



MINUTES OF THE RESIDENTS' FORUM MEETING
held on Monday 12th February 2007 at 6pm
at SOLON's offices, off Newfoundland Street, BS2 9AP

PRESENT:

Tenant members:

Diana Serra
Alison Crawford
John Klosinski
Mike Thornton
Karen Bailey
Nicky Ortiz

Staff members:

Paul Ville (Chief Executive)
Sarah Wilde (Customer Services Director)
Julie Sneddon Greaves (R.I.C.O)

Board members:

Margaret Richardson
Charlie Moss

ACTION:

1. APOLOGIES:

Apologies were received from Richard Varley, Debbie Collard, Valerie Swift, Barbara Tomlin, Miss Hussein, Miss Pocock, Lorna Obunike, Mike Wardman, Francis Digby, Maria Lopresti, Sophie Robinson.

2. TENANCY AGREEMENT CHANGES:

- 2.1 **SW** presented the document with the proposed changes, pointing out the key changes that had been made. She explained why new clauses have been added and clarified that the amendments affected new tenants only; current tenants are not expected to re-sign an agreement. An article for the next newsletter is being prepared to explain the key changes.
- 2.2 A resident asked if section 2x applied if SOLON intended to sell a property. **SW** stated that no tenancy agreement can be used to evict people if it's just to sell the premises and SOLON would not consider selling if people didn't want to move anyway.
- 2.3 It was asked what is SOLON doing to meet energy efficiency legislative requirements and Sarah Wilde explained that a database specifically designed to produce statistics to meet SAP ratings was being constructed which will enable

SW

SOLON to monitor and record relevant information to determine if new governmental guidelines are being adequately met.

3. BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL RESOURCE CENTRE AND INVOLVEMENT CARD:

- 3.1 This resource centre located at Waring House, Redcliffe Hill is dedicated to Bristol City Council tenants to promote positive action regarding housing issues affecting their residents. This provides an environment where people can safely explore their options, drawing on the experiences of others locally and nationally.
- 3.2 Julie has visited the centre and is in the process of negotiating a “pay as you go” scheme to be funded by SOLON that will enable access for residents to use the facilities for not only housing issues, but to also enhance career opportunities with relevant training schemes.
- 3.3 Volunteers working at the centre shall be making a presentation of what resources they feel able to offer during this pilot scheme at the next forum meeting in April, which is being held at Waring House in order to introduce the Forum to the venue.
- 3.4 It was agreed that the benefits for SOLON residents in accessing this service could be improved communication, understanding and support for tenants, to influence their landlord productively and be more constructively involved with decisions that are made.

4. CONTENTS INSURANCE:

- 4.1 SOLON is aware that Farris content insurance, the current recommendation, was in need of reviewing and Julie is awaiting information from the National Housing Federation in order to make comparisons.
- 4.2 Julie, (after discussions and research with the relevant bodies), can confirm that that the policy offered to Bristol City Council tenants will not be open to housing associations in the foreseeable future.
- 4.3 It was pointed out that people had policies significantly cheaper than FARR’s, however the forum recognises that the cheapest policies may not include flexible enough payment options to meet the needs of people on restricted incomes and will look to recommend only companies offering weekly payment schemes.
- 4.4 Julie shall research other companies, including Pearl to make cross-over comparisons in order to find the best value options for tenants to choose from.

JSG

5. FEEDBACK FROM DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM:

- 5.1 Julie circulated feedback notes from the Sovereign Development Consortium (SDC) meeting on 2nd November 2006 which she attended with Forum attendee Richard Varley.

SDC was formed from housing association tenants in order to generate new ideas in how different designs, materials and building methods could improve the quality of life in neighbourhoods.

After a presentation from architects and a development officer, people participated in workgroups that were made up of staff, residents and contractors to look at both the inside and the outside of homes.

The purpose of the meeting was to look at what was important to residents and the chair of SDC has been quoted as saying that *"It's been very interesting to see how residents from different housing associations view the design process. Our job is to get these views to converge, obviously within the framework of planning law, and government policy."*

ACTION:

- 5.2 The Forum would appreciate input from current tenants who will have invaluable contributions to make on these issues and invite any tenants wanting to participate in future meetings with SDC to contact Julie.

