

Northampton Borough Council

Northampton Disabled People's Forum

Friday, 18 March 2016

Officers at the meeting Alice Morgan
Darren Berwick

1. WELCOMES, INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Present: Martin DeSoraio (MD Co Chair), Mike Jackson (MJ British Polio Fellowship), Daniel Smith (DS Northants Police), Nicky McKenzie (NM Northampton Partnership Homes), Darren Berwick (DB Northampton Partnership Homes) , Debi Waite (DW, NBC) Emma Kilby (EK NBC), Elnora Latchman (EL LGSS/NCC) Beverly Mannell (BM NBC/Tennant), Carl Weininger (CW British Polio Fellowship), Cllr Rofi Ashraf (Cllr A, RA) , Norman Adams (NA Northampton DCH), Barbara Barber (BB Independent), Larry Barber (LB, Independent), Sarah Hayle (SH community Law)

Apologies: Rashmi Shah, Jacqueline Forrest- Smith, Cllr Larratt, Richard Fitzhenry, Laura Noble, Simon Burgess.

Chair welcomed everyone to meeting

2. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

NA: Questioned why certain questions had not been answered.

Statements made by officer EK at the previous meeting stating that there was a £1.4 million budget.

The actual budget is over £1.8 million where has the rest of the money gone?

NA checked the percentage of spend made. Until Jan 59% has been spent. The need is there to spend the money.

At the end of Jan 36 cases were awaiting an Occupational Therapist (OT) recommendation. 32 were still waiting, and 23 cases were still in process. Olympus Care should attend the Forum to answer questions.

DW stated that she had only seen the minutes today so will need to look into this. To date approx £1.7 million has been spent and further will be committed to spend.

NA said that he had obtained the figures from NBC website and this was not stated on there.

DW said that she look into this.

DW: We have no waiting list.

NA: There is an expectation that the freedom of Information is factual. NA gave information where this was obtained from.

BM: Officers of NBC have in the past given the Forum incorrect information. They should be reprimanded.

DW: Apologies if this has happened in the past. Correct information will be given in future. There is no intention to give incorrect information. Can give information for what has been spent and what has been committed.

ACTION: NBC officers to be invited to next meeting to give information.

DS: Why wasn't the Forum given correct figure? There is a discrepancy. There is a huge gap and there is justification to question this.

NA : We have been given the information now verbally.

LB: Why wasn't the information for February published on the website? We are in the month of March now.

CW: Things change all the time and information published is always lagging behind. There has to be allowance for that.

AM: No update about the lifts.

BM: Would like the Forum to invite Olympus Care. There are not enough Occupational Therapists (OTs).

NA: This is a statutory duty and there is real concern about the lack of OTs.

ACTION: The Forum to write to NCC.
ACTION: AM/NM to invite Cllr Brown to Forum meeting

After the meeting NBC officers sent the following information:

As of the 18th March 2016 DFG expenditure was £1,397,065.97, with an outstanding commitment of £314,244.66 i.e. committed not spent - meaning grant aid approved & works being undertaken.

Therefore the total DFG budget committed & spent as of the 18th March 2016 was £1,711,310.63.

Please note -These figures are subject to reconciliation with the finance department.

3. NORTHAMPTON PARTNERSHIP HOMES - RICHARD FITZHENRY

Richard Fitzhenry did not attend. NPH Officers discussed the following :

DB: A new policy will come into force on 1st February. All common areas shared by more than one person have to be kept clear of fire hazards. There will be a zero tolerance approach to this to ensure fire safety. Signs are being erected to notify people of this. The department will be legally entitled to clear any unguarded material eg potted plants, coffee tables, doormats, prams and mobility scooters. Personal balconies are exempt.

The fire risks are categorised:

Category 1: Imminent fire risk items eg – sofas, mobility scooters. Will ask for the owners' compliance immediately. If the owner cannot be found, a sticker is placed on the item. If the object is not removed within 1 day, it will be taken away.

Category 2: Medium fire risk items eg bikes. The risk is not imminent but can cause concern.

Category 3: Low fire risk items, Items have to be moved within 7 days. Letters are given to ask owner to remove them.

The issue is that a lot of properties are no longer fit for purpose. There are long corridors and mobility scooters create obstructions for wheelchair users. Bungalows are assessed when they become empty. Assessing flats is more complicated. If there is no safe storage then it may be that the tenant will have to move to another location. This will be assessed on a case by case basis. Will look at future proofing flats eg – placing racks for buggies.

