



## CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

26 February 2015

### PRESENT:

#### Directors

Robert Buckley (Chair)  
Elizabeth Bird  
Sheila Boutieh  
Joanne Carr  
Kathryn Ferdinand  
Eileen Gill  
John Hamilton

#### Advisers

Neil Bouch	Director of Customers and Communities
Julie McCartney	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Deborah Ewart	Housing Services Manager
Hazel Forster	Neighbourhood Relations Team Manager
Louise Taylor	Involvement and Diversity Manager
Stuart Gibson	Governance and Risk Officer

#### Apologies

Pauline Dillon

### 35 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 6 November 2014 were approved as a correct record.

### 36 TALISMAN – PROGRESS REPORT

The committee received an update on progress against actions identified in TALISMAN reviews completed to date and a general update on the Panel.

Most of the actions following the review of anti-social behaviour had already been completed and an update was provided of three actions that were still outstanding. One of the outstanding actions to share Housemark data and work with SIG to benchmark had now been completed.

It had previously been reported that there was only one outstanding action following the review of rent and income. This action was now complete and this action plan could now be signed off as complete.

At its meeting in November 2014, the committee received an action plan following the review of voids. An updated action plan that shows those that have now been completed and progress with those that are still outstanding was submitted.

The Panel has reviewed and made some suggested changes to its terms of reference, which reflect the learning of the panel and organisation since it was originally established. The amended terms of reference were submitted.

The committee also received a general update around the changes in membership, progress with TALISMAN's current review of customer service and external events attended.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the updated TALISMAN terms of reference be approved.
- (ii) That the committee is satisfied with the progress made since the last six monthly update in September 2014.

### **37 SAFE PLACES SCHEME**

The Safe Place Scheme is a national initiative whereby organisations and venues identify themselves as a Safe Place for people with a learning disability to access in their local community. The scheme uses a nationally recognised sticker displayed in the window of the premises so that people can clearly identify the venue as a Safe Place.

The scheme is aimed to provide somewhere that people can go to get help if they are lost, have lost a bus pass, wallet or purse, had something stolen, are being bullied or upset about something.

A local scheme was developed by Gateshead People, who are a self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities, run by people with learning disabilities. The Safe Places scheme has been supported by the Police and Crime Commissioners Unit and the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board.

The scheme was launched in March 2014 and over 60 places have now been registered as a safe place.

A report was presented at the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board on 16 January to encourage take up of the scheme by partners.

It is proposed that the Company sign up to the scheme and that all housing offices are registered as a safe place.

Training will be provided by Gateshead People to understand the Safe Places scheme and the role and establish the support needs a person with learning disabilities may have.

It is proposed that this training and approach goes beyond the Safe Places theme of venues being a safe place for people and to include other front line officers in the briefings to be able to respond effectively if they come into contact with someone with learning disabilities whilst visiting people's homes.

Reference was made to training that Gateshead councillors had received around Dementia Friends. It was noted that the Company was involved with this work and an employee has received training to deliver Dementia awareness training to employees and customers.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the Company sign up all housing offices as Safe Places.

- (ii) That the resulting actions that the Company will do to continue to respond effectively and support vulnerable tenants and leaseholders be noted.

## **38 CUSTOMER INSPECTIONS: MULTI-STOREY BLOCKS**

The committee received an update on the introduction of customer inspections in multi-storey blocks.

There are currently a number of different types of inspections of the communal areas within the 25 multi-storey blocks across Gateshead. These include the Estate Tours programme, inspections of the Caretaker cleaning standards and Health and Safety inspections.

Estate Tours are carried out on a quarterly basis by the Estate Officer with a customer.

Customers who attend the Multi-Storey Service Improvement Group (SIG) requested the opportunity to become more actively involved in the monitoring and “testing” of the specific cleaning standards, outside of the Estate Tour programme.

During 2013/14, a customer inspection pilot was developed with customers from the SIG. They were provided with training by the Caretaker Supervisors and following a period of shadowing started carrying out the inspections on their own.

Feedback from the customers involved in the pilot was very positive and details of this were reported.

The customer inspections effectively replaced the inspections previously carried out by the Caretaker Supervisors. Their feedback was also very positive and they reported that after the initial pilot the inspections were working very well.

Following completion of the pilot it was reviewed by the SIG and agreed to adopt in all 25 blocks. This has now been fully rolled out and involves a team of seven Customer Inspectors.

The customer inspections have been operating in parallel with Estate Tours but there is an opportunity to align both programmes to provide a streamlined inspection regime. Customers from the SIG value and wish to maintain the link with the Estate Officer that the Estate Tour provides.

The group have suggested that customer inspections and Estate Tours are aligned so that each multi-storey block receives an inspection every three months, alternating between an Estate Tour and a customer inspection i.e. one of each every six months.

This approach will help inform a wider review of Estate Tours to be delivered in 2015/16.

