



Notes of Meeting			
Subject:	Supported Housing Forum		
Date:	20/09/2022	Time:	14:00
Location:	Betty Paterson House		
Attendees:	<p>DBC Staff – Jenny Dickerson (Improvement & Engagement Officer), Kevin Mutio (Supported Housing - Team Leader), Daniel French (Improvement & Engagement Coordinator), Jenny Butterfield (Supported Housing Lead Officer), Katie Ellis (Supported Housing Lead Officer), Andrew Tippen (Supported Housing Lead Officer), Amanda Greenaway (Estates & Cleaning Team Leader) & Tina Ferris (Cleaning Supervisor).</p> <p>Attendees – Keith Field (Chair), Muriel Williams, John Baldwin, Ron Ellison, Susan Horton, Jean Reid, Barbara Daniels, Jacqueline Nunn & Bernard Coshall.</p> <p>Apologies – Jackie Walker, Lena Emmins, Margaret Stevens & Neke Gaylon.</p>		

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1	<p>Welcome, apologies and minutes from last meeting:</p> <p>Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Chair – Apologies from Jackie Walker, Lena Emmins, Margaret Stevens & Neke Gaylon.</p> <p>AG introduced herself to the Supported Housing Forum.</p> <p>The minutes from the last meeting were agreed and accepted.</p>	Chair
2	<p>Cost of living update:</p> <p>KM – This was supposed to be the last item on the Agenda, but I think it is very important to give this priority today. The Chief Executive is working with many local charities, and senior managers have been meeting every week to discuss the rising costs of living. Andrew Tippen would like to ask you four questions, and it will be very good to hear your feedback and ideas.</p> <p>AT – I would like to find out the main areas where you think people might struggle, during the cost of living crisis. What are the problems facing Dacorum residents now, and in the near future?</p> <p>Chair – Food will be a problem for many people.</p> <p>SH – Everything is going up, and it is not just going up by pennies, it is going up by a lot of money.</p> <p>Chair – In our Supported Housing scheme, the council provides the heating and the hot water, so there is not much we can cut down on. We can cut down on using the television or the lights but I am not sure if that will save a lot.</p> <p>RE – If you are not using electricity for heating then electrical appliances do not generally use large amounts of electricity, apart from when cooking.</p>	KM

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	<p>There is not much scope for cutting your electricity if this is the case.</p> <p>Chair – Our bill has more than doubled in just three months, even though we are trying to limit how much we use.</p> <p>AT – Does anybody have smart meters? If so, how do you find these?</p> <p>Chair – They just tell you what you already know, that you are going into the red.</p> <p>BD – It is just another form of big brother as far as I am concerned, I will not have one.</p> <p>AT – I have a smart meter at home, and it shows me how much is being used at that present time. It is the one thing I find useful, because I make the children go and switch their bedroom lights off when they are not using them.</p> <p>SH – One thing that worries me about them is that you wake up in the morning and there is already money on the smart meter. They put your standing charge on there, so you can see that you have spent money before you have even got out of bed.</p> <p>AT – That could also be things like leaving your television on standby. They are called ‘vampire devices’ when devices use your electricity without doing anything.</p> <p>RE – When I am not using my television, I turn it off at the mains so it cannot use any electricity. I even turn off my Wi-Fi at night, because I am asleep and will not be using it. I am not sure how much electricity that is saving, but I do it anyway.</p> <p>KM – One thing that worries us in Supported Housing is that people will avoid using the heating or turn it down to a very low temperature. We do not want people to be extremely cold and suffer because of this.</p> <p>JR – Will the council be increasing our service charge bills that pay for things like gas?</p> <p>KM – We have not heard anything about that happening, but you will definitely get a letter if this is the case.</p> <p>AT – What services do we currently have at our disposal to address these problems? Do you think people are comfortable in coming forward if they need help? If not, how can we make people feel comfortable?</p> <p>JR – I think having meetings is a good idea.</p> <p>SH – I agree, this will help people to realise that they are not the only ones struggling.</p> <p>JB – Would any of you feel comfortable going to your SHO if you were struggling?</p> <p>JR – Some older people are very proud, and this is the main reason they may not feel comfortable doing this.</p> <p>KM – At the council, we have a foodbank. If you know anybody who is struggling to pay for food or the basics, we can provide them with a bag of food and other essentials when they need help. You can have that delivered to your property if needed. You do not need a referral from a doctor or a health visitor; you just need to speak with your SHO.</p>	

