

Presentation on ASB Theme to NRG on 02.10.09 at Trafford Hall

Since Resident Involvement first started with Granta Housing Society, I have continued to sit on all but one of their local resident panels here in Cambridge. I still continue to keep this up as well as to undertake various other tasks requested by Granta. My main areas of interest are the Estates & ASB Panel and Editorial Panel, as I used to be involved in printing and publishing and studied typography for many years. I also sit on Customer Care, Maintenance, The Residents Forum and PDSG – Diversity.

With Metropolitan Housing Partnership, I am one of Granta's two reps and I am currently about half-way through a two year term as an NRG member. Here, I hold the portfolio for ASB for the whole Metropolitan Housing Group. I sought this topic as it was a subject completely new to me and there had been incidents of Anti-Social Behaviour on my estate. I was keen to learn more.

In addition to this, at Metropolitan Housing Partnerships' behest I am also a member of the following organisations:

- Social Landlords Crime and Nuisance Group
- Chartered Institute of Housing
- TPAS
- London Community Safety Partnership (Metropolitan Police & London Boroughs)
- National Tenants' Voice (Applied in June but nothing heard to date)

For my training in this specific topic, it was not possible to attend any of the InStep training workshops as the events were all cancelled due to a lack of support despite having tried on three occasions. Instead, I attended an internal training event with Metropolitan in London intended for the Neighbourhood Housing Officers, which I thought was excellent and was far better than anything that could be offered by outside training organisations. I was able to ask questions and get a reply from people who were friendly to me and are at the sharp end of the job. I am able to keep on learning, and keep myself up to date with magazines and frequently visit the web-sites of the above organisations and others. In my remaining year on the NRG, if financial constraints allow, I would like to attend more events gaining the opportunity of talking to others active in this field to give more depth to my understanding of this subject which is of genuine interest to me.

On sight of the new job description for the 'NRG Anti-social Behaviour Representative' which was part of the bundle for this meeting, I welcome the opportunities to do more and meet new people and challenges. I continue to look forward to work closely with fellow NRG members and staff to improve the service to our residents. I am hoping to be in a position to publish an article on ASB on a fortnightly or monthly basis on NRG website or MHP publications.

The conclusion that I have drawn, is that it was rather unfortunate that it was not possible to get into this topic sooner with precious time being lost on the ASB topic. Some of the web-sites that I have visited are a mine of useful information. Others are not quite so, but still worth a visit. But there a few which are ill conceived, woolly and go all round the edges of a topic and fail to make the point. If they do, then it is lost on me. These not being worth a second visit and there are a few. It would be an idea if we could give some thought to the length time us members stay on the NRG. If it is just two years, as in my case, the first year, there is much emphasis is on training with not too much work being done. Then, in the second year there seems to be a steep learning curve and then being able to do the job as intended. Perhaps it should be considered that elections or appointments to the NRG are staggered to allow a more useful value for money approach for training and longer times in office.

My thoughts and some others for the future are as follows. Firstly there is a need to maintain a consistency across the group. We perceive that Granta has a difficulty in recruiting Housing Officers of the desired calibre which is something we need to question. Service levels are not consistent. We have two good housing officers. One a young lady, who has taken maternity leave on occasions, or has been made responsible for a different area on her return. When she is away the service slips to poor and abysmal and there has been one dismissal. Another being an older lady, who is also good, is seemingly always under pressure but performs well. Other post holders have been unsuitable for the job. Questions need to be asked as to is this a selection problem, or is pay not sufficient to attract better candidates? Is this a purely a local thing? What can be done to redress this? If residents are unsatisfied with the service, they will end up paying for it and should have the choice and opportunity to have their say.