



## HOUSING MANAGEMENT USER PANEL

**Board Room, Tarka Housing**

**Minutes of the meeting held on  
Friday, 17 December 2010 at 10am**

**Present:** Paul Raeburn (Head of Customer and Community Services), Jon Hadwen (Housing Services Manager), Mick Bentley, Peter Thompkins, Cathy Martin, Reginald Strong, Eileen Brown, Tony Walker (Residents)

**Minutes:** Beccy Shaw (Receptionist)

Item		Action By And Date
1.	<p><b><u>Welcome and Introductions</u></b></p> <p>Paul Raeburn welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Panel were informed that John Sanders has moved closer to family in Holsworthy and has informed all Panels that he is stepping down.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that he will be covering the Presentation on Service Charges, the Garage Policy and the Resident Involvement Update as Nigel Barnard, Caroline Pittwood and Alister Gillies cannot attend the meeting.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn explained that item 10, Service Charges, will be removed as the Presentation will cover everything. Mick Bentley asked if it could be replaced with 'Local Offer'. This was agreed.</p>	
2.	<p><b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Katherine Russell, Eleanor Rogers, Edward Merrick, Janette Merrick, Hazel Strong and Pauline Davies.</p>	
3.	<p><b><u>Minutes of the Last Meeting (Accuracy)</u></b></p> <p><u>Page 6 – Resident Involvement Update</u></p> <p>Mick Bentley informed the Panel that John Sanders has never been a part of Scrutiny and can his name be taken out.</p>	

