

Minutes of the Accent Group Residents' Panel
29 June 2001 at 10:00 am
The Great Northern Hotel, Station Approach, Peterborough

Present:

Residents:

Ian Bennet, Accent Foundation (Chair)
Amanda Deallie, Accent Peerless
Wendy Dyer, Accent Nene
Tony Plumstead, Accent Nene
Charles Wright, Accent Foundation
Terry Monaghan, Accent Foundation
Miriam Blott, Accent Foundation
Brian Wooderson, Accent Peerless

Group Board:

Allan Smith, Accent Group Chairman

Staff:

Gordon Perry, Accent Group
Rachael Walsh, Accent Group
Jane McKalroy, Accent Foundation
Kath Ward, Accent Nene
Deborah Hodge, Accent Nene (part)
Wendy Darby (Minutes)

Apologies:

Jim Anderson, Accent Foundation
Margaret Moher, Accent Peerless

<p>1.</p> <p>RW</p>	<p><u>Welcome, Introductions and Apologies for Absence</u> Ian Bennett opened the meeting and welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Jim Anderson, Accent Foundation, Margaret Moher, Accent Peerless and Anita Blackie, Accent Peerless.</p> <p>Regarding the position of Margaret Moher, Accent Peerless, it was agreed to ascertain whether formal resignation had been received from her and if so, a formal thank you to be arranged.</p> <p>Ian handed over to Tony Plumstead to update Members on an ongoing item with the TSA.</p> <p>Tony read out the letter sent by the Group Panel to the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) following the TSA's decision not to allow the results of the Accent Group Residents' Satisfaction Survey to be used in the Regulatory Statistical Return (RSR), and that the survey had not been conducted using the National Federation's STATUS guideline.</p>
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<p>RW</p>	<p>Tony also read the reply from our lead regulator at the TSA, Maxine Loftus, which acknowledged the co-regulatory nature of the work to develop the survey, and confirmed that the results could be used in the RSR.</p> <p>Members were pleased with the response, and discussed other challenges to be the subject of campaigning letters. Supporting People funding cuts was one suggestion which followed discussion at the informal meeting. Another suggestion was to write to Lord Freud with regard to the loss of direct payment of housing benefit. The Residents Group was asked to think about whether there were any other items which could be lobbied on behalf of the Residents Group. Rachael Walsh to draft letters for the Chair on both issues.</p>
<p>2.</p> <p>WD</p>	<p><u>Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 2 March 2011</u> Proposed by Tony Plumstead, seconded by Terry Monaghan and agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting be approved subject to the following amendment:</p> <p>Page 3, 7th Paragraph . Allan drew attention to the penultimate line, last word to read would instead of could as there was no question as to whether affordable rent would lead to erosion of social housing stock.</p> <p>Because there had been some issues with all Members receiving their full set of agenda papers, it was agreed that for future meetings, papers would be prepared centrally and posted out to Members.</p>
<p>3.</p> <p>RW</p>	<p><u>Accent Group Residents’ Panel – Outstanding & Completed Action Schedule</u> The following actions were discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and Community Together (PACT) (Item 1) - This was a national policing initiative and there was a need to ensure residents knew how to access this initiative and types of initiatives like this. It was agreed that the engagement of residents in these projects should be dealt with through the Group-wide ASB Project with an overview at the National Residents Panel. • Your Voice (item 19) Accent Peerless Members confirmed they had received a copy of the publication. • Accent Foundation Residents’ Panel Road Show (item 20) had been arranged for Tuesday 27 and Wednesday 28 September 2011.
<p>4.</p>	<p><u>Update from Service Excellence Board</u> Wendy advised that she was unable to attend the last meeting, however she could confirm that she had received the minutes of the meeting and advised that the main subject discussed was the HMS Tristar Project. The launch of the new housing management system had been delayed from August 2011 to November 2011 in Accent Nene; this was to allow for as much data as possible to be transferred onto the new system. The project was progressing well.</p> <p>Rachael confirmed that a special meeting was to be held the following week, in order that a decision could be made about customer relationship management (CRM) and licenses.</p> <p>The CE raised issues about CRM in relation to answering customer queries and signposting to other teams if the first point of contact was unable to help. He felt that even if the specialist knowledge was not available from the customer’s first point of</p>