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	<p>RE – That would be a good thing to put in the newsletters.</p> <p>AT – Many people who use foodbanks are currently working at the same time. Many people are currently accessing them and they are there to be used.</p> <p>JB – You may also want to think about the benefits you are getting, because you may not necessarily be getting all of the support you are entitled too. For example, if your savings have decreased then you may now be entitled to more benefits such as housing benefit. There is also attendance allowance, for people who have carers or rely on people to do things for them. Making yourselves aware of what support is out there and what benefits you are entitled too could change your finances quite a lot.</p> <p>KM – I saw earlier today that another £150 payment has been authorised by the government, for people who are classed as disabled.</p> <p>AT – Does everybody use the noticeboards at your schemes? This is another way we can get information and messages out to people.</p> <p>RE – I get the impression that nobody looks at the noticeboards at our scheme.</p> <p>BD – We have one in the lounge and one in the laundry room. Quite a few people do not use either of them.</p> <p>RE – We have one out in the street. You cannot miss it and people still do not look at it. We also have one in the communal lounge, but there are only a few people who use the lounge.</p> <p>JN – We have four, and they are all in the same area. People still ask what events are happening, even if the information has been on the board for a few weeks. This shows that people are not always using them.</p> <p>Chair – There was an exercise done in the past, about where noticeboards should be placed and what information should be displayed on them. Did anything come of that?</p> <p>AT – We did look at the noticeboards. Some schemes have lots of space available for noticeboards and some schemes have hardly any. Keeping them consistent is proving to be difficult. We have improved at making sure the information on them is up to date, but there is still clearly more work to be done.</p> <p>KM – Another thing that I would like to mention is HertsHelp. If for any reason you do not feel comfortable coming to us for help, you can always contact HertsHelp. We will make sure their contact number is displayed on each noticeboard. You can contact them with anything, and they will always direct you to the right place.</p> <p>AT – What are the obvious gaps in provision that will put Dacorum residents at risk? Is there anywhere you think we will have to do something or people will be put at risk?</p> <p>BD – It is hard to know what to do to help people. If you ask people if they are receiving any benefits, they do not always want to tell you. Some people are struggling, even if they do not want to admit it.</p> <p>AT – We have to make people realise that we are all in this together, and everybody is struggling in different ways. This is a society thing, not an</p>	

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	<p>individual thing.</p> <p>JR – Some people are not aware of what they are entitled too, and nobody seems to be prepared to tell them. Who would they go too for this information?</p> <p>KM – If you want to talk to your SHO, they should be able to help you. If not, you can contact the council on 01442 228000 and they will direct you to the right place. You are right, information is key.</p> <p>JR – In this scheme, somebody received some benefits and then two more people realised they were entitled to it. They had no knowledge that they were entitled it before this. I think that it is sad if people are struggling and they do not know what benefits they are entitled too because nobody tells them.</p> <p>KM – We do have a benefits department at the council. They used to visit tenants, so we will be asking them if they can do this again. We would like them to attend the Tenant Information Meetings and talk to tenants about the benefits they could receive.</p> <p>KE – Citizens Advice is also a good place to go for help, and they have drop-ins where you can discuss benefits. How many people have access to emails? We could send the information digitally and you could click on a link which would take you to the website, instead of having to write it down after reading the noticeboard.</p> <p>BD – I think the next generation will probably do more of that, but a lot of us in my generation don't even have a mobile phone.</p> <p>RE – Do we have any means of knowing how many people are online?</p> <p>KM – In Supported Housing we can do a check, but we will have to rely on tenants telling us.</p> <p>RE – You will probably find that around a third of your residents are not online by any means.</p> <p>AT – Who do we need around the table to discuss these issues and plug the gaps? We have already said the Benefits department to make sure everybody is getting what they are entitled too. We have already said that regular scheme meetings will give people the opportunity to discuss how things are going and discuss their concerns. Is there anybody else we need to get involved in the conversation?</p> <p>KM – GPs. We are looking at how we can incorporate them within our meetings. We have a few GPs that are visiting our sites and speaking with our tenants whenever they can.</p> <p>SH – PCSOs would be good.</p> <p>KM – We have some community navigators who work closely with the GPs and support people with a lot of things such as taking people to appointments, helping them with bills and helping people to complete benefits assessments.</p> <p>BD – Do you have a number where the community navigators can be contacted?</p> <p>JB – Your SHO can help you with that. There has to be a specific need, as they are very limited on their time and numbers. They are put in place when</p>	

