

**Middleton Area Panel**  
**Middleton Civic Centre**

**6pm; Wednesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2008**

**Attendance**

Paul Stott (Boarshaw), Ann Hall (Boarshaw), Julie Hall (AMTRA), Mark Finn (AMTRA), Zoe Beer (Rhodes), Russell Richardson (Rhodes), Elaine Richardson (Rhodes), Heather Stott (RBH), Sharon Worsley (Hollin EMB), Jay Law (RoFTRA), Ken Wilson, Roy Thompson (RBH Board), Conor McPartland (Hollin EMB), Lois Tinker (Hollin EMB), Barbara Barningham (Hollin EMB), Jonathon Walton (RBH), Debbie Hopwood (RBH), Andy Wadsworth (RBH), Doug Croxon (RBH).

**Apologies**

Chisholm Court & Lonsdale Court have expressed non-interest in attending Area Panel meetings as they would prefer to attend SHIP meetings to progress and make decisions on sheltered only issues.

**Introductions**

AW welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were made.

AW suggested that the meeting start with item 2 on the agenda – election of chair.

**2. Election of Chair**

Barbara Barningham was nominated in her absence at the previous meeting. Barbara said she was still prepared to stand, no other nominations were made.

AW asked for nominations for position of Vice Chair explaining that this would ensure there was always someone available to chair meetings.

Lois Tinker proposed Ken Wilson. AW noted that under proposed terms of reference both candidates must be tenants, both BB and KW are. No other candidates were nominated.

**Barbara Barningham was elected as Chair – unopposed**  
**Ken Wilson was elected Vice Chair - unopposed**

AW stated that the Chair and Vice Chair would hold their position for 12 months and then another election would take place, full training would be made available for BB and KW.

Meeting handed over to BB who called the group to order.

## 1. Notes of Last Meeting

BB asked for comments on page one of the notes.

LT asked if last meeting had been 'legal' as Terms of Reference (ToR) were not recognised.

AW explained that it was 'legal' to have the meeting but technically it was a 'shadow' meeting as the terms of reference had not been agreed.

LT stated that the reference to herself nominating BB as chair was incorrect – nomination made by KW.

LT stated that they had requested ToR be sent out to give time for people to look over and discuss within individual TRAs. Why was this not done?

AW said fair question – will be answered under item 8 on agenda.

BB stated that Middleton Area Panel had asked for different ToR. RBH board had decided that each panel should have the same terms of reference.

AW restated that this should be covered when the meeting reached item 8 on the agenda and that he did not want the meeting to get bogged down on this issue.

BB felt this was critical issue for the panel and as Chair demanded it be discussed.

LT stated that at previous meeting she had asked for the ToR to be distributed but that this was not reflected in the action notes.

SW challenged RBH decision not to send out the notes in advance, as a tenant she felt that she should be consulted.

AW stated that some people were challenging the ToR in order to undermine the Area Panels.

LT asked him to justify this view.

AW said that at last meeting they had spent 50 minutes on this one issue, leaving less time for other items on agenda.

LT said this was offensive, but that she was used to being offended by RBH.

JL said she recalled concern was expressed because people wanted to learn about voting rights but AW had dismissed this.

DH said she felt the meeting should try to move forward positively.

BB said this issue should be first item on agenda not number 8, cannot run proper meeting without ToR.

AW advised that it was not within the scope of this meeting to agree the terms of reference because the terms of reference have to be agreed by RBH, the Council RoFTRA and recognised tenants groups. However, he pledged that any decisions made by the meeting would be implemented. Began to suggest that people who attended this meeting will have idea of voting procedure.

LT Interjected to challenge this. Asked why ToR had been hidden. Concerned that meeting not quite legal. Said that at previous meeting AW had stated that it would be up to the tenants to set the agenda but now an officer was dictating what they could do.

AW said that last meeting had circulated ToR which provoked a lengthy discussion. He felt that they should undertake the business of the panel and move forward to start improving the estates in Middleton.

BB asked that ToR be distributed to the meeting so people could look them over as meeting progressed.

AW did so and noted that any changes need to be approved by the Council and RoFTRA, this had not happened so far hence delay and desire to start the panel doing some work while we wait.

LT brought up AW explanation (notes from previous meeting) that as time spent drafting ToR there was no time to put advert in Middleton local press. This was not acceptable.

