



**GGHT Panel of  
Excellence and Scrutiny  
Wednesday 09 October  
2013  
Eagle Park**

**Minutes**

<b>Attendance:</b>	Lynda Johnson (part), Linda Booth, Dot Thacker, Fiona Roberts, Jean Bullock, Graham Hanson, Charlie Martin (part), Jenny Thompson, Rebecca Hallam, James Bacon (part).  Observers: Beth Griffin
<b>Apologies:</b>	Alan Rankin, Ayo Akinrele, Debbie Ergen

		<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<p><b>Apologies/Declarations of Interest</b></p> <p>Apologies as above.</p> <p>No declarations of interests.</p> <p>The Panel welcomed one observer to the meeting</p>	
<b>2.</b>	<p><b>Minutes of Meeting held on 12 June 2013</b></p> <p><b>Matters arising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ JT advised that acronym DLO referred to Direct Labour Organisation- the I.T. system that logs details of each job (work, orders, cost of material used, operative that complete work. Panel agreed that any acronyms be explained in long hand the first time they are used in report or minutes.</li> <li>❖ JT explained that Sean McDermott is putting together before and after photographs of void properties for Panel.</li> <li>❖ JT advised that Neighbourhood Watch is responsibility of police and neighbourhood organisations.</li> <li>❖ Minutes of previous meeting detailed some changes to wording in Repairs report. Panel has not received email with updated report. CM to resend email.</li> <li>❖ Panel previously asked for manager's feedback on repairs report. JT has requested feedback from managers and is collating their responses.</li> </ul>	<p><b>LJ/JT</b></p> <p><b>CM</b></p>

	The minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.	<b>JT</b>
<b>3.</b>	<p><b>Feedback from York Conference</b></p> <p>Trafford Housing have completed a review on Right First Time for Repairs. Recommendations for Right First Time Repairs brought to meeting. CM to send written response to repairs questions raised by Panel.</p> <p>Panel felt that a forward plan of meetings for the next six month period was needed to allow them to prepare in advance. CM agreed but explained that will need to retain flexibility to change meetings due to individual and business needs.</p> <p>Panel would also like to receive previous meeting's minutes within one week of meeting. CM agreed.</p> <p>Panel felt that would be useful to network with other scrutiny panels. Panel in agreement that they can arrange meetings with other scrutiny panels themselves. CM to provide contact details for other panels.</p> <p>Panel asked to be given details of future training events where possible. CM agreed to provide list of all currently available training opportunities to panel. CM warned that need to discuss cost/benefit of training opportunities. Panel to contact other scrutiny panels to ask their opinion of specific training sessions.</p> <p>Panel asked if it would be possible to have control over, or input into, their budget. Panel asked how much their annual budget is and to have autonomy to decide how to spend budget, specifically with regards to training. CM explained that no specific scrutiny panel budget and their budget comes from the customer service budget which allows greater flexibility and more opportunity to access training. CM explained that Allen Barber provides training on costs and budgeting and possible that Panel will be able to attend this.</p> <p>Panel asked for independent mentor. CM explained that Linda Levin had previously mentored panel and cost/benefit of future mentor meant that it is not a viable option.</p>	<p><b>CM/ PANEL</b></p> <p><b>CM</b></p> <p><b>RH</b></p> <p><b>CM</b></p>
<b>4.</b>	<p><b>Response Repairs Review Update</b></p> <p>Response received from Mark Burrows and timescale for handyman policy has been agreed. Draft policy will be presented by December.</p> <p>There has been a change to the target date for the AM/PM appointment cost/benefit analysis because the scheduler is being updated. No new target date agreed at present.</p> <p>Panel concerned that move to AM/PM appointments will not be to tenant's advantage as tenants will potentially be waiting a long time for operative to</p>	<b>JT</b>