It was noted that the Company had been shortlisted for the TPAS Northern Award of Excellence in Co-regulation and this was reflected in its submission.

**RESOLVED – (i)** That the development of customer inspections and the pilot work undertaken be noted.

- (ii) That the proposed frequency of Estate Tours and Customer Inspections in multi-storey blocks from April 2015 be approved.
- (iii) That the proposed review of the wider Estate Tour programme in 2015/16 be noted.

### **39 DATE AND TIME OF MEETINGS 2015/16**

RESOLVED – That the following schedule of meetings of the committee in 2015/16 be approved: -

- Wednesday, 6 May 2015 at 10am
- Thursday, 10 September 2015 at 10am
- Thursday, 5 November 2015 at 10am
- Thursday, 11 February 2016 at 10am

### **40 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PERFORMANCE UPDATE: APRIL TO DECEMBER 2014**

The committee received an update on the following anti-social behaviour (ASB) partnership work and neighbourhood activity between April and December 2014: -

- Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC)
- Domestic Abuse Cases
- Hate Incident Cases
- Mental Health Link Worker
- Non Attendance Panel
- Victim Support
- Legal Tools and Powers
- Multi-Agency Public protection Arrangements (MAPPA)
- Northern Engagement into Recover from Addiction (NERAF)
- Illegal Money Lending
- Anti-Money Laundering
- Safeguarding Adults and Children
- Social Services child protection checks
- Families Gateshead Council
- Missing and Exploited Group

It was noted that a report around trends in hate crime reporting and partnership working would be included in the next committee report. The committee welcomed this.

It was noted that the current Mental Health Link Worker had left their position with South Tyneside Foundation Trust. Regrettably they had been unable to commit to providing an alternative link worker at this stage. The Council had funded a post around mental health and more details on this would be brought to the next meeting of the committee.

The committee asked the Company had any involvement with the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). It was explained that we were involved and an update would be provided at the next meeting of the committee.

The committee asked if the Company was prepared for safeguarding including self-harm from 1 April 2015. It was noted that this falls under self-neglect and the Company was part of a group looking at this. Details of the process would be brought back to a future meeting of the committee.

RESOLVED – That the committee is satisfied with the performance update on tackling anti-social behaviour.

#### **41 CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) is a standard which was introduced by the Government in order to ensure that services are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering. Fundamentally they expect organisations to put customers at the heart of service provision.

The Company was first accredited with the CSE Standard in March 2011 and subsequently was subject to further visits for the following 2 years to ensure that we had continued to maintain this standard. In its last assessment, the Company was found to be fully compliant in all areas.

Achieving Customer Service Excellence was identified as a key action for the Company in 2014/15 and a report was presented to the committee in May 2014 outlining our plans for reaccreditation.

Following a two day onsite assessment with the assessor in November, the Company was assessed as meeting the standard in all areas of the assessment. In particular, five areas were highlighted as positive practice (compliance plus).

The assessor highlighted in the report that, while the organisation has faced significant changes and budget restrictions since the last full assessment, it continued to deliver high-quality services.

Following this accreditation, the Company now follows a three-year cycle to maintain the standard.

The committee felt that the Company should be ensuring that the cost of accreditations was value for money. The cost of the CSE re-accreditation was approximately £1,600 which the committee did consider to be good value for money. It was noted that the Board had previously took a decision that it should be focusing on accreditations around customers (CSE) and its staff (IIP).

The committee acknowledged how good this result was but stressed the challenges it now gave the Company to improve further given the number of compliance pluses it had received.

RESOLVED – (i) That the findings of the Customer Service Excellence Re-assessment be noted.

(ii) That employees be commended on such a good result.

#### **42 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY – UPDATE**

The committee received an update on customer involvement activity for the third quarter of 2014/15.

During the period, 79 involvement activities took place. Customers have been involved in activities on over 3,950 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.

Details of activity with young people, work around illegal money lending, performance against service standards, Mears activity, the involvement database and future activity were also reported.

The committee asked how Mears feeds into the community initiative. It was noted that the Mears Customer Services Manager attends the Home and Involvement Service Improvement Groups (SIGs) and is happy to attend to any of the other SIGs when requested. She has also specifically attended the LGTB Forum. Mears do learn from this. The committee felt that there had been a shift in attitude towards customers since moving from Morrison to Mears. It was also noted that this was reflected in the approach to dealing with complaints.

The committee now needed to consider how it could strengthen its links to wider areas with Construction Services as well.

Reference was made to the Live Well Gateshead hub which aims to provide a single access point to health and wellbeing services in Gateshead. It was suggested that the Company should contact them about how they could link into the events/courses the Company delivers and for the Company to raise awareness of the hub with its customers.

RESOLVED – That the update on customer involvement activity be noted.

#### **43 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.

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

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Wednesday, 6 May 2015 at 10am at Gateshead Civic Centre.