JL stated that notes of previous meeting as a whole were not a true reflection of what was said.

DH felt this was important to set record straight but that we should start the meeting proper.

BB agreed need to not get bogged down and move forward.

JL felt that some comments had been made against RoFTRA that were inappropriate. Said would check her notes and report back.

RT said that sending of notes from meetings and other information needed to be sorted.

DC said notes were sent to the 1<sup>st</sup> contacts for recognised Middleton groups but did not have full addresses for all attendees at the meeting. Would be helpful if attendees note the first line of address on the attendance sheet.

BB restated that the info she had requested on 22.2.08 had not been sent. All relevant documents need to be sent out.

AW said that we should send papers out the week before the meeting is to take place but that in sending all info out it would almost make it unnecessary for meeting to take place.

BB said better to get all information and have chance to read through and digest than rush through during the meeting.

AW/DH accepted this point.

**Action TPU Admin**

### **3. One-off T P Grants**

DH outlined the grant application from Lonsdale Court sheltered scheme for £300 to organise a day trip for residents.

PS asked which attendees had voting rights on this matter. All Boarshaw TRA reps attending the meeting are residents; does that mean they cannot vote?

AH asked what the closing date for grants would be, seems silly to cut off the grants at end of March.

SW felt that each group should get one vote regardless of estate size.

BB concurred.

AW offered explanation of voting rights under proposed ToR. ToR are intended to encourage people to attend area panel meetings. Non tenants should however always be in minority when making decisions on how money from rent is spent. When a quorum is agreed under the ToR for example 6 tenants, the non tenants would have their vote capped at 5 votes. If there are 3 preset they would all get one vote, however if 7 were present they would each be given a 5/7 vote.

SW - so tenants always have more votes?

AW - yes – tenants always in majority. At previous meeting they had come up with the term 'beyond the garden gate' to describe larger issues/projects not affecting individual properties that could be voted upon by residents.

The One-off TP grants and Quick Wins schemes are both 'beyond the garden gate' so residents can vote on them provided the schemes do not directly affect their property.

PS - so the grant for Lonsdale court is 'beyond the garden gate', can we vote on that?

AW - yes

LT said that residents (non tenants) should not decide how 'tenants money' was spent. Residents should have minority vote.

BB - one vote per group

RT stated that with regard to the application, previous decision was not to fund social trips.

DH stated that the criteria for grants was that they could only be funded up to 50%.

BB asked why the sheltered scheme was not in attendance.

DC explained that when invited to the meeting they had declined because of concerns about late night travel and mobility issues.

AH said that at the previous meeting the sheltered groups had said they preferred to participate through the SHIP forum. Should they therefore be excluded from grants overseen by the Area Panel?

DH suggested that it was up to the panel how they respond to these issues.

LT said that if the residents of Lonsdale Court were able to take part in a trip they could attend the meeting.

KW asked if there was a way for us to make the meeting more accessible by arranging taxis or reimbursing for travel expenses incurred.

DH felt that older residents not able to face up to the rough and tumble of debate in the meeting and were put off by previous experiences.

SW challenged this. If they want to take advantage of the money they should attend the meeting.

AW stated that one of the other Panels had already approved a grant for social purposes. Aim of the trip was to inspire interest in the group, attract members and recruit more active members.

RT stated that Area Boards had agreed not to fund trips.

BB asked for a vote.

**None in favour.**

**Application from Lonsdale Court denied.**

**Action Letter to group TPU**

DH – next application from Chisholm Court sheltered scheme for lockable cupboard to store digital camera and equipment used in IT sessions.

BB – any comments?

SW said that the application should not be discounted because the group unable to attend, too hard hearted.

KW asked if they had no other place to store things, could RBH make room available.

DH answered that there was no space in the scheme and building a cupboard would be far more expensive.

BB noted that the application had 2 cabinets listed and that the one from ARGOS was cheaper.

ER agreed this was better value.

SW – will leave spare cash for other projects. Will the money left roll over after end of financial year?

DH – no, spare cash will be absorbed back to RBH and will go towards services for tenants.

AW stated that we currently have £900 left, rather than see money disappear urged groups to come up with applications to spend money for benefit of tenants.

BB said that the decision on how any left over money was spent should be made, as had in the past, by chair and DH.

