



MINUTES OF RESIDENTS' FORUM MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 30TH APRIL 2007 (6PM), AT BRISTOL TENANTS RESOURCE CENTRE, 4 WARING HOUSE, REDCLIFFE HILL, BS1 6TB.

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<p>1. INTRODUCTIONS:</p> <p>1.1 9 tenants, 2 board, 2 staff members and 2 workers at Waring House introduced themselves. This list of attendees shall only be circulated to those members present. All Solon tenants are welcome to participate and are urged to talk with Julie Sneddon-Greaves, our RICO (Resident Involvement Communications Officer).</p>	
<p>2. APOLOGIES:</p> <p>2.1 10 apologies were received. Further details are as above.</p>	
<p>3. PRESENTATION FROM VOLUNTEERS WHO RUN BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL RESOURCE CENTRE AND QUESTIONS: <i>please see history in previous minutes</i></p> <p>3.1 We were given an overhead projector presentation welcome, by workers' at the resource centre. Originally an initiative run solely by volunteers and now with support from local authority, this project (based a short distance from the city centre), is able to offer free support and information in person or by phone, and provides a real voice for council tenants across Bristol.</p> <p>3.2 Open Mon-Fri between the hours of 10am to 4pm and run by enthusiastic tenant volunteers for the benefit of tenants all over the city, the resource centre directs people to the service most suitable to resolve their troubles. With full disabled access to all facilities, services available on site include internet access, computers, printers, phone, fax machine, photocopying, a small reference library on housing/community issues and most crucially the opportunity to chat over a hot drink with local people interested in assisting you.</p> <p>3.3 The Tenants' Resource Centre is the venue for most of the free courses offered by Bristol City Council's Tenant Participation Unit. This training has been especially developed for tenant and resident groups as part of a rolling program to equip residents with</p>	

	ACTION
<p>knowledge and skills that can be used to influence and improve housing situations.</p> <p>3.4 A variety of training and volunteering opportunities exist at the resource centre.</p> <p>3.5 The recently finished voluntary handbook was produced with the development of best practice in mind for any group to adapt and adopt when working with local authority guidelines alongside different housing providers. A present board member commented how impressive this document is, and felt a lot could be learned from its pages.</p> <p>3.6 It is possible an ID card could be used in future as a way of debiting SOLON for it's residents using this service, but for now it was decided that a system whereby SOLON tenants paid the nominal charges for services used and then presented the receipt for reimbursement was acceptable.</p> <p>4. FOOD BREAK 10 MINUTES:</p> <p>4.1 Tasty hot food catering to the needs of vegetarians and meat eaters alike was provided and very warmly received. There is always an opportunity at this time to talk informally and we were able to hear many stories of how a greasy disused take-away had been transformed into the clean, fresh and friendly resource centre of today.</p> <p>5. INSURANCE: <i>please see history in previous minutes</i></p> <p>5.1 Previous to this meeting our RICO had circulated a detailed comparison of both FARR and the National Housing Federation's relatively new policy named My Home.</p> <p>5.2 It was emphasised a number of times that SOLON needed to promote the take up of home contents insurance to tenants, not specifically to pass literature of companies to tenants as appears to be intention of staff members.</p> <p>5.3 There is considerable savings to be made with My Home, and it was acknowledged that although it was developed particularly to meet the needs of housing association tenants, it was a young policy and no information as to how well it would pay out was available.</p> <p>5.4 A member had been refused a FARR policy following a break-in; which are not the actions of a company SOLON would particularly want to support or promote.</p> <p>5.5 As there is no way of ascertaining the performance of FARR, it was suggested that an article be prepared for the newsletter asking tenants make contact with their experiences.</p> <p>5.6 Members expressed a desire to see tenants armed with the facts and that the comparison list could be included in a tenants welcome pack, with the emphasis on home-contents responsibility lying solely with residents as opposed to the promotion of a specific</p>	

ACTION

insurance company/policy. Forum members appreciate that although always on the lookout for best value services for tenants, it was not Solon's role to select or choose whom residents invested with and that residents ought to be empowered to request policy literature directly from insurance providers. However our customer services director did have to report that historically staff have found home-contents insurance was more likely to be taken up by new tenants if they were supplied with policy papers.

6. RESIDENTS FORUM TOUR:

- 6.1 Members expressed an interest in visiting a mixture of new and old properties. It was agreed to organise a tour in late June, on a Monday or Tuesday during the hours of 10am-1'ish, finishing with lunch.
- 6.2 It was suggested that Rackfield House in Bath be considered as part of the tour, but it was decided due to restriction of time that this property not be included this time and that perhaps could make for another trip at a later date if people expressed an interest.

7. WEBSITE – RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT:

- 7.1 SOLON recognise that greater development of the website is needed and although still under construction has already added an option that includes a resident involvement section, where forum minutes and notices are posted. So as to not compromise anybodies security, it was decided not to print members' names on minutes posted on the public website.

8. TAXI COMPANY:

- 8.1 Our RICO has had words with the cab company manager, Craig, after hearing that drivers had upset people, and more feedback has been requested to assess if it's worth staying with this particular service provider.
- 8.2 People spoke of their experiences with the drivers that are currently contracted to transport tenants to meetings. One member was sorely offended to hear that somebody had been left to struggle with bags whilst the driver did not leave his seat, another just this evening had been asked for directions to the venue by their driver, which was most disconcerting and left them angry and unsatisfied with the service.
- 8.3 A vote was taken to decide whether or not people felt the cab company needed changing. On this occasion it was decided that staying with the current company and improving how this worked was the preferred option, but on-going feedback will determine eventually if approaching a different company is the most appropriate form of action and our RICO shall keep this under review.
- 8.4 Frustration at the lack of action was expressed at this time by a member, who felt that Solon as a rule, generally spent too much time in meetings talking, with situations constantly under review

ACTION

and side-stepping any form of positive direct activity that would change current service providers or practice and policy.

9. EDITORIAL PANEL FOR NEWSLETTER:

9.1 As monies existed within the budget to support a professional editorial design team, a contract was put out to tender and was awarded to Kate and Karen (£2,800) after our RICO had considered a few offers.

9.2 A meeting has been set for Tuesday 8th May at 2pm for Karen and Kate to meet with those residents who have expressed an interest in being part of the editorial team.

10. TPAS TRAINING COURSES:

10.1 Please find a list attached with these minutes.

11. RUBBISH IN COMMUNAL AREAS:

11.1 As the member whom wished to address the forum on this subject was not present, this item was deferred to next meeting.

12. BOARD UPDATE:

12.1 Dudley Thomas has recently retired as a District Judge for the Magistrates Courts. He was previously a self- employed barrister and before this a solicitor for a number of years, who has just became a Solon Board Member.

13. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:

13.1 It was agreed that the minutes of the previous meeting were a true and accurate record of decisions.

14. URGENT BUSINESS (MAINTENANCE UPDATE) AND ANY AGENDA ITEMS FOR NEXT TIME:

14.1 It was agreed that maintenance issues as a general rule, are to be presented during the maintenance forum. The next meeting is to be held at the Create Centre on Monday 11th June at 6pm.

14.2 Rubbish in communal areas to be added to next agenda.

15. CLOSE:

15.1 With special thanks to the workers of Bristol's Tenant Resource Centre for their warm and friendly hospitality.