

ARHAG Housing Association		
Meeting		
Date & Time	Saturday 12 th December 2009	
Venue	ARHAG HA Unit B, Ground Floor Mary Brancker House 54-74 Holmes Road London NW5 3AQ	
Present	Present: Yemane Wolde-Rufael - Carnwath Road YWR Abdulrahman Sayed - Chair of Forum - Dalwood Street AS Rosemary Arthur - Carolina Close RA Assefa Abbay - De Laune Street AA Teku Regassa - Evelyn Dennington Road TR Andrew Murphy - Juniper Crescent AM Mahir Sidhom – Fairbanks Road MS Dawit Teferra – Juniper Crescent DT Salaheidin Taha – Azania Mews Residents Association Chair ST Barrington Billings Chair Board Arhag BB Sheron Carter Chief Executive SC Ismail Atiloa Head of Housing IA Anthony George – Quality and Performance Manager AG Steve Hill Community and Engagement Officer SH	
Item		Action
1.0	Introduction and apologies Apologies Apologies were received from Gera Patel, Mohamed Ali-Hiri, Ron Tootill, Abdulrahman Muhamad-Ali and Habbib Aziz	

2.0	<p>Minutes of the Previous meeting</p> <p>The minutes of previous meeting were accepted as an accurate record.</p>	
3.0	<p>Feedback From Last Meeting</p> <p>3.1 The specification for the Arhag website to be interactive is currently being looked at.</p> <p>3.2 The Anniversary event in November was successful. Unfortunately it was not possible to invite more tenants because of resourcing issues. Residents who have been significantly involved with Arhag were invited as were those who have been with Arhag the longest. The DVD of the event will be put onto the website.</p> <p>3.3 The Audit Commission inspection has now finished. It went well with much work done by staff in preparation. There were however weaknesses as well as strengths in income management and dealing with ASB. Thanks are due to the residents who were involved in meeting with the Audit Commission. The result is expected in the new year.</p>	IA to I.T development
4.0	<p>Rent</p> <p>4.1 The Tenants Service Authority has confirmed the September 2009 inflation rate as -1.4%. The formula thus becomes 1.4-0.5 % plus £2 per tenant household until rent reaches target rent. 60% of Arhag's properties are below the target rent at present. Our financial plans predicted an increase of 4.45% which means we will need to make savings of about £148,000.</p> <p>4.2 The main areas where savings can be achieved are staff and the maintenance budget. The options are to either increase the rent so there are no cuts in maintenance service or to cut rents and decide maintenance priorities. AA suggested that more supervision of contractors could</p>	

<p>4.3</p>	<p>be done so as to minimise wastage. DT suggested Arhag look at the target rents at particular schemes such as the one at Juniper Crescent as the tenants of different landlords are paying different rents. A question was asked about 'the surplus' from past years. SC explained that in Arhag has been very using surplus to fund £2.3 million investment in planned works The planned maintenance work for the next few years is on the Arhag website.</p> <p>It was suggested that worked examples of the effect of planned maintenance cuts could be provided at the next meeting in February.</p>	
<p>5.0</p>	<p>Rent Arrears</p> <p>5.1 Rent arrears is currently 10% against a target of 6.5%. This is a big gap and has an effect on the ability of the organization to deliver services.</p> <p>5.2 74% of tenants are in arrears (including those on housing benefit)</p> <p>5.3 The area of most concern are those tenants who are on partial housing benefit who are responsible for most of the arrears. It is important that Arhag targets housing benefit shortfall as well as monies tht are owed directly from the tenant</p> <p>5.4 YWR said a special strategy is needed for tenants who are on partial housing benefit who are in arrears. DT said that the rent statement and arrears total may be out of alignment because of timing of payments and debits. IA confirmed housing benefit is paid in arrears.</p> <p>5.5 All tenants in arrears have received a letter, even those with under £500. Tenants should be in credit at all times.</p>	<p>Head of asset Management / IA</p> <p>IA to review</p>

