

MINUTES OF MEETING

SUPPORTING PEOPLE LIASION GROUP MEETING

Wednesday 8th September 2010 at 2:30pm

Attendees:

Kay Quinn (Chair)	Atal y Fro
Pam Tom	Vale of Glamorgan Strategy & Supporting People Manager
Kevin Parsons	Vale of Glamorgan Supporting People Team
Lisa Doe	Vale of Glamorgan Homeless & Advice Manager
Kath Hudd	Gofal Cymru
Paul Thomas	Llamau
Doreen Murray	United Welsh Housing Association
Rhydian Wiggins	Gwalia Care & Support
Gurjit Kaur	Atal Y Fro
Karen Berry	Taff Housing
Annette Kerr	Taff Housing
Simon Davies	Vale of Glamorgan Housing Stock Transfer Manager
Kim Hughes	Hafan Cymru
Amber Constant	Flying Start Vale of Glamorgan
Ieuan Counsell	Vale of Glamorgan Social Services 15plus team
Fez Fernandez-Bennett	Pathways to Work
Paul Bevan	Reach Supported Living
Kathy Belle	Pen yr Enfys

Apologies:

Chris Evans	United Welsh Housing Association
Delyth Thomas	Hafod Care
Jennifer Garraway	Hafod Care
Julie Jones	Gofal Cymru
Cath Gallivan	Llamau
Kieran Towler	United Welsh Housing Association
Maeve Keenoy	United Welsh Housing Association
Erica Reed	Gwalia Care & Support
Janice Bell	Taff Housing Association
Gary Cartwright	Inroads
Anne Williams	Vale of Glamorgan Social Services 15plus team
Gareth Corbin	The Wallich
Glen John	Vale of Glamorgan Social Services Manager

Minutes.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and agreed.

Presentation – Simon Davies – Housing Stock Transfer.

Simon informed the group that while the Council currently estimates it can undertake most improvements to the Council properties, it does not expect to have the financial resources needed to achieve the full Welsh Housing Quality Standards in all respects, and solve the significant estate design problems across the Vale.

Simon stated that all Council tenants are being informed, and consulted, of the facts regarding either choosing to remain with the Council or voting to a transfer of housing stock. Simon declared that it is for the tenants to choose the outcome. Tenants are kept informed and up-dated, via a monthly newsletter, of the current housing stock transfer situation.

The Welsh Assembly Government are funding all the costs of the stock transfer ballot. If the stock transfer takes place then the new organisation will be known as Heritage Coast Homes. The ballot is due to take place March 2011.

Questions.

Pam Toms asked that Simon explain the forthcoming “door knocking” exercise, as all in attendance are dealing with the most vulnerable people in the area.

Simon informed the group that there was to be an exercise undertaken by the Council’s housing staff to speak to Council tenants. The objective was to determine whether they wished to vote for the proposed transfer or wished to vote against it. Staff are also going to be available to answer any questions that the tenants may have in relation to the housing stock transfer. Initially the visits to tenants will take place over a four week period, Monday to Friday from 1700-2030 and Saturday mornings. Staff will identify themselves to all tenants.

Kay Quinn asked if the responsibility towards Homelessness is remaining within the Council. Simon advised that no decision has been made as yet but a decision will be made, post ballot.

Kay Quinn asked whether Simon was able to attend all future SPLG meetings to up-date everyone regarding the housing stock transfer. Simon confirmed that he was able to do so.

Presentation – Annette Kerr – Taff Housing Association – Customer Involvement Strategy.

Annette Kerr gave a presentation on customer involvement within Taff Housing Association. Annette stated that all departments within Taff Housing Association are actively involved in the scheme, H.R., finance, etc.

Annette explained that the aim of the strategy was to continuously improve services through the greater involvement of customers, using formal and informal approaches and tenant and resident groups. This ensures the aims of the Welsh Assembly Government tenant participation strategy are met, i.e. that there are consistent standards in tenant participation and customer

involvement, and that this is seen as part of the core business and not as an add-on activity.

Taff encourage participation via various groups, such as Taff Tenants and Residents Association, a Tenant Information Panel, and Editorial Panel. Taff Housing Association has also established a Taff BME Contact Group, made up of Taff tenants. This group is also available for consultation by other groups.

Taff Housing Association encourages tenant involvement via quarterly events, with various activities and rewards offered as an incentive. Taff offer timebank credit rewards for participation to use towards training sessions, educational courses, leisure activities, etc. Companies will donate prizes for the timebank scheme, and Taff have also funded trips using tenants cashed in vouchers. .

For further information, contact Annette Kerr, Customer Involvement Officer, (e-mail...annette.kerr@taffhousing.co.uk)

Questions:

Kay Quinn asked whether this scheme falls within Taff's mainstream budget. Annette stated that this was all within Taff's mainstream budget.

