



**MINUTES OF
SENTINEL TENANTS' & RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION
MEETING HELD AT
SENTINEL'S BASINGSTOKE OFFICE
ON TUESDAY 25 OCTOBER 2011**

Present:

Kathy Hine	George Herbert	Tony Mitchell
Mike Thomas	Dawn Moors	Brian Sanders
Dick Wylie	Debbie Twinn	Helen Parry
Marion Witts	Ruth Wadsworth	

Absent: Mary Page Karleen Armour

In Attendance:

Joan Poulter	Ms C Forry	Colette Phippard (Interpreter)
Val Bagnall	Kari Tourle	Richard Pilbeam
Sandra Crook (Minutes)		

Distribution: Those Present / Those Absent / Those In Attendance Neighbourhood Managers

Issue outstanding over 2 months



Issue outstanding over 1 month



Issue outstanding from previous meeting



1. Welcome and Apologies

- 1.1 Dick welcomed those listed above to the meeting.
- 1.2 Apologies were noted from those listed above.

Action

Info



Info

2. Minutes of Meeting held on 23 August 2011

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		<u>Action</u>
2.1	The Minutes of the Meeting held on 23 August 2011 were agreed as an accurate and true record.	Info
3.	<u>Matters Arising from Meeting held on 23 August 2011</u>	
3.1	No matters arising.	Info
4.	<u>Election of Officers</u>	
4.1	Dick handed over to Richard for the election of officers.	
4.2	There were 3 candidates for the position of Chair. Kathy was proposed and seconded by Tony and Marion; Dick was proposed and seconded by Bill and George and Debbie was proposed and seconded by Brian and Mike. A ballot was held at which point Dick was eliminated from standing for the position of Chair due to receiving less votes. There was however a tie between Kathy and Debbie and a second ballot was held. Following the count Kathy was elected Chair of STARA.	Info
4.3	There was only 1 candidate for the position of Vice Chair – Mike. Mike was proposed and seconded by Brian and Dawn and duly elected as Vice Chair.	Info
4.4	There were no candidates for the position of Secretary.	Info
4.5	The Treasurers role would continue to be carried out by Sentinel's Finance Department.	Info
4.6	Kathy took up her role as Chair of STARA and thanked the members for showing their confidence in her.	Info
5.	<u>Board Minutes – 21 July 2011</u>	
5.1	The Minutes had been circulated with the Agenda. A question raised was what exactly is the Tenant Cash Back Scheme. Val explained it was a proposed scheme, which is being piloted in some areas, where tenants manage their own budgets for repairs to their properties. There are significant risk and health and safety implications of this Scheme. Lessons need to be learnt from the pilot schemes currently in place before we would review.	Info






	<u>Action</u>
<p>5.2 Another question was whether the Flexible Tenancies proposals would be going out to all tenants for consultation. Val thanked the members that had responded for their comments. The proposals need to go to a wider audience and local Councils need to be consulted before the proposals go back to the Board in January 2012. Dick advised that recently there had been a High Court ruling where it clarified what percentage of customers need to be consulted to ensure a wide enough consultation.</p> <p>Val said that the legislation to enact flexible tenancies had not yet been passed by the House of Lords and that we are directed by the Regulatory Framework which is still awaiting clarification. In the Spring the proposals would be consulted on with a wider audience. The changes proposed only apply to new tenants.</p>	Info
<p>6. <u>Feedback from Flexible Tenancy Consultation</u></p>	
<p>6.1 The responses Val had received from STARA members was mixed. Some felt that a 5 year tenancy did not give tenants sufficient security as they might have to consider moving children from schools etc. and that 7 years may be more acceptable.</p>	Info
<p>6.2 Queries raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a couple are both earning after 5 years at what point does Sentinel decide to move them on; • In some instances where families have grown over the 5 years it may be a case of them needing to move to a larger property; • Who is going to carry out vetting of income. Will Sentinel have to employ staff to do that; • How do Sentinel find out the income of tenants; • When renting privately had to provide evidence of income and expenditure and give permission for it to be discussed. 	Info
<p>6.3 Val responded that Sentinel needs to look at all allocations and get more sophisticated in its approach. Choice Based Lettings (CBL) needs to be more flexible. The market is moving and we have to adapt to offer a range of services to allow us to move forward. Staff will need to be trained on allocation choices available to ensure tenants are offered the correct options. There are methods in place that will allow Sentinel to find out the income of tenants, and provide evidence. Giving permission for sharing this information can be made a condition of the tenancy.</p>	Info

