 2014. Health Watch had been invited to give an update to the Partnership Delivery Group on 8 January 2015.

With regards the incidents of roadkill in relation to badgers, Streetwise Environmental Ltd had agreed to notify the location to Nottinghamshire Wildlife Trust of any badger road kills that they picked up.

9. Review of Metropolitan Housing Partnership

The Strategic Housing Manager introduced Richard Walker who gave a presentation on the key achievements of Metropolitan Housing during 2013/14 and the direction the organisation was heading. He informed Members that there were some further changes to the Executive Management Team structure. This included the appointment of a new Director of Asset Management Strategy who would be joining the organisation on 17 November 2014 and a newly created post entitled Director of Customer Insight. The Chief Executive, Brian Johnson, had set out a vision to improve performance and services over a 2 year period. There was a need to acknowledge past failings and this had been done and many issues had been addressed. The recent changes at Executive Management level should provide a positive outlook for the future. Richard Walker had met with the Director of Development at Metropolitan Housing to stress the importance of Rushcliffe as a key area to invest in housing to meet local need and had received a positive response. The Chief Executive and Director of Development would be contacting the Chief Executive of Rushcliffe Borough Council to discuss ways to build on existing partnership working in this area.

Richard Walker informed Members of some of the work undertaken by the Data Team over the previous year which involved reviewing the figures of rent arrears which identified a trend of increased arrears during the Christmas period. As a result, potential hotspots were targeted by Metropolitan staff, reducing over half the number of tenants falling into arrears compared to the previous year.

Metropolitan had introduced 'patch working' which meant a more joined up approach to discuss key issues affecting customers in a geographical location to avoid teams working in silos. This had some positive results, for example, improvements in safety for gas access.

Another initiative which Metropolitan was involved with was the METTS scheme which provided intensive support to 33 tenants in Rushcliffe.

Metropolitan Housing had been working with Rushcliffe Borough Council on launching a direct payment pilot whereby customers could have their housing benefit paid directly to them. So far there had not been a large amount of tenants using this scheme. Councillor Fearon asked whether this was due to tenants not having bank accounts and the answer given was that 90% of tenants did have bank accounts. A discussion ensued about whether the problem related to tenants' mistrust of bank accounts and tenants' preference to withdraw their money and pay direct themselves. Richard Walker confirmed this would be an area that they would continue to review in preparation for the introduction of Universal Credit.

Metropolitan were the first housing provider in Nottinghamshire to run sector based work academies. As part of this scheme there was a guaranteed job interview for the apprentice and of the 7 persons on the scheme 100% had been able to get jobs either with that employer or another company. The highest achieving employee was a Rushcliffe tenant.

In answer to a question about Universal Credit, Members were informed that the Government had not yet announced the full roll out plan. The Department for Work and Pensions had announced a two tier system where in 2015 Universal Credit would be open to all new claimants and existing claimants would be part of a subsequent roll out. In response to a question regarding whether the legislation allowed the money to be deducted at source if rent arrears had accrued Richard Walker referred to the switchback scheme where payments can be paid directly to Metropolitan Housing if rent was in arrears for more than 8 weeks.

Richard Walker gave an update on Asset Management and stated that a new programme of planned maintenance had been approved comprising spending £12.2 million over the next 5 years. In the past year the maintenance contractor had changed from the Mears Group to Kier Building Maintenance which had resulted in improved performance, fewer complaints and more satisfied tenants although the changeover had caused some delays at the outset. A full repair and maintenance options appraisal was planned for 2015.

Richard Walker discussed the level of customer satisfaction and stated that this had improved compared to previous years. 108 complaints were received compared to 205 the previous year. Only 1 of those complaints had progressed to stage 2 as opposed to 9 the previous year. There had been 155 cases of anti-social behaviour and 154 of those cases had subsequently been closed. The customer contact opening hours had reduced due to low demand. The new opening hours would be from 8am to 6pm. In the previous 12 months 91% of calls were answered against a target of 95%. The reason why this target had not been reached was the change in repair and maintenance contractor as mentioned above. It had been decided to have a maximum of 3 automated tiers for answering the call before the customer spoke to a live person. In answer to a question Members were informed that it took 1 minute to listen to the automated message and then 20 seconds for the call to be answered. Repeat calls had previously been a large amount of the overall total however a dedicated team had been created for dealing with repeat calls and a concerted effort had been made to lower the amount of calls that needed to be made by tenants for the same problem.

