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# “Joining Together in Excellence”

# The Challenge Group

# 24th April 2014

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| **1. Welcome and Apologies** | ACTION |
| Present **Jenny St Leger** (Acting Chair) (JSL), **Louise Booth** (Chair) (LB), **Austin Ambrose** (AA), **Dave Jones** (DJ), **Sophie Lewis** (resident Involvement Officer) (SL), **Harry Moss** (Resident Involvement Apprentice) (HM), **Lorraine Hare** (Estate Services Supervise) (LH), **Greg Bones** (Director of Resources) (GB), **Ian Salt** (Assistant Director of Property Services) (IS), **Simon Worthington** (Voids Team Leader) (SW), **Gary Naylor** (Repairs Manager) (GN) **David Gooda** (Chair of Board) (DG).  Apologies  **Mike Thraves**  JSL welcomed everyone to the meeting, and welcome Challenge’s new member, David Jones.  Before the meeting started JSL asked if people could put their hands up when asking questions, and refer to the Chair as “Chair” |  |
| 2. Minutes & Actions from previous meeting |  |
| Following on from the last Challenge meeting, where Challenge expressed a desire to know more about what was going on, SL advised that she now forwards to the group any update emails she receives from Housemark, CiH and TPAS.  In addition, Rachel Allcock has now agreed to send Challenge a Quarterly Update about what’s happening throughout the Trust.  AA discussed contacting the Chamber of Commerce and alderlyedge.com again.  Q. What is “alderlyedge.com”?  A. A local website that promotes local events | **Action: Austin to contact Chamber of commerce to chase message sent from Sophie, and forward the e-mail to alderlyedge.com to AA.**  **Action: AA to contact alderlyedge.com to see if they can publish anywhere on their website that Challenge are recruiting.** |
| **3. Challenge recruitment update** |  |
| SL ran through updates about advertising the role, and advised that she has posted the vacancies on the CVS website and in Inside Poynton magazine.  The online flyers that Ben Lowe and SL have met about will be drafted over the next few months.  AA suggested that once the mail-shot has been created, we add it to the agenda item, sol Challenge can talk through it.  Q. What’s happening about putting posters on the new vans?  A. 1 Van will advertise Challenge vacancies, and other Peaks and Plains services, on a rotational basis  Q. Why only one van?  A. Because that van will be used as an advertising van  LB raised that people are against door-knocking. SL explained that it’s only been suggested in the group on one or two occasions, and it’s not been very successful in the past.  *Nb. SL suggested this option to Challenge last year when staff were out and about handing out winter survival packs to every property, and unfortunately struggled to get any volunteers from Challenge due to various health/mobility problems.* | Action: SL to invite Ben to Challenge once the electronic flyers have been drafted |
| **4. Feedback Session** |  |
| SL fed-back about the TPAS workers conference, and talked through one of the sessions she attended around resolving Impact Assessment issues.  The group also discussed the benefit of staff promoting the events they’ve organised, and the outcomes, on the website so that customers can see the benefit of getting involved. |  |
| **5. Grounds Maintenance Action Plan** |  |
| LH ran through the action plan.  Q. Under the new system, what happens to payment methods? Do you change the direct debit amount, or cancel it and start a new one?  A. We simply change the amount of the direct debit.  Q. How long was the original contract with Landscape contractors?  A. 5 years  Q. Is this for Grounds Maintenance or low cost gardening?  A. It’s ground maintenance  Q. Is it difficult managing green spaces that back on to Cheshire East land?  A. Yes you have to take a lot into account, and there’s a lot of admin involved.  Q. Did EMT take the system on board straight away or did they look at different ways to do so?  A. LH looked at different areas that would work best for customers, and considered different companies, in the report which was considered by EMT  Q. Do you get many disputes with private owners?  A. Not really, as we ensure mistakes aren’t made.  JSL raised the point that the piece of grass isn’t owned by Peaks and Plains or Cheshire East Council. LH suggested that she writes a letter to her councillor. |  |
| **6. VFM Self-Assessment** |  |
| Greg Bones ran through the VFM self-assessment.  Q. When was the last self-assessment?  A. Last year. We do one once a year. We are currently ranked 53rd out of 152 housing providers, which we are very pleased with.  Q. On what basis is the value of the asset measured on?  A. We take the land value and divide it by 100 for new properties, and by 60 for old properties.  Q. Do the houses belong to the government?  A. We need to ask permission from the government to dispose of the assets, and develop more properties in local areas.  Q. How are you going to involve Tenants in the next VFM?  A. SL suggested approaching the Quarterly Update; it would be helpful for customers to have an opportunity to review this.  GB explained that the Trust will look to see if we can improve efficiency in terms of staff having mobile devices, in order to try and prevent customers having to come in to the Trust when they have an issue. | Action: SL to invite GB to the Quarterly Update after the next VFM self-assessment is done.  Action: SL to invite Neil Bancroft to Challenge meeting to discuss reviews that he’s working on |
