



CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

6 May 2015

PRESENT:

Directors

Pauline Dillon (Deputy Chair in the Chair)
Elizabeth Bird
Sheila Bouitieh
Eileen Gill

Advisers

Neil Bouch	Director of Customers and Communities
Deborah Ewart	Housing Services Manager
Martin Poulter	Neighbourhood Services Manager (Central)
Teresa Smare	Neighbourhood Services Manager (East and South)
Louise Taylor	Involvement and Diversity Manager
Stuart Gibson	Governance and Risk Officer

David Hewitson	Chair of TALISMAN
David Chambers	Member of TALISMAN
Carole Cutter	Member of TALISMAN

Apologies

Robert Buckley
John Hamilton

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 26 February 2015 were approved as a correct record.

2 MATTERS ARISING – SAFE PLACES SCHEME

All housing offices have signed up as Safe Places. In addition, offices have been briefed on the scheme and signs have been displayed in offices to promote our involvement.

3 TALISMAN – REVIEW OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

David Hewitson, Chair of TALISMAN presented the Panel's final report following its review of Customer Services, which specifically focused on the Office Network.

Overall, TALISMAN found this to be a very positive review. TALISMAN found a level of consistency in the promotion of good customer service throughout the Office Network. This has indicated a high standard of work in this field which has shown a willingness to address any shortcomings that were identified, in all areas. The Panel thought that this has been achieved by good interaction between the housing managers and frontline.

The review highlighted nine areas of positive practice. Unlike with previous reviews there was one positive practice relating to the way the Wednesday briefing was delivered in a housing office which the Panel has recommended should be replicated in other offices. TALISMAN would like to be kept updated with progress implementing this.

There were also 19 recommendations which if implemented could result in improved customer service and a better service to tenants.

Although there were only nine areas of positive practice highlighted, it was also stressed that overall this was a very positive review. With the exception of issues highlighted around the sign up procedure, none of the recommendations highlighted were considered significant.

TALISMAN thanked all of the staff involved with helping to collect evidence for the Review. As TALISMAN develops, the Panel feel that co-operation between TGHC and Talisman has increased greatly, allowing it to scrutinise customer service delivery in an appropriate setting.

The committee considered it to be a very good review that had really made the Company think in terms of the sign up procedure and other areas that are looked at from a customer perspective. Members of TALISMAN were thanked for the work that they had carried out.

- RESOLVED – (i) That the outcome of the review by TALISMAN of customer services and in particular the Office Network be noted.
- (ii) That a formal response to TALISMAN's recommendations be presented to the next committee and subsequently reported to TALISMAN together with an action plan.

4 GROUNDS MAINTENANCE SERVICE AGREEMENT 2015/16

A revised service agreement between the Company and the Council for the delivery of grounds maintenance services was presented.

Positively, Customers and Environment will continue to deliver the same level of service as agreed in the 2014/15 service level agreement, with charges for pest control also remaining the same. The key updates and amendments in this years' service agreement are: -

- New budget information 2015/16
- There will be no spring or summer floral planting
- Litter picking hotspots areas have been reviewed

- Mechanical sweepers have been reduced however, the routes have been re-aligned to share across all areas
- TGHC Fixed play equipment review and replacement programme

A performance management framework involving customers is in place to monitor the service provided and support the delivery of the service agreement.

An updated version of the Service Agreement, highlighting the changes this year will be published to customers on the TGHC Website and the service standards will be published through the TGHC Newspaper.

Customer satisfaction has continued to fall across the estates and neighbourhoods over the last few years. The Company has successfully delivered a range of Neighbourhood Pride and Design out Crime schemes across the neighbourhoods.

Whilst these schemes have positively enabled the Company to tackle local issues and improve the appearance of estates, it was timely to review its approach. The terms of reference for Neighbourhood Pride and Designing out crime were similar but by combining the two along with the budget, this will enable the Company to deliver more innovative and wider ranging schemes to tackle local issues, sustain estates and neighbourhoods and help improve customer satisfaction.

This will provide an overall budget of £270,000, which includes £20,000 contribution from the Council's Communities and Environment service.

Going forward this year, the Company will be doing some joint work with the Council's Street Enforcement Team to raise public awareness and educate customers on environmental issues and encourage positive behaviour through local campaigns. This will also include closer working around enforcement issues and maximising the use of the new tools and powers under the ASB Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The committee welcomed that fact that the Company was looking at more innovative ways of involving people.

- RESOLVED –
- (i) That the Grounds Maintenance Service Agreement for 2015/16 be approved.
 - (ii) That the committee is satisfied with the new approach developed for the Sustainable Communities Fund.
 - (iii) That the committee receive a report in September 2015 on estate management activity undertaken in 2014/15.

