

# **Communications and Marketing Focus Group Minutes**

**Held at Southgate House on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

## **Background**

Jenny Wyatt explained that the reasons for holding the focus group was, firstly, to provide information about the different types of communications and publicity materials already in use in Gloucester City Homes and secondly, to consider how this could be improved. Jenny provided information to the attendees of a wide range of communication products in use.- for example – Newsletters, tenants handbook, range of leaflets. She explained there are also many other forms of publicity material used to market GCH and its services –e.g. Banners and display materials used at internal and external events, Certificates and other communications to people advising what type of organisation GCH is and informing of our achievements.

The Website is a very important way of communicating information and also makes services accessible on a 24 hour basis covering times when the office is closed. Another important item is our GCH logo – this brands the organisation and makes communications and publicity instantly recognisable as GCH.

GCH also uses verbal communication by telephone or in person. People can be contacted by email or text if preferred. Large print, audio tapes and documents translated into other languages are all available services.

## **New communications service – GCH digi-TV service**

Jenny advised the group of this brand new service about to go on line at the end of this week. This service is available to anyone in Gloucester with interactive TV - with switchover to digital TV. This will mean even more people can access our services – for instance those who do not have access to a computer to go on line and view the website.

## **Demonstration of digi -TV service**

Jenny provided an on screen display of the new Digi - TV service. This service provides a basic snapshot of the information contained on our GCH website, but not quite so detailed. Some of the information viewed on the TV

- What's On guides
- Repairs Service information
- On line forms – e.g. How to make a complaint, how to complete an Anti Social Behaviour incident log
- How to request contact from a Housing Officer
- Topical Issues - e.g. swine flu advice
- Information about other local services – e.g. Job Centre Plus.

The group were asked if anyone would care to test out this new service in their own homes, feeding back to Jenny about how they found it –

i.e Is the service easy to use?

easy to understand?

are the directions clear?

Two attendees said they would test the service and advise Jenny of their findings.

### **Discussion feedback and suggestions**

The discussion revolved around all forms of communication, publicity and marketing.

#### **Feedback comments**

- When phoning GCH the response from staff is usually positive.
- Call centre staff are generally patient considering the number of calls they must deal with  
It is not as frustrating now the call centre is set up – it's a better service now.
- GCH TV is a brilliant idea. Impressive.

#### **Issues**

- Sometimes officers are unavailable due to being out of the office a lot. In a way this is good as it indicates officers are doing their jobs out in the community but when messages are left by tenants sometimes officers do not phone back quickly.
- Procedures in place not always implemented fully – need to take into account human actions on occasions when procedures don't work. This could also be a training issue with staff turnover – people new to the job may make mistakes in the beginning.
- Rent account letters can be too severe, especially for older people or people with learning difficulties.
- Sending out letters to wrong person.

#### **Suggestions made**

- Provide tenants with officers mobile phone numbers to allow speedier contact
- Make Tenants Handbook available on GCH TV service
- Provide information about resident groups and Choice Based Lettings on GCH TV
- Take advantage of technology to communicate with young people
- Make more use of video on GCH website
- Film GCH Board Meetings
- Advertise community information and tenant group events on digi - TV

Jenny finished the session by advising/reminding the group that she runs regular meetings of separate groups looking at communications, publicity and marketing materials and tools. A number of tenants are involved in all these meetings. If anyone wishes to get involved and come along to these meetings Jenny or Lyn can provide further details.

Meeting groups are:

- Publications group
- Reading Panel
- E Panel

**End of meeting.**

**Please refer to the corresponding Reaction Report to view our response to the issues raised.**

**Lyn Scudamore  
Resident Involvement Officer  
08/10/2009**