



Starley Housing Co-operative General Meeting

Minutes of Meeting held on 12th March 2013 at 7.00pm

Agenda Item 1	Present & Apologies
Members:	1. See attendance list
Also in attendance:	2. Geoff Birch (Accountant) and John MacSomhairle (Office)
Apologies:	3. See attendance list + Julie Capell
Chair and minutes:	4. Lee Brock chaired the meeting and John MacSomhairle took the minutes.
Agenda Item 2	Minutes of Previous Meeting
	1. The minutes of the last meeting were accepted as a true record and signed by the chairperson.
Agenda Item 3	Matters Arising
	1. There were no matters arising
Agenda Item 4	Complaints
Skateboarders:	1. A very successful meeting was held on 19 th February 2013 with Coventry City Councillor Jim O'Boyle, youth service operational manager Brian Mason, youth worker Janine Doyle and skateboarders Emily Martin and Adrian Cotterell. PC Tony Coy from West Midlands Police was also there. Council officers were directed to come up with ways in which the menace of skateboarding near shoppers and resident's homes could be tackled and the police were asked to get back to Cllr. O'Boyle with the legal means of dealing with them. These tasks have already been carried out and if there are further incidents, the means of dealing with them is in place. The skateboarders who attended said they were against young people causing problems by skateboarding on unofficial sites and had a code of conduct designed to prevent rude and inappropriate behaviour by them. They were in the process of developing a skateboarding venue at an industrial site. Co-op members at the meeting pledged support for this. Since the meeting there have been no further reports of skateboarders in the area. Thanks should go to Alan Mulholland for doing a lot of work to make this meeting happen and for involving Cllr O'Boyle.
Antisocial behaviour:	2. John reported that there are currently 10 cases of antisocial behaviour on the books. Three of these were straightforward noise nuisance cases; two of them were nuisance from dogs; two were putting neighbours and property at risk from fire or gas explosion (one of these was also about fire damage to co-op property); one was about smoking cannabis in a Vicroft Court block and the latest has to do with kicking in the front door to the office block. This puts the confidentiality of all co-op tenant files at risk and has yet to be dealt with. Three Written Warnings have been issued and one Acceptable Behaviour Contract was signed guaranteeing future good behaviour, another one is due to be signed. One Notice



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<p>Non attendance at ASB meetings:</p> <p>ASB Review Panel:</p>	<p>to Quit was issued and a further one is likely after the next management committee meeting.</p> <p>One ongoing problem is that some people think they don't have to attend ASB meetings, although the Conditions of Tenancy makes it very clear that this is required by all members. Failure to attend in most cases will lead to a Written Warning, followed by a Notice to Quit for those who still refuse to attend.</p> <p>3. The first ASB Review Panel was set up in February, comprising ordinary members who are not on the management committee. They heard two cases. On both occasions the complainants and the residents being complained about were given the opportunity to address the panel before a decision was reached. In both cases the original decision of the management committee was upheld.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 5</p> <p>Under-occupation and downsizing:</p> <p>Size of rooms for under-occupation:</p> <p>Co-operation with contractors:</p> <p>Taxi fares:</p>	<p>Co-operative Correspondence</p> <p>1. A memo from the Allocations Group regarding those with rent arrears who can't downsize was noted. The co-op's solicitor's advice was sought on this matter and she has recommended that members in debt could sign an acknowledgement of debt form before being transferred under the under-occupancy rules to smaller properties. It was agreed to adopt this as policy but that that there will be a no-transfer ceiling of 6 weeks arrears and all transfers will remain at the discretion of the management committee. All members likely to be affected by the under-occupancy rules were asked to please contact the office if they have not already done so. Help can also be obtained from the CAB and Coventry Law Centre.</p> <p>2. It was noted that section 326 of the Housing Act 1985 appears to state that rooms under 50ft square are to be counted as adequate space for half a person only.</p> <p>3. A memo from the office raised the issues of member co-operation with contractors employed by the co-op. Tenants are often not available for repairs when they should be and this can happen several times before a job gets done. The co-op is footing the bill for these incidents. It was recommended that the co-op should adopt a three-strikes policy and that tenants should be charged where repeat visits are necessary due to their lack of co-operation. This was put to the vote by a show of hands and the results were:</p> <p>For Against Abstained.</p> <p>4. It was reported that some members without mobility restrictions and who are not disabled are requesting the Co-op to pay for taxi fares to hospitals etc. It was agreed that taxi fares should only be allowed for those with mobility restrictions or disability, or, in the case of a genuine emergency, and that all others should make their own arrangements at their own cost. It was noted that it is possible to get a refund for public transport costs for those on benefits from the hospital and members were advised to keep their bus tickets.</p>