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4.	<p><b><u>Matters Arising from the Last Meeting</u></b></p> <p><u>Page 3 – Adaptations Policy</u></p> <p>Mick Bentley asked for clarification on what ‘major adaptations’ entailed. Paul Raeburn explained that a stairlift, adaptations to the front of the property, wetrooms etc. were what he would consider a major adaptation. Mick Bentley informed the Panel that the Adaptations Policy states that if Tarka have an Occupational Therapist (OT) report saying that a resident needs major works and cannot move property, then Tarka must do these works. They cannot say ‘Tarka do not do it’, because they do.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn explained that Tarka have made major changes to some properties and then the tenants have moved out. When new tenants move in we then have to remove it all again. Jon Hadwen said that specially adapting our properties is changing the status of them. He feels it is best to move residents to a better suited property.</p> <p>Mick Bentley felt that major adaptations should be an extension. Stairlifts should not be classed as ‘major’ as they can be removed. Also a wetroom can easily have a bath put in it to change it back.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn asked if this had been raised at the Asset Management User Panel (AMUP) and what was the outcome. Mick Bentley said that it had been discussed and they had said that Tarka do major adaptations, depending on the OT report. Tenants are left in limbo and nothing is made clear.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn said that the Housing Management User Panel (HMUP) is about the service side of Tarka Housing. He explained that a definitive answer is needed for this question and he will meet with Josh Jackson and Nigel Barnard to get it.</p> <p>Mick Bentley informed the Panel that he feels the Aids and Adaptations Policy is vague and needs to be changed. Eileen Brown wondered what the process would be if someone did the works themselves and paid for it. She felt they would still have to put the property back to how it was before they left which does not seem right.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that if a couple of Tenants are under occupying a property and they want major adaptations done to the property then they will have to move in order to get the works. Tarka are within the Law to do this. Mick Bentley explained that if there are a couple in a two bedroom property and one of them dies, that is still not under occupying the property as you are allowed one extra bedroom. People are being told ‘no’ to having works done and Tarka are going outside of the</p>	Paul Raeburn
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	<p>boundaries by saying this.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn explained that Tarka's policy is within the law. Mick Bentley asked what right Tarka has to do this. If an OT says that the work needs to be done and Tarka still say no, then how is it within law. Paul Raeburn said that he will meet with Josh Jackson and Nigel Barnard and get a straight forward answer that explains it all.</p> <p>Eileen Brown felt that under occupying properties with a lack of them is a problem that needs to get sorted. Paul Raeburn explained that there are new Tenancy Standards coming out and an overview of the new policy would be useful. Mick Bentley was informed that the new Standards would not affect any secure tenants. He felt that this needs to be sorted as the new policies will be signed but the old policies need to be looked at as they could jeopardise Tarka. Paul Raeburn suggested putting 'New Emerging Government Bills' as an agenda item for the next meeting.</p> <p><u>Page 3 – Fuel Poverty</u></p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that Fuel Poverty is being looked at by himself and Andrew McMurray. Advantage South West (ASW) are putting in 25000 solar panels but we are not sure how this will affect Westcountry Housing. There is a meeting taking place with Westcountry next Wednesday and Paul Raeburn will present a draft to the HMUP at January's meeting. Tarka want to reduce fuel poverty. It was decided that 'Fuel Poverty' would be added to next months agenda and Andrew McMurray will be asked to present this to the Panel. There are a lot of issues with fuel poverty in rural areas due to certain incomes.</p> <p>Mick Bentley asked if Tarka are removing chimneys without Tenants permission. Jon Hadwen explained that he believes the works are undertaken when the property is void. Mick Bentley felt that this is not a good idea when Tarka are talking about helping with fuel poverty. Chimneys could help in rural areas with the oil costs. Jon Hadwen will look into the reasons for this and report back at the next meeting.</p> <p><u>Page 4 – Trailer at Chopes Close</u></p> <p>Mick Bentley informed the Panel that the trailer has now been removed.</p> <p><u>Page 4 – Terms of Reference</u></p> <p>Paul Raeburn said that the Terms of Reference will be brought to the next meeting.</p>	<p>Paul Raeburn</p> <p>Beccy Shaw</p> <p>Paul Raeburn</p> <p>Jon Hadwen</p>
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	<p>Cathy Martin asked when Pauline Davies will have to come off the HMUP as she is part of the Scrutiny Panel. Paul Raeburn explained that while the Scrutiny Panel are in training they can stay; this will roughly be 6 – 8 months. Peter Thompkins felt that they should come off all User Panels as soon as they are elected. Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that Sarah Cracknell (Westcountry’s Resident Involvement Manager) and Alister Gillies have decided that as soon as the first project comes up they will have no choice but to come off the User Panels.</p> <p>Peter Thompkins felt that this could be open-ended and he feels that they should not be on any other Panels. He asked a Chair a question and the response was ‘I cannot tell you’. Peter Thompkins feels that now we know who is on the Scrutiny Panel they should come off.</p> <p>Mick Bentley informed the Panel that he was on a team to sort the setting up of Government scrutiny on the internet. It was said that for a Scrutineer to do a positive job they cannot be on other teams. Jon Hadwen explained that you are not a true Scrutineer until you have completed the training. Paul Raeburn said that what was said about paperwork was correct but as soon as work starts, they will come off User Panels. Mick Bentley does not want Tarka to bend what has been written down.</p> <p>Eileen Brown and Tony Walker both felt that it was acceptable to keep Scrutineer’s on the User Panels until the first bit of work commences or they complete their training. Tony Walker explained that he was selected to see what the Scrutiny Panel was about and before you become a Scrutineer you need 6 – 8 months of training. During that time you can say that you are no longer interested and would not like to continue or you can get told that you are not right for the job.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that he will have a discussion with Alister Gillies and Sarah Cracknell and will come back to the Panel with answers. Tony Walker explained that he has so far learnt that it is not a Tarka Scrutiny Panel; it is a Group Scrutiny Panel. So if any Tarka Panels are to be scrutinised then Westcountry members would do it. Cathy Martin felt that it seems like a waste of money if people carry out the six months training and then decide that they do not want to do it.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that in future, if anything needs to be removed from a garage then the Caretakers will come and remove it. This will not be charged to service charges, it will go to garage income. Mick Bentley said that garage shrubs were charged to service charges. Paul Raeburn replied that they are not anymore. Mick Bentley felt that income on garages should be spent on garages. Paul Raeburn said that he will speak with Josh</p>	<p>Paul Raeburn</p>
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	Jackson at the next Senior Management Team (SMT) meeting and report back.	Paul Raeburn
5.	<p><b><u>Presentation on Service Charges</u></b></p> <p>Paul Raeburn showed the Panel a presentation on service charges.</p> <p>Mick Bentley asked if residents will have any control over the cost of service charges. Paul Raeburn explained that both Landlord and Tenant are working towards the same thing, cheap costs. Mick Bentley was concerned as to whether Tenants will be able to afford it and do they have any influence over what they pay. Paul Raeburn said that if for instance everyone on the estate wanted hanging baskets and someone to look after them, then Tarka would do it but it would cost x amount. So Tenants can ask for things, but they will cost.</p> <p>Mick Bentley wondered if Tenants are given true perception of what they can afford. Paul Raeburn said that he is still waiting to see how it will work. Jon Hadwen explained that we will not be getting rid of everything. Housing Officers will be finding out what people want / do not want in estates and we will consult with prices before we do anything.</p> <p>Mick Bentley feels that there will always be some people that will struggle with payments. Paul Raeburn said that Tarka are aiming for good quality service and good prices. Mick Bentley wondered what would happen if Residents took on clearing themselves. Paul Raeburn explained that with service charges, there will never be a huge increase in price. Jon Hadwen said that he will have a look into this and see how it would work if someone could not afford to pay their service charges.</p> <p>Cathy Martin informed the Panel that Tenants had been helping out with the maintenance of a patch of grass at Chubb Road as Tarka never cut it. Would Tarka need to get insurance for this. Paul Raeburn said that he thinks Tarka would need to get insurance for this but he will speak with Karen Witney and Caroline Pittwood and see what the process would be. Eileen Brown asked if Tarka could just say 'if you do this, Tarka are not liable'. Paul Raeburn said that this could be the case.</p> <p>Mick Bentley asked if this affects the right of transfer. Paul Raeburn explained that if you were a Tarka Tenant before 2008 then yes it does, but if not then it does not apply. Mick Bentley said that the deficit would be considerable with older tenancies not paying for service charges. So income coming in from new Tenants will produce deficits. Paul Raeburn explained that some deficits will be written off.</p>	<p>Jon Hadwen</p> <p>Paul Raeburn</p>

