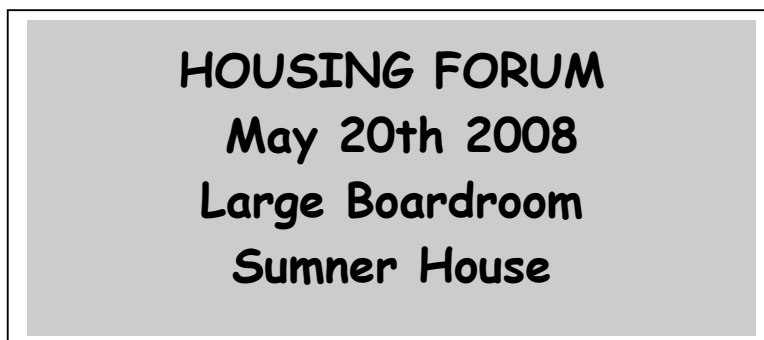


Residents Present:

John Harwood
Phyllis Whiteside
Don Smith
Sandra Wade
Frank McKenna (Chair)
Paul Fieldsend
Tom Moss
Joan Moss
Tony Webster



Paul Attwood, Carole Park, Mr & Mrs Cookson, Beryl Cotton, Mavis Bennett, David Gilson, Jean O'Neill & Christine Latus

Supported by: Steve O'Hagan, Rachel Page, Sarah Barnes & Linda Alcock

Apologies: Edna Counce, Trish Henshaw, Freda Smith, Vikki Fazekas, Bernie Keenan & Gary Melia

Item		Action	
1.	Notes from the Forum - 26.02.08	<p>Frank checked that all had a set of papers for the meeting and had taken the opportunity to have a look at the contents beforehand</p> <p>The enclosed notes of the February 26th meeting were agreed as a true record after Frank talked through them and particular attention was drawn to a number of matters: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At item 3 - Steve advised that a seminar programme would be put together from September onwards later in the year when the Annual Board Meeting programme was confirmed. The programme would include some sessions on matters relating to financial inclusion for reasons touched on under items 5 & 6 on the agenda• Frank drew attention to item 4 in the notes indicating that points raised by Tony Webster after the last meeting and included in the notes had resulted in further consideration of performance issues by the NPHA Board. He encouraged those present to note that issues can be raised with staff at any time. David Gilson asked for clarification of the meaning of "BME" i.e. Black & Minority Ethnic and Rachel remarked that we should avoid the	

		<p>use of initials and abbreviations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Linda referred to item 5 and explained that in the local heat for Southern Division Lancashire Constabulary's "Problem Orientated Partnerships" awards NPHA won we will now go on to the regional heat representing The Southern Division Lancashire Constabulary and NPHA. <p>The meeting noted the deserved recognition for NPHA work in this service area.</p>	
2	<p>NPHA performance report</p>	<p>Sarah went through the performance review report relating to April 2007 to March 2008 including some additional information to the report sent with the papers for the meeting.</p> <p>Sarah explained that she had produced the update tabled as it helped to amplify a positive trend over nearly all the performance measures with the exception of completion of emergency repairs that showed a very slight downward trend (0.3%) over the twelve month period.</p> <p>Paul Fieldsend asked a question about procedures relating to the reporting of allegedly abandoned properties and Rachel advised this would be dealt with outside the meeting after a short explanation of some of the possible complications.</p> <p>Don made the point - supported by Frank - that it was very that people followed established procedures when dealing with individual matters in their neighbourhood.</p> <p>Sarah was advised that the meeting was happy with the report content AND format after she asked if this was the case. Frank thanked Sarah for the report and she left the meeting soon after.</p>	

3	Managing Directors Report	<p>Steve passed on apologies from both Bernie and Gary who could not make it to the meeting. He circulated a draft of Bernie's Managing Director Report to the NPHA Board on June 2nd and invited the meeting to read it and ask any questions.</p> <p>Steve drew attention to the work being done to achieve independent accreditation of NPHA Sheltered Housing Services and the expansion of the Estate Caretaking Service.</p> <p>He also pointed out that people were welcome to raise issues relating to the content of the report at any time and as indicated at item 1 this would be reported to the Board if appropriate.</p>	
4	Rent Arrears Strategy	<p>Rachel circulated the draft Rent Arrears Strategy due to be presented to the NPHA Board on June 2nd and talked through the document in some detail.</p> <p>This included an analysis of arrears by property type, by the age of the tenants and by area as well as a number of other factors.</p> <p>Attention was also drawn to the priorities in the Action Plan for 2008, including: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With regard to prevention-measures to better identify tenants vulnerable to falling into debt • Continuing the successful work with Court User groups to speed up legal processes • Developing the "campaign" approach to raising the profile of rent arrears issues • Persisting with the effective targeting of low-level arrears to ensure timely action is taken • Developing specialist advice in the context of multiple debt problems and customers from abroad <p>A lively discussion that a number of people contributed to ensued.</p>	

Mavis and Carole noted the reference to the improved Rent Arrears position at Wade Hall. Tony remarked that the number of people in arrears of over £1,000 had increased and this led Rachel to emphasise the importance of early intervention.

Frank suggested that most owing in excess of £1,000 would be the subject of orders from court that would result in a slow reduction in debt, hence they would be slow to reduce the debt to below £1,000 and would be swelling these figures. Rachel advised that Frank was right.

She also advised that NPHA could not easily vary court orders when Frank asked if those whose financial circumstances improved could be obliged to reduce their debt more quickly.

Following a query from Dave as to the contribution made to arrears by Housing Benefit (HB) problems Rachel advised that this is often a factor. Notwithstanding Don's concern about the quality of service offered by South Ribble Borough Council on HB Rachel advised that South Ribble were relatively good when compared with others.

