

Housing Regulation Panel (HRP) Progress Report 2013/2014 to Housing Management Board

Presented by: Chair of Housing Regulation Panel, Mr. Stan Best

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the meeting of the Housing Management Board on 5 March 2013 the Executive Councillor
 - (i) Noted the outcomes achieved by residents' Housing Regulation Panel in their second year of activity.
 - (ii) Approved continuing to support residents' co-regulation and the constructive challenge provided by residents' Housing Regulation Panel
- 1.2 This report is to inform Housing Management Board of the Housing Regulation Panel's activities during the year 2013/2014.

2. The Role of the Housing Regulation Panel

- 2.1 The Panel is a group of trained tenants and leaseholders who independently inspects the standards of Cambridge City Council's landlord services. It has the authority to challenge any services that are falling below the agreed service standards.
- 2.2. The Panel provides a residents' view about service, performance and business direction.

3. Housing Regulation Panel's programme of activities 2013/2014

- 3.1 The Panel continuously reviews its own practices and procedures to make them appropriate for specific activities within its programme.
- 3.2 In addition to inspecting a specific Landlord Service, it has widened its role to obtain an over-view of the services provided by the landlord. This helps to inform its forward plan.
- 3.3 The Panel continues to review the services it has previously inspected and reports locations to City Homes where a particular service is falling below the agreed service standards.

- 3.4 Representatives of the Housing Regulation Panel have been involved in:
- a) Voids Best Practice Group
 - b) Repairs and Maintenance Improvement Plan Scrutiny Group
 - c) Estate Services Liaison meetings
 - d) Citywide Garages Review Working Group
 - e) Judging the annual Residents' Garden Competition
 - f) Disabled Adaptions meetings
 - g) Performance Monitoring sessions
- 3.5 During the year Housing Regulation Panel representatives participated in:
- a) Recruitment and appointment of the Resident Involvement Officer
 - b) Viewing of the new build properties at Jane's Court
 - c) Visit to Uttlesford District Council to gather information about management of void properties
 - d) Study visits with representatives from other housing providers to share good practice
 - e) Chartered Institute of Housing Eastern Regional Conference
 - f) Customer Journey Mapping Seminar
- 3.6 The Housing Regulation Panel independently appraises the Tenant Initiative Scheme (TIS) bids from residents and makes recommendations for approval or not to City Homes Management Team. The projects recommended for approval were:
- a) Water butts for a communal garden at Russell Court
 - b) Retractable sunshade for the communal garden at School Court
 - c) Retractable sunshade for the communal patio and small shed at Rawlyn Court
 - d) Communal shed at Fernwood

4. Housing Regulation Panel Inspection of the Communal Window Cleaning Service

- 4.1 The purpose of the investigation was to determine:
- If the service being provided is in accordance with the specification in the contract
 - If the service is being provided consistently across the city
 - If the service provides value for money

The inspection of this service was the most challenging of all the services HRP have inspected. The service is delivered to each location three times a year and the contractor can vary the scheduled dates up to fourteen days either way which made the logistics of co-ordinating the HRP inspections problematical. As the service is delivered by an

outside contractor, HRP had to observe all the sensitivities associated with this. Communication had to be with City Homes, not directly with the Contractor.

- 4.2 The Housing Regulation Panel commenced its inspection with an information briefing from City Homes and the Contractor's Operations Manager.
- 4.3 It proceeded to collect information about the service from a variety of documented sources.
- 4.4 It developed a Window Cleaning Service Inspection form (Appendix 2) for site visits using the Window Cleaning Specification and the Housemark Estate Services Club Peer Review Photo Book
- 4.5 When requested by the Housing Regulation Panel, a City Homes Housing Officer made site visits with HRP during the inspections to provide clarification of issues arising.
- 4.6 The Housing Regulation Panel collated the results from all the site inspections (Appendix 3)
- 4.7 On completion of the inspection the Housing Regulation Panel presented the report of its findings and recommendations for improvement (Appendix 4) to City Homes.
- 4.8 Together, City Homes and the Housing Regulation Panel agreed the improvements for the service which are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timed (SMART).
- 4.9 In January 2014 City Homes reported back to the Housing Regulation Panel on the actions taken to improve the service as agreed.

(Appendix 5 lists HRP's recommendations for improvements together with the actions taken by City Homes).

5. Keeping tenants and leaseholders informed

The Housing Regulation Panel gives regular updates to all tenants and leaseholders in the quarterly Open Door magazine. The Summer 2014 edition will feature the findings and results of the inspection of the window cleaning service.

6. Housing Regulation Panel support and recruitment

- 6.1 The Housing Regulation Panel Chair has regular meetings with the Resident Involvement team to support the independent work of the panel.
- 6.2 The work programme of the Resident Involvement team includes strategies for the recruitment of more residents to become involved.