<p>5.6</p> <p>5.7</p> <p>5.8</p> <p>5.9</p>	<p>IA stated Arhag has adopted a zero tolerance approach to arrears and there is a special campaign to target all those arrears of £500 or less and publicise the clear rent account scheme.</p> <p>Part of the strategy adopted by Arhag includes 'attachment of earnings' for tenants in arrears with a court order to ensure arrears are paid and tenancies sustained and the use of small claims court for static arrears.</p> <p>AS suggested that some tenants may have a language barrier in understanding correspondence to do with rent. It was accepted that tenants often co-operate once they are phoned about rent. For example an interpreter could be used.</p> <p>IA stated Arhag introduced a card payment option in November and residents can now pay directly to Arhag over the phone.</p>	
<p>6.0</p> <p>6.1</p> <p>6.2</p> <p>6.3</p>	<p>Learning from Complaints</p> <p>From April – September 2009 Arhag received 8 complaints; Repairs -2; Staff conduct -3; Compensation -1; Contractor conduct -1; and Rent arrears -2. 4 complaints were upheld and 1 partially.</p> <p>The main thing is that Arhag has failed sufficiently to keep tenants informed of the progress. Occasionally there has been incorrect information provided by Arhag and insufficient information provided.</p> <p>As a result complaints will now be handled by the quality and performance manager at stage 1. Following the completion of complaint action there has been a poor response to the return of satisfaction forms. The forum was reminded where learning takes place from complaints that a high level of complaints can mean a high level of satisfaction.</p>	

8.2	<p>discrimination as well as to improve access. The main findings of the recent report are;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Board profile in line with current targets. ■ Fair access to housing. 90% of all new tenants were from BME communities. ■ The staffing target of 5,2% with a disability has been achieved and the board profile is in line with current targets. 	
8.3	<p>As a result Arhag will seek;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ to streamline data capture for key areas ■ Consider centralizing the satisfaction survey process ■ Set up area based meetings for Tenants forum and service panel meetings. ■ The current 25% disability levels requires further investigation ■ Look at new ways of encouraging contractors from BME communities to provide services. ■ Involvement. Address gender in-balance of attendees to panel and forum meetings. 	
8.4	<p>In answer to a question as to why Arhag does not employ people from similar backgrounds to the main resident groupings IA stated recruitment based on the quality of the candidates. However, Arhag works in partnership with Hact to provide training and work placement opportunities for refugees. The next in January 2010 for a 3 to 6 month period.</p>	<p>Quality and Performance manager SH IA</p>
9.0	<p>Forum / Panel survey</p>	
9.1	<p>This was done following the resident involvement survey which was aimed at tenants who had expressed an interest in being involved in the forum and panel.</p>	<p>IA/Head of asset Management</p>

<p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p>	<p>Of the 14 replies 7 were in favour of a merged meeting, 4 for separate meetings, and 2 had no preference. Respondents opted for six meetings a year rather than 8 or 4.</p> <p>The decision has been made to have six residents meetings during 2010. There will be an opportunity to have some of these in different boroughs than at present. The meetings will generally take place on the first Saturday from 11-1pm of even month so s to avoid holiday times as far as is possible. The first meeting being in Newham on 6th February and will invite contractors, a review of the planned maintenance schedule and a finalisation of the rent approach for 2010 decided.</p>	<p>SH</p>
<p>10.0</p> <p>10.1</p> <p>10.2</p> <p>10.3</p> <p>10.4</p>	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>Thanks were given to Yemane for his contribution to helping positive changes occur with Arhag over the past years. He is moving outside of Arhag in January 2010.</p> <p>It was emphasised that the changes that have occurred within Arhag would continue regardless of any future staff or board changes.</p> <p>Tenants complemented Arhag on the quality of the Tenants handbook though it was mentioned that a photograph was used where permission had not been given by a tenant.</p> <p>IA informed the forum that a decision on appointing a new parking contractor would occur next week.</p>	<p>SH to notify in Residents newsletter plus by invitation</p>
<p>11.0</p>	<p>The next residents meeting will be held on Saturday 6th February 2010 at 11am in Newham (venue to be advised)</p>	