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<p>Disability discrimination case:</p> <p>Access to computers:</p> <p>Alterations to the office:</p>	<p>5. An article from 'Inside Housing' magazine which reported on a group of disabled tenants who are going to court arguing that the under-occupation rules are discriminating against them as disabled people was noted.</p> <p>6. An article from 24dash.com that highlighted the problems tenants are likely to encounter with the new Universal Credit scheme, which requires access to a secure, internet-enabled computer, was also noted.</p> <p>7. Lee Brock reported that alterations are to be made to the office to allow a space for restricted access to the internet for those on benefits. Wheelchair access will be allowed for. The management committee is also to look into free internet services, such 'as Y Fi'.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 6</p>	<p>Share Certificates</p> <p>1. Share certificates were available at the meeting for collection by the following tenants and prospective tenants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Delcia Carvalho, 8 Vicroft Court;• Christopher Rushton, 21a Starley Road;• Jordan Whateley, 38 Starley Road;• John Montague, 43b Starley Road;• Julie Capell, prospective tenant;• James Colleran, prospective tenant. <p>John Montague and James Colleran paid their £1 each and collected their certificates amidst applause from members.</p>
<p>Agenda Item 7</p>	<p>Budgets 2013-2014</p> <p>1. Mr Birch reported that expenditure had been generally in line with the budget, though certain expenses such as a replacement boiler and extensive work to a kitchen had not been taken into account. He said that one benefit of the current financial year was that it was a 53 week year. Problems were expected because of the welfare reforms and, unfortunately, it was not even certain when these would arise as there was a rolling programme and changes might come into effect at different times of the year.</p> <p>Copies of the budget were made available to all members at the meeting and, after a report from Geoff Birch and some discussion, the budget was put to a vote by a show of hands. The votes were as follows:</p> <p>For: Against: Abstentions: The vote was carried and the budgets for 2013-2014 were adopted as co-op policy.</p>



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Agenda Item 8	<p>Draft Proposals to amend the Transfer/Exchange Member Policy</p> <p>1. The proposal to amend the transfer/exchange policy was put to the membership by Lee Brock and voted on by a show of hands. The votes were as follows:</p> <p>For: Against: Abstentions: The vote was carried and the amendments were adopted as co-op policy.</p>									
Agenda Item 9	<p>Draft Proposal to amend the Antisocial Behaviour Policy and Procedures</p> <p>1. John reported that the Office of the Housing Ombudsman had recommended two years ago that it was appropriate for the co-op to have a two-tier, rather than a three-tier complaints procedure, given our size and relative lack of resources. This has now, late in the day, been achieved and the draft policy and procedures lay out a two tier system, except for cases of minor complaints when a three-tier system is still operable. Other changes include updating the range of ASB categories and a paragraph to make it clear that the last tier in the procedure is a final tier that cannot be undone by any other process. This is in line with the Fully Mutual Model Rules that underpin all policies and procedures adopted by the co-op. This was put to the vote by a show of hands and the votes were as follows:</p> <p>For: Against: Abstentions: The vote was carried and the amendments were adopted as co-op policy.</p>									
Agenda Item 10	Starley Logo									
Agenda Item 11	<p>Allocation Report</p> <p>1. Although there was no formal report, James Allan informed the meeting that there had been a waiting list for bedsits and 3-4 bed homes but this was closed last Thursday as it was oversubscribed. He said that he and Charlie Whitmore were continuing to keep the allocations group on top of things and were building on the sterling work of former member Doreen Angus.</p>									
Agenda Item 12	<p>Treasurer Report</p> <p>1. Mr Birch said that overall finances were slightly better than budget expectations and reported on the bank balances at 28th February 2013, as follows:</p> <table data-bbox="475 1921 1441 2022"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>January</th> <th>February</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Current Account 1- Working account</td> <td>£ 1,748.22</td> <td>£ 1,646.18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>No Notice</td> <td>£ 50,957.99</td> <td>£ 74,678.38</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		January	February	Current Account 1- Working account	£ 1,748.22	£ 1,646.18	No Notice	£ 50,957.99	£ 74,678.38
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<p>Agenda Item 13</p>	<p>Rent Report</p> <p>1. Lee Brock reported on former tenant rent arrears for the end of the financial year 31/03/2013. The balances as at week commencing 25/02/2013 were as follows:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Debts Outstanding on Starley Old Stock:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) £349.20 - carry forward as ex member has just re-started monthly payments to address. 2) £7.83 - may be cleared - if not write off as no recourse to contact former member. Agreed to write off if not received by the last working day of March 3) £795.25 - One payment rec'd late December - notification that may refer to debt collection agency. Monitor and may carry forward. 4) £1415.76 - No recourse to contact former member. Agreed to write off, but keep a note of the situation for future reference. 5) £3362.99 - Bad debt previously written off - former member starting making payments to address - none received for some time. Will keep on file for further contact and/or payments which will be recorded as bad debts recovered only, and not included in the rent arrears figure. <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Debts Outstanding on Vicroft Court:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) £433.06 - carry forward- payments being received monthly 2) £2069.79 - carry forward - payments had stopped, but ex tenant contacted and payments due to start again at the end of March. To be monitored. 3) £28.68- write off - no contact for over 12 months 4) £136.12 - carry forward - payments being received monthly, but co-op has to pay 35% on monies collected as recovery is through the debt collection agency. 5) £261.72 - carry forward- payments being received monthly. <p>2. Lee Brock reported that the office has made appointments for Discretionary Housing Payments in the following cases for current tenants:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) £1194.98 to be cleared via DHP to bring rent account with a clear balance 2) £695.00 back dated payment of HB due to DHP involvement 3) £2000 (approx) to clear rent debt - yet to be formally confirmed by DHP but indications that it will be cleared. 																					



