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 **Summary of Resident Panel meeting held on August 6 2020 via Zoom**

**Residents Present:** Liam, Dot, Logan, Janice, Fenan, Chris, James

**Staff/Board:** Susan French (CEO) (SF), Vivienne Astall (Interim Operations Director) (VA)

Nancy Korman (Board member) (NK), Barbara Sidnell (Board member) (BS)

Dean McGlynn (Project Manager) (DMc)

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|  | **Welcome and Introductions**Apologies were received from Steve. VA, who is covering for Pam Sedgwick’s absence, was welcomed to her first panel meeting. |
|  | **Green Doctors Service**The panel heard that so far, the Green Doctors service had visited or called 15 residents. The service has helped residents save money so far by helping them switch energy providers and securing the Warmer Homes Discount. It was agreed to feature this in the next newsletter and to continue to promote as the colder months come closer. |
|  | **BHA Operations Update + COVID-19 response**The panel heard an update on BHA’s service during and after lockdown. Currently BHA remain working from the home, with the exception of doing work that cannot be done remotely, such as printing/scanning/posting. Repairs and caretaking staff, such as Steve and Spencer, have remained on-site through the duration of the outbreak. VA added that staff have been proactively calling many residents since the outbreak to check in on them to ensure they are safe and assess whether they need any support or signposting to any other services. BHA have begun to wind down this service but will continue to call the residents that still wish to be called regularly.BHA are now carrying out non-emergency and urgent repairs and Westbourne have returned to carry out void works. BHA’s surveyors are now visiting homes and communal areas to assess works – Joe Johnson has been employed as a temporary surveyor to help deal with the backlog of repairs issues.VA detailed the impact that the outbreak has had on BHA’s rent collection. The amount of Universal Credit claims from residents has greatly increased. BHA continue to offer welfare and benefits advice for any resident that requires it. The panel agreed that it would be good to understand how BHA can support residents if the predicted recession affects BHA residents’ ability to pay rent.The panel expressed thanks to the staff for working through challenging circumstances, especially to Spencer and Steve for keeping the service going throughout the outbreak. |
|  | **The Barnsbury Home Standard**The panel discussed the draft Barnsbury Home Standard that will set the standard for BHA homes and what residents should expect when they rent a home from BHA.The panel asked about what BHA will do to fix damp properties. SF informed them that BHA are investing in a new asset management database so BHA can better track long term issues such as damp. SF added that BHA are looking to restart preventative works such as gutter clearances as soon as possible as Autumn approaches. The panel discussed the need for reasonable timeframes for BHA to complete all the works that they set out the standard. This will be important to set resident expectations.The panel discussed Barnsbury Street’s upcoming refurbishment. Residents also discussed the potential improvements to their energy efficiency to improve the heating costs and environmental impact. The panel also discussed improving back doors in terms of accessibility and security. SF confirmed this would be included in the planned refurbishment works. Lastly the panel suggested looking to possibly include installing insulation for heat and sound and also air conditioning in homes. They also suggested adding a glossary to explain ambiguous terms and clarify what terms such as “periodically” mean. |
|  | **Digital Inclusion Project**DM discussed a proposed project on digital inclusion for BHA residents. BHA’s survey results last year indicated that there may be an issue of loneliness/isolation with BHA’s older residents – this can only have been made worse during lockdown.DM is looking into a project to try and get older residents online and using digital tools to stay connected to friends, family and the wider community. Other social landlords have carried out projects such as communal Wi-Fi, tablets for residents and befriending.The panel supported this project. The panel added that BHA should take guidance on befriending services and safeguarding issues and look to ensure staff are trained and have suitable support in place to ensure their safety and the safety of residents. |
|  | **BHA Hardship fund**DM introduced BHA’s new policy and procedure for funding for residents most in need. This has been introduced already to allow staff to start helping residents with applications. The purpose of this fund is to help residents pay costs for things such as utility bills and can be used to fund white goods too.The panel approved BHA’s approach to this fund. They added that the bursary scheme should also be promoted to residents as they may be looking to retrain and gain additional qualifications if they lose their job due to the pandemic. |
|  | **Next meeting – October 2020**The panel agreed to hear updates on BHA’s service and the effects of COVID-19. The panel were also keen to hear an update on how BHA are preparing for winter in case of a second spike of the virus. SF added that the panel will also hear an update on a community development approach from Take Stock Exchange. SF and Liam agreed that a resident steering group for the garages project on Morland Mews would be worthwhile and they will arrange to discuss this and set it up. |