5 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2014/15

The committee received an annual update on work undertaken in the following areas to tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) and associated performance undertaken during 2014/15: -

- Performance

- Service Standard Performance
- Customer satisfaction
- Vetting and Exclusions
- Hate Crime
- ARCH Hate Crime reports
- School Based Anti-Discriminatory Arts Activities
- Domestic Abuse
- Customer Assessment Tool
- Victim Support
- Housing and Mental Health Outreach Worker
- Non-Attendance Panel
- Safeguarding Adults/Children
- Families Gateshead Council
- Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub
- Missing and Exploited Group
- Restorative Justice
- Legal Tools and Powers (Civil Injunction)

The committee asked if the new civil injunction was less expensive. It was noted that the court fees had increased for a legal sanction. However, they had been introduced to hopefully make the process swifter, though the Company hadn't tested it yet.

The committee welcomed the appointment by Gateshead Council of two Housing and Mental Health Outreach Workers and asked to be kept updated on their progress.

RESOLVED – That the Anti-Social Behaviour Performance Update 2014/15 be noted.

6 MULTI-STOREY TEAM – YEAR END UPDATE 2014/15

The committee received a summary of the following activity carried out by the Multi-Storey Team during 2014/15: -

- Performance against Service Standards
- Repairs in communal areas
- Small tasks
- Complaints and compliments
- Training and development
- Multi-Storey Service Improvement Group
- Customer inspections and estate tours
- Additional activity

Details of the Team's five priorities in 2015/16 were also reported.

RESOLVED – That activity carried out by the Multi-Storey Team during 2014/15 and the priorities in 2015/16 be noted.

7 COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS PERFORMANCE UPDATE 2014/15

The committee received details of complaints and compliments performance in the following areas for the year ending 31 March 2015: -

- Number of complaints recorded
- Responding within target
- Customer satisfaction
- Compliments
- Service improvements
- Complaints Scrutiny Panel
- Progress against complaints review recommendations
- The Housing Ombudsman
- Vexatious contacts

RESOLVED – That the Complaints and Compliments Performance Update 2014/15 be noted.

8 MOVING FORWARD CUSTOMER TRAINING PROGRAMME – ANNUAL REVIEW

The committee was informed of progress of the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme 2014/15 and the programme for 2015/16.

Analysis of the training that took place in 2014/15 identified a number of positive outcomes for attendees on the training ranging from increased confidence, attending further training with the company, improved health and wellbeing, and increased digital skills in preparation for Universal Credit.

47% of attendees had told the Company that they had a disability which the committee considered to be encouraging.

The committee welcomed the two independent living sessions that the Company delivered to young people aged between 16-25 years who were unemployed. The Company would continue to deliver these sessions when there was demand.

The Company held a number of digital drop-ins with tenants and leaseholders to build upon their existing knowledge and increase their confidence in accessing services online. The Company would continue to deliver these throughout 2015/16, particularly to those who needed to apply for Universal Credit.

The Moving Forward training programme for 2015/16 was launched in April 2015. The Company would continue to offer a range of scheduled and demand led courses to provide greater flexibility and accessibility to them.

B&Q were no longer able to commit to deliver courses in 2015/16. Gardening courses were now being delivered by the 4C's Community Project. This was a charitable organisation that was committed to local sustainable development and climate change community champions.

RESOLVED – That the Moving Forward Customer Training Programme 2014/15 and the programme for 2015/16 be noted.

9 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY – UPDATE

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

During the period, 80 involvement activities took place. Customers have been involved in involvement activities on over 800 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 and details of these were reported.

Details of Warwick Court Community Lounge, the Service Improvement Groups, performance against service standards and future activity were also reported.

The committee asked if the initiatives in Warwick Court Lounge would really make a difference. It was difficult to measure this but sustaining tenancies was one of the priorities in the five-year strategic plan and anything to enhance the reputation of the block could only help.

The Company was shortlisted in the following areas in the Northern round of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) awards for 2015 which took place on 24 April 2015: -

- ‘Excellence in Co-regulation’ – for the Company’s approach to co-regulation and how it meets the regulatory requirements
- ‘Excellence in tenant led scrutiny’ – for the scrutiny work that TALISMAN have undertaken across the Company to help improve service delivery.

The committee was informed that the Company won the award for ‘Excellence in Co-regulation’ and will now progress to the national awards which take place in July 2015.

RESOLVED – That the involvement activities undertaken in the quarter be noted.

10 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.

11 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the committee will be held on Thursday, 10 September 2015 at 10am in Room S21 at Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead.