



## GGHT Scrutiny Panel 16 November 2011 Warrington Disability Partnerships

### Minutes

<b>Attendance:</b>	Lynda Johnson, Ray Powell, Jean Stringer, Dot Thacker, Pete Thacker, Mick Rivington, Jean Bullock, Observers: Lynda Booth, John Mulhall, Stephanie Lee Alison Foy, James Bacon, Charlie Martin (minutes)
<b>1. Apologies:</b>	

		Action
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting 12 October 2011</b></p> <p><b>Matters Arising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ AF advised that all members have been provided with information on Q2 complaints for discussion at the sub-group on 17 November.</li> <li>❖ AF advised that CTD is following up the Panel's query as to whether tenants could be issued with a carbon monoxide detector.</li> <li>❖ It was agreed that Voids should remain on the forward plan and that this was an area that could be reviewed by the Panel at a later stage.</li> <li>❖ LJ asked to be included in the mailing list for CCP papers for information.</li> </ul> <p>The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record</p>	<b>CM</b>
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Pre-tenancy Service</b></p> <p>JB provided an update to the panel on progress against the flat strategy action plan. A key aspect of the plan is the pre-tenancy scheme which aims to engage customers before, during and after a tenancy has been agreed. The service will help tenants understand how to manage their homes and maintain sustainable tenancies.</p>	

The pre-tenancy service was borne out of a review conducted by HQN which advised that more work needed to be done to support customers before they became GGHT tenants.

JS asked whether special support is provided to tenants who have spent time in institutional care or prison. JB advised that a higher level of support for these tenants is provided through care leavers support and the probation leavers service. The pre-tenancy service is specifically aimed at new tenants who do not have particular needs.

JB advised that GGHT has quite a low letting standard. This is partly due to need to turn around properties quickly to meet the high level of demand. However, the HQN report stated that customers will be incentivized to take greater care of their property if it was rented to tenants in a higher standard.

RP asked whether improvement work would be carried out after a tenant had been moved into a property. JB advised that urgent repairs would be completed before a tenant moved in. Less urgent work, such as kitchens and bathrooms would be completed as per Capital Investment Programme.

RP advised that some tenants will have special requirements and that these should be addressed before move in. JB agreed and advised that the pre-tenancy service will enable staff to ensure special requirements are accommodated. However, this is unlikely to include decorating as the costs attached to this would be too expensive.

LJ asked when the letting review would be completed. JB advised that the standard will be discussed at EMT on 16.11.11. A Sub-Group might need to be set-up to review the letting standard before an update is taken to CCP in January.

RP asked whether new tenants received vouchers to decorate their properties. JB advised that tenants received an average of £200 in vouchers. However, work is ongoing to review this as some tenants sell off their vouchers for cash. JB advised that GGHT might return to the original system of offering tenants 2 thirds up-front and a final third on the condition that tenants have decorated their property. The review of this scheme will form part of the review of the Letting Standard.

AF asked if the Governance and Performance team could benchmark the scheme against other Housing Associations. JB advised that the scheme has been benchmarked against other housing association and that these organisations offer their tenants an allowance to decorate their properties. It was noted that some housing associations do decorate the property before tenants move in.

DT asked what the minimum letting age for tenants is. JB advised that tenancies cannot be given to customers under the age of 18.