Pam Toms asked whether Taff have to contribute financially towards the Timebank reward offers. Annette stated that they do not contribute financially as partner associations will benefit in other ways, depending upon the offer and the partner organisation. For example, a partner association could benefit by having an increase in its attendance, or attracting a new audience, developing further volunteers via the tenant's participation, etc.

Pam Toms asked how many properties Taff have in the Cardiff area. Annette confirmed that they have just under 2000.

Presentation – Fez Fernandez-Bennett – Pathways to Work.

Fez informed the group that this is a new scheme introduced by the government to manage sick absence, and concentrates more on what an employee may be able to do at work rather than what they cannot do. With the new fit note a doctor can advise that a patient is either fit or not fit for work, and that if a patient is declared fit for work then a GP is able on the note to suggest ways which could help an employee get back to work. These could include a phased return to work, flexible working, amended duties, and workplace adaptations.

Pathways to Work aims to get people back into work, often after months and years of being out of the workplace. Pathways to Work will assess what clients are able to do and will then provide tailored support towards this. Pathways to Work staff will also work with employers to try and provide the most beneficial return to work for the employee. Every person is appointed their own advisor who in turn will provide work-focused advice to individuals on incapacity benefit, who have experienced a prolonged period of health-

related absence to help to find, or return, to work.(Contact Fez 01446 461230 for further information.)

Questions:

Kath Hudd asked whether visits were made to tenant's homes. Fez explained that they were unable to do so unless it was in exceptional circumstances.

Presentation-Doreen Murray-United Welsh Housing Association-Food Banks.

Doreen explained that this initiative came from the Welsh Rural Regeneration Fund about five years ago, and was designed to promote the "five a day" fruit and veg healthy eating scheme amongst United Welsh tenants. Currently, there are over 200 fruit and veg co-ops throughout Wales, with 4 in the Vale of Glamorgan. The scheme started with Sam Powell from SPICE, who was seconded into United Welsh.

Tenants are encouraged to participate in the scheme. United Welsh hopes that this scheme will promote healthy eating amongst their tenants, improve their budgeting skills and help improve relationships within the community. United Welsh has also used participation of this scheme as part of their time banking scheme, as a way of residents to earn credits.

(For further information about the scheme please contact Hannah James, Rural Regeneration Unit, 02920 232943, mob. 07717 205438.)
Hannah.james@rru.org.uk

Questions:

Kay Quinn asked whether monies received from the club get re-cycled back into the organisation. Doreen stated that this was the case.

Karen Berry asked how this scheme is funded. Doreen informed the meeting that United Welsh put money aside for the project.

Aspire Project, Gofal Cymru.

The Aspire Project is delivering the STEPS program to tenants. It is a training programme similar to life coaching in order to achieve goals and aspirations and to improve confidence. The first programme will run for 7 weeks for approximately 2 hours a week.

The programme was initially for Newydd tenants only, however this has now been opened up to all tenures and the programme is not only for people with mental health needs.

The capacity of the programme is 10 clients. Courses have been ear marked for September/October 2010 and January 2011.

If anyone is interested in attending the forthcoming programme could they contact Julie Jones, Gofal Cymru, tel. 01446 742941.

Training Opportunities or Feedback

Pam Toms informed the group that Mental Capacity Act training is available once again, 13 December. To book onto the training please contact the Supporting People Team, (tel.01446 709788). This is only available for those who are contracted to work with the Vale of Glamorgan Council contracts.

Questions

None.

Suggestions for Future Meetings

Maureen Neave will attend the December SPLG meeting to explain the recent changes to housing benefit that will take place from April 2011 onwards.

AOB

Amber Constant, Flying Start, Vale of Glamorgan informed the meeting that Flying Start have opened a new family centre in Gladstone Road, Barry. Kath Hudd asked whether the scheme was restricted to residents in the Flying Start area alone. Amber replied that this was dependant upon the project as some are restricted, whilst others are not. (For further information contact: Flying Start, 01446 732180.)

Pam Toms – Supporting People Budget.

Pam explained to the meeting that a Welsh Assembly Government official from the Grants team attended the last SPIN meeting and advised all authorities that they are looking to claw back 12% over the next three years. It is likely that the bulk of the cuts will be in 2011/12. A comprehensive spending review is to be completed by 31/10/10 and after this time local authorities will be notified officially of the exact budget cuts and if certain services/tariffs have been targeted.

Questions.

Paul Bevan asked whether each Local Authority has similar cuts. Pam explained that she had not been informed as yet of how the Welsh Assembly will implement the cuts, but added that the Vale is one of the lower funded Authorities.

Paul further asked how the savings will be made. Pam replied that until she has more information from the Welsh Assembly then she cannot really target any particular support areas.

Chair of next meeting, time and date.

Kathy Belle, Pen yr Enfys, Thursday 16th December 2010, 2:30pm in Committee Room 1, Civic Offices.