

WAVERLEY HOUSING CUSTOMER REVIEW PANEL

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

FROM

COMMUNICATIONS SCRUTINY EXERCISE

MARCH 2018

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1. BACKGROUND

Having been encouraged by the response of the Board to the Re-let Standard Scrutiny project of 2016/17 the Customer Review Panel met on 19th April 2017 and chose the area of Communications for their next scrutiny project for 2017/18.

The specific areas of communication we covered in our scrutiny activities were:

- a) The Tenant Zone of the website;
- b) Allocations documentation - the “Applying for a Home” leaflet, various allocations correspondence to applicants; and the allocations process right through to the Settling-In Visit Survey carried out on new tenants.

2. FINDINGS:

2.1 WEBSITE- TENANT ZONE

Whilst the Panel agreed that overall the ‘Tenant Zone’ area of the site contains the type of information we as tenants would like to read we particularly identified the following points in our review:

- 2.1.1 A need to ensure that the Customer Review Panel page is updated with the current focus of review and proposed future review. It still refers to Re-let standards and should have changed to Communications. A list of future meeting dates so that interested parties could attend.
- 2.1.2 When referring to e.g. the Customer Review Panel or Social Housing Quality Standards the abbreviation or any other jargonised term should not be used in the first instance, any subsequent reference can then be by the abbreviation. Not all readers will know what CRP or SHQS stands for.

- 2.1.3 Insert the words 'click here' before any links, as not all readers are aware of this and that these are links which will connect them with another page.
- 2.1.4 The 'How are we performing?' area needs updating with the most recent Quarterly Reports.
- 2.1.5 Have a link to the Tenants Handbook at the end of the FAQ's for any further queries customers may have.
- 2.1.6 FAQ section should include information on different waste collection times for different areas etc. OR a direct link to the SBC website waste collection page.
- 2.1.7 The pictures need updating e.g. Customer Review Panel as well as pictures of previous staff members no longer with the organisation.
- 2.1.8 Update/ delete the reference to the Stonefield Residents Group, as this group is no longer active.

3. ALLOCATIONS DOCUMENTATION

- 3.1 "Applying for a Home" leaflet - In this part of our scrutiny exercise we identified the following points the majority of which are for clarification purposes.
 - 3.1.1 The order of information in the booklet should be rearranged. E.g. have the 'What happens if I am successful for an offer' section after the 'priority section'.
 - 3.1.2 Page 5 last paragraph states that if an applicant refuses 2 suitable offers then they will be suspended for 3 months. It goes on to say that after 3 months the suspension will be lifted "provided you have rectified the reason for your initial suspension". This does not

make sense and should be deleted as the suspension refers specifically to the refusal of 2 suitable offers only.

- 3.1.3 In the review of the 'Applying for a Home' leaflet the consequences of declining offers given the high percentage of refusals should be given more prominence. Currently this is covered by only one line in Section 6 Suspending Applications "For refusal of two reasonable offers – suspension 3 months."
- 3.1.4 Acknowledgement letter- the third paragraph needs changing to reflect that 'Other available properties' are no longer separated and are advertised alongside newly available properties and not differentiated.
- 3.1.5 Armed Forces Priority application - the third bullet point, change 'either serving' to 'who has served'.
- 3.1.6 Overcrowding priority - clarify where one bed space would not actually qualify for another bedroom and the need for a bronze priority pass. Having two levels of priority may be confusing for applicants.
- 3.1.7 Priority Pass rejection letter - needs to include the reasons for being rejected. These are required in the event of an applicant wishing to appeal.

4. ALLOCATIONS PROCESS

- 4.1 During overview from management on the allocations process, the Panel also noted that relet timescales were higher in comparison to Scottish average figures. There appears currently a gap between an applicant being sent an offer letter following the closing date of the property and the property being viewed when Ready to Let. With the intention of reducing relet times and refusals, could

consideration be given to an accompanied inspection with the Property Services Manager which we understand is done within 3 working days of the termination date, to enable the successful applicant to view the property and be advised of any upgrading work. At this stage the chosen applicant can be asked whether they are still interested and, if not, it may be that other works could be identified which might secure the allocation rather than receiving a refusal when the property is ready to let much later and then having to go to the next person then. We think this could help to reduce refusals and relet times.

- 4.2 If the accompanied inspection with the applicant is approved as above consider giving successful applicants a short ‘cooling-off’ period after viewing the property when ready and before signing up. We think to have these done on the same day could be seen as pressurising applicants into signing up and having the cooling off time, would avoid any applicant feeling ‘pressured’ and not thinking it through properly. This may help with longer tenancies, as we noted some were terminated after short periods.

5. SETTLING-IN VISIT SURVEY

- 5.1 The panel had suggested new tenants be surveyed on satisfaction with the allocation process. We were informed that such a question was contained within the settling-in visit survey, and so we included in this exercise a review of the questions asked within the survey form.

5.2 Survey leaflet suggested points:

- Q7 delete ‘generally’
- Q8 insert email and other (please specify).

- 5.3 We noted that surveys are not completed independently by new tenants but with housing staff about 5-6 weeks after the tenancy has started. We consider that tenants could feel under pressure to answer positively and any improvements to service needed could be being missed. We think these should be sent out for independent

completion with follow-up by housing staff to make sure they are completed.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BOARD

6.1 Website-Tenant Zone:

- 6.1.1 There should be a more structured regular review of the whole website to ensure that all pictures and information are more regularly brought up-to-date including those specifically identified in our scrutiny exercise.
- 6.1.2 We request that our findings be given consideration and approval by the Board for change.

6.2 Allocations Documentation:

- 6.2.1 We request that our findings from reviewing the allocations process, allocations correspondence and culminating in the settling-in survey should be considered by the Board and given their approval for change.