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# “Joining Together in Excellence”

# The Challenge Group

# 22nd November 2013

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| **1. Welcome and Apologies** | ACTION |
| Present Margaret Pickup (MP) (Standing Chair), Paul Brooks (PB), Mike Thraves (MT), Sophie Lewis (SL) (Resident Involvement Officer), Harry Moss (HM) (Resident Involvement Apprentice), Chris Twomey (Assistant Director of Housing Services), Vicky Burgess (Deputy Team Leader of Income team)  Apologies  Neil Bancroft (NB) , Louise Booth (Chair), Jenny St Leger (Vice-Chair), Austin Ambrose (AA)  MP welcomed everyone to the meeting. |  |
| 2. Minutes & Actions from previous meeting |  |
| The group agreed that they were happy with the minutes. |  |
| **3. Incentive Scheme Update** |  |
| SL advised the group that the proposal has shifted direction, as it was felt that similar schemes in other housing providers couldn’t evidence any improvement in arrears or ASB-levels since rolling out their incentive schemes.  The steering group are now looking at alternative ways of consulting, such as consulting with customers who call into our 0800 number and sending out ‘easy-answer’ questions via texts. |  |
| **4. Local Offer review** |  |
| SL advised that the Finance team are currently in the process of creating a dashboard which displays performance against all of the 16 approved standards. Once it’s completed, it will be passed to Challenge to make sure they are happy with the evidence required for each one. |  |
| **5. Outcomes register** |  |
| SL talked through the outcomes register, and congratulated the group on having achieved so much in the past 12 months. The register is a log of all Challenge suggestions that have been actioned, and have had a direct impact on service delivery. |  |
| **6. Feedback Session** |  |
| MT attended a cross-inspection event at Stockport Homes with SL and Ian Taylor. He told the group that this gave him a chance to do things he wouldn’t normally do, such as mystery shopping. |  |
| **7. EMT Performance & Scrutiny Info** |  |
| CT talked the group through the performance information.  Q. Are the high costs for IT support value for money?  A. No, but they are unusually high because of the new server  Q. Are the sickness figures just for sickness, or do they represent other absences too?  A. Just sickness, and staff receive a written warning on their 4th incident of sickness  Q. What does it cost to give flu jabs?  A. Just a fraction of the cost of staff sickness to the Trust  Q. Do you have in mind who you want to move in to new builds?  A. They have to have a local connection or community connection, or it will depend on how close they live in the parish  Q. Is the village green application covered by commonlands?  A. Yes  Q. Does the Trust use studio flats more?  A. Yes, they are more popular now with the bedroom tax implications  Q. What’s the main reason that the Trust are struggling to let properties?  A. Some of the properties are too small, or have restrictions such as over-55 only  MP mentioned that she has been approached by the boiler suppliers, since having gas central heating fitted, asking if she wants to buy insurance . | Action: SL to pass details across to gas team (*Done 22.11.13*) |
| **8. Income Team Update** |  |
| Vicky talked the group through the Income team performance details.  Q. Do you advise standing orders as a method of payment?  A. Yes  Q. What happens if someone wants to pay the difference but is struggling?  A. We’ll still help and try to assist them (i.e. through Discretionary Housing Payments), and sometimes we’ll sponsor them and pay the difference if we’re able to raise their priority on Homechoice (so they can get rehoused quicker), but we won’t do this long-term  Q. I would like to see how the welfare benefit reform has affected tenants across the board  A. We’ve not been affected as badly as we thought  Q. How much will rent go up?  A. We’re not sure yet  Q. How many Direct Dates are there in the month?  A. There are 4 |  |
| **9. Quarterly Update Feedback** |  |
| The Challenge group suggested that Lorraine Hare came to the next quarterly update meeting to talk about bringing the garden service in-house. SL reminded them that this could take a year or so to implement, so it may be that Lorraine doesn’t have any news to give, but SL will discuss this with her.  The group also suggested that someone from development comes to talk about new builds.  CT suggested that someone comes to talk about digital inclusion and welfare reform (where legislation is up to). | Action: SL to invite Lorraine, Development , and representatives who can talk about digital inclusion and welfare reform |
| **10. Internal Auditors Schedule** |  |
| To be discussed at the next meeting where there are more members available. |  |
| **11. Grounds Maintenance Action Plan** |  |
| Lorraine Hare was unavailable this month due to sickness. |  |
| **12. Any Other Business** |  |
| MP asked if it would be possible to put a clock in reception so that customers can easily check the time, as the clock on the BBC news isn’t always visible. | Action: SL to pass on this suggestion to Customer Experience Manager (*Clock has been purchased and will be put up within next 2 weeks*) |
| **The next meeting will be held on Thursday 30th January 2014 at 11am** |  |