		<u>Action</u>
6.4	Another consideration that has to be taken into account in this area is Sentinel's charitable status. Sentinel are exempt from Corporation tax and if we don't offer tenancies that comply with charitable laws we may be in danger of being liable for payment of corporation tax on all our income.	Info
6.5	The way in which this is communicated to tenants should be a crucial consideration. Val asked that should those STARA members that had not responded wished to do so he would be happy to receive their responses.	Info
7.	<u>Quarterly Feedback from Customer Survey</u>	
7.1	The Homing-In General Survey Tracker as at September 2011 had been circulated with the Agenda.	Info
7.2	The results were very positive in terms of customer feedback which was indeed encouraging news. It was agreed that the report was a very good visual aid. STARA members wished their appreciation on the excellent results on behalf of all tenants to be communicated to staff.	Val 
8.	<u>Summary of Customer Inspection into Estate Services</u>	
8.1	The Summary of the Findings had been circulated with the Agenda. Val reported that the inspectors had also attended the Board Strategy event to give their feedback. Generally the response was very positive. It was suggested that the 2 Champions for Scrutiny (Kathy and Dick) should get together with staff to see how to take this forward.	Kathy / Dick 
9.	<u>Maintenance Review</u>	
9.1	Val reported that following discussions over the year on the maintenance service it had been decided to introduce a new in-house maintenance service from September 2012. Mitie's contract would be terminated in August 2012. Having an in-house maintenance service would bring with it a range of benefits including a projected saving of £400,000 a year on VAT and labour.	Info
9.2	Mitie were disappointed but not surprised by this course of action. Sentinel were looking at developing a project plan to take this forward by getting the right IT systems in place and the right person to manage the service. It is hoped that Mitie employees may TUPE across to Sentinel.	
	<u>Extract from ACAS:</u> <i>The Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations (TUPE) protects employees' terms and conditions of employment when a business is transferred from one owner to another. Employees of the previous owner when the business changes hands automatically become employees of the new employer on the same terms and conditions. It's as if their employment contracts had originally been made with the new employer. Their continuity of service and any other rights are all preserved. Both old and new employers are required to inform and consult employees affected directly or indirectly by the transfer.</i>	Info

		<u>Action</u>
9.3	It is important to get customers involved in this process and it is planned to set up a Maintenance Focus Group (MFG) in November 2011. The next Community Spirit will have an article on why we are going down this route and how we plan to take it forward. There will be challenges and performance dips and Sentinel may need to put in extra resources to manage this.	Info
9.4	Dick was not sure that this was the right time to introduce an in-house maintenance service and felt that it should have been introduced 3 – 4 years ago, however, he wished Sentinel all the best and said that one of Sentinel's challenges was to keep tenants informed, which historically we were not good at.	Info
9.5	Bill felt it was important that Sentinel had at least 20 people on the MFG not as few as 5 or 6. Val advised that Focus Groups worked best when there was a maximum of 14 members. The MFG would be made up of members but from a wide group of tenants. Sentinel do not deliver a service designed by the geography of its housing stock but an overall service to all so it was important to get input from tenants wherever their location.	Info
9.6	During November 2011 – January 2012 the Customer Service Advisors would be asking an additional question to all those surveyed asking them what they think we need to improve.	Info
9.7	Sentinel may consider having an open meeting at perhaps the Oakridge Hall for All, setting up email panels, using the website and social media to increase consultation and communication.	Info
9.8	It was suggested that Sentinel could look to Colleges for maintenance operatives as well as more opportunities for apprentices.	Info
9.9	To encourage Mitie operatives to TUPE across they will have different Terms and Conditions to other Sentinel staff but likely more favourable than with Mitie. Pensions will have to be considered amongst other benefits to encourage the good operatives to transfer.	Info
9.10	It was agreed that Helen and Marion would become Maintenance Champions and join the MFG.	Info
10.	<u>Customer Deal</u>	
10.1	The amended Customer Deal was circulated with the Agenda. Val proposed that the proposed amendments be wrapped up. Sentinel have updated the document not re-edited it. STARA members felt that reprinting the Summary in its original format would be best as it was easy to read and pointed tenants to the full version. The revised full version of the Customer Deal will be available on-line but it is not planned to reprint the Summary.	Info

