

MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS FORUM

Monday 26 October 2015

Present:

Councillor Bull (Chair)
Councillor Morris

Also Present:

Richard Cleave	- Citizens Advice Bureau
Val Ewings	- Exonia Park
Steve Porter	- Exonia Park
Debbie Schamroth	- Ringswell Park
Alan Southard	- Newport Park
Malcolm Thomas	- Ringswell Park
Wendy Threlfall	- National Association of Park Home Residents
Geoff Threlfall	- National Association of Park Home Residents
Sheila Welsh	- Ringswell Park

Also Present:

Environmental Health Practitioner, Assistant Democratic Services Officer

In Attendance:

PCSO Anthony Keller	- Devon & Cornwall Constabulary
Denise Dearden	- Trading Standards

8

APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Councillor Morris advised the Forum that she had been appointed Portfolio Holder for Customer Access. Although mobile homes fall under her portfolio, she felt it was no longer appropriate to Chair the Forum.

This was likely to be her last meeting as she would be unable to attend the next scheduled meeting, followed by all-out elections in May 2016 where she was unlikely to stand in a ward with a mobile home site.

She hoped that members of the forum had felt listened to in her time as Chair and hoped the Forum would continue.

Members of the Forum thanked Councillor Morris for her help and influence since becoming Chair.

Malcolm Thomas nominated Councillor Bull to be the Chair and Wendy Threlfall seconded this nomination.

Agreed that Councillor Bull be appointed as Chair, and Councillor Henson remain as Deputy Chair.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Henson, Baldwin, Newby and Leadbetter, Caroline Aird (Age UK Exeter), Robert Norley (Assistant Director Environment), Karen Devaraj (Citizens Advice Bureau) and Keith Williams (Private Sector Housing Manager).

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27 APRIL 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2015 were agreed.

INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING

Councillor Bull welcomed PCSO Anthony Keller to the meeting to discuss any concerns around intimidation and bullying.

A resident gave an example of an incident where the Police had been involved. Although Police presence had some effect, he felt there was little the PCSO could do at the time and in his opinion was not a good use of police time. He enquired what procedures were available to police.

PCSO Keller advised that new legislation had come into force in October 2014 which made it easier for the Police, local authorities and landlords to deal with anti-social behaviour. Tools had been introduced for different situations. There is a recognised escalation process that is used – a warning letter is issued in the first instance, followed by a second letter. If problems continue, an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) is issued which is a formal agreement with an individual. It is extremely flexible in content and can be personalised to meet individual circumstances, so it could be to have no contact with particular people. The ABC does not have to come from the Police, but can also be made by registered landlords and local authorities.

If the ABC is broken, it may result in the Magistrates Court imposing an Anti Social Behaviour Order, a fine or a custodial sentence.

Reference was also made to the Community Trigger which is a process individuals can use to ask agencies to review their response to anti-social behaviour incidents they have reported and where no action has been taken. It can be used if incidents have been reported on three separate occasions within the past six months to either the Police, Council or housing provider. Enquiries should be directed to 01392 265147 or email environmental.protection@exeter.gov.uk.

It was noted that some site licences stipulate that residents should not cause nuisance, but a resident advised that their site licence only referred to visitors.

The website www.asbhelp.co.uk also provides support for anti-social behaviour victims.

The Forum thanked PCSO Keller for attending the meeting.

PRESENTATION ON TELEPHONE SCAMS - DENISE DEARDEN, TRADING STANDARDS

Denise Dearden, Trading Standards Project Officer, gave a presentation on telephone scams (attached).

Telephone scams can happen at any time and anyone can be targeted. It was often difficult to distinguish between an honest caller and a scam.

Some people are specifically targeted, and other scammers ring a variety of numbers to see who falls victim to it and then share the details. A lot of victims are too embarrassed to report it.

More work is being carried out in conjunction with Social Services.

Denise advised that she had a supply of postcards for the mail preference service and other free services such as the telephone and email preference services. Although this will help reduce the number of mail/email/telephone calls it does not stop those that are sent from overseas. The Post Office retain a central register of addresses and this can be used to stop junk mail to your address. Telephone companies may be able to offer assistance, or alternatively a call blocking machine can be purchased which is widely available and can block overseas calls. Some telephone companies can provide a code which can be entered when a nuisance call is received which then blocks that number.

Denise also had available some Scamwise leaflets. If members wished for more copies, Denise would be happy to send these on.

