

## **Resident Scrutiny Panel – 8 September 2011**

**Attendance list:** Arthur Diggle (AD), Nick Fry (NF) Dorothy Giacomini (DG), Kerry Law (Chair), Gina Ravens (GR), Gerry Webb (GW), Ian Willmer (IW)

**Present list:** Martyn Baker - Customer Accounts Manager, Westlea (MB), Ashling Jones - Corporate Governance Officer (AJ), Andrew Smith - MD OCHA (AS), Paul Worthen – Financial Inclusion Project Manager, OCHA (PW)

### **Welcomes, Introductions And Apologies**

Apologies were received from Janet Allen-Louden, Keith Fellows and Mike Forward. The Chair welcomed MB and PW to the meeting, which was followed by a round table of introductions.

### **Minutes, Matters Arising and Decision Monitor**

Minute 256 - it was noted that PDR paperwork from JAL and DG was still outstanding.

The non-confidential minutes of 7 July 2011 were approved and signed as a correct record.

### **Financial Inclusion Inquiry**

MB started by thanking the panel for looking at financial inclusion as he felt it was a great way to raise its profile. A group discussion took place around the information provided in the papers. It was noted that publicity around money advice was essential; people were invited to attend forums, articles were in the Home and Citizen magazines, links on the GreenSquare website to the Wiltshire Money website and the customer accounts team were trained in money/debt advice. MB and PW confirmed that short articles would appear in the Home and Citizen magazines this month to raise awareness.

MB thought there may be a requirement for an under occupation policy and strategy in the future given the changes in housing benefits in the near future and the impact of the benefit reforms. Homes for Wiltshire had confirmed they are able to change their allocations system. There were welfare funds available for people in an emergency.

The panel discussed areas they could focus their inquiry on and it was noted that resident inspectors, mystery shoppers and market researchers were all at their disposal. The panel agreed to focus on the current services available to residents and to see how many people know of the advice available to them. The panel agreed to draft a questionnaire and for members to comment and give further thought on the forum. The Chair confirmed she would speak to Jen Eastman, Neighbourhood Involvement Advisor, with regards to setting up a survey with the market researchers. The focus of the inquiry would be more defined by the time it came back to the October meeting.

The panel thanked MB and PW for attending the meeting.

### **HCA and the 'HCA Over £500' Expenses Policy**

AS explained that any expenses greater than £500 needed to be published in accordance with the HCA Expenses Policy. It was agreed that given their portfolios, AD and MF would be asked to monitor the data. AS was waiting for guidelines from the HCA as to the frequency and method of publishing the information. AS confirmed he would circulate the HCA Expenses Policy to the panel.

## **Role of The Vice Chair**

The panel agreed they were happy with the original job specification although would like to change "in conjunction" to "working with the Chair". It was agreed that AJ would reword the specification, resend it and extend the deadline for expressions of interest to Friday 16 September 2011. AS would confirm with the panel if a closed vote was acceptable with the GreenSquare board if there was more than one expression of interest, to save applicants giving a presentation or holding interviews.

## **Annual Report**

The panel agreed the reports were very good from a "readability" point of view. The reports were approved and signed off.

## **Quarterly Complaints Report**

NF confirmed he had met with Celia Fletcher and Loretta Pratt. It was noted that Rosalind Brooke on the Westlea board was standing down from the Board and that the Customer Satisfaction portfolio would be recruited to at the Westlea meeting in September. The quarterly reports were noted.

## **TPAS Conference Feedback**

GR attended two workshops - one on credit unions which suggested the possibility of setting up an office in Housing Associations' receptions in the future where residents could be signed up to credit unions. The second workshop was run by London based Stonewall Housing which related to setting up hostels and building communities. GR thought Stonewall Housing may be able to assist the RSP in their inquiry into Financial Inclusion.

## **Panel Members Updates**

Panel member updates were deferred to the October meeting.

## **Non-Confidential GreenSquare Board Papers**

It was noted that staff satisfaction with the flow of communication was red. It was asked if GreenSquare staff were performing to their best ability on behalf of the residents if they were not satisfied. It was asked if KF could look at the most recent staff satisfaction survey.

## **Any Other Non-Confidential Business**

It was noted that two members of the Youth Group would attend the November meeting as observers.

Further to the Chair's email seeking a volunteer to attend Housemark's South West Central Club being held in Swindon on 5th October, NF offered to attend and was supported by the panel. AS confirmed he would be attending the event also.

## **Date Of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting is Thursday 6 October commencing at 6.30pm in Barbury House, Swindon. "Role of the RSP" training with Mandy Arnold will take place at 5pm on 10 November in the Board Room.