	<p>attend job. Panel suggested a move to four hour timeslots may be more beneficial. <i>Update: Chair met with Angela Perry on 18.10.2013 to discuss Repairs Review report. Report updated to remove recommendation to AM/PM slots and to suggest that SMT reviews current appointment policy to ensure value for money.</i></p> <p>Panel had previously asked for information on what happens when a complaint is made directly to a subcontractor. JT has requested information from Carl Talbot-Davies and is awaiting response.</p>	<p><b>JT</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p>	<p><b>Overview of Voids and Ground Maintenance</b></p> <p><b>Voids</b> JB gave an overview of GGHT restructure. The following points were highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The traditional re-let standard for void properties has been low due to previous high demand.</li> <li>❖ Demand has recently decreased and there are currently 19 properties on Choose A Home which have not received any bids, 11 of these are flats at Peninsula House. The decrease in demand has led increased rent loss for GGHT.</li> <li>❖ Current rent loss over a 6 month period represents 1.8% of total rent. The business plan assumes rent lost through voids to be 1%. The average time for a property to be re-let is currently 42 days.</li> <li>❖ The re-let target for 2012/13 is 24 days. Aim is to bring the time down to 30 days or less before 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014.</li> <li>❖ The performance of the void team has been affected by low demand, a lack of resources and the increased work caused by void properties needing an electrical inspection and major works.</li> <li>❖ Reasons for low demand are unclear but JB believed that welfare reforms have affected demand. JB explained that GGHT is implementing a low demand action plan which will involve advertising via text message and social media and use of two show flats to show GGHT void 'gold standard'. GGHT are also engaging Vanguard to perform a lean review of the void process.</li> </ul> <p><b>Comments/Queries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Panel concerned that the minimum void standard will affect GGHT reputation.</li> <li>❖ Panel and JB expressed concern about loss of tenants to private sector due to current void standard.</li> <li>❖ Panel suggested internal photographs of properties would help to re-let properties quickly. JB agreed but said that void standard would need to be higher before photographs can be used.</li> <li>❖ Panel concerned that the cost of cleaning void properties does not represent value for money. JB stated that the issues with cleaning had recently been resolved with our contractor VPS.</li> <li>❖ Cost of review by Vanguard queried. JB explained that review will cost less than 5% of the total loss from voids in 2013/2014. The total loss will not be known until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014. JB will come back to Panel with more information about cost of Vanguard review.</li> </ul>	<p><b>JB</b></p> <p><b>Panel</b></p> <p><b>JB/Panel</b></p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Panel interested in being trained to conduct lean systems reviews. JB agreed that this can be a long term goal.</li> <li>❖ Concern expressed over the cost of the two Longford pilot enhanced void standard flats (approximately £20-25k per unit). JB explained that the cost is due to GGHT trialling a 'gold standard' in terms of the quality of the void. If this standard was extended to all properties the cost would be lower per unit but applying standard across all stock could be prohibitive. JB and Panel agreed that it would be useful for the Panel to view the flats when they are complete, if feasible.</li> </ul>	<p><b>JB</b></p>
<p><b>Ground Maintenance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The current partnership agreement with Street Scene ends in October 2014 and a new contract will need to be in place from then.</li> <li>❖ GGHT need to decide on the standard and specification of the new contract.</li> <li>❖ The current spec indicates a good standard but the implementation means that the standard has fallen recently as a result of restructuring and budget cuts at WBC. As a result GGHT are currently having to perform their own quality checks.</li> <li>❖ There are concerns that an enhanced standard will result in higher costs. Any new contract is likely to be for a five year period. The current cost of the service is approximately £497,000 pa.</li> <li>❖ GGHT expect the new contract to represent good value for money so that the savings can be reinvested. GGHT are keen to complement the new contract by investing in new planting in areas which have not have any planting for a number of years.</li> </ul>	<p><b>JB</b></p>
<p>There are currently five possibilities for the new contract:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Procure the new contract as one package</li> <li>❖ Break the service up into smaller geographical areas along the lines of GGHT restructuring</li> <li>❖ Bring the service in house</li> <li>❖ Arrange a new partnership agreement with another organisation</li> <li>❖ Separate the grass cutting from the shrub works. Possibility of bringing the shrub works in house.</li> </ul>	<p><b>JB</b></p>
<p><b>Comments/Queries</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Panel concerned that standard of Street Scene has slipped recently. JB agreed with concerns and has spoken to Warrington Borough Council (WBC) as recently as five weeks ago. On-going meetings are being held with WBC to discuss this and other issues.</li> <li>❖ Panel suggested spreading seed over areas of grassland during spring/summer months to reduce grass cutting costs. JB will investigate possibility.</li> <li>❖ Panel concerned that the five year term for new contract is too long if the quality of the service is not acceptable. JB explained that terms of contract would allow GGHT to end contract if this was the case. Panel suggested the use of fines to ensure compliance with the required standard. JB agreed that this is a possibility. Panel also suggested awarding contracts to two different companies covering separate parts of the borough for a period of two years with the promise that</li> </ul>	<p><b>JB/Panel</b></p> <p><b>JB/Panel</b></p> <p><b>JB/Panel</b></p>

	the contract be extended to five years and to cover the whole of the borough for the company who performed better. JB noted the suggestions and will investigate whether this is a viable option.	
6.	<p><b>A.O.B. &amp; Agenda for November Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Panel queried how many GGHT properties had been affected by Council Tax re-banding. JT to email panel with response. <i>Update: JT emailed panel after meeting to explain that GGHT do not hold information on which properties have been rebanded.</i></li> <li>❖ JT confirmed that water charges are paid to United Utilities by GGHT not by WBC. Water charges do not increase in line with rent increases.</li> <li>❖ Some members of Panel are unable to attend Wednesday meetings due to prior commitments. Panel discussed move to Friday meetings. Panel unable to reach agreement at meeting and JT to email members with possible dates for next meeting.</li> </ul> <p><b>Agenda for November Meeting:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ Discuss feedback on Repairs report</li> <li>❖ Scrutiny panel discussion- roles and responsibilities, aims of panel and expectations of GGHT</li> <li>❖ Forward plan for meetings</li> <li>❖ Forward plan for training</li> <li>❖ Format of future meetings</li> </ul>	<p><b>JT</b></p> <p><b>LB/JT</b></p>
7.	<p><b>Meeting Costs</b></p> <p>Postage:</p> <p>Out of Pocket Expenses: £43.80</p> <p>Room Hire: N/A</p> <p>Catering Expenses: £11.84</p> <p><b>Total: £55.64</b></p>	
	<b>Date of next meeting: Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> November Venue, The Gateway</b>	