There was a robust quality assurance system in place where complaints were logged on a computer database and not closed until the customer had stated that they were satisfied. Richard Walker informed that he also undertook a further quality assurance check of a sample number of complaints letters each week to make sure they had been satisfactorily dealt with and the promises made to tenants had been delivered as part of their 'Promise Guarantee'.

Richard Walker informed the Group that there was a 10.3% property turnover rate. In answer to a question regarding the reason for this, he explained that it could be due to abandonment, death, evictions or the option of better quality stock elsewhere. Stock condition in the Rushcliffe area was good but due to an older population profile, it was likely that property turnover would occur due to death. Demand for housing in Rushcliffe was high and therefore re-lets were not considered to be an issue.

The Chairman asked about the average void time which a property would be vacant whilst it was awaiting a new tenant. Richard Walker stated that for

Metropolitan North a property was empty for an average of 79 days however these figures included the Derby area where the Mears Group previously had the repairs and maintenance contract. Richard Walker agreed to find out the exact figure for Rushcliffe and inform Councillors at a later date. He was able to inform Members that the new contractors, Kier Building Maintenance, had reduced the amount of properties in Rushcliffe awaiting repair work to 40. This had considerably improved the backlog of properties awaiting repairs and maintenance which had increased under the old contractors due to an on-going dispute.

As a result in the change in funding for the home alarm support provision for older and vulnerable tenants Metropolitan had ceased provision of the home alarm service to tenants in group linked properties in April 2014. A number of existing Metropolitan tenants were assisted to change providers and out of 300 tenants, 75 had transferred to the Rushcliffe home alarm service. A further review of the support and care provision for tenants in sheltered housing schemes would be undertaken in the New Year following the outcome of the Nottinghamshire County Council budget review. In the future Metropolitan would be looking at ways to further promote the independence of the tenants through existing and new support mechanisms, rather than create a culture of dependency. Metropolitan considered this approach would set them apart from other housing associations. Councillor Fearon asked a question regarding the exact nature of the housing related support provided by Metropolitan and in answer Richard Walker referred to traditional warden type work. This prompted a comment that some tenants did not wish to pay for warden service which had historically been tied to the property rather than the individual and the new approach would provide greater choice.

Councillor Vennett-Smith congratulated Metropolitan Housing on a positive report and stated it filled him with confidence for the future.

Councillor Mrs Boote also praised Metropolitan for their work and asked for clarification regarding service charges. Richard Walker confirmed that there were 3 types of service charge; monthly, one offs (such as replacing a roof) and annual charges, though he would obtain more detail on this and report back to Councillors. He was able to inform Members that Metropolitan had previously been calculating the service charges incorrectly but an audit process had been completed for calculating service charges which would explain why they had increased recently.

Metropolitan Housing was developing a tenant loyalty scheme linked into promoting positive behaviours and reducing dependency. This could involve a tiered management service offering a gold, silver, and bronze standard. Tenants who paid their rent on time and adhered to their tenancy agreement would receive a gold standard service with the opportunity of receiving rewards. Tenants who had rent arrears but were adhering to payment plans would qualify for a silver standard service. Tenants who had breached their tenancy agreement, or were not adhering to a payment plan to reduce rent arrears would receive a bronze service. Councillor Mrs Boote expressed a concern that those tenants categorised as bronze standard could be people with mental health issues and wanted clarification on how Metropolitan Housing would deal with this. Richard Walker informed that an equality impact assessment had been done and vulnerability had been identified as a key

issue. If a vulnerable tenant was not able to modify their behaviour then no additional sanctions would be applied and they would receive the normal service. The METTS scheme was available for those tenants who need additional support and a large amount of housing officers were on hand to help. There was a clear launch strategy for the scheme and Metropolitan had already identified which tenants might benefit from this service and were working closely with them. Metropolitan were planning to repeat this process in 3 months time.

Councillor D Wheeler requested to know where the housing stock was located in Rushcliffe and Richard Walker offered to provide the Partnership Delivery Group with a map showing the sites.

