



**Customer Opinion Panel Minutes
Wednesday 13th August 2014 – Council Chambers**

Gosport Borough Council

Charles Harman	-	Head of Operational Services
Chris Davis	-	Head of Audit
Angela Penfold	-	Principal Housing Officer
Val Leopold	-	Senior Housing Officer
Denise Hudson	-	Resident Involvement Officer
Sam Downing	-	Resident Involvement Officer
Rachel Seymour	-	Housing Officer
Roz Weaver	-	Housing Officer

Guests:

Shirley Greenwood	Mrs M Griffin	Mrs J Brown	Mrs Miller
Mr B Wakefield	Mr R Forster	Mr Burns	Mrs R Hill
Mr Drummond	Mrs Carter	Mr Lidgley	Mr & Mrs Thomson
Mrs M Cook	Mr J Mardle	Mr B Hudson	Mr B Sherman
Ms S Kimbley-Brown	Miss J Reed	Derek Redford	

Apologies:

Mrs Spelzini	Mrs P Ripley	Ms J Rowe	Mr P Batty
Mr Cattle	Ms V Twyman	Mrs Hardy	Mr E Withers
Mrs P Grant	Miss S Bellerby	Miss J Light	Mrs A Barnes

		Action
1.	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>Denise Hudson opened the meeting and gave introductions.</p>	
2	<p>Chris Davis – Head of Audit</p> <p>Chris Davis gave a presentation on Fraud – The Bigger and Emerging Picture within Housing. Please see attached presentation.</p> <p>Questions raised</p> <p>Q) What is the cost to GBC for sub-letting/tenancy fraud? A) It is approximately £1million (based on <u>estimate</u> of 2% of stock x £18k (source: Audit Commission PPP 2013)</p> <p>Q) Do you think that the introduction of the bedroom tax has had an impact on tenancy fraud? A) No, there isn't an issue with a tenant letting out a bedroom to</p>	

help towards covering a shortfall from the bedroom tax as long as permission from Housing is given, the issue is with those people who are subletting a property and gaining financially from it.

Chris said that GBC doesn't always necessarily prosecute through the courts; there are occasions where a fine is given instead.

Q) Do we get the fraud money back when someone has been prosecuted?

A) Sometimes it is possible to get the money back but there are difficulties in getting the money back from the courts.

Chris said that GBC are trying to get the message across that fraud mustn't pay.

Chris stated that he receives newsletters called 'Knock Knock' and 'Yammer' which provide information regarding tenancy fraud. He stated that he will liaise with the Resident Involvement Team for appropriate information from these newsletters to be included in AYS newsletter.

GBC Audit only investigates properties in Gosport that have been accused of fraud. However, if there are cases which could be linked to another authority then they would also liaise with them.

Q) Do GBC have a statutory right of entry to a property?

A) No, an officer would need to be invited over the threshold.

Chris went on to say that when GBC staff investigates a case of fraud, they visit a property in pairs and risk assessments are carried out.

Q) Would it be possible to explain the numbers of properties that have committed fraud in terms of figures/financial amounts?

A) Yes, Chris will need to look into this and be able to provide number of frauds and values against successful investigations.

Q) Would it be possible for press releases on cases of fraud to be included with the AYS newsletter?

A) Yes, it is possible that some information could be included. An article on fraud did go in the Spring 2014 edition of At Your Service and there are plans to include an article for the Winter edition.

Q) Would it be possible to by-pass FOI requests/Data Protection?

A) We would need to seek legal advice in these instances with our in-house legal team.

Q) Can GBC provide some figures where they have saved some money following fraud investigations?

A) Chris will look into this and provide figures.

	<p>Q) Could there be a more in-depth presentation/workshop on fraud in the future?</p> <p>A) Denise said that we could look into holding a workshop similar to the Streetscene workshops at a later date. She will liaise with Chris.</p>	
3.	<p>Charles Harman – Head of Operational Services</p> <p>Charles Harman gave a presentation on the Annual Report. Please see attached.</p> <p>Charles commented that there is more work required to improve the Void (empty properties) turnaround time.</p> <p>There was a general discussion around some of the data.</p> <p>Questions raised:</p> <p>Q) What is counted as a debt?</p> <p>A) The minute that someone defaults on a payment is classed as a debt.</p> <p>Charles added that the vast majority of our tenants pay their rent on time.</p> <p>Lots of negative comments were raised about the contract with Sodexo and the poor state of the grounds maintenance in Gosport. Some members of the group would like someone from Streetscene to come along again to a meeting to explain why there are still these issues.</p>	
.	<p>Date of next COP</p> <p>Wednesday, 12th November 2014</p>	

Distribution:-

Attendees, HMT, Chairman of Community Board, Housing Spokesmen, Group Leaders, Web Site