

## Resident Advisory Group Meeting

### Hexagon Housing Association Resident Advisory Group (RAG) Minutes of meeting held on 30<sup>th</sup> April 2020 by Zoom

<b>Attendees:-</b>	
SN	VO
DB BH <sup>2</sup>	SS Jane Eyles (JE) (Chair)
MB	AD
SO	ML
NW	

#### Also present:

Michelle Lewis (Resident Involvement Officer) (ML), Brian Hughes (Resident Involvement Manager) (BH<sup>1</sup>), Andrew Green (Housing Services Director), Denny Senner (Resident Board Member), Carol Bernstein (Board member observer)

Item    Description    Action

#### **1.0 Introductions, Welcome & Apologies**

JE took the chair for the meeting. JE welcomed all present to the meeting and thanked everyone for their flexibility in joining virtually

#### **2.0 Minutes of Last Meeting**

The minutes of the RAG meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2020 were agreed as a true and correct record.

#### **3.0 Matters Arising**

JE gave an update on the stock tour and due to Covid19 this has now been parked until further notice.

#### **4.0 Covid19 Update**

AG gave an update on Covid19, he advised that Hexagon have rolled out home working for all office staff and already had in place a system where all staff were able to log in remotely. As per the guidance, staff are to work from home where possible as there is no access to the office.

Hexagon will continue to do emergency and urgent repairs, and it has been agreed to defer all routine repairs during this period. Carrying on with a normal repairs service does not fall in line with the guidance that has been issued in respect of safety considerations for both contractors and residents. Where residents are self-isolating, and require an emergency repair, contractors will only enter the home with the necessary protection. However, the struggle at this time is the Contractors being able to obtain the materials to carry out works as some builders merchants have

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closed and this has impact on the service. Hexagon will continue to work hard however to keep this going as it is essential.

All statutory health and safety required works (i.e. gas servicing and fire safety) to still continue.

The rent collection work is currently carrying on as per normal, though Hexagon are being very mindful that in the current circumstances they will need to be flexible where individuals are facing hardship through no fault of their own. Anyone facing hardship can be assisted by contacting the Financial Inclusion team.

AG informed that Hexagon currently have a great project in place that involves phoning 550 of our elderly and vulnerable residents to check in and ensure they are getting the help and support they need. This is being carried out by the Community Investment and Housing Service teams, they have been making phone calls and where more assistance is needed, they have developed strong partnership working with several agencies and community groups who can assist in ensuring the elderly and vulnerable residents are not forgotten during the current lockdown. AG was happy to report that 400 people have been contacted so far.

It was asked what the protocol was for social distancing especially for contractors? AG advised that it is crucial that contractors remain vigilant and mindful about the guidance around social distancing. Contractors also have PPE when entering properties.

Members had concerns that residents, especially vulnerable residents may be at risk of losing homes during this time. AG reassured group that Hexagon is working with residents to ensure this does not happen and reiterated that the Financial Inclusion team is working with residents that are facing financial hardship.

Members wanted to know if there would be any extra communications measures made accessible for residents to get updates etc as they felt the website was not being updated regularly enough. It was highlighted that the current methods being used to provide updates was Home News, the Hexagon website and email. It was suggested that BH<sup>1</sup> put together an email campaign to give an update and AG will take the suggestion of using social media more to promote information on activities in the community for residents to do. **AP1 BH<sup>1</sup>**

The members also wanted to see residents who are faced with financial hardship being encouraged to apply for Universal Credit and to not to be afraid to ask for assistance during this time.

### 5.0 Resident involvement Strategy

BH<sup>1</sup> presented his paper entitled Residents Involvement Strategy a follow on from the scoping paper presented at February's meeting. The following questions were asked:

Question	Response
What is the legal definition of Resident in relation to the strategy? Why are non-residents involved eg lodgers,	Resident is anyone who is living in a Hexagon property/household. Hexagon has no legal responsibility to lodgers.

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Question	Response
licensees etc?	The Team would always ensure consultation would involve relevant residents. E.g. leaseholders would not be consulted on rent levels or able bodied people consulted on disability issues etc.
Whilst the group accept and to a degree welcome the emphasis of meetings by video link, not everyone has access to up to date e-comms. How will Resident Involvement prevent exclusion to those who may otherwise want to be involved?	The change will not be at the expense of traditional ways for residents meetings. Hexagon will continue to offer engagement through face to face meetings once the current restrictions on social distancing are lifted, Residents can also get involved by post where necessary. Hexagon would like to remove all barriers where resident engagement is concerned and would support involved residents in obtaining digital skills and equipment
DB suggested 16.3 about adopting any new government guidance or legislation should include “any changes should include consultation” or engagement with residents	Agreed
With regards to 2.4 will Resident Involvement monitor the effectiveness of departmental run initiatives?	The RI Team draws up an Impact Assessment of key RI outcomes each year. Where possible it is hoped that the departmental teams will be able to monitor their own initiatives and feed into this report
Due to Covid19 there have been changes in working patterns and many people prefer to work from home. How will Hexagon help residents get more involved in business opportunities in the future?	The Community Investment team works with a number of employment initiatives which will cover working from home
Joint staff and resident training is valuable but this is not in the strategy, it was suggested that a sentence be added (section 12). The group felt shared training was a good idea to help with breaking down barriers as people will become less reserved	Agreed
It was suggested that the strategy could break down terminology like green and white papers for residents, in order to inform themselves in the politics of housing that affect them. This may in turn lead residents to want to become	It was agreed and that this would be done once a White Paper is available

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Question	Response
more involved.	
With regards to 13.2 can you explain more about what frontline staff means?	This is resident-facing staff and this term will be used to replace “front line staff” in the strategy
Given the green paper emphasised the need to combat social stigma, why is this not specifically referred to in the policy? It was agreed by the members that the stigma needs to be addressed via contractors too eg, their attitudes when interacting with residents and going into their homes.	The strategy does address social stigma towards social housing  It was agreed to include addressing stigma towards social housing as part of the procurement criterion for contracts
Within the strategy you have mentioned the regulatory frame work of the national Tenant Involvement & Empowerment standard and the green paper. Have you viewed the Together with Tenants charter and plan in relation to the Resident Involvement strategy?	This is included within the strategy
Training is very important and this is a good aspect of the strategy	Noted
Members would like to see more resident led activities. Including presentations at staff events and training	Noted

### 6.0 Support and training

JE advised that the training for the RAG members will still go ahead via video call. The next training date is scheduled for the 21<sup>st</sup> May and will be on Leadership and Chair training.

ML will resend all training dates to members.

### 7.0 Date of next meeting:

Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> June at 6.30pm

We will be looking at the Domestic Violence Policy with scoping on Anti-Social Behaviour Policy (what does ASB mean to you and what should Hexagons priorities be)

Jane thanked everyone for their fantastic digital engagement