

ENGLISH RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Resident Panel Meeting 21st January 2010

Report by the Operations Director

[FOR INFORMATION AND DISCUSSION]

1. Discussion Topic - Recruitment of Panel Members

- 1.1 The Winter Newsletter had sought to promote the role of the Residents Panel and secure additional participation. A letter from the Resident Board Members had also been distributed to all households to assist with this.
- 1.2 The response to these actions has been positive and we now have four expressions of interest from residents regarding participation. All have received additional information on the role and what to expect. It was originally intended that an election may be needed should the expressions of interest exceed the number of places available. The Panel had also sought to secure a broad geographical representation in line with the Association's housing stock.
- 1.3 A summary of the four residents who expressed an interest is provided below:

Resident Name	Location	Tenure	Comment
<i>Mr Martyn Clements</i>	<i>11 George Marriott Close Stoney Stanton Leicestershire</i>	<i>Tenant</i>	<i>It has previously been difficult to secure representation from this area, where we are no longer actively developing. Mr Clements property type will represent some of our older stock. He will help to compliment a gender balance on the Panel.</i>
<i>Mr Tom Wratten</i>	<i>11 Fortescue place smeeth Ashford Kent</i>	<i>Tenant</i>	<i>Lives in one of our newer properties and has recent experience of the allocations process, defects handling and inclusion of renewables. Would help to compliment a gender balance.</i>
<i>Lisa Swan</i>	<i>9 Church Field</i>	<i>Tenant</i>	<i>Is Chair of the Saintsfield</i>

	<i>Saffron Walden Ashdon Essex</i>		<i>Residents Association. Has a proven record of being positively involved.</i>
<i>Sharon Harwood</i>	<i>7 Hunters Close Kings Sombourne Stockbridge Hampshire</i>	<i>Tenant (Test Valley)</i>	<i>Sharon is the TVRHA Board Member and in place of seeking additional representation the Board have asked that Sharon is offered first refusal to participate.</i>

- 1.4 We have yet to receive any interest from the western area of our operation, although it is recognised that additional barriers such as travel requirements and proximity to central operations will be a factor here.
- 1.5 In order to proceed with successfully establishing the Residents Panel inline with its original aims and objectives it would seem appropriate to attempt to secure representation from the Western area of the Association's operation by approaching known candidates directly; consulting with the local area housing manager will help to inform such an approach.
- 1.6 *For discussion:*
- a) Should all those who have expressed an interest now be offered a place on the Residents Panel? If so, how should this approach be confirmed and is an election still necessary?*
 - b) Does the Panel feel that the candidates offer a fair and representative mix?*
 - c) Where are the current gaps and would the Panel support a more direct approach to recruitment on the basis of the limited response?*

2. Discussion Topic – Future Meetings, Tours and Fora

- 2.1 At their last meeting members of the Panel discussed the merits of holding the regional tours and forums and agreed to continue with these; maximising coverage and minimising the time/resource of staff and Panel Members was also agreed.
- 2.2 The Panel needs to confirm dates for future meetings, which according to the Terms of Reference should be held at least four times a year, given that the Panel is not yet fully operational, in that it doesn't have a full compliment of residents, it may be appropriate to have four further meetings in addition to this one over the course of 2010. It would also seem appropriate to synchronise these meetings with those of the full Board of Management.

2.3 In order to accommodate and resource future meetings, tours and fora the table below highlights some suggested dates and areas.

Date	Type	Location	Staff/Members
11 th March 2010	Panel Meeting	London	All
13 th May 2010	Panel Meeting	London	All
26 th August 2010	Panel Meeting	London	All
11 th November 2010	Panel Meeting	London	All
17 th June	Tour/fora	Surrey	LC, MC + Resident
16 th September	Tour/fora	Kent	PR, CK, KW & TW
9 th December	Tour/fora	Bucks/Oxon	JJ, MC + Resident

2.4 *For discussion:*

- a) *Should all the Panel meetings be held in London?*
- b) *Do the tours/fora offer an appropriate approach given previous locations?*
- c) *How can the format of the fora be changed to increase attendance?*

3. Discussion Topic – Asset Management Strategy and Work Plan

3.1 As English Rural continues to grow it is necessary that we develop appropriate strategies and systems for improving services to residents and maintaining properties under management to an appropriate standard. To assist with this it is necessary to put an Asset Management Strategy in place.

3.2 The Resident Panel will play a critical role in ensuring adequate consultation with and input from residents into the framework of this Strategy, and also in reviewing the Strategy once drafted. An initial framework and work plan has been circulated to Members of the Panel to highlight the scope and timescale of completing the Strategy.

3.3 *For discussion:*

- a) *How can the Resident Panel ensure residents play a key role in developing the framework of this Strategy? What format should resident input take given that as it stands the framework is fairly*

daunting? For example, smaller focus groups aimed at highlighting specific concerns or requirements?

- b) Will it be necessary for the Panel to delegate responsibility to one or several Members to work with Officers to liaise with residents?*
- c) Does the Panel have any particular concerns with the initial approach highlighted?*

4. Discussion Topic – Gas Servicing Arrangements

- 4.1 Panel Members will be aware that due to financial difficulties the previous contractor whom we used to service and maintain gas boilers could no longer continue it's arrangements with English Rural. The company informed us that because of credit difficulties it had been necessary to call in Financial Administrators and as they could no longer secure parts or sub-contracted labour it would be impossible for them to honour their side of the agreement in place.
- 4.2 This has presented significant difficulties given the time of year where offices and regional contractors shut-down over the Christmas period. The recent cold weather has also led to an increase boiler repair call outs. As a result the service we have offered residents with boilers has fallen below our expectations and resulted in a to a negative impact on the annual inspection programme. This detrimental effect is highlighted in the latest performance results.
- 4.3 Arrangements are currently being made to establish a comparable service and maintenance contract with Rok, who are a national contractor offering the coverage required. Preparations are being made for new arrangements to commence from 15th February 2010, and this will include coverage of all boilers, including oil and electric systems.
- 4.4 Rok were measured against a number of other contractors and a summary of this exercise is provided below.

<i>Contractor</i>	<i>Organisation description</i>	<i>Coverage</i>	<i>Set-up arrangements</i>	<i>What's included</i>	<i>Price (per unit)</i>	<i>HM Comments</i>
ROK	National network of contractors based at regional level.	National via a central 24 hour response centre	Harmonisation of inspections in specific areas Can cover gas, oil and non-vented cylinders Initial 12 month contract and price reflects this.	All parts included + 5 boiler replacements per year	£193 + VAT	Some concerns about extent of coverage, boiler replacements included in cost.
British Gas	National organisation	National via a central 24 hour response centre	Annual contract.	Emergency response, all parts, not replacement of boilers over	£210 +VAT	Known contractor with national reputation. Costs higher

				7 years.		than other contractors.
EAGA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Did not submit proposal
Homeserve/ NPower	Cover provided by Homeserve but via NPower and Multiassist. Already provide out of hours cover.	National via 24 hour response centre.	CP12 inspections would be carried out by NPower at £108 per property & repairs coverage by Multiassist. Can cover all boiler types. Existing contractual arrangements would be widened to cover emergency 24 for boiler/heating systems and separate contractual arrangement needed for servicing.	Emergency response, all parts, not replacement of boilers over 7 years.	£108 per property for Inspection. Unknown cost for coverage.	Concerns over complexity of contractual arrangements. Costs likely to be in the region of other contractors.

4.5 *For discussion:*

- a) *What, if any, additional performance monitoring would the Residents Panel like to see?*
- b) *Do the Residents Panel have any specific concerns or suggestions relating to the new arrangements?*