

MOBILE HOME RESIDENTS FORUM

Monday 27 April 2015

Present:

Councillor Heather Morris (Chair)
Councillors Bull, Hannaford and Leadbetter

Also Present:

Val Ewings	- Exonia Park
Steve Porter	- Exonia Park
Graeme Guy	- 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 Manager and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (SLS)

1

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Newby, Caroline Aird (Age UK Exeter) Denise Dearden, Trading Standards and Inspector Tanya Youngs, Devon & Cornwall Police.

2

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 APRIL 2014, 11 AUGUST 2014 AND 3 NOVEMBER 2014

The minutes of the meetings held on 28 April 2014, 11 August 2014 and 3 November 2014 were agreed.

Councillor Morris referred to a number of actions from the November meeting in relation to raising the profile and encouraging other attendees to ensure there were three representatives from each site, including details of the Forum in the Citizen.

Councillor Hannaford advised that he would pursue placing a piece in the Citizen – he also referred to Rydon Park which due to the City Council boundary changes was now in Topsham and asked Councillor Leadbetter if it was possible to have the appropriate contact details in their quarterly newsletter. It was important to have direct contact with site park dwellers, being mindful of any data protection issues possibly even making a leaflet drop.

Councillor Morris referred to the suggestion of a link from the Exeter Mobile Homes page on the City Council website, which would include links to governing bodies such as LEASE, NAPHR and the Mobile Homes Act, as well as to Exeter's site park rules. Councillor Hannaford said that he would contact Councillor Pearson to discuss this.

Councillor Morris also commented on the suggestion of setting up an informal meeting inviting representatives from other sites in the area such as from East Devon and Teignbridge to meet with this Forum. The Exeter Mobiles Home Forum had a developed network which helped to empower residents and offer support. It was agreed this would be an item for further discussion the next meeting.

3

SITE LICENCES - UPDATE ON THE CURRENT POSITION

Councillor Morris invited an update from all four sites and enquired if Exeter City Council had looked at the opportunities to charge for the site licence.

Keith Williams advised that the Council/Administration had not as yet formulated its position on how to incorporate the provisions of the Mobile Homes Act 2013 into current policy or whether to introduce charging. This was mainly due to the significant demands on staff resources within the Private Sector Housing Team associated with the introduction of the additional HMO Licensing Scheme. The plan was to seek an informal political steer soon after the Election on the most appropriate way forward. He would also explore the views and stance of other local authorities over charging.

Wendy Threlfall referred to the Mobile Homes Act 2013 which came into force on 1 April 2014 and advised that if such a charge was not enacted by the end of April 2015, it would not be possible to pass on any charge back to the individual residents. It was noted that the licence fee would still be required to be paid by the site owner. Councillor Morris clarified that the local authority now had additional powers and could take action or serve an improvement notice against any site owner. Keith Williams advised that the local authority would also charge for enforcement notices, but Members would have to be asked to consider and agree a policy. Councillor Hannaford 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. He requested an update to the next meeting in October.

It was noted that all four sites had lodged their Park Rules and were registered with the local authority.

4

ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

Wendy Threlfall suggested asking a representative from Teignbridge District Council to attend one of our meetings. Councillor Morris welcomed the opportunity for dialogue. Councillor Hannaford also suggested a representative from CAB should attend as there were often pertinent and legal issues raised. Councillor Bull suggested that as a volunteer with CAB, he could contribute.

Councillor Morris referred to the attendance by Age UK, and would extend an invitation to join the Forum.

The following items were identified -

- Update on the Inspection/Enforcement regime Mobile Homes Act 2014
- Report on pitch fees
- Consideration of bullying and intimidation and how to address this
- Future Exeter MP's support and future legislation
- Informal meeting with other Park representatives in the area

5

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Malcolm Thomas referred to the site licence and the new Park rules which were due to come into force, and commented on the lack of parity between sites. There were a number of issues at the Ringswell site such as poor lighting, the state of the roads and general maintenance on site. Keith Williams advised that the City Council only had the power to comment on the site licensing regulations. Individual Park rules were legally binding, and part of the express terms in agreement with the park owner, however any enforcement could only be pursued through civil action?

Councillor Leadbetter commented on a number of issues he was aware of with sites. Keith Williams advised that the licensing conditions were in place and as referred to earlier, when more staffing resources were available, an inspection would be able to help with an appropriate response. Many of the complaints related to the rules of the site and not the licensing conditions.

6

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Councillor Morris proposed that the meeting day be changed from meeting on a Monday to Tuesday from 2016. Proposed dates of Tuesday 26 April and Tuesday 26 October 2016 were agreed.

7

DATE OF NEXT MEETING - MONDAY 26 OCTOBER 2015

The date of the next meeting was noted as Monday 26 October 2015 at 2.15pm.

(The meeting commenced at 2.15 pm and closed at 2.50 pm)

Chair