



CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

27 February 2014

PRESENT:

Directors

Robert Buckley (Chair)
Sheila Bouitieh
Joanne Carr
Pauline Dillon
Kathryn Ferdinand
Eileen Gill
John Hamilton
Gordon Spring

Advisers

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

32 MEMBERSHIP

The membership of the committee was noted.

33 APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR

RESOLVED – That Pauline Dillon be appointed as Deputy Chair of the committee.

34 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 7 November 2013 were approved as a correct record.

35 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS – UPDATE

The committee received an update on the work of the organisation on complaints and compliments.

At the end of 2013/14, the overall responsibility for complaints and compliments moved to Corporate Services. At this time, a project officer was

seconded into the Involvement Team on a temporary basis to undertake a review of how the Company approaches this area. The review is now underway and the findings of which will be reported to Board in May.

This review will focus on a number of key areas to ensure that the Company continues to respond to complaints effectively and learn from these to improve services in the future. Details of these were reported.

The Complaints Panel was originally established in 2011 to scrutinise trends in complaints and identify areas for improvement. The panel received detailed performance information and presentations and feedback from managers around reasons for complaints to help inform learning and changes to services.

As part of the review, the project officer is now meeting with the panel on a monthly basis and members are working with the Company to develop policies, procedures and guidance.

Updates on the panel's activity will be reported to future committee meetings.

An internal audit of complaints was carried out in August 2013. This found that the control systems and procedures for the service were satisfactory with the two areas of best practice recommendations that will be considered as part of the review.

Findings of the review and recommendations will be reported to Board in May. Following this, the new guidance and approach will be implemented with the appropriate resource to support this.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the committee receive the Annual Activity Report on Complaints and Compliments at May's Committee.
- (ii) That the committee receive six-monthly updates on complaints and compliments thereafter.

36 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND SAFEGUARDING PARTNERSHIP UPDATE – APRIL TO DECEMBER 2013

The committee received an update on the following anti-social behaviour (ASB) and safeguarding partnership working and neighbourhood activity: -

- Domestic abuse cases
- Referrals to other agencies
- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference
- Hate Crime
- Victim Support Worker
- Mental Health Link Worker
- Non Attendance Panel
- Arson Education Project
- ASB Crime and Policing Bill – Community Trigger Update
- Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements
- Safeguarding Adults / Children
- Families Gateshead

- RESOLVED – (i) That the update on the anti-social behaviour and safeguarding partnership working and neighbourhood activity be noted.
- (ii) That the committee receive a further update on the implementation of the Community Trigger in Gateshead at its next meeting.

37 CONCIERGE AND CLEANING UPDATE

The committee received a progress update following the implementation of the Concierge and Cleaning review.

The new service was remodelled to operate during peak periods of activity and with the aim of being delivered from one location, Eslington Court. The role continues to focus on security, controlling access to the blocks and monitoring CCTV. The new hours and revised staffing structure to support this were introduced from April 2013. It is anticipated that the move to one location will be completed by 31 March 2014.

The residential Caretaker service took over the communal cleaning of the four multi storey blocks, previously carried out by LES under a Service Level Agreement. Caretakers also carry out a range of additional tasks.

During the period 1 April 2013 to 31 December 2013, the following was carried out in the four blocks: -

- A range of small repair tasks in communal areas of multi storey blocks. Caretakers have carried out a total of 453 repair tasks in the communal areas.
- In addition to repairs in the communal areas, Caretakers also carry out a range of small tasks inside customers' homes.
- Caretakers aim to visit all new customers within 21 days of the tenancy start date to discuss a range of topics.
- Caretakers attend accompanied viewings with Estate Officers in multi storey blocks.
- To support the Company's approach to fire safety, caretakers carry out a monthly health and safety inspection of their block.
- To enhance the duties carried out by LES, caretakers litter pick the area around their blocks when required.

The review has also provided the opportunity to strengthen the existing management arrangements of the concierge and caretaker service, whilst delivering value for money, details of which were reported.

Following a customer satisfaction survey issued to tenants and leaseholders, 91% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the Caretaker service since it was introduced and 86% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the new Concierge service.

Overall employees were positive about the changes and there were positive comments from other services within the Company.

The focus during 2014/15 will be on developing the existing Concierge role and strengthening performance management of both the services.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the progress made following the review of the Concierge and Cleaning service be noted.
- (ii) That the committee receive a multi-storey annual activity report.
- (iii) That Officers be congratulated on their achievements.

38 TALISMAN – PROGRESS REPORT

The committee received an update on progress against actions identified in the first two TALISMAN (Tenant and Leasehold Scrutiny Management Panel) reviews and a general update on the panel.

Most of the actions following the review of anti-social behaviour had already been completed and progress with the only outstanding actions was reported.

A number of the actions following the review of rent and income were now complete and an updated action plan was submitted.

Since the last update, a further five members have been appointed. Two members have been appointed onto the Board as Tenant Directors and another two members have resigned, resulting in there now only being five members remaining.

A further recruitment campaign has resulted in two applications and interviews for these will be held in early March 2014.

Following the review of rent and income, the panel discussed the process undertaken and identified that communication between the service under scrutiny and the panel could be improved. This has led to introducing a step to ensure that the service manager meets with the panel to discuss their proposed action plan prior to this going to committee. This and other lessons learnt are reflected in a flowchart showing the process to be followed for all future reviews.

A dedicated secure website for TALISMAN has also been developed since the last update.

- RESOLVED – That the recommendations from the first two TALISMAN reviews and the other progress made be noted.

39 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY – UPDATE – APRIL TO DECEMBER 2013

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

During the period, 60 involvement activities took place. Customers have been involved in activities on over 2,260 occasions, however some may have been involved in more than one event.

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

Mears have been working in the local community with residents and as a result of Community Fund applications, have delivered a number of valuable projects in Gateshead.

There has been an increase of 13 involved customers to the database since June 2013, totalling 880 members.

The Company offered another Summer of Fun competition in 2013, offering community organisations the opportunity to apply for a prize to help their group.

Details of activities planned for 2013/14 were also reported.

RESOLVED – (i) That the information be noted.

(ii) That future reports include the profile of the tenants that are engaging.

40 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.

41 DATE AND TIME OF MEETINGS 2014/15

RESOLVED – That the following schedule of meetings of the committee in 2014/15 be approved: -

- Thursday, 8 May 2014 at 10am
- Thursday, 11 September 2014 at 10am
- Thursday, 6 November 2014 at 10am
- Thursday 26 February 2015 at 10am