

CRF AGM 2010

Chairs Report



We set out two years ago to become **a better critical friend** to Connect Housing and this year a lot of this has come together for the CRF

For the first time the CRF directly fed into **strategic** Business Planning cycle of Connect Housing. Through the SIF working group we were able to tell the Board of Connect what the priorities of tenants for 2010/11 are, so the Board can make sure there are enough resources to meet those priorities. Our CRF Board representatives, Kath and Maureen make sure that the Board gives tenant priorities the importance they deserve.

How did the CRF find out what tenants priorities were?

- We did a survey of all our members asking what they thought their priorities were.
- We listened to people at our meetings
- We looked at the things people applied for in their estate priority bids.
- We looked at all the action sheets reports from the year before.
- We looked at a report drawn up by Chris Hartley, the Service Improvement Manager listing all the things tenants tell Connect in complaints, compliments and satisfaction surveys.
- We spoke to tenants on the door step on Estate visits.

The priority issues we told the Board about were:

- Communication in Repairs.
- Planned maintenance: the influence tenants have on it and the information they get about it.
- Ensuring our estates are well-managed and we are all clear what that means and what standards we expect.;
- Clarity and value for money when it comes to rents and service charges

The CRF also develop a new tool in their kit as critical friend.

We now have our very own group of trained tenant inspectors. When we think a particular service area needs

inspecting or would benefit from a tenant perspective, we can ask our inspectors to have a closer look. And that's what we have done.

Over the last 12 months the inspectors develop a **Well managed estate check list**. They did that by inspecting a range of estates, some that have a lot of problems, some that are very popular and have very few management issues. The idea was to find what makes for a good estate (GREEN) an ok estate (AMBER) and an estate that needs some urgent action (RED).

Some of the inspectors and **CRF committee members now are on the estate management working group** and have developed check list into a standard for estates that can be used by staff and tenants alike to trigger a full estate inspection. Tenant members of the group, including myself have recently **helped train members of the Connects patch teams** (housing officers, rent accounting officers, contracts and letting officers) on the development of the check list and how they can use it in their daily work.

What would be brilliant if tenants living on our estates would use this estate list now once every 6 or 12 months, alongside staff members using the list to check that Connect don't miss something important. **If you would be interested in filling in one of these forms once or twice per year, please give your name to Lisa today.** That would be great.

Since March this year we have asked our inspectors to look at the Planned Maintenance, especially how tenants can influence the planned programme and what information Connect gives to tenants about that programme once it has been put together. We will keep you informed about progress with this on the CRF page in Get Connected.

We have also started inviting Connect contractors to our meetings so that members can put questions to them. We think this is a good way of holding contractors to account. This has been very popular and we will continue this next year, but also ask that The contracts manager, Nick Drury to bring along information they have about contractors' performance, for example how many appointments they kept, or how many jobs they completed on

time, to a general meeting rather than an officers meeting, as this may be interesting for all of you.

The CRF spent its CRF

Community Priority Fund on:

- Methley Drive showers for greater energy efficiency
- Pennwell Garth new and more secure door entry system.
- Newall Close water butts and changes to the gate for easier access for the residents.
- Nunthorpe Road Communal planters to brighten up the estate.
- Greenthorpe Court gates. (installation still outstanding due to planning permission)
- 3 new benches for Hawthorn Mill
- Highfield Court bin store alteration (still to be done due to planning permission) new shrubs planted at front of scheme.
- Chatsworth Court security measures.
- Wheatcroft "residents only" sign.
- Woodfield Court external improvements.
- Upper Butts metal fencing.
- Grange Avenue new external doors
- Plus Water butts, security lights and compost bins for a variety of schemes.

This year the committee was not very happy with the way the Community Priority Fund was implemented. We have agreed a number of changes with Connect's regeneration team for this year's round of bids. We hope that this will make a difference. We also have let the Chief Executive and The Board know that the improvements suggested by tenants are very important to us and therefore should be a priority for staff. We hope to agree with Connect Housing that the Community Priority Fund delivery timetable should be part of their binding local offer service standards next year. The panel met again last Friday to look at this year's bids and funding for all bids received was agreed.

Other work we did last year includes:

- Shadowing connect staff in their daily work to make suggestions on how they can use the well managed estate check list.

- 9 officers meetings. This included six ordinary meetings, one meeting with the contractors to comment on their performance and the new empty homes standard and two away days, one with the tenant inspectors.
- We organised our AGM and four other general meetings with speakers.
- Our CRF Board reps attended 7 board meetings.
- We attended 4 meetings with Jenny Brierley the Chief executive. We use these meetings to raise issues of concern to tenants, poor performance or to discuss changes affecting Connect and its tenants.
- CRF members attended a number of working groups, including the Financial inclusion working group , the Connect Older People Strategists , the estate management working group and the Landlord Services Monitoring panel.
- Procurement Panels: Three CRF reps helped appoint the current maintenance contractors, interviewing these for two full days.
- CRF members attended training events, networking meetings with other tenants federations and one or two conference.
- We attended local events and meetings to meet some of our members.
- We lobbied to finally have achieved the first meeting of the green group that had been asleep for too long.
- We made a presentation to the Board of Connect to let them know what tenants priorities are.

I hope this gives you an overview of the interesting and varied work the CRF did last year and I hope you will join us in the things we are hoping to do next year.

If you have any good ideas what else the CRF should be tackling speak to me or any member of the committee at any time. Our door is always open.

Finally we would like to thank Jean Wood who has been with the CRF for 8 years, but has now moved to another housing association. We would like to thank Pat Dibb for her services as treasurer during the last year which she did as well as looking after our Ron 😊. Our thanks also go to Kath Cullingworth, who is not even on the committee, but nevertheless works very hard as CRF Board

representative, as one of the tenants inspectors and on many working groups and panels. I would also like to mention Graham Clarkson who regularly helps committee members with their computers and has been doing a lot of the envelope stuffing for Federation mail outs this year.

Thank you for listening.