



WOLVERHAMPTON OVER 50s FORUM
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Minutes of Over 50s Forum
Held on Wednesday 20 August 2008, 10am

- Apologies:** Rose Powell, Eddie Grizzle, Sybil Carney, Mrs McNeil, Sandra Ullah, Pat O'Dowd.
- Present:** 33 Members, Jean Fairclough, (Minutes).
- Speakers:** Anne Bailey, Commissioning, Older People, Jean Tompkin & Maureen Bradley, Accord Housing Association.
- Chairperson:** Brad Purshouse

Brad welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Speaker (1)

Anne Bailey gave a brief overview of what Very Sheltered Housing entails, which first developed 15 years ago in 1994 and is designed as an alternative to residential care, which provides more independence and a better quality of life, whilst still ensuring that all care needs are fully met. There are currently 8 schemes in operation. Broadway Gardens was the first scheme which was opened in 1994.

She also clarified what was said at July 16 meeting by one of its members regarding effect the new development will have on the current service users. For example Anne stated that once the new service is up and running there will be approximately 25 staff in place, also that letters and brochures were sent to everyone concerned informing them of changes as well as a press release. The Low Hill development will have self-contained flats, there will be a 24 hours care team on the site, day services (social club), a café, rehab facilities etc.

Planning for Low Hill started 4 years ago and Accord Housing Association was selected in December 2006. There will be 2 schemes, (1) Showell Circus, which will be supported housing and (2) Showell Park, which will be Very Sheltered Housing. Trips have been organised by Accord for people to visit their other schemes, they also left display boards with staff members to discuss with service users although many of the managers failed to attend meetings held. The Forum was shown layouts of the Very Sheltered Scheme and Supported Housing Scheme.

There 3 new schemes under development, Low Hill, Beacon Centre, Blakenhall and the Council is hoping to develop another 5 schemes in the near future.

Speaker (2)

Maureen Bradley stated the development is a sustainable one and went on to explain the many benefits of the Low Hill development, stating it will be safe and secure, enhance the quality of the service users life and well-being, will help people stay active, give them privacy and they will have sufficient staff in place who will provide the needed care and services. Their aim is to put people first, respond to their needs, give support services to users and valued members of community.

Speaker (3)

Jean Tompkins explained what Extra Care/Very Sheltered Housing is all about, i.e. self-contained homes, with support service which will provide care needs for people with disabilities, frail or health needs. She said Accord has developed 7 Very Sheltered Schemes, 3 Sheltered Housing and a number of retirement housing schemes. Also stated that Accord gather information and advice from other agencies, and service users will be provided with learning opportunities and other activities as and when requested.

The Low Hill Very Sheltered Housing completion is due December 2009, will housed 1 to 2 bedrooms for people over 55, there will be a shop, gymnasium, restaurant facilities, day care provision, guests/visitors room, large garden and hair salon etc. Jean also showed an artist impression of what the completed building will look like and gave brief explanation of layout. The new development will provide mixed tenure, sale/shared ownership and rental, assured the forum that the care staff will be recruited from the local community, there will be benefits to the local area, i.e. employment, job security and regeneration.

Roy Girdler's Comments:

Roy Girdler thanked the speakers for their presentation and said the information was very interesting. He also stated he and his wife visited the Chris Laws Day Centre and they were very concerned about the many accusations being made, also said that it seems as though things are being pushed under the carpet, although he did not have enough time to speak to all the service users and he also expressed concerns about the crime in the area. He said he could not find any display boards on the premises as stated by Accord and many people were not aware of these.

Roy also questioned the funding cost (£3½m), and felt that the development will need more money than the above figure. He also commented that many schemes are put on hold now due to the lack of sufficient finance. People need to be assured that this scheme will be completed and stated that the judicial enquiry about the whole plan itself has been put together. He was also concerned about the staffing set up which looks good, but when people are on holidays; the other who will be on duty would have a lot of work to do. Accord will need good strong staff ratio, as he himself knows what is involved in caring for the needs of ones with disabilities; there were also concerns around profit making.

It was said that many of the service users were unhappy with the way matters have been handled and that older people are not getting what they're entitled to, government makes many promises but delivers nothing. No proper discussion has taken place, many lies have been told by all, taking away older peoples rights, and there is a cover up by the speakers.

Anne Bailey – On the matter of profit making, stated that housing association is not allowed to make any profits and there are 8 schemes which are all run by housing association, therefore this scheme will run in the same way/principles.

