

Minutes RCRA Meeting Monday 5th July 2010

The Orchard Day Centre Chertsey

Present: Joan Kendall, John Downing, Jenny Hill, Graham Windsor, David Wheeler, Angela Horsey, Jane Margetts, Brenda Cobban, Debbie Bates, Teresa Stone, Sylvia Walker, Lisa Essery.

Apologies: Norman Scott, Nicky Culley

Correspondence: None

Minutes of Previous Meeting: were accepted after correction for the date of the AGM from 14th to the 20th of July.

Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedures:

Jane introduced Anti-social Behaviour Officer, Angela Horsey to the meeting. Angela went through the existing document on the subject, which contained alterations and amendments for the RCRA to consider. The committee agreed these changes and then took away the document with a view to feeding back any further changes to Jane before the next RCRA meeting. Meanwhile several points were raised, one being from David, who asked if complaints can be made to the Council about anti-social behaviour on non-Council properties. Jane said they could, and they would be investigated but there was no remedy that the council could put in place. Such complaints should maybe be made to the police.

ARCH:

Jenny reported on the ARCH sub-meeting she attended. She said that they seemed to be getting themselves in order now and that they had requested to be involved in the responses the ARCH Exec gave to proposals from the Government.

SWIG

Jenny said that she had been to a Steer Committee meeting at which they decided that for the next forum they would have a speaker to talk about Equality and Diversity.

Garage Letting Policy:

Jane brought the Garage Lettings Policy to the meeting for discussion and suggestions for amendments by members.

Jane said garages were let via a waiting list, with council tenants being given priority over private residents, those living within the immediate area of a vacant garage, and the length of time spent on the waiting list was also taken into consideration. A discussion took place as to whether it was right for council tenants to be given priority over other residents and it was agreed that anyone on the waiting list whether they be a council tenant or private resident should be allocated the first available vacant garage in the vicinity of their home. Garages are quite profitable and therefore it was not in anyone's best interest to have empty garages.

Jane went on to say that a garage had been allocated to a person who the council later discovered had rent arrears. They had not been allowed to take the garage and therefore a new policy on garage lettings has been drawn up, which says, "the council will not allocate a garage to an applicant who has an outstanding debt with the housing department..."

At the last count there were 25 vacant garages. It was not always easy to let garages as some applicants wanted them in specific places, and they were often not there.

Graham said some garages were used for storage, and it was mentioned that others may be used for business purposes.

Sheltered Housing:

Jane spoke about holiday and other absences from sheltered housing accommodation. One example she gave was of a lady who was absent from her home for about six months. Part of the tenancy agreement signed by tenants states that the allocated flat must be the main and principal home. For health and safety reasons tenants should inform the sheltered housing manager when they are absent, and if they are away for more than four weeks and are claiming housing benefit they should inform the Housing Benefit Department at the Civic Offices. Normally after thirteen weeks absence from their home the benefit will be stopped and the tenant will be responsible for the payment of the full rent. This will, of course, depend on personal circumstances such as hospitalisation, or time spent in a care home. Such situations will need to be discussed with the Housing Benefit Department.

On returning home the tenant is requested to inform the manager, or if out of hours Safer Runnymede by calling them via phone or by pulling the cord in their flat. If possible a return date should also be given.

The committee agreed that the above should be included in additional notes for Sheltered Managers to mention to tenants at sign up.

A.O.B.

Jane reported that the Housing Revenue Account is ring-fenced, and that there is a balance of £3 million. As we had done in the past the Housing Fund will be making a temporary loan to the General Fund.