		<u>Action</u>
10.2	Tony reported that Mary, who along with Tony was a Champion for the Customer Deal, had decided to resign from this role as having attended STARA meetings since the Consultative Group meetings ceased, was not happy that she did not have the right to vote at STARA meetings.	Info
10.3	A new Champion for the Customer Deal needed to be appointed.	Info
10.4	At this point Dawn pointed out that she felt it was inappropriate for her and Mike to be Champions of Policy and Strategy following their appointment as Board members.	Info
11.	<u>Role of Officers / Champions</u>	
11.1	The suggested criteria for Job Descriptions was circulated with the Agenda.	Info
11.2	There appears to be no clarity and some contradiction of membership of STARA which has resulted in Mary being very upset by her inability to vote and resigning in her role as Champion. All tenants are members of STARA and can attend meetings but only STARA Committee members have the right to vote. This had not been made clear to either Mary or Ruth. Dick however thought they had full voting rights as they transferred over from the Consultative Group. The STARA Committee members, as laid down in the Constitution, are 12 in total, 7 members from Basingstoke and the surrounding areas and 5 from Hart, Rushmoor and the surrounding areas.	Info
11.3	The onus is on the Committee to make this clear to anyone attending STARA meetings. It was agreed that Kathy would write to Mary to apologise for the way in which the matter had been handled this far and for the matter to be resolved at a future meeting.	
	<u>Post Meeting Note:</u> A letter was sent to Mary on 28 October 2011.	Info
11.4	Owing to Isla stepping down from her role on the Hart Panel and STARA there is now a vacancy on the Hart side which Dick will be bringing up at the Panel meeting in November.	Dick
11.5	Mike advised that Jane Brydges, who is a Basingstoke Panel member and Secretary, is keen to come onto STARA. However, under the current Constitution, Jane would have to wait until a vacancy came up as there were already 7 Basingstoke Committee members. If Mary and Ruth were to be invited on as Committee members then Jane should be invited too.	Info
12.	<u>STARA Publicity</u>	
12.1	Ruth and Debbie's report on their activities in the last quarter was circulated with the Agenda. Objectives and targets are needed from STARA so that Ruth and Debbie can implement them in their role as Champions for Publicity.	STARA



		<u>Action</u>	
12.2	Kathy wished it noted that all Champions should be bringing back their findings to STARA.	All Champions	
13.	<u>Any Other Business</u>		
13.1	In the 3 months, July, August and September 2011, 151 complaints had been received by Sentinel. 6 complaints were chosen at random by the members for inclusion in a report to be presented at the next STARA meeting by Miriam Morris. The numbers chosen were: No. 8 – C6002, No. 54 – C6096, No. 58 – C6104, No. 67 – C6124, No. 72 – C6137 and No. 101 – C6170.	Info	
13.2	Dick circulated a consultation response from STARA following Mr Finney's attendance at the STARA AGM on the proposed Social Housing Welfare Reforms. Dick thanked Debbie for collating the response.	Info	
13.3	Dick thanked everyone for their help and support whilst he had stood in as Chair of STARA since Arthur's death.	Info	
13.4	Richard had circulated information on relevant training available. Should anyone be interested in attending they should in the first instance contact Richard.	All	
13.5	Kari pointed out that the Agenda stated that the next STARA meeting would be held on 22 November 2011 in the Fleet office. The Fleet office was no longer to be used for evening meetings and would be held at the Basingstoke office.	Info	
13.6	Bill asked that the thanks of the tenants of Dudley Court be passed onto the staff who had dealt with the arson incident at the flats. The support from staff was excellent and the damage caused, in this instance, was relatively minor.	Val	
13.7	Dawn resigned from her Champion role for Policy and Scrutiny.	Info	
13.8	Joan reported that the speedy way in which a hedge hazard in her area was dealt with by staff and the excellent communication of the staff was appreciated and her thanks to be passed onto staff.	Val	
13.9	Ms Forry had some issues she would like to discuss and it was agreed to take these forward at the close of the meeting. Debbie was happy to assist as one of Ms Forry's area representatives.	Debbie	
13.10	Members were asked to submit any Agenda items for the meeting on 22 November 2011 by 12 November 2011.	All	
13.11	Val thanked STARA members for showing their appreciation of the work carried out by staff and would ensure this was passed onto them.	Val	

	<u>Action</u>
13.13 Val advised that the arson incident in Dudley Court had highlighted the need for all communal areas to be kept clear of any items for health and safety reasons. Sentinel will be applying the policy with absolute rigour and Notices will be displayed on the Notice Boards being put up in all communal areas enforcing this. Bill advised that the Notice Board in Dudley Court had been removed following the incident.	Info
13.14 Kathy suggested that all future STARA meetings scheduled to take place at the Fleet office now be held at Campbell Place. All attendees need to be aware that there is no parking available at Campbell Place and that the nearest parking is in Harlington Way (pay and display).	Info
13.15 Kathy asked that everything at meetings goes through the Chair and thanked everyone again for voting her in as Chair of STARA.	Info
14. <u>Date of Next Meeting</u>	
14.1 The date of STARA's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday 22 November 2011 at 6.00 p.m. at Sentinel's Basingstoke office.	Info
The meeting closed at 8.02 p.m.	