**A&A MINS OF MEETING**

**RCVE 2020 Meeting 1** - Thursday 6 February,

The Brain Charity, [Norton Street, Liverpool L3 8LR](https://www.bing.com/local?lid=YN1029x11998641912893278839&id=YN1029x11998641912893278839&q=The+Brain+Charity&name=The+Brain+Charity&cp=53.4101448059082%7e-2.9758660793304443&ppois=53.4101448059082_-2.9758660793304443_The+Brain+Charity)

Present:

**RCVE Members** - Margi Kelly (MK), Viv Fleming (VF), Keith Harkness (KH), Peter Taylor (PT), Richard Nichols (RN), Michael Hewes (MHe), Vic Andrews (VA) (RCVE Chair), Cameron Dougherty (CD), Sally Trueman (ST).

**Engaged Customers** - Jean Williams (JW) (Vice-Chair LCV), Maureen Delij (MD) (Secretary LCV)

**Staff** - Tonia Punter-Ojong (TP), Karen Kendall (KK), Hugh Owen (HO)(a.m.), Andy Douglas (AD)(a.m.), Linda Ahearn (Observer), Patrick New (PN)(a.m.), Joe Robinson (JR)(a.m.)

Apologies:

**RCVE Members** - Michael Hulme (Mhu), David Otty (DO), Robert Lowther (RL).

Meeting Opened 1000

**Welcome by Chair**

Vic Andrews welcomed the RCVE and Riverside Staff, and extended a warm welcome to our Observer Linda Ahearn.

**Minutes of Previous Meeting (6 December 2019) & Matters Arising**

Victor provided additional clarification relating to the Clarion transfer in the North East, and confirmed the RCVE would be engaging with the transferring tenants. Officers will agree the specifics.

Minutes Approved, Secretary to Issue

**Our Riverside Plan & Rent Update** - Hugh Owen (Director of Policy and Communications, Riverside) and Andrew Douglas (Corporate Planning Advisor, Strategy & Planning) session

* Andy Douglas presented an update on the “Our Riverside” plan. This work includes significant input gained from a customer session held in September 2019 in Birmingham. This was attended by several RCVE Members and other Engaged Customers.
  + People, Homes, Places (along with 3 cross-cutting themes – sustainability, safety, value).
  + Builds and expands on the previous plan, and from the Customer perspective includes the activities already within PN’s Customer Plan which has already launched.
  + The aim is to finalise and publish to Customers in the Spring.
  + RCVE Members will receive an advance copy once approved.
  + RCVE Members will receive a copy of Andy’s presentation via the Secretary
* Hugh Owen presented the outcome of a rent review conducted by Riverside as well as the plan for rent increases from April.
  + Since 2015 all social housing rents have been reduced by 1% p.a. This being a Government requirement.
  + Over the 5 years this has led to an overall revenue loss to Riverside of c. 14% once normally expected increases as well as the mandated 1% p.a decrease is calculated.
  + Such a loss in revenue has impacted Riverside’s ability to maintain and to expand services, as the “loss” has had to absorbed by the existing structure.
  + From April 2020 the Government will permit social housing providers to resume rent reviews providing no increase above CPI + 1% are charged to Customers. Additionally, only one increase p.a is permitted.
  + For 2020 CPI is 1.7%. Therefore, a rent increase of 2.7% is permitted. It is expected that the very large majority of social housing landlords will increase to this figure.
  + The Riverside rent review also took into account constraints relating to LHA and adjustments will be made as required for a small number of Customers who would otherwise face a larger shortfall.
  + Customers will receive a letter explaining the changes from April. In general, the increases will be in the region of £2-£3 per week.

**Social Media Consultation** – On behalf of Richard Collingwood (Brand and Digital Manager, Riverside), Joe Robinson presented.

* Joe provided a detailed update relating to a recent consultation around all aspects of Social Media within Riverside, and particularly relating to Customer channels.
  + Highlights: No HA is particularly good at the utilisation of social media channels.
  + Riverside do seem to have better than average following via LinkedIn (7th) and Twitter (2nd) though Facebook is further down the list at 16th. These as compared to other social housing providers.
  + A list of recommendations was provided.
  + This detailed report will be provided to the RCVE by the Secretary.
  + An interesting presentation which featured the use of the Slido tool. This allows an audience to vote and promote particular ideas via their smartphone. The RCVE should review this tool for future meetings. RCVE members will receive a copy of their results from the Secretary.

**Scrutiny Project Update** - Cameron Dougherty (Chair Scrutiny Working Group)

* Verbal update on the status of the current Scrutiny project (Customer Satisfaction with Planned and Cyclical Maintenance).
  + The Scope has been agreed, and an initial Desktop Review has taken place.
  + Further planning will take place with the SWG on Friday 7 (the day following this RCVE Meeting) to plan the Staff interviews.
  + (As these minutes were prepared after the scheduled SWG Meeting on 7 February I can report that 2 separate sessions were agreed, one in Leicester and one in Liverpool.
  + Separate updates to be provided via SWG Chair

Lunch 1230

*The RCVE were joined for Lunch by Jean Williams, (Vice-Chair LCV) and Maureen Delij, (Secretary LCV). We are very pleased to meet our Engaged Customer colleagues and look forward to a warm working relationship.*

*LCV is Liverpool Customer Voice*

Meeting Resumed at 1330

**RCVE Regional Feedback** - ALL (see separate communication, and feel free to request documents from the Secretary). Due to the Christmas and New Year period updates were limited.