Councillor Fearon asked for some preliminary information about the Choice Based Lettings Scheme as it would be considered at the meeting of the Partnership Delivery Group on 8 January 2015. The Strategic Housing Manager was able to inform Members that the Choice Based Lettings Scheme was working well and achieving its objectives. Metropolitan Housing had committed to 100% of its properties being let through the Choice Based Scheme. Each tenant was entitled to make 3 bids a week. Councillor Fearon asked a follow up question about tenants who under-occupy properties, and the Strategic Housing Manager stated that priority, under the current Housing Allocations policy banding system, was awarded to people who requested a move to a smaller property. The Housing Allocations policy also allowed single people to bid for 2 bedroom flats due to the current shortage in smaller accommodation, although this was being addressed on new developments where a range of property types was being negotiated to meet both current and future need. She stated that the issue of under-occupation was under constant review to ensure best use of stock within the Borough.

The Vice Chairman complemented Metropolitan Housing on the work they had done at Leys Court in Ruddington and requested that the three Ward Members be able to visit the property when it opens. The Strategic Housing Manager informed that they would be invited to the opening ceremony.

The work of the partnership was endorsed by the Partnership Delivery Group.

10. **Review of Positive Futures**

The Community Development Manager explained the background to the extension of Positive Futures outside the Cotgrave area and that a series of targets have been set for a period of 4 years in respect of the transfer of £90,000 per annum loan to grant. He introduced Tracey Francis and Mark Clifford from Nottinghamshire County Cricket Club who gave a presentation on the key achievements during 2013/14 against the outcome targets and how the scheme was moving forward. Mark Clifford informed Members that there was still a skeleton programme in Cotgrave even though the scheme had been rolled out to Keyworth, Bingham and Radcliffe on Trent. Many of the children from Cotgrave attended schools elsewhere and were able to go to the after school clubs.

Information was given about the cohort targeted by the scheme which consisted of those in school years 6 and 7. Originally the scheme targeted

those involved with anti-social behaviour (ASB) though it had moved onto preventing youngsters getting involved with ASB in the first place. NEET engagement targeted those Not in Education, Employment or Training. Tournaments continued to be organised which gave people the opportunity to try different sports.

Metropolitan Housing had part funded a Peer Mentoring scheme where those who had turned their lives around could give their insight back to other young people. Positive Futures also provided funding for young people to obtain a First Aid qualification. Mark Clifford gave examples of the Community Pride initiative such as the Cotgrave Santa's Grotto, the World War Memorial, and the Welcome to Keyworth mural.

Tracey Francis concluded by stating that calculations using the National Sportworks data management system estimated that the annual savings to the Rushcliffe area as a result of Positive Futures was £2,215,850.

Councillor D Wheeler stated that he was delighted that the partnership has worked and was very complementary towards the scheme. Councillor Tansley praised the partnership between Positive Futures and Rushcliffe Borough Council and hoped it would be as successful in Bingham, Keyworth and Radcliffe on Trent as it had been in Cotgrave.

Councillor Mrs Boote also expressed how impressed she had been; informing that she had attended one of the Positive Futures events and met people who had their lives transformed. She asked what percentage of the cohort had vulnerability issues. Mark Clifford informed that the majority of young people that Positive Futures dealt with came from vulnerable homes or had Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder.

Councillor Fearon asked how far the Positive Futures scheme had expanded into other areas of the country. Tracey Francis provided some detail on the work of Positive Futures in Newark which targeted a younger cohort of 8-12 year olds of which 98% were on the register in terms of vulnerability. Many of the young people in Newark came from a travelling background.

The Partnership Delivery Group unanimously endorsed the work of Positive Futures.

11. **Work Programme**

Councillor Vennett-Smith stated that the meeting on 12 March 2015 would be his last as he was not standing for re-election in May 2015.

Councillor Mrs Boote asked for an explanation of the Garage Co-operation Agreement which would be covered at the July 2015 meeting of the Partnership Delivery Group. The explanation was provided by the Executive Manager – Transformation.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm.

Action Sheet

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Minute Number	Actions	Officer Responsible
9 Review of Metropolitan Housing Partnership	a) Richard Walker to find out how long properties in Rushcliffe wait for new tenants. b) Richard Walker to provide a map of the housing stock in Rushcliffe.	Strategic Housing Manager