

**Minutes of the Tenant Forum Meeting
Held in the Committee Room at the Saffron Walden Council Offices
On Monday 01 October 2007 at 14:00**

Present: Helen Joy – Tenant Participation Officer
Ian Brown – Tenant Participation Officers
Daphne Cornell – Tenant Forum (Chair)
George Chesham – Tenant Forum
Paul Simpson – Tenant Forum
Joan Hoadley – Tenant Forum
John Maddams – Tenant Forum
Colin Gilbey – Tenant Forum (Leaseholder representative)
Russell Goodey – Housing Repairs Manager UDC
Bill Golbourn – Senior Surveyor UDC
Ken Morrison – Swan Windows
Paul Jarvis – Norfolk Frames

Apologies: Sam Sproul
Barbara Armstrong

1. Guest Speaker Presentations

RG – Introduced Swan Windows and Norfolk Frames, followed by an overview of the new method adopted by UDC for procurement and Contractor selection. Essentially all UDC contracts are advertised in the European Journal allowing a broad spectrum of service providers to Tender for the work. Any would-be Contractor has to be a member of Construction Line who are an independent vetting agency who carry out a thorough fitness test of all members prior to accreditation, including Health & Safety checks, existing client satisfaction checks, published company policy checks and all the usual confirmations necessary to become a suitable member of the scheme.

UDC have joined forces, along with six other Local Authorities, with Braintree District Council who lead this process of submitting contracts for Tender.

In combination their actual short list selection process involves a lengthy and thorough panel interview where a potential Contractor is placed under a spotlight, having their procedures, documentation, transport, staffing, training, Environmental and Waste policies, Health & Safety policies, indeed every aspect of their company is well and truly scrutinised.

Once a successful candidate has been selected UDC enter into a three year framework agreement which essentially locks both parties into a three year fixed price contract, with the usual performance related “get out” clauses.

Russell gave the assurance that although both Swan and Norfolk Windows had provided services to UDC for many years, they had been subjected to this new vigorous vetting and selection procedure.

Forum members were invited to attend the next selection panel with a view to maybe becoming a more permanent contributor to these panels.

BG – Clarified that although UDC has a three year contract with the two window contractors there are in addition annual service contracts, which would normally run from April to March and are performance volume related. The current yearly contracts did not commence until July, however, the contractors have agreed to apply more resources in an attempt to ensure an entire year's volume of work is completed.

Norfolk frames cover the North of the region, down to Great Dunmow, whilst Swan windows cover South of the district, from Dunmow downwards.

Whilst the 2008 programme is not out yet the current programme allowed for 200 properties to be completed, split 50/50 north and south region. The contractors are in contact with the tenants to arrange direct access as the work is carried out internally and thus does not require scaffolding.

Norfolk commenced work in Dunmow and have completed c. 25 units, whilst Swan commenced in Takeley and have likewise completed c. 20 units.

DC – Queried whether this new method of selecting contractors and entering into a three year contact would indeed prove a better value judgement.

RG – Agreed that it may need a review at the end of the first three year contract.

KM - Confirmed that Swan use their own surveyors. The company has 35 years experience of the industry, specialising in commercial work, as opposed to domestic work, and have thus evolved systems specifically to meet that sector's requirements, which include adherence to specific Health & Safety, Environmental and Local Authority related legislation.

Ken went on to explain how all the redundant PVC frames were fully stripped and recycled at a bespoke recycling facility.

PJ – Norfolk have been in the industry for 22 years, starting life in domestic they too made the transition into dedicated Local Authority contracts six years ago, creating specific expertise in this type of work to suit the needs of that sector.

Norfolk worked with Braintree District Council to formulate the framework agreement and now has a depot in Braintree, staffed by local people, to better serve the area.

Paul went onto explain that they use a Lead free PVC profile in the manufacture of their windows and do in fact use the same bespoke recycling facility as Swan.

