



## CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

12 September 2013

### PRESENT:

#### Directors

Robert Buckley (Chair)  
Joanne Carr  
Pauline Dillon  
Kathryn Ferdinand  
John Hamilton  
Joachim Mouanda Mousounda  
Gordon Spring

#### Advisers

Neil Bouch	Director of Customers and Communities
Julie McCartney	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Kevin Johnson	Head of Customer Service
Teresa Smare	Neighbourhood Services Manager
Louise Taylor	Involvement and Diversity Manager
Deborah Ewart	Housing Services Manager
Stuart Gibson	Governance and Risk Officer

#### Also Present

Hazel Hitchen	TALISMAN
Elizabeth Bird	TALISMAN
Margaret Gale	TALISMAN (observing)
David Hewitson	TALISMAN (observing)
Carole Cutter	TALISMAN (observing)
Clare Butterfield	TALISMAN (observing)

### 13 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 9 May 2013 were approved as a correct record.

### 14 MATTERS ARISING – HOUSING SERVICES PROVIDED FROM FELLING HIGH STREET HUB

It was noted that as agreed with ward members, the surgeries at Felling Hub have been reviewed and all the surgeries have now been withdrawn.

## **15 TALISMAN REVIEW – REVIEW OF RENT AND INCOME**

The committee was informed of the outcome of the TALISMAN review into how the Company manages Rent and Income Services.

This was second review that TALISMAN had carried out and overall their findings showed the Rent and Income employees to be the biggest asset to the service. The overwhelming feelings from interaction with staff from all levels showed that they operate a ‘firm but fair’ approach and respect the customers they are dealing with.

Scrutiny of the service has highlighted 12 areas of positive practice including an easier to understand rent statement after consultation with tenants, regular training to staff around identifying vulnerable tenants, advice given around Welfare Reform, working with other agencies and the Money Matters leaflets.

It also resulted in the identification of 15 recommendations which if implemented will result in tangible improvements to customer service delivery and assist in managing the service more effectively.

- RESOLVED –
- (i) That recommendations and review positive practice be noted.
  - (ii) That a formal response to TALISMAN's recommendations from the Rent and Income Team be presented to the next committee and subsequently to report this response and action plan to TALISMAN.

## **16 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY – UPDATE**

The committee received an update on customer involvement activity for the first quarter of 2013/14.

During the period, 59 involvement activities took place. A range of activities are offered to provide tenants and leaseholders with the opportunity to get involved and influence decision making in a way which suits them.

Customers have been involved in involvement activities on over 2,684 occasions, although some may have been involved in more than one activity.

There have been a number of outcomes from customer involvement during the period, details of which were reported.

There are a number of service standards in place for involvement to help monitor performance and ensure that we continue to involve customers in the way services are delivered. The results at the end of the period were reported.

During the last quarter, through a partnership between Mears, the Company and Gateshead College, an 8 week training programme has begun offering tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to gain more detailed training on DIY, painting and decorating and carpentry, enhancing the training offered

through the existing Moving Forward programme. The outcomes of this training will be evaluated and reported to a future meeting of this committee.

A number of activities are planned for 2013/14, details of which were reported.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

## **17 OPPORTUNITY KNOCKS 2013**

Following on from the success of the Opportunity Knocks 2012 programme, it was decided that the same approach would be taken for this year. By attending community led events across the Borough and Northern Pride (LGBT Festival) in Newcastle, would ensure the Involvement Team would be attending events which have a guaranteed high footfall level.

The purpose of the programme was to use range of opportunities to engage with the local community in their own environment and share key messages from the Company.

A summary of events attended and outcomes achieved were reported. The full report of the programme was also submitted.

There have been a number of outcomes achieved from Opportunity Knocks 2013, full details of which were detailed in the report.

The report will be shared with the Involvement SIG for discussion and it will be recommended that the same approach in 2014 be adopted.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

## **18 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PARTNERSHIP UPDATE – APRIL TO JUNE 2013**

The committee received a quarterly update on anti-social behaviour (ASB) partnership work and neighbourhood activity.