NA: Agreed with the policy. It is expected however, that NPH should deliver what they are expected to. An instance occurred where a fire safety officer shared a video in another meeting. The officer assured members of the meeting that the video will be posted on the NPH website on 14 March. However, this has not been done.

DB: Assured forum members that will be done.

BM: Pleased with the word "enforcement," Everyday tasks can be difficult for people with disability. Raised concerns about not allowing doormats. When there is rain people need to wipe their feet. Doormats can be thin.

DB: The policy is zero tolerance. The doormat can be inside the door rather than outside.

NA: Zero tolerance should be that. It is important to keep everything simple. And we should not have exceptions. There should be no doormats and no caveats.

MJ: How are you dealing with chairlifts?

DB: They cannot be stored in communal areas.

Cllr A: Only had three people complain in her ward. How is information been given to diverse communities?

NM: Currently looking at translation services and a decision will be made about this.

DS: Translation in foreign languages is expensive. Better option is to approach local communities. This will help build engagement. With the regards to the issue of doormats in corridors – these need to be removed. Carpets can be cut and inserted in.

CW: There is a fine line between disability and being elderly and there is a real need for people to have scooters.

DB: Some scooters bought off non regulatory sites and can be dangerous.

NM: People can be rehoused and there will be support for vulnerable and disabled people.

CW: How do you prioritise groups of people?

NM: People can only bid on property that they are eligible for. There is a shortage of housing and no decisions have been made with sheltered stocks. No longer have resident wardens and we are looking at changes.

Cllr Ashraf: Do you have enough stock for people who have a disability?

NM: Review has not been completed yet and there is no timeline. Previously, we didn't have sufficient property. A consultation is taking place and there should be stock for the disabled and elderly.

4. COMMUNITY LAW - NEIL JOSHI

SH: Community Law is a volunteer organisation and have an office in One Stop Shop (OSS). The organisation offers advice on benefits, debts housing etc. SH brought leaflets to the Forum.

ACTION: Drop in times for the OSS to be circulated electronically to the Forum.

SH then gave a presentation called energy Best Deal encouraging Forum members to review their energy bills and to look for better deals. Leaflets were brought to meeting for Forum members to take away.

ACTION: Presentation to be electronically circulated.

DS: Supported the idea for people to look for better energy deals. There is a potential to save approx. £200 per year.

Cllr Ashraf: People don't always feel confident to switch. Would like it to be easy and not time consuming.

SH: There is a lot of information about your bills. Suppliers have to treat you fairly. Notice should be given before tariffs come to an end. You can also complain to Ofgem. People are concerned about changing tariffs. Prices are coming down and you could save approx. £30 per month.

CW: Is there a contract which you are tied into?

SH: Yes you are in a contract but sometimes there are no exit fees. So there is no penalty if you leave. The process is not an exact science so it is advised to keep your readings.

SH gave advice on how to switch suppliers and there is no risk of gas and electricity supply being switched through the transitional period. The process is straightforward.

SH explained the Priority Services Register (PSR). If you are pensioner, disabled or chronically sick, have a sight or hearing difficulties, you can qualify to go on the PSR and access services.

SH explained the warm home discount. This is a discount of £140 which is deducted from the

electricity. The scheme is closed at the moment and will reopen in May. Contact community Law for more details.

Contact details for Community Law: 01604 621038.

ACTION: Presentation given to be circulated

5. DEBBIE LOLE - NENE CLINICAL COMMISSIONING GROUP

Did not attend

6. ACTION PLAN

AM developed a Hate Crime survey with Luisa Jepson from Northants Police. (Luisa is no longer at the Police). There is a paper survey and is also running live on the website. Have received 45 responses.

ACTION: Survey to be shared across forums.

Looking for space for International Day for People with Disability. The Guildhall is booked.

ACTION: To look at other venues including the Grosvenor Centre.

7. COMMUNITY INFORMATION EXCHANGE

The Chair had to remind attendees to go through the Chair

8. ITEMS FOR NEXT AND FUTURE MEETINGS

Olympus Care and Cllr Brown to be invited to next meeting

9. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

May 13 Holding Room, The Guildhall 10.30am – 12.30pm

The meeting concluded at Time Not Specified