DC – Raised the fact that almost every house has different size windows and thus every installation must be bespoke, both contractors confirmed that this was indeed the case and that it was therefore impossible to mass produce units.

CG – Highlighted a problem for elderly and infirmed in using sliding sash windows in certain situations, such as over sinks and baths, and questioned if it would be possible to change the style to make their use more practical for the application.

The contractors suggested the use of a modern “mock” sash design that allows for a combined opening/sliding vent with various handle placement options.

Bill pointed out that the windows do have trickle vents that allow a flow of air without the need to open the window.

GC – Requested the opening handle on a window at Gaces Acre be swapped to the opposing hand as it was almost impossible to use in its current hand, BG to inspect.

George went on to question the expected life of the PVD windows (mean time before failure - mtbf). The contractors explained that current PVC is significantly more stable than its predecessors, although it will eventually discolour with a pinkish hue, and that they are expected to maintain a serviceable life of up to 30 years. The windows being installed come with a 10 year frame warranty and a 12 year warranty on locks and hinges.

RG – Advised Forum that within the next three to four months the heating and electrical contracts will be open for review and contractor selection, inviting Forum members to attend those selection panels.

DC – Thanked guests for an interesting and informative presentation.

Guests left meeting to allow Forum business to continue.

2. Previous Minutes

Two sets of previous minutes were adopted, seconded and approved as an accurate record of those events.

3a Matters Arising from meeting on 09 July

DC – Attended the Community Committee, reporting that UDC are to raise their objection, in combination with other local authorities to the current positive rent payment policy with HMG. Daphne went on to make the comment that this money could be spent on Housing in the district and that our Councillors are likewise pressing for a reversal of this policy.

The Internet link for anyone wishing to add their name to the petition seeking a reversal to this Government policy can be found at www.

3b Matters Arising from meeting on 20 August

In light of the imminent Forum elections the two individuals who showed positive interest in the work of the Forum at the Dunmow road show are to be followed up and encouraged to seek nomination for election.

The next pre election road show is scheduled for Thursday 04 October at Thaxted Day Centre, invitations have been sent.

Date of next meeting – Thursday 17 January 2008, Venue to be confirmed.

4 Community Issues

PS – The waste removal operatives are refusing to collect bins of mixed waste from Wagon Mead. Despite numerous attempts to educate tenants at the site there still is an element who are refusing to heed the directions and segregate their waste before placing in the bins.

IB – Suggested he construct, once again, a letter directed at all tenants of Wagon Mead re-confirming the rules for segregation and the need to adhere to the scheme, he confirmed that more recycling bins were on order for Wagon Mead, in particular brown bins for food waste.

As it is known that certain residents are Polish it was suggested that a suitable translation of the letter be targeted at those households.

PS – Advised that the untaxed vehicle was still parked at Wagon Mead, IB to seek guidance on next steps to have it removed.

PS – Requested Ian include a reminder over grass cutting responsibilities in his letter to the residents, Ian is to seek clarification of Leaseholder responsibility before compiling that letter.

DC – Made the observation that UDC seemed too lenient on Tenants who flout the rules and their responsibilities under their tenancy agreements, Daphne urged UDC to toughen up its response to these culprits.

IB – Raised the issue of needing to define ultimate sanctions.

CG – As the Leaseholder representative Colin asked how he could become better known to the District Leaseholders, Helen is to ask the UDC Leaseholder Officer to construct a letter to the leaseholders advising them of Colin's contact details.

5. Housing Repairs Performance Indicators

MONTH	SATISFACTION %	YES	IN PART	NO
JUNE	99.00	250	52	2
JULY	97.89	255	70	7
AUGUST	99.76	324	85	1

6. A.O.B.

DC – There is an element of scepticism surrounding Choice Based Lettings and the need for UDC to join the scheme.

Meeting closed at 15:30

Date of next meeting – Friday 07 December 2007, time and venue to be confirmed.