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	<p>Jon Hadwen informed the Panel that if a Leaseholder asks for something to be done by Tarka then we charge them for it. Mick Bentley asked where the right was that Tenants can actually challenge the service charges.</p> <p>Peter Thompkins informed the Panel that the heating in the Chubb Churchill Communal Room sometimes turns off. If Residents are paying for it, then surely it should be on all the time. Jon Hadwen explained that the service charges pay for the fuel and Tarka are trying to keep the costs to a minimum. Peter Thompkins said that it would be good to have access to turn it on and off. Paul Raeburn will look into this and report back.</p> <p>Eileen Brown informed the Panel that the energy auditor came around and wondered if he went to all of the Schemes. Paul Raeburn said that he was not sure.</p>	Paul Raeburn
6.	<p><b><u>Garage Policy and Procedure</u></b></p> <p>Paul Raeburn explained the purpose of the procedure.</p> <p>Eileen Brown felt that the price was quite high and asked how it compares with others. Paul Raeburn explained that Tarka compared their price with other Associations and if you are not a Tarka tenant you pay the VAT. He asked if the paperwork was all clear. Mick Bentley felt that the procedure was contradictory, as in the agreement it says that the garages are for the purpose of a motor vehicle only and in the procedure it does not. Properties in Sheltered Schemes do not have space for garden tools so they use garages for storage.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn explained that the license we hold is for vehicles. Mick Bentley asked if the license could be altered so that people can store other things and asked if Tarka really mind what people are storing in their garages. Jon Hadwen replied that we need to have restrictions due to fire risks with gas cylinders etc.</p> <p>Peter Thompkins explained that the document does not allow anything to be stored in the garages besides cars. Paul Raeburn said that he would hold a meeting with Caroline Pittwood and Jon Hadwen to see how the document can be amended. Jon Hadwen suggested that it would need to say something like 'Tarka are allowed to go out and check garages at any time'. Eileen Brown asked if Tarka have looked at any other Associations agreements. Paul Raeburn was not sure. Mick Bentley felt that the procedure needs to be more specific. Paul Raeburn said that he would come back to the Panel with a redraft.</p> <p>Peter Thompkins asked when the painting will start on the garages. Paul Raeburn said that he would need to check this. Mick</p>	Paul Raeburn