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	somebody has a specific need, and help you with the area you are struggling with.	
3	<p>Cleaning:</p> <p>AG – I am here to be the voice of cleaning. I am sure you have had a few issues with cleaning in the past, and I have heard windows mentioned quite a lot. I have been involved with Supported Housing most of my life, and I understand that you need to know what we are doing. We need to offer you a service that has not been there for quite a while. I am hoping to bring something to the table for how we do things in a better way, so you get value for money and get a nice clean environment.</p> <p>BD – I would just like to say that at Leys Road & Gatecroft, we love our cleaner and she is brilliant.</p> <p>AG – Thank you, I appreciate that feedback. I have been in the cleaning industry for 35 years, and have been with three different councils. I have a lot of knowledge about the good, the bad and the way forward. I would like to introduce to you the new system that I will be implementing. Going forward, our cleaners will be given a cleaning specification. This will tell the cleaner exactly what they need to do daily, weekly and monthly.</p> <p>JB – Will a copy of the specification be given to the SHO?</p> <p>AG – Yes, it will.</p> <p>JN – Will the tenants be able to see that?</p> <p>AG – Yes, you will be able to see the schedule so that you know when different areas are due to be cleaned. In addition, the cleaners will be getting a programme. On that weekly programme, it will say what work they need to do every single day. I am bringing experience, and I know what you should be having.</p> <p>Chair – During COVID-19, the cleaning service we received was excellent including the window cleaning. A week ago, we also had a deep clean. The only issue is that there are blu-tack marks on the walls where notices have been stuck previously. Is it possible to add that to your list?</p> <p>TF – Yes, we can get that sorted out.</p> <p>MW – We have quite a few carers who come in and they sometimes drop masks. Sometimes they stay in the lifts for three weeks sometimes. There are also lots of things dropped in the carpark.</p> <p>AG – We will look at that, as we will be discussing litter picking and how we can improve things.</p>	AG
4	Comfort Break	All
5	<p>Erosh Accreditation Review Results:</p> <p>KM – We have now had our Erosh accreditation review, which happens every year. We have had this accreditation a long time, and it is something we treasure because they do not hold back when giving us feedback and advice. They tell us about the things we are doing well and are not doing well and they want to know what changes we have made each time they come back.</p> <p>During the review, they met with tenants at Gravel Lane. There were no DBC staff present, it just them and the tenants discussing the experiences they</p>	KM

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	<p>have had. There were some tenants who were not happy, but overall they did get a sense of a good service. They recognised the importance of the Supported Housing Forum. They can see the work you do, the changes you help us to make and the value of the service that you give to tenants. You give your time for free and you are always ready to come and tell us how we can do things better. I want to say a massive thank you for that.</p> <p>Some tenants were unhappy with the way we have changed the Supported Housing Forum. It was changed because Erosh said that we spend too much time discussing scheme-specific issues. They wanted us to discuss bigger issues that are affecting tenants at all schemes. Thank you for sticking with us and helping us with these changes.</p> <p>I would like us to do a trial, where a few of you can visit some other schemes and attend their Tenant Information Meetings. You can then talk to the tenants and they can give their feedback on the Supported Housing Forum. You can then let us know at the next Supported Housing Forum meeting what the tenants have said.</p> <p><i>Barbara, Keith, Sue, Jean and Jacqui all volunteered for this.</i></p>	
6	<p>AOB:</p> <p><u>Tenant Information Meetings:</u></p> <p>KM – So far, I have been involved in a few of these meetings. I was encouraged to see the numbers of tenants that are coming to talk to us, be open about how they feel and speak about the things that are affecting them. When you get back to your schemes, I would like you to thank everybody who has been attending these meetings.</p> <p><u>Other AOB:</u></p> <p>BD – Some of the tenants are complaining about the smell of the bins at Gatecroft. The food bins are close to the flats, and we have been cleaning them out ourselves with the hose and disinfectant. We wondered if there might be money to send a bin cleaner every few months.</p> <p>KM – I have not really thought about this. I am meeting with the Amanda from the Cleaning team tomorrow so I will bring this up and get back to you.</p> <p>BD – It is only the food bins that smell. Some tenants do not like to open their windows because the smell comes in.</p> <p>KM – No money has ever been allocated to bin cleaning, but we will talk to the cleaning team to see if it is something that can be done.</p> <p>BD – Is it possible to have a meeting with the Compliance team regarding the empty cupboard policy? We have a big cupboard with lots of shelves and space, but we are not allowed to use it.</p> <p>KM – We can ask them to come to the next meeting.</p> <p>RE - Members will remember that at the June meeting I reported that we had no social activities at Rice Close since the COVID-19 pandemic, other than the Jubilee Party. We do have twice-weekly coffee mornings where varying numbers of people attend. I am pleased to report that since then we have developed a programme of events both on-site and at other locations. We have had only one council organised event, Andrew's dreaded quiz! All other events we have organised for ourselves. I would like to see more council-run</p>	Chair

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	events. We do have a particular problem here in that, try as I might, I cannot persuade any residents to put themselves up for a formal committee. We do have a couple of residents who do sterling work to help arrange the functions but I am concerned at the lack of formal arrangements.	
7	<p>Close of meeting</p> <p>Next meeting on Tuesday 6th December at 14:00 in The Forum.</p>	Chair