

Minutes of a meeting of the Tenant Forum held on Monday 13th November 2006 at Saffron Walden Council Offices

Present: Jill Bolvig-Hansen, George Chesham, Daphne Cornell, John Maddams, Paul Simpson, Dick Brown, Colin Gilbey, Joan Hoadley, Sam Sproul, Barbara Armstrong

Officers in attendance: Helen Joy, Rebecca Procter (Tenant Participation Officers); Liz Petrie (Housing Manager)

Guest speaker: Steve Currell (ex Superintendent), Essex Police

1. APOLOGIES

Richard Livings.

2. GUEST SPEAKER – STEVE CURRELL, ESSEX POLICE

Steve Currell explained that he is undertaking a consultation on Neighbourhood Policing on behalf of the Chief Constable, to include focus groups with all officers and as many appropriate external groups as possible. He will be reporting to the District Commander, Graham Stubbs. The new system for Neighbourhood Policing was implemented in July this year and incorporates the following: (1) Dedicated neighbourhood teams, which should be visible, accessible, and skilled. It is intended that the teams should be familiar with their area, and that staff are not moved from one post to another where possible to maintain continuity. (2) Evidential based policing, which is intelligence-led. This is essential in order to build up a picture of where crime happens, which will in turn affect the resources allocated. (3) Neighbourhood action panels, comprising members of the public who will help to decide on priorities.

A question and answer session then took place.

The Tenant Participation Officers advised that they had included in Housing News the new community police telephone numbers for the District.

Dick Brown: Why was crime prevention not mentioned? Also, it seems that there is never any police presence in Birchanger.

Steve Currell: Crime prevention is central to the ethos behind the new changes. Comments relating to absence of police presence are helpful information for the report to the Chief Constable.

George Chesham: Since the traffic police have left Newport there seems to be no police presence.

John Maddams: Four Acres has received visits from the Community Support Officers. Some youngsters recently had said they wished they could report an incident of criminal damage but did not know the number.

Steve Currell: There are improvements to be made in publicising the contact details for the new Community Support Officers. Suitable places for displaying these numbers would be village magazines, local shop windows, Parish newsletters and noticeboards, etc. The information is also available on a website, www.essex.police.uk. Any further suggestions for where this information should appear is welcomed. The TPOs confirmed that the tenants' newsletter had contained this information.

Jill Bolvig-Hansen: The information should be given in large print. There is a police station in Hatfield Heath, but never any police in the village.

Steve Currell: There is a training base at Hatfield Heath, but comments noted: rural areas are sparsely populated, so some areas may not get to see PCSOs. Currently there are 330 PCSOs, but over the next few years numbers will be increased to 628. The public wish to see police on the streets, not behind a desk. The number of Special Constables will also be increased. As the police will only place resources where the need is, and this need is assessed on reports received, Tenants should be encouraged to make suggestions from time to time that the police should visit certain areas.

Jill Bolvig-Hansen: How quickly can PCSOs request support from police officers in view of the limited opening times of local police stations?

Steve Currell: The Chief Constable is keen to increase opening times of stations, and will consider using volunteers. The information that comes in from PCSOs is the quickest ways in which intelligence is received. PCSOs also attend community meetings, which is recognised as very useful. It would be helpful to involve tenants in workshops on criminal matters relevant to their area.

Paul Simpson: What about the fact that PCSOs have limited powers?

Steve Currell: The PCSOs can report problem behaviour to their Neighbourhood Policing office, who may then issue an "ABC" (Acceptable Behaviour Contract).

Dick Brown: Until what time do PCSOs work?

Steve Currell: Until midnight.

Daphne Cornell: How involved are PCSOs with Neighbourhood Watch?

Steve Currell: This works well as it provides dedicated points of contact, but in some areas it is not as active as in others.

Jill Bolvig-Hansen: Could a Community Officer come to a Tenant Forum meeting as a guest speaker?

This was agreed for early 2007. Jill Bolvig-Hansen thanked Steve Currell for his informative talk.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

Agreed.