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	Bentley felt that the painting of the garages should be included in the rent of the garages. Paul Raeburn said that he will speak with Josh Jackson and come back to the Panel.	Paul Raeburn
7.	<p><b><u>Anti Social Behaviour Update</u></b></p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that on Friday 14 January 2011 an Anti Social Behaviour (ASB) event will take place and a Focus Group will join with Westcountry Housing. He has looked at other policies to see how they have been presented and Selix Homes documents are great.</p> <p>Mick Bentley asked if it would be a total overhaul to the procedure. Paul Raeburn explained that the procedure may be changed slightly but it will mainly be changes to the policy. He will bring a draft to the February HMUP meeting and then take it to the Board in March or May. The policy will be a Groupwide project and will be a major policy review.</p> <p>The consultation event will be seeing how well things are working. Paul Raeburn will bring two cases to the next meeting but it must be kept confidential.</p>	
8.	<p><b><u>Arrears Processing – Rent Statements</u></b></p> <p>Jon Hadwen informed the Panel that the new rent statements have included what Tarka feel is important. He asked the Panel if they had any comments.</p> <p>Peter Thompkins asked if the figures could be explained. Jon Hadwen said that the figures used on the document are just examples. Eileen Brown asked if Tarka mind if the payments are paid weekly or monthly. Jon Hadwen replied that it does not matter as long as the Resident is always in credit. Paul Raeburn added that anyone reaching £500 in arrears will have steps taken.</p> <p>Mick Bentley asked if service charges are included within the figures. Jon Hadwen replied that they are. Mick Bentley suggested keeping the two figures separate so that people know what they are paying. Eileen Brown thought that having another box for service charges on the same page would be useful. Jon Hadwen will look into this.</p>	Jon Hadwen
9.	<p><b><u>Local Offer</u></b></p> <p>Mick Bentley informed the Panel that he has recently had a Local Offer Survey and has been very involved. He is concerned that the input from the Community is not strong enough. Mick Bentley is worried that consultations may take place but are just ‘lip</p>	

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	<p>service' so are not very useful and money is tight. 99% of the people involved said no.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn explained that the Local Offer Steering Group have been given surveys. Once they are complete Tarka will write a document based on the Tenants views and then send it out to them. Mick Bentley said that if it goes down the line and becomes purely tick box then it is not value for money.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that Alister Gillies is so focused on why things are being done, that he would not do anything that is not helping to make an improvement.</p>	
10.	<p><b><u>Devon Home Choice</u></b></p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that the date for Rupert Warren's visit is Wednesday 19 January 2011. He asked the Panel if it would be best to combine the Devon Home Choice meeting with the next HMUP meeting or to keep them both separate. Mick Bentley felt that it would be best to keep the two separate.</p> <p>Eileen Brown said that Pauline Davies has already spoken with Rupert Warren. Paul Raeburn explained that he was not sure of the outcome. Mick Bentley said that Pauline Davies had spoken with someone but it was not Rupert Warren.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that the meeting would take place at 2 pm and a reminder will be sent out a week before.</p>	
11.	<p><b><u>Resident Involvement Update</u></b></p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that the Local Offer Survey has been sent out and roughly 30 completed forms have come back.</p> <p>The Scrutiny Panel has had full induction and agreed a programme of training from January through to April for the coming year. It is hoped that the Scrutiny Panel will start working on their first project in April 2011.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn explained that the Training programme for each User Panel needs to be completed and reminded everyone to choose which items interest them and feed back to Alister Gillies.</p> <p>The Resident Auditors are still looking for more recruits and the next recruitment session is likely to be late January 2011.</p> <p>The Tenants Panel Development Group has been formed and their first meeting will take place Tuesday 4 January 2011 with Alister Gillies. Mick Bentley asked who was nominated for the event. Tony Walker replied that it was said at the last Tenant</p>	

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	<p>Panel meeting that the Chair, the Vice Chair, the Secretary, Christine Scott and Katherine Russell would all get involved. Paul Raeburn will get confirmation of this.</p> <p>The Panel were informed that an event to highlight how Boards work will be held late January 2011 and Tarka are hoping to form a working group that will help to recommend an effective policy on recruitment and training for Board members. Some Tenants have already expressed an interest and more information will follow early in the new year.</p> <p>The Communications Group is looking to recruit more members so if anyone is interested can they please contact Alister Gillies.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that the Resident Auditors Voids Project's remit has been extended to cover the whole group. Mick Bentley asked how much longer it would take. Paul Raeburn replied that it should be complete in April 2011.</p> <p>The funding for a full time Resident Involvement Officer has been approved and an advert is likely to go out by the end of February.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel Constitution and Code of Conduct were ratified at the recent Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) that Alister Gillies attended. The Panel were informed that Chris Paterson was voted as the new Secretary.</p> <p>There will be a Resident Involvement update going out in the next edition of the Tarka Times.</p> <p>The Customer Involvement has been printed and is now available. If anyone would like a copy for friends or neighbours they can.</p> <p>Finally Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that Alister Gillies had wished everyone a Merry Christmas.</p>	Paul Raeburn
12.	<p><b><u>Permission Letters</u></b></p> <p>Paul Raeburn informed the Panel that Housing Officers deal with permission letters and Jon Hadwen added that it depends on what is being sort.</p> <p>Mick Bentley explained that he finds it unfair that Residents can put new stuff into the properties to make them look nice but then receive a letter saying that they need to remove it all. It is not right if something is leaking. Jon Hadwen explained that we have Tarka Standards, Tarka have certain light bulbs for instance and if someone puts in a sunken light then Tarka will have to replace the whole thing which will cost money. Everything has to be within reason.</p>	