In particular, details of domestic abuse cases, sub-categories, closed cases, current open cases, referrals to other agencies, Multi-Agency risk Assessment Conference, domestic abuse training, repairs and security measures, Hate Incident cases, the Mental Health Link Worker, safeguarding adult/children, safe neighbourhood groups, the non-attendance panel, victim support, involvement, mediation training, the youth crime education programme, the Safetyworks! Initiative, multi-agency public protection arrangements and the Shelter Offender Management Event were reported.

RESOLVED – (i) That the information be noted.

(ii) That the committee receive a detailed update and evaluation of the learning outcomes and number of attendees of the Safetyworks! Initiative.

(iii) That the committee receive an update on the Mental Health Link Worker at a future meeting.

## **19 FAMILIES GATESHEAD (TROUBLED FAMILIES PROGRAMME)**

In December 2011 the Government announced the Troubled Families Programme, which is committed to turning around the lives of 120,000 families nationally. There are additional resources of £448m over the initial three years of this programme, based on the analysis that these 120,000 families are costing £75,000 per family. The estimate from central government is that this equates to 595 families over the three year period, in Gateshead.

The estimation is that it costs £10,000 to 'turn a family around'. The programme offers local authorities and their partners 40% of this cost of providing intensive interventions, payable on the achievement of successful outcomes. A proportion of money is paid up front on a tapered basis to enable partnerships to invest in and redesign services which can respond to the needs of troubled families.

In June 2013 the DCLG announced that the programme is to be extended until 2020 in response to the success nationally in engaging families and achieving positive outcomes, with funding secured for 2015/16.

In Gateshead the troubled families programme is known as 'Families Gateshead'. A multi-agency project board is well established, which the company is represented on.

The approach Gateshead has adopted follows the principles of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), Team around the Family (TAF) and Lead Practitioner (LP) model. Cases are managed through delivering holistic family interventions, predominantly managed through the Council's Family Intervention Team, Children's Social Work and Youth Offending Team services.

The Annual Progress Report for 2012/13 was submitted. As at the end of April 2013, Gateshead was working with 229 'troubled families'. Families are fairly evenly distributed across the borough.

A national evaluation of the programme is currently being developed and Gateshead has confirmed it will take part in this evaluation exercise. Further detail can be provided to committee on this evaluation as it progresses.

**RESOLVED –** That Gateshead's approach to Troubled Families and progress made for year one be noted.

## **20 ESTATE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY – APRIL 2012 TO MARCH 2013**

The committee received an update on estate management activity for April 2012 to March 2013.

In particular, the following were highlighted: -

- Estate tours and grading
- External Peer review

- Neighbourhood Pride
- Designing Out Crime,
- Grounds maintenance,
- Pest Control
- Street Action and Enforcement
- Garden management
- Garden Scheme update
- Wrekenton Neighbourhood Action Plan – Cleaner, Safer, Greener

RESOLVED – That the information be noted.

## **21 SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE – YEAR END UPDATE 2012/13**

The committee received an update on activity, performance and customer satisfaction for the Sheltered Housing Service for the year 2012/13.

In particular, estate tours, drop ins, Home Welcome visits, small tasks, Neighbourhood Pride, improving the quality of accommodation, digital inclusion, the Older Persons Service Improvement Group, the Sheltered Accreditation Working Group and Annual Scheme Meetings were reported.

In May 2012 committee received a report outlining the service achievements during 2011/12 and provided an update on the achievement of the accreditation by CHS Code of Practice. This quality mark demonstrates that sheltered housing related support services in Gateshead are of the highest standard, delivered consistently and are person centred. Re-accreditation for this code of practice is currently taking place in partnership with the Council and an on-site assessment is scheduled to take place by the end of September 2013.

RESOLVED – That the information be noted and the committee receive a further update on the outcomes of the CHS accreditation.

## **22 FORWARD PLAN**

A forward plan of reports that will be presented to meetings of this committee during the next year was submitted.

RESOLVED – That the forward plan be noted.

## **23 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday 7 November 2013 at 10am in Board Room 1.