

AT A MEETING  
of the  
**CPA HOUSING IMPROVEMENT  
PLAN JOINT WORKING GROUP** held at  
the Council House, Walsall on **Thursday 28  
April 2005** at 6.00 p.m.

**PRESENT**

Councillor C. Ault	
Councillor Barton	
Andrea Little	(Head of Supported Housing Services)
Kathy McAteer	(Assistant Director Adult Services)
Jason MacGilp	(Assistant Director Community Regeneration and Housing)
Julie Metcalf	(Head of Younger Adults & Disability Services)
Dejan Ajzenkol	
George Fanning	(Interim Service manager)
Deb Breedon	(Scrutiny Support)

**APOLOGIES**

Apologies for non attendance were submitted on behalf of Councillor I. Shires, Councillor D. J. Pitt, Councillor Walker and Sue Byard.

**DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND PARTY WHIP**

There were no declarations of interest.

**NOTES OF MEETING 24 MARCH 2005**

Members agreed that the notes of the previous meeting were an accurate record.

**UPDATE OF HOUSING SERVICES CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

Jason MacGilp outlined the documents: Monthly Improvements, Housing Inspection, April 2005: -

( see annexed.)

Dejan Ajzenkol explained that the documents were to track records over a period of time. Jason MacGilp further outlined the document and asked if members wanted to highlight a couple of operational items for further discussion. Councillor Ault indicated the Disability Facility Grant (DFG). Jason MacGilp explained that the operational side of the DFG team had now been relocated to the Civic Centre and that new equipment available within the centre would improve the services and officers ability to track

disability facilities grant. Kathy McAteer advised that a range of leaflets regarding disability services, both specific and general were available. She said that DFG management had changed to private sector housing and new public information was being produced to reflect the changes.

Andrea Little said that Sue Byard was drafting a leaflet outlining the DFG process with a range of other material. George Fanning confirmed that the leaflet would be ready to circulate in the near future.

Councillor Ault asked for clarification if a customer with a problem approached him who should he approach for advice. Kathy McAteer said that all members enquiries should follow the usual process and go through herself. Kathy would then refer the enquiry to the appropriate service for a response. This would depend on the customers circumstances, as it could be a social work team or the OT service that are involved; She confirmed that where they were in the system would depend on current changes.

Jason MacGilp indicated that the 'operational sheet' tabled at the meeting indicated what level of activity Walsall Housing Group would deal with and what would be passed forward. He advised that an approved step forward in agreeing the framework had been adaptations under £5,000 would be carried out by Walsall Housing Group own contractors, funded from the extra capital allocated to clear the back log.

Kathy McAteer advised that the new structure was implemented on 7<sup>th</sup> March but there was still work to be completed to develop the new younger adults social work service. She suggested that a report showing the progress on adaptations and a flowchart be submitted to the first meeting of the municipal year. George Fanning advised that currently he was updating the flowchart and drawing up agreement to show who does what. He informed members that the report and flowchart should be available within two weeks. Members requested that the information be circulated to them prior to the next meeting.

Councillor Barton asked for clarification of the procedure for members dealing with individual queries. Kathy McAteer outlined the process for members: -

- Member puts forward the request in writing or by e-mail to Kathy or by telephone via her PA, Maddy Wilkes.
- There would be a check to see who was dealing with the individual.
- The enquiry would be forwarded to the relevant Head of Service for investigation and a response.

Jason MacGilp advised members that the next housing inspection had been put back and would now take place in March 2006. He said it was an ideal opportunity to reassess the improvement plan from the previous inspection in conjunction with the CPA improvement plan to build an action plan for housing improvements for March 2006. He said it would also be an opportunity to embed some of the improvements achieved to date. Kathy McAteer said that tremendous progress had been made and that in addition to continuing with the actions of the previous review takes stock of the recent self assessment work to build an action plan for March 2006.

Jason MacGilp asked members and officers to consider the role of the joint working group and the way forward for this group. He indicated that the frequency of meetings should be considered; that amended improvement plan be brought forward merging CPA action plan, housing improvement plan, service plans, and a programme for the revised panel.

He referred to the initial self assessment document and suggested the document could be brought forward to the second meeting of the CPA working group in September 2005. He requested that members receive an update at the first meeting July 2005.

In response to questions from Councillor Ault, George Fanning informed the members that the occupational therapy team had made tremendous improvements; He clarified that some cases should not have been on the waiting list and have now been removed. In response to questions about staffing levels; he advised members that the staffing levels were still down by 40% but gave information of the special occupational therapy team coming to deal with the backlog of occupational therapy cases at Walsall. He confirmed that they would be dealing primarily with the assessment criteria. Councillor Barton welcomed this initiative stating that once the customer had been seen and assessed officers could easily recognise whether the case was urgent or was able to wait for services to be provided.

#### AGREED

- 1) That officer's provide an inspection action plan March 2006 to the next meeting of the CPA housing working group in July 2005.
- 2) That George Fanning circulate a copy of the flowchart and report showing improved procedures when complete.
- 3) That members note the great improvements in the occupational therapy service to the community and welcome the introduction of a specialised team to deal with the backlog of occupational therapy assessments.

#### BRIEFING NOTE CPA IMPROVEMENT PLAN JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL

##### MYSTERY SHOPPING

Officers tabled the document: - see annexed.

The purpose to outline a mystery shopping note for members linked to the availability and quality of information for service users. Andrea Little was in attendance to give an outline to the document and to discuss with members a way forward for mystery shopping. She advised members that the Council is working in partnership with whg on a mystery shopping initiative involving tenants. A number of tenants have been selected and are being trained as mystery shoppers to go out and test services, using agreed scenarios. Their findings will be shared with officers and a report submitted to panel. She advised that in order to compliment this work members would be requested to visit designated information points such as receptions and "mystery shop" the availability of information. Members would be provided with a checklist, and visits undertaken quarterly.

It was suggested that the mystery shoppers should be invited to the working group to give reports back to members or that an informal focus group be held to discuss the outcomes of mystery shopping exercise. Members recognised that the overall aim of the exercise is to learn how we provide a service and how we can do it better.

### AGREED

- 1) That the “tenant” mystery shoppers be invited to the working group to present their findings when known.
- 2) That member’s be requested to test the availability of information at designated access points, forwarding information to officers for collation into a report back to the working group.
- 3) That officer’s be requested to write to members to ask them to give an indication of their willingness to visit designated offices and partake in the mystery shopping exercise.
- 4) That officers organise training for those members willing to participate and develop a checklist for use in mystery shopping

### INFORMATION LEAFLETS

Andrea Little referred to the pack of information leaflets circulated to members (see annexed). She circulated a members information pack contents list coloured coded to advise members of the information within their pack and asked for their comments.

Members welcomed the information packs and commented that the information was easy to read and very clear. Andrea Little asked for clarification on the type of sites that members would want the leaflets distributed to. The following list of sites was agreed: -

- Walsall Housing Group Offices.
- All councillors to receive leaflets.
- Council office reception areas.
- Salvation Army.
- Faith Communities.
- Police Stations.
- Youth facilities and Youth Opinions Unite.
- GP Surgeries and Health Centres.
- Bus Stations and Train Stations.

Andrea Little, Head of Supported Housing thanked members for their guidance.

### DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Members agreed the purposed CPA Housing Working Group 26 May be cancelled and that the group meet following the re-establishment of the CPA Housing Working Group in July 2005.