Some calls currently being reported were:

- Council tax rebate
- Calls asking for money to sign up to telephone preference service
- PPI

Denise advised that any complaints should be directed through the Citizens Advice Consumer Service on 03454 04 05 06. Further details can be found on www.citizensadvice.org.uk. The Chair also highlighted that in some instances there is a 14 day cooling off period so would be important to check with the company that any services can be cancelled.

Action Fraud are collecting information on scam websites emulating genuine Government service websites (real ones have the suffix *.gov.uk*). Denise was not aware of where they are in the process but would endeavour to find out and provide an update report with the minutes. * Denise has since made some enquiries and will circulate a response when available.

Richard Cleave reported that the Citizens Advice Bureau do analyse the type of work that is reported to them and they have seen most of the examples provided by Denise. The CAB and Trading Standards hold a joint Scams Awareness Week, which this year was held in July.

The Forum thanked Denise for her presentation.

Action: Denise Dearden to follow up with Action Fraud as to progress with .gov website scams.

At the last meeting it was advised that the local authority would charge for enforcement notices, but Members would have to be asked to consider and agree a policy. Councillor Hannaford had acknowledged that this would have to be discussed with the Council's Legal Department, but he hoped that it would be possible to have more inspections to help drive up standards.

Councillor Morris reported that it is at the Local Authority's discretion whether it charges for all or any aspect of site licensing and currently no charge is made. They were waiting until legislation was brought in so that the site owner cannot pass the fee onto the homeowners, so this would now need to be reconsidered.

Action: Councillor Morris, as Portfolio Holder, to follow up the issue of charging for enforcement notices.

14

PITCH FEES

Members of the Forum noted the comparisons across park sites.

15

MP SUPPORT AND FUTURE LEGISLATION

The following campaigns were noted:

- Age UK launched its campaign for warm park homes. Two residents from Exeter were invited to the launch and Ben Bradshaw MP also attended to show support. Councillor Bull and Councillor Morris, as Chair and Portfolio Holder, would sign the petition on behalf of the Council. Social media was seen to be a good way to get the message out and Councillor Bull also suggested a press release.
- Discontinuation of Park Home Green Deal Funding.
- 10% commission and a petition for pitch fee reviews to have RPI replaced by CPI. A park owner is allowed to charge up to 10% commission on the sale of a park home. NAPHR have sent out 7,000 petitions recently in relation to these issues.

Councillor Bull referred to Early Day Motions which are formal motions submitted for debate in the House of Commons and allows MPs to draw attention to an event or cause. MPs can be encouraged to sign to register their support.

Richard Cleave advised that the CAB was looking at mobile homes problems as they do receive a number of issues county-wide. However, they do see very few issues in Exeter, which may be as a result of the work of this Forum and also NAPHR.

Action: The Chair and Councillor Morris to sign the Age UK petition on warm park homes and the Chair to organise a press release around this issue.

16

LIGHTING AT RINGSWELL PARK - MALCOLM THOMAS

The Chair advised that this Forum was not the correct channel to discuss individual park home issues.

However, it was suggested that the Chair and Portfolio Holder, together with Keith Williams (Private Sector Housing Manager) meet at the site to discuss issues and a date will be notified in due course.

Agreed that a site visit to Ringswell Park is arranged to discuss lighting issues.

17

INFORMAL MEETING WITH OTHER PARK REPRESENTATIVES IN THE AREA

The Chair referred to a suggestion raised at a previous meeting around whether representatives could meet with residents of other park home sites.

A Member advised that a similar meeting had taken place with residents from one particular site owner, but it was more focussed on cases relating to individual sites.

Councillor Morris suggested that an event could be held in Exeter at the Labour Club in Clifton Hill with representatives invited from other park homes after the Christmas period.

It was also noted that an officer from Teignbridge District Council had been invited to attend a meeting as an observer. He was aware of this Forum, and although unable to attend the meeting today, would be interested in attending the next meeting.

Agreed that Councillor Morris arrange a joint meeting with other park homes in the area after Christmas.

18

ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Site Inspections

It was noted that any charge the Council makes for site licences would have no impact on residents and would therefore not need to be reported to this Forum.

19

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - TUESDAY 5 APRIL AT 2.15PM (PLEASE NOTE CHANGE FROM PREVIOUSLY AGREED)

The date of the next meeting was noted.

(The meeting commenced at 2.15 pm and closed at 3.34 pm)

Chair