

Value for Money Focus Group Minutes

Held at Clapham Court on 8th December 2009

Background

Carole informed everyone present that the reason for holding the focus group were to provide some information about what value for money means within GCH, explain her role within the organisation and also explain how all staff must address value for money issues within their work.

Information

Carole explained that benchmarking allows GCH to compare themselves with other similar sized organisations doing the same work. Comparison in this way indicates how GCH is performing in relation to other organisations. Carole outlined some of the areas of work she will be undertaking in the near future.

In 2010 she will be looking closely at and evaluating the following areas -

GCH office costs and asking the following

1. Do our tenants want GCH to stay in current office premises within Southgate House?
- or
2. Would tenants prefer cheaper office costs which mean any savings could be used in other service delivery areas?

Contracts

Some examples of contracts are telephones or laundry services.

Laundry services include the laundries within the sheltered housing schemes plus the Kingsholm laundry, making a total of 16 machines. Carole has already received quotes from laundry suppliers and the next stage of the process is to call the suppliers in for interview. Four companies are being considered – these are JLA, Electrolux, Armstrong and Laundry Serve (the current provider) Apart from Electrolux they all have the same machines.

Evaluation of laundry services means looking at

- How much it costs in electricity to run the machines
- How much is the rental on machines
- How much are the water rates

GCH needs to evaluate all aspects of service provision to ensure tenants are not subsidising the external laundry facilities. All options will be fully considered once Carole has all the information required from the companies.

Comments

- Sheltered Schemes should be looked at as stand alone schemes
- Kingsholm Estate Laundry is quite separate – it runs the smart card system
- Repairs required on leased machines have been carried out speedily

Questions

Q: Where does the money from the machines go?

A: Money is collected by sheltered scheme managers and banked

Q: What would be the difference between leasing and purchasing machines, plus adding on an extended guarantee?

A: Purchasing industrial machines is very expensive. It is far more cost effective to lease at present.

Q: Why has timing on tumble driers has changed – tenants now receive less drying time for their money ?

A: Suppliers advise on the necessary charges to cover the cost of the driers

Door entry systems

Evaluation of the door entry systems will consider

- How much does it currently cost for the link to phone lines to operate the system
- How much are maintenance costs

There will be a presentation from organisations in approximately four weeks time.

Questions:

Q: Can a tenant attend the presentations?

A: Yes. An invitation will be sent to Andrew Harley once date is confirmed

Comments:

- Kingsholm TCC deal with issuing replacement key fobs. Sometimes strong security devices found in shops or airports will wipe the code off key fobs.

Income Management Best Value Review

Rents were considered to be high and performance not necessarily good when this area of service was given to Carole to look at. However following the review GCH costs appear to be in the middle when compared against other organisations and our Income Management Team carry out other duties in addition to collecting rents.

Comments:

- A way of reducing costs of Income Management service could be to stop holding the quarterly prize draw for tenants who have clear rent accounts. Tenants are supposed to pay their rent anyway so why reward them? The annual cost of the quarterly draw is £4000 which could be spent elsewhere.

Questions:

Q: The recent incentive scheme to encourage tenants to be at home for notified gas servicing visit – is the money for the £100 prize draw coming from GCH or the contractors?

Q: Can Connaughts allocate appointments within shorter time slots ie 2 hour slots instead of 6 hour slots e.g. “between 12noon and 6pm “?

Q: Why do leaseholders have to pay £55 for a GIFTS card that tenants receive free?

Tenants Decorating Scheme and savings achieved with Leylands

If a GCH tenant has been issue with a voucher for £75 worth of decorating materials Leylands will deliver the goods free of charge. This deal has again been secured for 2010 – at a very small increase.

Wallpaper prices within their sample books are down to £5 per roll.

Existing tenants requiring redecoration within their property should contact their housing officer who will assess the situation and consider issuing a letter for production at Leylands.

Focus Group 2008

Reaction report from the previous year's Focus Group was produced and Carole updated the group on what has been implemented since this report was produced:

- Recycling projects within schools (St Paul's)
- Big Tidy Up days took place involving schoolchildren from Matson and Robinswood
- 1 ½ ton bags are now used by the Estate Service Workers and Smiths wagons call out to collect these from us – this saves on journeys by the ESWs

Waste management is being looked at currently. Smarter working practices have resulted in positive outcomes e.g. Bulky items removal costs - we will now store items in designated garages and they will be collected by a company – this means we can clear the streets of bulky items and save costs.

End of meeting

Lyn Scudamore
Resident Involvement Officer
8/12/09