4. **MATTERS ARISING**

It was noted that Jill Bolvig-Hansen had attended Community Committee, that no letter had been received back from the Housing Minister, and that a meeting had been scheduled for 22nd November 2006 with Councillor Morson in order to discuss this prior to rent setting in the New Year.

It was noted that Richard Livings has not attended a meeting since January, for understandable reasons. He has remained in touch by giving apologies as necessary. However, in view of his prolonged absence, it was agreed that the Chair would write on behalf of the Forum to ask whether he wishes to continue as a representative.

5. **CO – OPTION OF TENANT REPRESENTATIVES**

It was noted that two prospective candidates for co-option were in attendance, and that co-option could take place at the January meeting following the rent setting meeting.

6. **TENANT PARTICIPATION**

Vicarage Mead, Thaxted - Helen Joy reported that work is well into Phase 2 and that most minor problems had been resolved.

The Green, Stoneyfield Drive, Stansted – Rebecca Procter is taking a report to the next South West Area Panel on 23rd November.

Upper Mill Field, Great Dunmow – the question of putting in additional parking was proving controversial as mixed responses had been received to a survey carried out by the TPOs. The issue of retaining green areas for children to play on near their homes was seen as very important by some residents. The Forum noted that this question keeps arising across the District, and agreed to include this on a future agenda, with a view to reporting the views of the Forum to the Community Committee.

The Croat, Gaces Acre, Newport – Helen Joy asked George Chesham for comments on a report she had received of litter-dropping and nuisance behaviour by children from the school. George confirmed that there was little trouble, but that rubbish from food bought at lunch time was being left. It was agreed that the TPOs would write to the school.

7. **PERFORMANCE INDICATORS**

Homelessness – figures from 01.0806 to 31.10.06

49 presented as homeless

11 rejected

37 accepted (of which 22 are Lebanese evacuees)

Repairs – figures for August

The Customer Satisfaction Survey shows 99% satisfaction (327 very pleased, 51 pleased in part, 3 not pleased)

8. LOCAL ISSUES

Paul Simpson: regarding the drains at Wagon Mead, Helen Joy has liaised with the contractors about narrowing the drains and installing a finished edge to prevent stones going onto the grass. The situation with wheelie bins now seems to have been resolved. The survey recently conducted by an outside firm has been found to be quite intrusive by some people, and that they are concerned about confidentiality. Liz Petrie explained that this is one which is required to be sent out by central Government every 4 years.

John Maddams: regarding the cutting back of the overhanging trees, one of the residents was still not satisfied that they had been taken back far enough. Trees overhanging from RA Butler School were still a problem. The TPOs would speak to Barry Stansfield about this. The grass is very rutted at the corners and the street light is again in danger of being knocked over. The question of putting in more yellow lines has gone through the Town Council to Highways. The current double glazing work has given rise to some problems for residents, and the TPOs have spoken to Russell Goodey about this. It has been agreed with the contractors that they should not come later than 5pm. John also reported communication problems with UDC failing to get letters out in time, which has already been reported to the TPOs.

Daphne Cornell: Essex County Council are still considering switching off street lights at night between 1am to 5 am. The police are not objecting, but many people have written to Essex to express their concern – a formal consultation has not taken place.

Dick Brown: Tenants are asking why they have got to empty their garages on the car park, as they use them for storage. Liz Petrie advised that first priority is given to storage of vehicles for tenants, then homeowners. Currently Suzanna Clarke and Roz Millership are reviewing the issue of garages in order to report to Community Committee. Some sites may be developed, but there is no decision yet.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Jill Bolvig-Hansen wished to raise the question of the cost of biodegradable bags with Community Committee, and asked for the support of other Tenant Representatives. It was agreed that this point would be taken up with Community Committee.

It was agreed that information from tenants regarding children's play areas would be collated with a view to an item appearing in the next Newsletter.

It was noted that Fiona Gardiner (Anti-Social Behaviour Officer) is to be guest speaker at the March Tenant Forum meeting.

10. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 16th January at 2.00 pm – Committee Room (Rent Setting meeting)
Monday 29th November at 2.00 pm – Chairman's Office