Maureen Bradley – CCTV, this will be built in the building and will enhance what is already in the system.

Day Centre – Accord will provide instructors according to needs and demands and will use existing instructors.

Funding – Accord will be putting the same money or even more according to what is needed.

Anne Bailey – said the funding is for the service users and the building.

Jean Tompkins – Commented on the CCTV, saying it's about working together with the community, there will a 24 hours staff rota, they will visit the community to see what's facilities are already out there, so that the facilities in the building will complement what's in the community. They will also find out what went wrong regarding the display boards, Jean also stated that 35 people will receive extra care model once they have been assessed, 25 staff members will not be on site all at the same time. Jean confirmed that the walk-way to the Chris Laws will be altered which will give access to i.e. the restaurant.

Anne Bailey stated that the new café/restaurant will improve on the quality of the meals as they will be much fresher being prepared on site, where as now service users are having meals that are prepared else where, and it's about better choice and quality.

Accord will cover any cost of loss revenue, they will subsidise this to make it work, they will also liaise with the police to enhance security, Accord said they would welcome any further questions members might have and these can be passed to Brad. Brad suggested that it would be a good idea for members to visit the scheme, Accord is in agreement with this.

(Information on Very Sheltered Scheme Development at Low Hill together with the response to the Express and Star as well as Change for the Better Brochures, Edition Two were distributed at the meeting)

Brad thanked the speakers on behalf of forum members.

Minutes of Last Meeting

Minutes were agreed as an accurate account by Roy Girdler and seconded by Mr Rai.

Matters Arising

Mr Rai commented on Forum account and thought it would an idea if biscuits could be provided at future meetings, but this was denied.

Mr Rai stated that 501 bus (Sunday) services is not running on time, as it leaves early which means that people misses the bus.

Comments were also made with regard to the starting time for senior citizens to use their bus passes at 9am but because of the cost involved this will not be implemented.

Mike Nicholls stated that people should campaign for the 24 hours nationwide travel pass service which would cover bus, train and trams, 7 days per week.

Correspondence

Mike Nicholls commented on the Intergenerational Project 'Fire in Our Arms' event which took place on Tuesday 22 July 2008 at the Lighthouse Media Centre. He commended the hard work of Barbara Nelson, Ian Peddie and others who took part. He also expressed his disappointment at the lack of support shown by the police.

Brad read replies letters from Rob Marris and Ken Purchase, MPs, regarding questions previously asked, i.e. cuts in older peoples services, funding for preventive services, funeral grants council tax etc.

Treasurer's Report

Dave Walker, Treasurer, reported that the balance in the Forum account is now £2,156.17.

Sub Group Report

There was no sub group report. Mike Nicholls stated that Wolverhampton Homes are allowing some of their properties to fall in disrepair; he suggested the forum invite one of Wolverhampton Homes' senior letting officers to attend one of the Sub Committee meetings. Roy supported Mike's comment, and commented that he and his wife left their former home in excellent condition but because Wolverhampton Homes took so long to let the property vandals were able to cause a large amount of damage at taxpayers' expense.

Sub Committee now called 'Environmental Committee'

Jean Girdler announced the new name, and informed the forum that the committee now has a permanent meeting room, Interview Room 17, Ground Floor (located by the Social Service Reception 4, by the Keepers). Jean also announced the next meeting date, which will be Tuesday 26 August 2008, 10:30 – 12:00.

Future meeting dates are as follows:

Tues 23 September 2008	2:30 – 4:00	Interview Room 17, Ground Floor
Tues 21 October 2008	10:30 – 12:00	Interview Room 17, Ground Floor
Tues 25 November 2008	10:30 – 12:00	Interview Room 17, Ground Floor

Transport

David Plant informed the forum that the no. 612 bus to Bentley Bridge has not been very successful perhaps this is due to the fact that people were not made aware of this service.

Any Other Business

A member of the forum presented and a printed card from the Art Gallery entitled 'artforum', which is encouraging people to make their own art, by creating something new. Although people are being encouraged to participate, only those between the age of 14 and 25 years can do so, member felt this is ageist.

Denis Kennedy reminded the Forum that Brian O'Leary promised to return and discuss care services issues, and asked if Brian could be invited to one of the meetings, Brad said this is being sorted.

**Date of next meeting is Wednesday 17 September 2008, 10am – 12pm
Committee Room 1 & 2, Third Floor, Civic Centre.**

Speaker: Brian Pearce, West Midlands Fire Service