<p>GP/RW</p> <p>RW</p> <p>5.</p>	<p>contact, he/she should either be sign posted to the correct person/department or an arrangement made for them to be called back, it was about being flexible and able to help with a range of questions/queries. Panel members agreed with and supported the approach.</p> <p>In AP, although the repair service was good, there was no appointment system for repairs and no phone call to advise residents that the contractors would be visiting am or pm or that they were on their way. The CE understood that this must be very frustrating to customers re waste of annual leave, waiting in time etc and that the information would be reported back to AP. Brian said that he attended the last AP Repairs Monitoring Group Meeting and could confirm that Lovell & were working on the first time fix and their appointment system. Because there was a different telephone system in AP it was difficult to achieve a consistent response. Calls were direct to the contractor rather than AP staff. Rachael Walsh agreed to raise this with AP management.</p> <p>In AN, the arrangement with Fosters was working well. Wendy Dyer confirmed that there was a two hour appointment slot for customers with an option for call 20 minutes before the contractor was due to arrive.</p> <p>In AF, Terry confirmed that in Bradford and Yorkshire the contractors were working really hard to meet appointment times and improve services.</p> <p>Rachael advised that she would take the specific responses and issues to the relevant RP or the Project Board and also advise the CE of the date of the additional SEB to assess if he could attend.</p> <p><u>Update from the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference (CIOH) and Government Policy Initiatives</u></p> <p>The CE went through his presentation and the following items were highlighted and discussed. (The presentation was appended to the minutes).</p> <p>The CE advised that there were two main events per year for housing, the CIOH in June and the National Housing Federation Conference (the trade body of HA) held in September. He advised that the Housing Minister had attended the CIOH conference and key policy issues were discussed which all affected housing. The most significant changes were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare Reform • Planning Reform • Supporting People Reform and other public sector cuts <p>The question was posed: is there a housing crisis? There was acknowledgement that there was a housing crisis with the highest demand for houses versus the lowest level of developing new homes. Social housing was not going to be the answer to the crisis and the private rented market would have to be improved and increased at big rents. The CE advised that fixed term tenancies would need to be looked at for the private sector.</p> <p>There were more radical solutions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased land availability (with less planning restrictions) • Lower land prices
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<p>RW</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning restrictions reduced <p>Lenders had a major role to play and banks changing their views on lending would have a major impact. It was likely to be three to seven years before things started picking up again. Banks had to keep reserves to meet lending commitments, for example Accent Peerless (AP) could borrow £125M, they had already drawn down £85M so the bank had to keep the remaining £40M in reserve in the event that it needed to be drawn down by AP.</p> <p>Policy Issues . The CE looked at a year in housing, covering the main policy issues featured in Inside Housing. The web address to be provided to all members to view the publication of Inside Housing online. The presentation was appended to the minutes.</p> <p>In 2012/13 Accent needed to consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much do we invest in supporting our residents to sustain their homes and communities? • How can we demonstrate we are ambitious? <p>Key messages from CloH Conference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To put social back into social housing • Not just a cuts programme . big society is important too • Private sector needs to do more, and public sector needs to do less • What should our charitable role be? • How do we make housing relevant to everyone in society? <p>It was agreed that there may be a need to convene a Special Group Residents Panel Meeting should there be a quick turnaround on the new TSA Standards.</p> <p><u>ASB Update</u></p> <p>Shaun Finegan had been unable to attend the meeting to present his update. Members agreed to defer this item until the next meeting and ask Shaun to focus on strategic relationships and strategic investment.</p> <p>Amanada Deallie would contact Shaun in relation to what was happening at Accent Peerless.</p> <p><u>Performance (Challenges from Key Results report, Annual Residents' Reports, Residents' Satisfaction Survey – responses to key issues)</u></p> <p>Deborah Hodge, Resident Involvement Officer, Accent Nene, joined the meeting.</p> <p>RW presented challenges from the key results report. The presentation was appended to the minutes.</p> <p>The RI leads presented their responses for Accent Foundation, Accent Nene and Accent Peerless on the result of the residents satisfaction survey 2010 (copies of the presentations were appended to the minutes).</p> <p>ASB Satisfaction, KRR Page 16. In response to a question raised by Amanda Deallie the CE advised that in terms of ASB satisfaction, Accent was getting better but needed to build on that and look at things differently to get the best outcome.</p>
