

WOLVERHAMPTON FEDERATION OF TENANTS' ASSOCIATIONS C.I.C

Minutes of the General Meeting 7pm Monday 16th September 2019 at Coven Lodge.

Attendance: as per list.

Ann congratulated Wolverhampton Homes (WHs) and the Council on the Housing First project.

1. Apologies:

Julie Spencer, Jean Jones.

2. Declarations of interest:

None.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 15th July 2019:

Agreed.

4. Matters arising: None.

5. Update on homelessness – Angela Barnes Assistant Director WHs and Deb Thompson Service manager Homelessness WHs

Angela said the homelessness service transferred from the Council to WHs in December 2017. Since then they have taken on extra staff to meet requirements of the Homelessness Reduction Act. She said the service is delivered from Market Street and Wednesfield, as there is not the demand at Bilston. She said there are 2 elements to homelessness - rough sleeping and insecure housing.

Deb said in 2018/19 WHs had received and dealt with nearly 4,000 cases and had taken 1377 homeless applications. She said some people just need advice and help to stay in their homes. She said the 4 top reasons for homelessness have been the end of assured shorthold tenancies (in the private sector), family no longer willing to accommodate, friends no longer willing to accommodate, domestic abuse and other violence. In January 2018 there were 32 rough sleepers recorded on the count and in August 2019 there were only 7 counted. Ann raised the issue about rogue private landlords. Mr Motawalla asked about squatters, but Angela said this is rare in WHs properties but could occur in the private sector. Graham queried the accuracy of the rough sleeping count as he said there are several rough sleepers in his area. Angela advised him to contact the organisation P3 about this. Dave said that a weekly check is made on the rough sleepers that partner organisations know about. Deb said since April 2018 they have settled 25 rough sleepers into accommodation but there are some that do not wish to be housed. She said there are about 13 people begging on the street but some of these are in accommodation. Partner agencies are trying to tackle the issue.

Deb said in July 2019 WHs agreed to take on a Housing First project for the City Council. This initiative, for which there is extra funding, offers housing and support services for rough sleepers particularly those at risk. She said it is important that agencies work in partnership. Dave said St Georges run a breakfast club to provide food and a place to have a chat that hopefully breaks down barriers. Angela said WHs do take the service out to places such as libraries however some people are reluctant to engage with them but they have had some success stories. Ann said some will not wish to take on a tenancy as they do not want the responsibility of paying bills. It was said that the Credit Union is there to help with budgeting. Graham said the withdrawal of rent direct will affect rent issues and lead to homelessness.

6. Finance:

Ann referred members to the quarterly finance report that had been handed round and this was agreed.

7. Correspondence:

Lal referred members to the handout on benefits training.

8. AOB:

Lal said that the Fed had been successful in obtaining another Lottery grant to hold an event for tenants next March.

Date/time next meeting: Monday 21st October 2019, 7pm at Coven Lodge.