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3. It was reported that overall rent Arrears up to the 3rd March 2013, a five week period, were as follows:

Annual Rent Roll (52 weeks in advance 2012/2013 rents)	<u>£495,314.55</u>
Total Rent Arrears (Gross)	£47,757.82 - 9.64%
Total Credit	£2,224.23

Breakdown of Arrears

Current Rent Arrears	£18,995.77 - 3.83%
Housing Benefit delay (approx)	£20,114.86
Monthly payments (approx)	£3,899.79
Ex-tenant Rent Arrears	£4,747.40

Breakdown of Credit

Tenants pre-payments	£2,224.23
Voids this period	£288.33
Total void loss to date	£3,361.82
Bad Debts recovered this period	£00.00
Total Bad Debts recovered to date	£90.00

4. A summary of rent arrears issues during the month of February 2013 was given as follows:

- The management database is still not working for rents. However, we have been assured by the IT consultant that he has addressed the error on the rent database and should be in a position to install the new system before the year end. The office has put manual records in place in case this does not happen.
- Gross & current rent arrears have increased slightly this month. The gross is due to a large 4 weekly payment of HB being due, and current arrears has increased as we have a few cases of new rent arrears due to working members financial issues, they are currently below the £1000, so are not currently being reported to committee. Members have been in contact and some have started making payments again. This is being monitored.
- The figures for members in very high rent arrears (1000+) have increased to 9. The breakdown is 7 current and 2 former tenants.
- Office involvement in HB claims is on the increase to support members through the on-going changes to their income benefits.
- Under-occupancy: there are 26 cases in the co-operative, and the office has now had direct contact with 23 of the members involved. All members affected have been given the new weekly charge/calendar monthly option charge with their rent increase letters, along with a rent payment option sheet and a bank standing order form. The co-op has arranged 4 appointments with a member of the Discretionary Housing Payment team, and there have been some successes so far. With one being awarded a



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£695 back date of HB; one case will have arrears cleared in excess of £1100, and an indication that another case could have arrears cleared in excess of £2000. The office has given DHP forms to 10 other cases, and landlord support letters to assist. John is assisting other members during his drop-in with letters to HB for medical reasons. We are not likely to be informed about any reviews of u/occupancy decisions until after 1st April. The office has done a complete summarised list of cases and actions for all under-occupancy issues; copies have been given to the rent officer; the working group members and the Starley accountant. The office will keep the list updated. Each member under-occupying also has a separate confidential folder on their tenancy file. The office has also established a good working contact with a member of the DHP team, and a HB officer who is currently working on welfare reforms, and facilitates the welfare reform meetings at the council. The next meeting is late in April.

- Managing rent arrears will become more time consuming and must be given priority in the office.

Agenda Item 14

Repair Report

1. It was reported that the following repairs were carried out in February 2013:

Repairs Reported	102 (113 last month)
Repairs Ordered	102

Co-operative Attention

Standard Category	57
Urgent Category	22
Emergency Category	6
Void category	10
Quoted	7

Standard - Achieved in target category time 95% (98% last month)

Urgent - Achieved in target category time 96% (97% last month)

Emergency- Achieved in target category time 100%

Targets have reduced slightly this month, with 4 jobs overall not reaching the target category time. 2 jobs were due to adverse weather conditions for outside

work, the other 2 jobs due to contractor availability.

Co-operative Approval Required

Agreed new gas boiler to 2 bed flat Starley Road- not viable to repair

Agreed to decorating after damp issue in a 3 bed Vicroft Court home due to roof venting issues.



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	<p>New Front lounge window Starley Road 3 bed flat New Communal hallway Window - Starley Rod block Dry lining to a bedroom - 26 Tomson Avenue - work not covered by the claim. Decorating the new area, and moving electrical sockets to the new area</p>
Agenda Item 15	<p>Social Report</p> <p>1. It was noted that members have responded to the letter from the Social Group and 19 people have said they wish to continue to be notified of forthcoming social group events. Notification of events will continue to be placed on the notice boards.</p>
Agenda Item 16	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>1. Lee Brock reported on the damage caused to the door to the office block and said that this would cost the co-op several hundred pounds to replace. The existing door has been forced so many times that it is not secure and confidential files on all tenants are at risk. This is being investigated under the ASB procedure. The doort will be replaced by an all steel security door.</p>
<p>There being no further business Chairperson Lee Brock closed the meeting at 8:45 pm.</p> <p>Signed..... Lee Brock, Chairperson Starley Housing Co-operative.</p> <p>Date.....</p>	