

RESIDENTS' FORUM – 14 FEBRUARY 2017

AGREED MINUTES

Members Present: Blossom Shakespeare (acting Chair); Sylvia Donaldson; Sonia Dobson; Lindsey Malcolm; Wendy Jackson; Rob Page; Eunice Sinyinza; Phil Williams.

Staff & Board Present: Steve Hitchins, Board Member; Bill Henderson, Housing Services Director; Karen Orr, Senior Resident Involvement Officer (minute taker).

Apologies: Martin Hughes; John Sadeghipoor; William Crilly; Lloyd Gale-Ward; John Rymell; Tonu Miah; Ruth Cadby; Geraldine Grant; Annette Morrison.

1. WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS

1.1. The chair welcomed all participants.

2. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 The minutes of 30 November were agreed as a true and correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING AND UPDATE ON ACTION POINTS

3.1 Lindsey requested that he be added to the list of Forum members interested in being involved in future procurement projects.

3.2 Under 6.4 from the previous minutes, Bill clarified that he was writing a report for a committee about the proposed new transfer system discussed at the last Forum and agreed in principle by members.

3.3 Noted that the Business Plan goes to the Board on 29 March and he expects the views of the last Forum to be reflected there.

3.4 **ACTION:** Agreed to request that Nadja Rajgeli, Procurement Manager adds Lindsey to the list of Forum members interested in future procurement projects.

ACTION: Agreed Karen to discuss with Sonia, the possibility of being involved in estate inspections.

4. NEWLON STANDARDS

4.1 Bill Henderson, presented the paper on Newlon Standards. They are generally simple with the key one being how quickly we aim to get back to people, the 2:10 standard. The Forum were asked whether they thought any needed improving. Rob asked if Newlon were really able to always give repairs appointments when residents call. Bill explained this can be done, except for some trades. In those cases the contractors will call the resident back to make an appointment. Rob suggested that the "always" in the current standards is loosened. Bill suggested that Newlon consult internally before agreeing this as loosening standards can make them less firm. Rob also suggested that if a contractor does not call the resident back to make an appointment then Newlon should. Bill agreed as Newlon has access to most contractor's databases.

- 4.2** Eunice suggested under 2.2 for Reliability that Newlon should add something about following up to check that they have delivered what they promised. Lindsey suggested under 2.3.2 Rent, we look into the possibility of being flexible, or varying how we notify residents who pay monthly about arrears. Bill agreed to speak to the Head of Income about this, although he had worries about loosening this standard. Bill noted that Newlon are planning to do more in the Customer Portal so that residents can get a faster response. In response, Lindsey said there should be some promotion of the Portal but Newlon would also have to be careful about not discriminating against residents who aren't able to go online. Bill said he would come back to the Forum about what services Newlon intend to put online. Newlon are mindful about providing services to residents who aren't able to go online.
- 4.3** Blossom asked about cases where contractors are liaising solely with residents, say they'll return to complete a repair but don't - whether Newlon would know? The question was based on her experience on the Complaints Panel where she has heard that residents call Newlon who have no knowledge the contractor promised to come back. She recommended that contractors should tell Newlon when they promise a resident that they will return to complete a repair. Bill agreed as Newlon is always responsible for every repair. Contractors should tell Newlon and largely they do, although sometimes they don't. Bill said he may suggest Mark Newstead to come to the Forum to discuss the best way to get feedback or find out satisfaction from residents about their repairs.
- 4.4** Phil asked about follow up for communal repairs. Bill noted that all should be done within three weeks or quicker if more urgent. Phil's experience was that if a communal repair is not done, he has to wait a month to report it again when he goes out with the estate inspectors. Bill reported that the statistics reported back to Newlon indicate that about 90% is being done. Phil agreed that communal repairs were a lot better now. Eunice asked if there
- 4.5** **ACTION:** Agreed to consult internally about the suggestion to reword 2.3.4 of the current standards to make it clearer that residents may not always get an appointment straight away when they call us about a repair.
ACTION: agreed to add something to 2.2 of the current standards, under Reliability – about following up to check that what has been promised has been delivered.
ACTION: agreed that Bill will speak to the Head of Income about the possibility of being flexible/varying how we notify residents about their arrears when they pay monthly.
ACTION: agreed that contractors should be required to inform Newlon when they promise a resident they will return to complete a repair.

5. RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

- 5.1** Karen consulted members on how they would like their strategy and planning meeting in May to be organised. Ideas they suggested included: having an away day; have nothing else on the agenda for that day; plan their agenda for the year ahead; Newlon staff also attending; as a starting point have an understanding of what is open to the Forum to discuss e.g. Residents' Services Committee's agenda for the year and other areas relating to residents, perhaps a series of workshops; look ahead five years for the Forum; look at the Forum's objectives and then agree what KPI's the Forum would like; whether new members should be invited; Wates visiting the Forum to discuss repairs during the year; an officer from Estates to visit the Forum and discuss their work and the difference between having Housing Officers; look at Newlon's Business Plan & the resident involvement survey results and respond to this. It was agreed to consult all members by the end of March on these ideas and ask if they had any others to contribute, then finalise the arrangements.

- 5.2** Bill was asked if there was any consultation about significant housing legislation coming up and a discussion followed. He noted that there had been a lot of coverage in the news about the difficulty of finding housing in London; there is the right to buy if that comes in; Value for Money and there are some measures coming in about that; the current Government wants Housing Associations to bring in different sorts of housing – rent and shared ownership. But not much coming in that affects existing tenants. Planning obligations are being put on private developers to provide social housing when they build. Blossom asked about residents in older damp and cold housing and whether they could be nominated to Newlon's new build. Bill replied that at the moment, the Local Authorities get 100% of nominations for new build. Newlon are trying to open things up so their residents can apply.
- 5.3** The results of the recent resident involvement survey were discussed. Of almost 800 invitations sent out, 166 replies were received. Karen noted that some replies had commented on groups/activities that they were not involved in. Lindsey wondered if some residents commented on for example, the Forum, because they did not know anything or enough about it. Also why those residents who strongly disagreed with some of the questions did so. Karen agreed both these could be explored further with residents who replied. He also suggested for future surveys there should be an option for questions such as the training one to say that it was not relevant or did not apply for them. Wendy asked why some residents had responded that they did not think there were good opportunities for them to get involved, was it because they did not know what was available. Karen replied that some residents did give that feedback so the "Get Involved" leaflet will be promoted again in various ways. Noted there was a typo for this question with "strongly agree" appearing twice, which will be corrected.
- 5.4** Two Forum members had recently resigned due to work commitments – Jon Hill and Liz Ellston. There will be a recruitment in the spring newsletter for both these and one other unfilled place. It will target the gaps that the Forum identified in their membership last year. The Forum then discussed the recommendations from the Resident Liaison Representative (RLR) review. Sonia asked if residents could be sent an alert when inspections are due to happen. Wendy pointed out that RLR's living on another estate may not pick up all issues. Bill responded that our estate inspectors would be happy to meet residents as a one off, and it would have to fit in with the current RLR.
- 5.5** Lindsey asked if there were enough RLR's to cover all estates. Bill replied that there were two issues, the timing, some practical issues and the cost. Ideally he would like all estates to be covered. However, we could not afford to cover all estates unless the voucher level was reduced. Lindsey also asked would there be any value in having RLRs during the defects period on new estates. Karen reported both RLR's and estate inspectors have both indicated they value the joint estate inspection system. Phil said that he generally had good experiences of being an RLR. One exception was when the contractor fixing a hole in a communal wall was not the same person who painted the repair. Bill thought this issue should be raised with Repairs.
- 5.6** **ACTION:** Agreed to consult all members about the ideas suggested at this Forum for organising the strategy and planning meeting, format and content by the end of March.
ACTION: Agreed to send out the Business Plan to members once this has been finalised.
ACTION: Agreed to send out information to members about two national resident involvement consultations currently being held.

ACTION: Agreed that future resident involvement surveys will offer a “not relevant option” for questions that may not be applicable to everyone.

ACTION: Agreed to follow up in more detail the reasons why some residents responded to survey questions about groups/activities they had not been involved in and why some strongly disagreed with some questions.

ACTION: Agreed for the purpose of RLR’s to define large and small estates.

ACTION: Agreed Karen to discuss with Sonia, the possibility of being involved in estate inspections as a one off.

ACTION: Agreed to raise the suggestion with Repairs that one person/operative should complete a communal repair and make good afterwards.

ACTION: Agreed to ask the Estates team to arrange an estate inspection for Hertford Road.

6. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS FOR THE FORUM

- 6.1** Bill asked for the Forum’s views about the performance information they receive for every meeting. Specifically, did they like it or not; was anything missing; was the format what they wanted; is some of the information too much. He highlighted the information about lifts which records the % which are safe – including lifts that have never moved. He asked for any suggestions. Noted that Lindsey had suggested at a previous Forum, to have a trend line from the previous year for number of homes that were improved under cyclical works.
- 6.2** Steve Hitchens informed the meeting that Residents Services Committee (RSC) tries to do an annual review of Newlon’s KPI’s before each new financial year. He wondered what the Forum thought about “outcome based” KPI’s rather than the current “turnstile” ones. These just count what’s happened rather than judge whether it was a good experience for residents. For example, if a repair was resolved the first time a contractor visited rather than after several visits (even if it was completed within target), then that would be a more positive outcome. He’d like to see more of these outcome based targets which would lead to continuous improvement. Bill noted that Newlon do outcome based reporting in the satisfaction reports. Rob thought there were too many KPI’s. Wendy asked if the years between cyclical decorations being carried out on Newlon homes changed, how would that be reflected in the KPI’s. Bill replied that is not currently reflected in the KPI’s. We have been restrained financially for the past couple of years and currently don’t decorate enough homes each year to complete all homes within a five year target. So a target could be progressed well but it may be an irrelevant target.
- 6.2** Rob asked why the Forum gets the rental income for community halls at each meeting, was this necessary. Bill suggested that the Head of Community Services visit the Forum once a year as an alternative – and give more detailed information. There was then a discussion about whether the % of homes with a valid fire risk assessment should come to the Forum. Steve said that this was an assurance for the Board. However, Bill asked if this was of interest to the Forum. Lindsey suggested the KPI’s could be brought to the Forum only when they are not achieving their targets (as in exception reporting). Steve said the Forum does not have to be bound by the KPI’s that the RSC chooses. By the time of the Forum’s strategy and planning meeting in May, the RSC will have decided on their KPI’s, including whether the targets were the right ones. Perhaps the Forum could use those as a starting point for their discussion about KPI’s.
- 6.3** Bill said that he would be suggesting to the Board. That they look at the key things that really matter, a limited number of KPI’s and concentrate on these, rather than look at many graphs. It may be better for them to get a detailed report from the officer responsible, say for repairs being followed up. Members agreed that the key KPI’s were rent; repairs;

customer contact & enforcement and not the safety & community hall hire ones. There could also be a button that says how we are doing overall.

- 6.4 ACTION:** agreed that the planning and strategy meeting in May will look at the Forum's objectives and then decide what KPI's they would like provided for their meetings. As a starting point they will consider the KPI's agreed by RSC for 2017/18. Their discussion to consider whether they think the targets are the right ones and which information they would like regularly and which just once a year.

7. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS, INCLUDING DEFECTS

- 7.1** Blossom said that she had asked for a Q buster call back the day before and got a message to say that it wasn't working. Bill had no reports of Q buster not working and agreed to check. Wendy thought that five hours, the longest time a resident waited for a call back in January 2017 was a long time. Bill noted that some days and times of year are very busy. Lindsey asked if it was possible to get the average waiting times for a call back for December 2016 and January 2017. Phil thought the number of defects that the satisfaction and performance was based on was small – only three. Bill noted that these were based just on the residents interviewed, not the number of defects. Agreed to request information on how many defects there were.

- 7.2 ACTION:** Agreed that Bill would check if the Q buster call back system had not been working recently.

ACTION: Agreed to provide the average waiting times for a call back for December 2016 and January 2017.

ACTION: Agreed to provide information on the number of defects.

8. FEEDBACK FROM & TO THE BOARD/RSC/SCRUTINY PANEL & AOB

- 8.1** Steve reported that he will take back some of the results from the Mystery Shopping report to RSC and that he was pleased with these as they showed an improvement. Steve also announced that he would soon be leaving the Board as he was coming to the end of the maximum nine years limit. Blossom thanked Steve for all his support on behalf of the Forum.

- 8.2** Blossom brought up any other business items. A member had requested to know why Newlon withhold their numbers when calling out. Especially as the Met Police had advised sheltered residents not to answer withheld numbers. Bill agreed Facilities will be asked to provide an answer. A member had received a Section 20 consultation letter about the proposed smoke alarms contract. This showed that Newlon were paying for consultants to advise them and this cost would be paid through the service charge. It was suggested that instead Newlon get advice from their peers, other Housing Associations. Another member had suggested that any repairs appointments that were rescheduled should be confirmed by email. They had requested this but had been told it was not possible. Bill confirmed it would be reasonable to expect an email confirmation.

- 8.3 ACTION:** Agreed that Steve will feedback the Mystery Shopping results to RSC

ACTION: To follow up the AOB items and report back.