6. MAINTENANCE UPDATE AND FORUM DATE:

- 6.1 SOLON is committed to producing a new cyclical repairs programme.
- 6.2 Seddon has been contracted for another year to provide cyclical painting, because they have managed on the whole to produce high standards of work within set timetables.
- 6.3 M.D. Building Services have had 90-94% positive feedback from work carried out, managing to keep tenants happy, responding to telephone enquiries and maintaining a good standard of workmanship.

The contract has been extended for another 6 months to allow time for a board meeting to review costing and current performance of M.D., with a view to offering a 5 year contract for maintenance if it is proven that they are consistently providing best value for SOLON.

- 6.4 Contractors and SOLON maintenance staff will be present on Monday 5th March at St Paul's Family & Learning Centre.
- 6.5 Julie has produced an attractive, eye-catching A4 flyer, promoting the maintenance forum.
- 6.6 Different avenues for advertising the Maintenance Forum were discussed and along with mailing out tenants, it was suggested that housing officers and staff be given flyers to distribute when appropriate.
- 6.7 Residents are also encouraged to display notices in different languages in communal areas where they live in order to promote SOLON activities. Hopefully this could provide a focus of discussion and support between neighbours, who may feel detached from the goings-on and unable to participate for a variety of reasons, not least the inability to understand literature sent to them because of language or literacy issues.
- 6.8 Work orders for annual fire alarm checks were dated for the whole year, Sarah will clarify the timetable that has been agreed.

ALL

7. 10 MINUTE BREAK:

SW

8. EDITORIAL PANEL FOR NEWSLETTER:

- 8.1 The 13th March is the deadline for any articles for the next newsletter, which will be distributed to everyone in the 1st week of April along with annual rent statements.
- 8.2 The Forum recognises that evening meetings are far from ideal especially for single parents. Creating an editorial panel committed to convene in the morning it is hoped to start to address this issue and to widen the circle of forum users.
- 8.3 Julie will be facilitating all Forum meetings and it was suggested that perhaps Forum meetings could be held twice to include a day meeting as well as the current evening one.
- 8.4 It was also suggested that editorial meetings could include a section for general Forum issues to be discussed.

9. BOARD UPDATE:

Decisions made include:

- 9.1 Seven new houses in Barton Hill are to be developed in conjunction with Sovereign Housing Association.
- 9.2 Approved post and advertising to take place for a permanent maintenance surveyor.
- 9.3 Extension and renewal of contracts with Seddon and M.D. Building Services. – see **7. MAINTENANCE UPDATE**
- 9.4 Moorfields flats, Lawrence Hill: approved new development/extra costs.

10. DATES, VENUES AND FORUM DATES:

- 10.1 Julie distributed a list of future meeting dates that reads as follows:

Monday April 30th Bristol Tenants Resource Centre
4 Waring House
Redcliffe Hill
Redcliffe
BRISTOL
BS1 6TB

Monday July 23rd The Kings Arms Inn
Garston Street
Shepton Mallet
SOMERSET
BS4 5LN

Monday Sept 10th Leftbank Centre
128 Cheltenham Road
Montpelier
BRISTOL
BS6 5RW

Monday Nov 26th The Stackpool Room
The Southville Centre
Beauley Road
Southville
BRISTOL
BS3 1QG

It was agreed that the hot food is preferable to sandwiches and much better value than previous caterers. The Forum looks forward to more of the same quality of munching during 2007 and thanked Julie for using her initiative and discretion by making the necessary arrangements. It was agreed that it is preferable that when possible SOLON support local caterers and of course any tenants with the relevant health and safety certification be given the opportunity to provide refreshments for the Forum.

11. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING/MATTERS ARISING:

- 11.1 Julie shall feedback her findings from different home contents insurance providers at the next meeting.
- 11.2 Paul reported back that research into charities that possibly may fund a Support Worker post was not needed as the post is funded by SOLON.
- 11.3 Sarah reported that action had been taken to provide a mortis lock for John Klosinski.

12. URGENT BUSINESS AND ANY AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT TIME:

- 12.1 It was agreed that a tour of a selection of SOLON properties would go ahead in June.

13. CLOSE: With thanks to all.