**Liverpool CRV/RCVE Engagement Discussion** - Vic Andrews

LCV have previously received secretarial and other logistical support from Riverside. This included the preparation of the Meeting Minutes, Dictaphone recordings, and the organising of customer meetings. This support was provided by a Riverside employee who is now absent due to illness.

As the LCV have been unable to pick up these tasks it has led to a situation where there has been no meeting since July 2019.

Whilst it isn’t, and wasn’t, the responsibility of Riverside to provide these services, it is understandable that things developed this way. As Engaged Customers it is agreed that independence of planning and action is desirable and therefore a plan to move forward without Riverside staff support is needed.

Maureen explained that the LCV wished to resume their meetings but in the absence of customer contact details this was impossible to organise. GDPR prohibits Riverside from providing these details to LCV directly. Two options were discussed:

* Riverside write to the Customers and invite them to contact the LCV Secretary directly with their contact details. The LCV Secretary can then organise a meeting during which permission for the LCV to retain the Customer’s contact information can be signed.
* If the LCV provide, via the RCVE Secretary, a time and venue, Riverside will create invites and send to the Customers. During the first meeting a similar waiver can be signed so that LCV can contact the Customers directly in future.
* Maureen and Cameron will correspond to agree the best way forward once Maureen has consulted with the other LCV Officers.

Vic then read an email which had been send to TP by the LCV Chair Nora Rimmer regarding the development of the above situation, and the absence of the Riverside employee. It was agreed that this was open to different interpretations and that no further action is required on the subject.

*Jean and Maureen had joined only for Lunch and this agenda point so the RCVE bade them a fond farewell.*

**NSC Update** - Margi Kelly, RCVE Vice-Chair

* Riverside have been selected as the preferred bidder to acquire1162 properties in the North East from Clarion, they beat 3 local providers.
* The biggest improvement in performance of total repairs logged was in the South-Central Region.
* Building Safety Update - Highlighted was a draft “Resident Engagement Strategy” being developed as part of the Customer Plan and will involve the RCVE committee.
* A survey of 622 customers across 279 sites revealed that 91% of customers confirmed that they knew what to do in the event of fire.

**Group Board Update** - Sally Trueman/Richard Nichols

* Richard gave an overview of his observations during his first two meetings as RCVE Observer to the Board.
  + He stated he had been warmly welcomed, and treated as an equal by the Board Members. Richard will replace Sally Trueman who will retire from the executive at the end of her 9-year service.
  + He noted his pleasure that Riverside recognises that Staff Satisfaction impacts Customer Satisfaction and therefore activities which lead to an increase should lead to higher satisfaction amongst Customers also.
  + H & S has higher visibility, recognition and engagement across all levels.
  + Climate Change is a recognised Risk and has been added to the Group’s 30-year plan.
  + Riverside anticipate an increase in their housing stock as a result of ongoing bids.

Sally reminded the RCVE that some of the discussions at Board level are Confidential in nature and that documentation must be appropriately controlled. All agreed.

**Complaints Panel** – Keith Harkness

Keith had received an email from TP regarding the dissolution of the former complaints panel. It has been decided that responsibility for higher level complaints will be the responsibility of the RCVE.

Keith was concerned that the email sent by TP had suggested the people who had been dealing with complaints prior to this action had been less capable than the RCVE.

This decision was in fact purely pragmatic, in view of the low level of Complaints requiring input at this level. In fact, it is almost certain that the same people will be engaged in resolving future complaints.

Whilst all written communication can be subject to interpretation the RCVE did not agree with Keith’s reading on this occasion.

**Statement Regarding Group Confidentiality** - Vic Andrews

Vic emphasized the rules relating to sharing of confidential information relating to specific complaints, even within the group. Likewise, with information gleaned from updates relating to Scrutiny.

**RCVE Member Selection Process for April** - Vic Andrews

In April our meeting in Stoke will have as an agenda item relating to the selection of RCVE members. We must select 7 members of the existing group to ensure continuity across the RCVE. All members are eligible to vote.

The exact process to be communicated by the Secretary.

**Equality & Diversity** - Karen Kendall (Customer Engagement Partner, Riverside)

Thank you to Karen for this thought-provoking quote.

“**Diversity is the art of thinking independently, together**”

**AOB**

Sally explained that she is working, on behalf of the Board, on a project examining the reduction of Stigma amongst our tenants. She will meet in Hull on Monday next to progress this.

Vic explained that RCVE are very happy to fund this engagement. Stigma is a very relevant area of interest for the RCVE and is also being addressed as part of the ongoing Scrutiny Project.

Margi attended an event on 24 January, subject Renewing the Service Standards, in Stoke. This group may be very useful to the RCVE and we should aim to make contact with them. Officers to progress.

Next RCVE Meeting is 16 April in Stoke-on-Trent.

**Note: These Minutes were prepared after the situation with Covid-19 commenced and they document a meeting which took place before this event. They are intended to be an accurate depiction of the meeting, though many of the actions referenced are or will be rearranged.**

Closed Meeting at 1530