Group generally indicated support for this.

AW stated that they must act before 31<sup>st</sup> March.

BB asked for vote.

**Unanimous yes vote.**

**Application from Chisholm Court approved**

SW asked that it be made clear that the previous (Lonsdale Court) application failed because is a social trip not non attendance.

**Action Letter to group TPU**

## **5. Respect Agenda**

Jonathan Walton gave a presentation on aims of the government's Respect Agenda, areas covered and how the Respect Standard will be implemented by RBH.

He closed by stating that two of the ways RBH would be addressing issues around nuisance and anti social behaviour would be through involvement in PACT meetings and Estate Inspections – item 6 on agenda.

CP stated that he already attended PACT meetings but that RBH had been absent.

DH replied that in the past RBH had not been invited by organisers but that she was aware of the oversight and would be taking part in future meetings starting with the Rhodes PACT meeting at 8pm this evening.

JW invited comments from the Panel on their experience of the work done by RBH on antisocial behaviour.

**What do we do well?**

**What do we need to improve?**

**What are the issues for Middleton?**

JL- with reference to third to last slide, does someone affected by anti social behaviour (ASB) have to go through court? Know of people who are fearful of reporting problems in case they get targeted by perpetrator.

JW - personal evidence or testimony in the court is most valuable.

JL interjected – but what if that puts you at risk?

JW continued - yes but personal testimony gives greatest chance of conviction, anonymous evidence given to RBH staff is admissible as 'hearsay' and carries less weight than being cross examined in court. If an individual wants to report a problem this way we are happy to do so. There is also the possibility to provide cameras or recording equipment to gather evidence and

document the offence. For example using tape recorder to prove noise nuisance. Every case is taken on its merit, there is no blanket answer. Must be aware that you (as witnesses) are the strongest evidence. RBH staff will use the information that you give us permission to use, unlike the police or courts we will not compel you to come forward. Less information limits what we can do, but we will always respect your rights and go as far as you want us to. Last thought is that not all cases go to court – acceptable behaviour contracts (ABC) are a step along the path but only one in ten cases go to court for and ASBO.

Many stepping points along the way, if behaviour improves can stop the action. Non legal means can affect behaviour.

PS - things you do well – Work in primary schools with Sue Kershaw. Have recommended her to the Independent Governors Forum.

How do we contact you, through TPU?

JW - any way you want to – easiest may be to use your local housing office.

### **Action contact details in Tenants Talkback & TPU news**

PS - at the PACT meeting on Boarshaw last night only 4 attendees, no tenants so may lose it

JL stated that she did not know about the meeting.

PS - was well advertised in local paper.

JL - got to read papers though!

PS - conclusion is that apathy is starting to take hold. How can you rectify this?

JW felt essential to raise the profile of what we are doing so people can get involved and see what we are achieving,

LT - had problems in our block – housing department staff responded quickly and well. Support from local housing office excellent.

In addition local people supported each other so made it easier. Much harder for people living on their own. Would be good idea to train people in mentoring to support and advise each other – like victim support.

JW - excellent idea, would also like to get testimonials to promote further reporting.

LT - should support local TRAs to act as contact point. Also need to speed up the time it takes to do something. Not just the victims who report problems that you are aware of, there are also people living in fear of crime – need to reach them as well.

BB - had lots of problems with tenants living in properties owned by private landlords. Need to get in with them so they are on side.

RR - asked what if both the victim and perpetrator are residents not tenants?

JW - should make no difference, report anyway – we can take action.

### **6. Estate Inspection Programme**

AW - we already have informal estate inspections when for example local TRAs ask for it. RBH Board has now approved formal inspections to take place 4 times a year by local Housing Manager/TRA/TPO/other tenants and residents. Will be publicised in Tenants Talkback etc. Also hope police will get

involved/attend. JW has spoken to contacts and they have pledged to take part.

Feel the inspection will achieve improvements through the embarrassment factor – officers from RBH or other agencies will want to ensure action taken before next inspection (if not sooner). Ward councillors to be invited – some feel they have become distanced from housing following move to ALMO. Will be good to get them on board as they get reports of problems as well. All recognised groups will be invited. Programme to be published shortly.

Question raised at another panel was what about estates with no TRA? Will still have inspection with all local tenants and residents invited – also hoping to use the inspections as an opportunity for estates without TRA to identify areas for Quick Wins schemes that can be recommended to the Panel.