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<p>RW</p> <p>8.</p>	<p>New ways of dealing with this could be through mediation service, to employ a Community Safety Officer or both, this needed further debate for the best solution. Performance on re-letting empty Sheltered Housing was down and RW advised that this could be was mainly due to lack of strategic investment/remodelling of some schemes specifically.</p> <p>AP had managed to turn around some long standing lets. Long term voids had a detrimental effect on the whole picture and perhaps there was a need to think about changing the product or the market it served.</p> <p>RW advised that the value for money aspect of our performance was hard to evidence and was based on a balance of cost and quality. Members agreed that the vfm aspect was open to interpretation but information based on a balance of cost versus quality would be acceptable.</p> <p>RW advised that benchmarking information from our Housemark benchmarking would become available later in the year.</p> <p>DH advised that in relation to vfm, AN had found a way of evidencing this through a small number of facts, for example AN was saving money by taking on 1000 extra units with no extra staff . this was meaningful to residents.</p> <p>Communication training and knowledge on how to deal with calls at the first point of contact were discussed as well as repairs and satisfaction levels and learnt how each RP dealt with these via texting & automated systems such as #ickleq</p> <p>It was also observed that the presentations had covered a range of different teams with all service improvements and even though RPs were all performing at different levels ASB, Repairs and VFM were still the top priorities.</p> <p>Improvement priorities for the Accent Group Residents Panel include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sheltered Housing Strategy • VFM - estate services • Transparency and Accountability <p>Members noted that the business planning/ budget setting would begin in October. RW would ensure these priorities were reflected in the plans.</p> <p>Debbie Hodge left the meeting.</p> <p><u>Update on Affordable Rent & Fixed Term Tenancies (FTT)</u></p> <p>RW provided a report for Members and provided an update on the consultation taking place with residents on our policy proposals.</p> <p>RW advised that as part of the final contract to develop affordable homes needed to be decided which homes would be converted. She drew attention to item 4.2 the Conversion of Social Rented Stock. It was a complex issue with a limited time frame for completion and a lot of factors would need to be taken into account such as the financial constraints and local issues. This was not therefore being widely consulted with residents.</p> <p>Resident consultation was taking place re the fixed term tenancies for the affordable</p>
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	<p>rents housing. The lifetime tenancies for supported and older persons housing would be excluded from selection as affordable rent properties. If we had to have FTTs Members agreed that a fixed term of 5 years tenancies was the preferred option in terms of keeping costs down but giving the tenant sufficient settling in time.</p> <p>Members noted the report and the following was agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 Year FTT • The proposed criteria for deciding whether to re-issue a FTT as set out in section 5. • It was appropriate to only consult more widely on the proposed criteria for reissuing a tenancy
<p>9. JM</p>	<p><u>RESIDENTS' PANEL ROLE PROFILE</u></p> <p>JM presented a draft profile for Members to consider. Members agreed to adopt the role profile subject to amendments in relation to disclosure of interest. JM to redraft and send a copy to Members to consider.</p> <p>Recruitment . JM informed members that following the resignation of Khalid Aziz there was a vacancy for a Foundation Panel Member, and also one each for Nene and Peerless.</p> <p>Members were asked to consider how we recruit new members, whether it was from existing involved residents, whether we run an open recruitment and whether there should be a skills matrix and interview process.</p> <p>The CE pointed out that this was not what was agreed when the group was set up, when each RP could decide on their representation at the National Panel.</p>
<p>ALL</p> <p>10.</p>	<p><u>SUMMARY OF THE DAY</u></p> <p>AS summed up the meeting in that the meetings were well run and very effective. He felt progress was being made and was getting better with every meeting. It helped him refocus his priorities as Group Chair. The TSA letter and outcome was very good. Wendy's input on the discussion around customer service, making ourselves more helpful at the first point of contact and how this could impact positively on our service and value for money was very useful. The CE added that all the discussion gave us an overview of the environment we are working in and it was important that we understood that.</p> <p>The discussion on ASB was also very useful and informative and especially in relation to managing resident expectations where it was important that our residents had a part to play and we would only succeed through a joint effort.</p> <p>The VFM issue came up in relation to service charges and affordable rent, it was a complex area and he wished he could see a route forward. He felt there may be a different way or a more entrepreneurial way of dealing with it to develop new houses to meet housing need.</p> <p>He thanked everyone for attending and Ian for a well chaired meeting.</p>
<p>11.</p>	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agreed a letter would be sent to Lord Freud re direct rent payments. 2. Agreed a letter would be sent to Grant Shaps on transparency over cuts in

- local government supporting people funding.
3. Amanda to Chair the next meeting.

Date of Next Meeting

To be held late October to enable feedback into the national Board Members Conference.

The meeting closed at 2.30pm