Having talked about linkage between two strategies earlier Rachel pointed out that an important part of the Welfare Rights Manager's role was developing and applying expertise to assist tenants to appeal against poor HB decisions effectively.

Referring to page 17 of the strategy Paul Fieldsend asked about the importance of early serving of notices relating to arrears in the process overall. Rachel agreed this was important although she drew attention to the length of time it can take the courts to do their bit in getting cases before a Judge.

In response to Carole, Rachel confirmed that influence is being exercised via various Court User groups to accelerate this part of the process.

		<p>Frank referred to the importance and value of investing time in networking with appropriate court officials to get things moving.</p> <p>Dave remarked on the value of good liaison with HB departments and Don re-emphasised the importance of early intervention.</p> <p>This led Rachel to emphasise the importance of the visits to new tenants about six weeks after their tenancies commenced to address any emerging problems with HB etc. that formed a part of the strategy.</p> <p>Frank checked that everybody was happy to endorse the thrust of the Rent Arrears Strategy and moved the meeting on to the next item</p>	
5	<p>Welfare Rights Strategy</p>	<p>Rachel advised that she would be making just a few points relating to the strategy document enclosed with the papers partly because it was drafted by the Welfare Rights Manager - Franco Barnowski.</p> <p>Rachel indicated that the customer satisfaction rate with the service provided by Franco was over 92% and advised that priorities within the strategy include more work on addressing the financial inclusion agenda including development of a basic bank account suitable for social housing tenants who don't currently have bank accounts.</p> <p>Another lively discussion ensued when Rachel spoke of Franco's success with attendance Allowance claims especially for older people.</p> <p>Phyllis mentioned that older people are sometimes reluctant to claim benefits due to what Frank described as mis-placed "pride". Beryl echoed the view from Phyllis based on experience working in Sheltered Housing whilst Frank emphasised that such benefits are entitlements that people should claim and obtain.</p> <p>Christine, Don & Paul also participated in the discussion with the general tone being that</p>	

		<p>everything practicable should be done to encourage claims from NPHA tenants.</p> <p>In response to a query from Phyllis about Franco using Sheltered Housing Schemes to encourage benefits take-up Rachel advised this was still an important area of work within the strategy as was the development of work with younger people at schemes such as The Bridge and Foundations.</p> <p>Frank checked there were no more questions or comments before thanking Rachel for presenting the paper and inviting Steve to present the next item.</p>	
6	Community Investment Strategy	<p>Steve apologised that the version of the strategy that had been sent out with the papers for the meeting was missing some pages.</p> <p>He drew peoples' attention to the full strategy and the two-page summary circulated. The key strands of the strategy were described as falling within three main themes; Involving Customers in Core Business Decisions, Developing the Community Investment Role and Looking to Future Developments in the Housing Sector.</p> <p>With regard to these themes Steve reminded people that many of those present had been involved in developing the thinking particularly at the seminar in February.</p> <p>There were a couple of questions.</p> <p>Carole asked about the level of interest in the Youth Work Qualification being provided in partnership with Runshaw College. Steve advised that a recent introductory session was well attended and there was further interest to be investigated as a result.</p> <p>Dave asked about the inclusion of more music based community engagement work like that provided at Sumner House by the Liverpool Samba School some time back. Steve advised that such</p>	

		<p>work was being incorporated into the arts inclusion strategy.</p> <p>Frank thanked Steve and invited Rachel to present the next item.</p>	
7	Charitable Status Allocations	<p>Rachel reminded people that it was important to monitor allocation of properties periodically to ensure that the majority of people housed could be classed as "charitable beneficiaries". This was to ensure NPHA was in no danger of losing it's Charitable status that results in many millions of pounds saved through taxation concessions being available.</p> <p>The report circulated with the papers indicated that in the twelve months to March 31st 2008 over 98% of those allocated NPHA properties could be classified as "charitable beneficiaries".</p> <p>In answer to a question Rachel advised that a loss of charitable status would be very bad news financially for NPHA.</p> <p>Don expressed concern that working applicants could be discriminated against by the approach. He was reassured that charitable status had no such effect since, for example, many working people on lower incomes found themselves in housing need through repossession of their homes.</p>	
8	Anti-Social Behaviour Performance Report & Strategy	<p>Linda explained that she would go through some of the headlines from the strategy and performance report that had been circulated with papers.</p> <p>She was mindful that a good number of those present had attended the most recent and previous seminars on the subject and apologised if there was some repetition to be endured.</p> <p>Headlines included: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Savings made through NPHA staff presenting cases in court rather than paying for legal representation 	

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some perpetrators of ASB had received appropriate custodial prison sentences • The learning curve for staff had been a steep one • There had been more notices of seeking possession issued in the last year than in previous but no evictions • The Tenancy Enforcement Team attended many problem-solving meetings with the police and other partners • Out of hours working by the team had been a great success • Congratulations on the NPHA approach had been forthcoming from the police • During the year 53 items concerning the work of the tem had appeared in the local or specialist press • If NPHA were to go forward with issuing parenting orders staff training would be important, and • Work with local schools had been well received <p>Christine was able to confirm this last point as her daughter works in a school that had benefited and Phyllis wondered about extending this work to different areas.</p> <p>Linda confirmed this was the intention and specifically mentioned Priory Girls School in Penwortham.</p> <p>Tony asked about work to introduce a Neighbourhood Agreement at Wade Hall that he had picked up reference to at local meetings. Linda confirmed that following discussion of an early draft some time ago this issue was being looked at again soon.</p>	
9	Date, Time & Venue for next meeting	Tuesday 5 th August 2008, 6pm Boardroom, Sumner House	