| **7. EMT Performance Dashboard** |  |
| IS ran through the EMT performance.  Q. What prompts a disciplinary?  A. IS explained what a disciplinary is ,and why they need to be actioned. A number of staff have reached this point if they have been off sick on more that three occasions within a 12-month period.  Q. Has work started at Park Green?  A. No, not yet, but we will be starting soon. |  |
| **8. Voids Performance Update** |  |
| SW introduced himself and ran through performance of the Voids team.  Q. Are people happy with the void when they move in?  A. Yes, we work to a lettable standard  Q. When we get re-chargeable repairs, how good are we doing at retaining money?  A. The Income team usually chase it. We don’t let them off with a re-charge without a valid reason.  Q. When people vacate, is there often a dilapidation issue?  A. Since doing inspection, issues have been reduced as we can block the move until work is done  Q. If someone refuses to have any work done then it becomes a void, do you do all the work?  A. It has to meet the Lettable standard. If it’s functional we won’t replace it, but if it needs doing, we’ll give the new tenant a choice of bathroom/kitchen  Q. When you get a rechargeable repair, how successful are you at getting money in?  A. We raise them, but think only a small percentage pay - if they apply to come back to the Trust, they have a debt so they would need to clear it to be eligible for any properties  Q. How many radiators do you put in a lounge?  A. The contractor deals with that; it’s normally geared up to the heating requirements of the room (size, heat loss, etc.) |  |
| **9. Repairs Performance Update** |  |
| GN ran through the Repairs performance.  Q. When people refuse to have improvements, are other people’s properties brought forward?  A. Yes, we tend to bring people forward by about 3-5 months.  Q. What is the expected lifetime of the kitchens/bathrooms?  A. 20 years for a kitchen. 30 years for a bathroom.  Q. Who sets the targets?  A. Ian Salt and Gary Naylor. We look for areas that we can improve on, and if we hit the targets, we can re-set them  Q. When you are promised something, but don’t ever hear about it, are you meant to chase it?  A. We’re looking into that. We will be looking at booking repairs at the visit of the first repair. |  |
| **10. Any Other Business** |  |
| SL raised that the repairs inspection report will go to the Board meeting on Tuesday 20th May 2014, and every Challenge member will be expected to attend**.**  SL ran through the next scrutiny topics, and everyone provisionally agreed on “Tenant Sustainability” as the next area to review. SL advised that Challenge have a week to review this, before they make a final decision.  JSL suggested inviting someone along to the Quarterly Update to talk about the progress of bringing the gas team in-house.  Challenge agreed they are happy for SL to send them the draft agenda two weeks before the final one is sent out, to add any items.  David Gooda, Chairman of the Board, came in to briefly discuss the Resident Involvement structure.  DG asked if anyone would like to do anything differently in future? A recent conversation with LB had identified that :   * there is disillusionment from Challenge members * they’re not having the impact they want * there’s no support from other tenants * service groups(Community Voice) want to veto decisions made by Challenge   DG - Is it the structure you’re dissatisfied with, or the people?  AA - It will always be a struggle to get unpaid volunteers for such a time commitment. I’m happy with the structure, and I think we get all the information from SL that we ask for, but I just think we need more people.  DJ – It might be less independent if Challenge members got paid.  JSL – New people won’t join Challenge because they can’t commit to going to Community Voice meetings.  DG – It’s important to accept that some customers will prefer attending more conversational meetings like Community Voice that work at an operational level, and others will prefer a more strategic role like Challenge.  AA – The recruitment process is too formal and too demanding.  LB – Challenge don’t know what’s going on at ground level.  DG – Neither do Board, but that’s because we’re a strategic group like Challenge, and our role is to look at the bigger picture of the organisation. We’re not an operational group. There are two very different philosophies, and we’ve tried to provide two different levels of opportunities to tenants. | Action: SL to send out Repairs Report and Action Plan *(Done 11.05.14)*  Action: SL to send out the risk report compiled by the Internal Auditors *(Done 28.05.14)*  Action: SL to invite Gary Thompson along to the Summer Quarterly Update |
| **The next meeting will be held on 29th May 2014 at 11am** |  |