



Summary of Resident Panel meeting held on 9th February 2023 at Colebrooke Place and Teams

Residents Present: Janice, Rachel, Chris, Helen

Staff/Board: Nancy Korman (NK) Susan French (SF) Patrick Penny-Annang (PPA),
Vivienne Astall (VA)

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies

No Apologies were received.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record of the previous meeting held on Nov 10th 2022.

3. Corporate Plan 2023-2026

SF gave an update on the corporate plan which shows the values of BHA, objectives for the coming years and how BHA plan to deliver.

Chris mentioned the plan looks good but questioned how BHA would make this a reality, so it is a 'living breathing document'.

SF replied there are details in the plan which specify how BHA will achieve this and BHA's new set of performance indicators are linked to the plan.

SF added BHA staff will be asked to think about their role and how they can support the plan to be successful.

Chris also mentioned it could be tricky in some cases to have 'two hats on' when it comes to connecting to residents and enforcing policies.

Janice and Rachel mentioned the difficulty of connecting to 'hard-to-reach tenants'.

Chris suggested the term can be alienating, the panel agreed.

Patrick added a term like 'disengaged' is more inclusive.

4. Retrofit Update

Susan updated the panel on a bid for The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) this will improve the EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) of 63 homes on Morland Mews. This includes small and bigger measures like including loft insulation to installing solar panels.

Rachel asked if this is part of gas boilers being phased out and whether source heat pumps will be introduced.

SF replied there are issues with air source heat pumps. BHA will utilise the fabric first approach where the focus is on making the building as warm as possible and minimising heat loss.

SF added BHA is working on a planning application for a Barnsbury Street flat. This will give BHA an idea of what can be done in older buildings. A planning application will be sent in April/May 2023.

SF will provide an update on this in the next meeting.

5. Repair responsibilities

SF informed the panel BHA have set out Repair responsibilities for tenants and BHA, this is about making it clear to tenants what they repair they are responsible for.

There is currently a grey area and BHA often do more than other Housing Associations especially if a tenant is persistent.

Rachel suggested it should be clear in the document what happens if the repair is due to external issues like a flood, this should be BHA's responsibility.

SF answered this would be seen as BHA's responsibility.

NK added there is no mention of BHA's duty of providing a repair and maintenance service. And asked about giving tenants the choice of design with kitchen and bathroom upgrades.

SF added tenants are given options, but it can be difficult to cater to requests because it can delay work.

When suitable BHA would allow tenants to buy items to be installed by contractors.

6. Comparing Tenant services.

VA informed the panel about the Tenant Support & Wellbeing Service (TSWS). BHA have offered the service for the last two years, although TSWS offer a wide range of support and information and have been widely promoted a few residents have used it.

'Pocket-Power' is an alternative service focused on reducing bills and saving money.

VA asked the panel what service they prefer and which one would benefit tenants most.

NK suggested that tenants may be independent and find their own support or forget about support services.

Rachel added there is different support out there like the AGE UK Islington helpline and some may see it as another free service.

NK suggested a focus group to ask a wide range of tenants what they prefer.

Chris added this service will benefit everyone who is looking to save money not just tenants that are struggling with money.

VA agreed she will circulate the websites to give the panel more time to look at them.

7. Rent Arrears Policy

VA presented a summary of the updated Rent Arrears policy, this was last reviewed three years ago.

VA informed the panel about new sections on universal credit and the cost of living crisis.

Helen suggested could BHA promote a direct phone number for support.

VA replied when tenants call the mainline they have the option to be directed to the relevant department.

8. Lettings Policy

VA presented a summary of the Lettings policy.

BHA keep 50% of one-bedroom voids, and the other 50% is allocated to the council. We often don't fill the 50% quota for one bedroom.

The goal is to make bedsits available which could go to key workers.

BHA are committed to giving charity Women's Aid one property a year and also a property inspection before a mutual exchange is finalised.

9. Downsizing incentive scheme

VA informed the panel on the scheme, it has been underused in recent years.

Chris asked if a tenant wanted to move from a 4 bedroom to a 2 bed would it be an option for them?

VA replied we would allow tenants to occupy one bedroom when suitable.

NK suggested showing how much your rent could decrease if you downsize could be a good incentive.

Janice asked if moving to a new property affects your tenancy.

Susan confirmed moving will not affect your initial tenancy.

Helen suggested introducing new tenants into the new neighbourhood to assure the tenant.

Other issues from residents

Janice mentioned residents should not suffer living in their home and what BHA can do to support tenants.

VA replied where ASB is related to noise it can be easier to combat compared to complex cases.

Topics for the next meeting

- King Charles's Coronation event
- Cost of living update
- Resident Involvement – Bringing tenants in from the beginning.

The next resident panel meeting will be held in April.

Minutes are published on BHA's website:

<https://barnsbury.org/get-involved/resident-panel/>

For information on the panel please contact Patrick Penny-Annang
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