RT - was at last Board meeting and the councillors attending said they would come along.

AW - extra thought regarding larger estates such as Hollin. Will probably have 2 or 3 inspections to break it into more manageable areas.

BB - acknowledged that she felt sorry for housing officers after last walkabout – 5km trek!

## **7. Rehousing Policy Changes**

DH announced that the summaries were for information purposes. Report made in January stated that to reduce waiting times the Council would allow people with children over 10 years old to be rehoused in properties above the ground floor. Now also recognises same sex siblings sharing bedroom as priority for rehousing in 3 bed property.

BB asked if that meant family with 2 girls could ask for 3 bed property?

DH - yes

BB - will family with girl and boy get priority over them?

DH - no – would be equal priority (decided by first come first served).

DH Continued with the update on introductory tenancies, people who have an assured tenancy and violate their tenancy conditions e.g through arrears are classed as being in suspended possession and are called a tolerated trespasser. If anyone in this position transfers they will be moved to an Introductory Tenancy.

BB - fair enough

RR asked why you have to go online to look for available properties – not everyone has access to computer.

DH acknowledged the problem but said tenants can use their local offices and telephone to register interest. With current low turnover of properties the priority tenants (band A) get most of the available properties leaving little for rest.

RR - have expressed interest on properties but am always 8<sup>th</sup> in list.

DH accepted that it is not perfect system, can only say keep trying.

ZB stated that she was given advice to sit on computer and put interest on everything or take possessions in carrier bags over the homelessness section.

DH was concerned that staff might have given such advice on homelessness. Will investigate if ZB provides details.

## 8. Terms of Reference

AW - core terms of reference need to be agreed by the Council, RoFTRA and TRAs.

BB suggested we sort meeting of Area Panel chairs/RoFTRA/Council reps.

AW noted that only just had Middleton chair voted in.

BB felt previous group could do this. Need to get people together to decide.

PS echoed BB's suggestion to get meeting organised and make decision.

BB suggested sending draft Terms of reference to recognised TRAs – this is what we have agreed, any feedback?

SW asked if it was feasible to do?

AW - yes, could move things forward

JL said important to also involve combined groups like MATRA.

AW stated that we need agreement for all 4 panels. Had thought best way

was to get agreement from Council and RoFTRA first then pass to all recognised TRAs. If just use Chairs of Area Panels other tenants could feel they have not been consulted.

BB - this was suggested 6 months ago.

AW - until Council & RoFTRA given agreement and made comments there is no point.

BB asked who was speaking to in the Council.

AW - Adrian Montgomery

BB asked if it was ok for her to contact Adrian and ask him to meet with Chairs and Vice Chairs

SW echoed BB's suggestion or could have meeting between

Chairs/RoFTRA/TPU to decide what terms of reference are acceptable to all panels and then take to Council.

LT felt that should go to Council last so that all groups could have their say and council cannot impose their will on ToR.

AW thought idea sound but not sure if can be done.

JH - without terms of reference there is no point to meeting.

LT – agreed.

RT stated that AW thinks it is ways the way to go. I think it's the way to go.

Get all chairs together and sort ToR for all. Need to set up asap.

PS - anyone moving from one township to another will see no changes to how area panel works.

SW asked for it to be noted that the area panel and AW were in agreement. This is progress!

RT - need to get this sorted by next meeting so can progress. Does not want to hear people saying - no point. Fight for Middleton.

AW - will put every effort to getting this done. Some people arguing about terms of reference to put people off. Echoed RT thought – wants people to get involved. The Area Boards made most decisions by consensus and he expected that the Area Panels would make most of their decisions by consensus.

LT - need to set target date so doesn't stall – moving forward like tortoise with broken legs. Need group to make decisions on how Environmental Improvement (quick wins) money spent.

RT is part of Environmental Steering Group who are trying to get schemes done. Is trying to get stuff for Middleton but this Area Panel should be pushing for schemes.

PS - recent MATRA meeting asked who has terms of reference for different RBH groups/committees. Also what are the interests/responsibilities of the Board members? Need to send to all recognised groups.

BB - can we sort meeting of chairs before March?

AW - meeting with council officers and RoFTRA on Monday will raise with them then.

BB Called close of meeting.