	<p>JB advised that GGHT are looking to reduce the number of furnished properties as tenants who rent these properties incur a £30 service charge. GGHT is looking to work in partnership with St. Rocco's charity to enable tenants to purchase furniture at a discounted rate.</p> <p>JB advised that pre-tenancy meetings will be held to enable GGHT to identify tenants that will need closer support. Tenants will also be encouraged to complete their own registration forms to ensure they understand the process and develop a great sense of responsibility for their tenancies.</p> <p>JB advised that GGHT are in the process of drafting a new 'recharge policy' aimed at tenants who have breached the terms of their tenancy. LJ advised that she would like to receive a copy of the draft policy. AF advised that this will be circulated to the Panel for information.</p> <p>JB outlined plans to enable new tenants to view properties prior to the existing tenant moving out. It was explained that this would enable the current occupiers to meet the new tenants and give an overview of the service they can expect to receive.</p> <p>JS asked if tenants who have committed ASB are evicted from their properties. JB explained that GGHT had procedures for tackling ASB and, in some cases, will look to provide new accommodation for the victims of ASB.</p> <p>PT asked whether GGHT had a stockpile of furniture that could be sold to tenants. JB explained that GGHT was looking to work in partnership with St. Rocco's to provide furniture to tenants at a discounted rate.</p> <p>JS asked when GGHT would cease advertising properties in the Warrington Guardian. JB advised that GGHT would continue to advertise in the Guardian until next year. GGHT will launch its new Looking Local service at CCP on 29 November and this will enable tenants to view properties via their TV.</p> <p>LJ asked what how much the Looking Local service would cost. AF agreed to report back to the panel with the estimated costs.</p> <p>JS advised that the word 'churn' had been used throughout the report and asked what the term meant. JB explained that the term referred to properties that had a high turnover of tenants moving in/out. It is thought that the biggest cause of 'churn' is the failure of tenants to manage financially.</p> <p>JS asked whether GGHT is looking to develop new build properties. JB advised that GGHT is not looking to develop at present. The Board is currently reviewing GGHT's business priorities for 2012/13 and new build is among the options under consideration.</p> <p>LJ asked how many staff will be employed under the pre-tenancy service. JB</p>	<p><b>AF</b></p> <p><b>AF</b></p> <p><b>ALL</b></p>
--	---	---

	<p>explained that the team will consist of 2 redistributed from sign-ups and two additional full time staff officers.</p> <p>LJ asked whether the pre-tenancy meetings would be observed by members of the Scrutiny Panel. JB advised that members of the panel would be welcome to observe these meetings and would keep the panel update as to the date and time of the sessions.</p> <p>AF asked whether the service would apply to all tenants or a selection of tenants. JB advised that the service would target young tenants and employ a 'just in time' approach to ensure minimal void loss. Under this approach tenants will be notified when properties are available or are expected to become available.</p> <p>LJ thanked JB and advised that the panel look forward to receiving further updates on the scheme. AF agreed to check the forward plan and advised that a further update will be provided in the next 3 months.</p> <p>JB thanked the Panel for their support and suggested that the Panel Members presented a list of queries on the Action Plan to be discussed prior to the next update.</p>	<b>CM</b>
<p><b>3.</b></p>	<p><b>Review of Scrutiny Panel Performance</b></p> <p>AF presented a report that provided a review of the performance of the Scrutiny Panel and outlined the areas that the panel have scrutinized. AF advised that their have been 9 meetings of the panel since it was established and attendance levels have been good.</p> <p>DT asked whether the dates for the complaints panel could be changed if required. AF advised that will be a level of flexibility but meetings are held quarterly as complaint reports are produced on a quarterly basis.</p> <p>AF advised that there is an opportunity for panel members to meet with tenant inspectors and discuss areas that could be reviewed. Tenant inspectors could be invited to Scrutiny panel and panel members could visit estates with inspectors.</p> <p>The procurement process was discussed and the Panel advised that they would like more information on the procurement process. RP advised that the some panel members are involved in the procurement and they do mostly see the full procurement from start to finish.</p> <p>DT asked for clarification on the reasons behind the increase in void re-let time. JB advised that this had been due to an ongoing restructure in Property Services. JB also explained that there are ongoing issues with the multi-storey block, in particular Peninsula House. Savills have agreed to complete an</p>	<b>AF</b>

	<p>options appraisal of both multi-storey blocks that will review ASB and tenant turn-over.</p> <p>LJ advised that the Panel had found the meeting with Steve Lamb and the tour of I.T. and GDD to be very useful.</p> <p>LJ advised that the panel could visit other Scrutiny Groups. AF suggested that the panel visit Salix Homes which has an established and accredited Scrutiny Panel.</p> <p>RP advised that gas service has undergone significant improvements . AF advised that the new gas manager is now in post and will be invited to attend the panel to update members on .</p> <p>AF advised that the review has demonstrated that minor changes can have a significant impact on the standard of service delivery. Going forward the panel could look at service areas in greater detail with a focus on reviewing the priorities for tenants and improving performance.</p>	<b>AF</b>
6.	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Doreen Moors has stepped down from the panel and it was agreed that LJ would continue to Chair until January 2012</li> <li>❖ JS advised that she had not received a copy of News and Views and CM agreed to forward her a copy.</li> <li>❖ JS forwarded her apologies for the next meeting</li> </ul>	
7.	<p><b>Date &amp; Time of Next Meeting</b> : Wednesday 14 December 10am, Warrington Disability Partnership</p>	