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	<p>Mick Bentley felt that Tarka have no flexibility. The Tarka Standard states what it states and when a Tenant moves into a property they have to sign for it. This defers Tenants from improving their properties. Paul Raeburn said that this would involve a bespoke letter that is specific to each case. Mick Bentley explained that Tarka should be supporting Tenants that want to improve their properties.</p> <p>Jon Hadwen informed the Panel that if something has to be repaired and the store does not make the model anymore, it is a lot of cost for Tarka and the Tenant will have no choice but to have the Tarka Standard products back in their property and they might not be as happy. Mick Bentley said that if that was the case then the Tenant would just have to accept it as it is the Tarka Standard. Paul Raeburn said that he would discuss this with Josh Jackson and report it back to the Panel. He suggested making this an agenda item for the next meeting.</p> <p>Cathy Martin felt that it was common sense to leave a property how it is and that people would not go to the trouble of changing it all back before they left. Mick Bentley said that in the policy it says to make people want to improve their properties.</p>	Paul Raeburn
13.	<p><b><u>Any Other Business</u></b></p> <p>Beccy Shaw informed the Panel that from now on an actions sheet will be added to the end of everyone's minutes so that everyone can see what actions have been taken so solve any issues before the following meeting. This allows time for people to make sure that the correct answer has been given and to raise the point if it has not. This could also save time instead of going through the minutes to check each action has been solved.</p> <p>Cathy Martin reported that Torrington Lane's wall by the car park is peeling. Jon Hadwen said that he would get a Housing Officer out to inspect it.</p> <p>Cathy Martin informed the Panel that she has had complaints from Tenants regarding a Surveyor. The Tenant does not want to put in a complaint and does not know which Surveyor it was. The Surveyor sent out a letter for something which now is not going to happen. When the Tenant questioned it she received a rude reply from the Surveyor.</p> <p>Jon Hadwen explained that new kitchens have standards to follow. Mick Bentley said that it is like for like. Peter Thompkins explained that if the property had five units then Tarka must replace five units. Jon Hadwen said that he would get clarification of this and report back. Cathy Martin felt that Surveyors should</p>	<p>Jon Hadwen</p> <p>Jon Hadwen</p>

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	<p>take into account if a person is disabled before they go out and look for improvements. Jon Hadwen suggested that this issue be brought up at the Asset Management User Panel (AMUP).</p> <p>Mick Bentley informed the Panel that whenever it is suggested to bring something up at the AMUP people do, but then the AMUP just sends it straight back to the HMUP. He would like to know if the service has been given or breached. Workers come out when people are not home. Paul Raeburn explained that Gas Servicing should be addressed at the AMUP.</p> <p>Mick Bentley said that the Panel needs to know if it is a service issue or not. Jon Hadwen explained that a query will get passed over to someone else if we feel that they can answer it better. We do not want to give false information. Paul Raeburn felt that it would be a good idea to make a statement to say who deals with what. He will sit down with Josh Jackson and discuss it. Tony Walker suggested that Paul Raeburn and Josh Jackson both attend the Tenant Panel in the new year to clarify this.</p> <p>Mick Bentley asked if Teign Housing would be looked at in the HMUP. Nigel Barnard said that he would give an update at each Tenant Panel but it has not happened. Paul Raeburn felt that it was not appropriate for this Panel and to keep it to the Tenant Panel. Changes to the policy could be discussed at the HMU however.</p> <p>Paul Raeburn asked Beccy Shaw to send out calendar invites for all future HMUP meetings for the year.</p>	<p>Paul Raeburn</p> <p>Beccy Shaw</p>
14.	<p><b><u>Date, Time and Venues for Next Year</u></b></p> <p>Everyone received a letter giving details of the dates for the following years meetings. The next meeting will take place on Friday 21 January 2011 at 10am.</p>	
15.	<p><b><u>Feedback on Meeting</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Excellent</li> <li>➤ Positive</li> <li>➤ Good outcome</li> </ul> <p>Paul Raeburn thanked everyone for all of there time spent on the Housing Management User Panel and wished them a Merry Christmas.</p>	