

Local Offers Framework Cotman



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INTRODUCTION

‘Local offers’ are about tailoring housing related services based on what tenants want and must be in force by April 2011. Cotman’s Annual Report to Customers in 2010 detailed how these will be put in place.

The clear message customers gave us was that what really matters most is delivering a high standard across all services to all customers. The focus will be to address local offers through our existing close work with customers living in our neighbourhoods and communities.

Cotman will also work in partnership with other local agencies to provide local offers where it is appropriate and where customers would like us to. We will also adopt the Neighbourhood Planning Approach developed by the Places for People Group, of which we are a subsidiary.

For more information about our local offers, please contact Jane Warnes on 01603 731 699.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY

This section details the different ways customers have access to 'local offers'

Customer Consultation – Estate Based

The views of our customers at a very local level are crucial to the shaping of our local offers. Between September 2010 and March 2011, we therefore liaised with all existing Residents Associations and Estate wide forums to canvas their opinions. Estate walkabouts were another useful platform. We conducted focus groups in other areas, such as Bowthorpe, Norwich. We attended South Norfolk Council's Neighbourhood Community Consultation and Information Day to seek views of Cotman living on our Costessey estate.

We developed a written questionnaire which was sent out to all our Cotman Customer Liaison Panel members and to our wider Reader Panel. This focused on their vision of what mattered most in their neighbourhood. We invited further comment in our corporate newsletter and on our Estate notice board.

We will continue this approach to ensure that our local offers are responsive and relevant to our customers' priorities.

Customer Consultation – Client Group based

We are aware that certain Cotman customer groups require a broadly tailored service arising from particular needs common to their circumstances. With this in mind, we embraced the introduction of the Local Offers framework as an opportunity to find out where we could shape services for different client groups where appropriate.

We therefore held focus groups sessions of randomly selected customers from the following groups:

- Older people living in general needs accommodation
- Younger tenants (under 25 years)

In the case of the latter group, we incentivised attendance by payment of £10 and a bowling voucher.



We also discussed a local offer for sheltered customers with our Sheltered Housing Forum, and offered customers in rural schemes the opportunity to attend a focus group to discuss their specific requirements.

We will monitor the effectiveness of local offers for specific client groups and would be pleased to develop new client group based approaches where customers identified a need to do so.

Neighbourhood Assessment

Places for People stock, including that managed by Cotman, has been analysed and grouped into meaningful "neighbourhoods". This activity has identified almost 600 neighbourhoods with over 20 homes.

A detailed dashboard will be produced for each neighbourhood. The dashboard will include turnover levels, arrears, void loss, re-let times, surplus per property, etc. Staff across the business will be able to access and analyse the data at any point in time.

The neighbourhoods will be banded into three key areas:

Green – neighbourhoods that are generally performing well and need less intensive housing and neighbourhood management support.

Amber – poorly performing neighbourhoods. These will be the areas where the Neighbourhood Planning approach is applied.

Red – neighbourhoods where there is a question regarding the medium to long term future and the assessment criteria highlights the need for a detailed option appraisal.

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY



Partnership with Norfolk Housing Alliance

Currently we are working with three other landlords under the umbrella of the Norfolk Housing Alliance to deliver a TSA local offers pilot initiative in Terrington St. Clement, near King's Lynn. We have developed a charter detailing our common standards in respect of Neighbourhood and Estate Management standards. Set and monitored by local residents, these are primarily aimed at tackling anti-social behaviour, neighbourhood issues and a greener environment. Feedback from all local stakeholders has been extremely positive and a tangible improvement in the appearance of the estate has resulted as well as a quantifiable reduction in turnover.

We have undertaken a stock mapping exercise with all ten landlords who collectively form the Norfolk Housing Alliance. We will build on the positive experience and lessons learnt from the pilot to deliver joint initiatives and services where stock is held in neighbourhoods as part of our local offers framework.

Local Service Delivery

We provide specialist services to customers locally and detailed below are examples of what we offer:

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment

Cotman Customer Body to commission mystery shopping and service reviews by customers who make up the Customer Service Review Team to improve service delivery

- Cotman Customer Body to monitor service delivery within each region and work with staff to make improvements
- Cotman Sheltered Housing Forum to benchmark service delivery across each sheltered scheme and work with staff to make improvements
- Cotman Customer Body analysis of complaints, lessons learnt and systems get changed to prevent happening again
- Through our Neighbourhood Planning approach, customers' feedback is used to identify priorities in the neighbourhood, and they can then be involved in agreeing actions to address issues and monitoring progress against them. This might involve responding to perception surveys, local residents' groups, open forums or carrying out estate walkabouts; or helping to select and manage contractors delivering services.

Home – Repairs and Maintenance

We have consulted with our customers and they have been clear that they do not want differing, local standards in the repairs service. They want a universal service which offers the standards listed below as a minimum.

- Our repairs service is offered to customers on an appointment basis.
- We have a comprehensive suite of contracts which offer periodic inspections to ensure the health and safety of our customers homes
- We are working to complete as many as possible of our repairs in one visit for the convenience of customers

DIFFERENT APPROACHES TO LOCAL SERVICE DELIVERY



- We are looking at a number of routine repairs and planning them into programmes to ensure that we get better value for money for our customer.
- We tender our repairs contracts.

Neighbourhood and Community

- Neighbourhood Officers - there are generally the first point of contact for the customer, welcoming them to their new home and visiting them again within the first few weeks of them moving in, co-ordinating delivery of services within the area and promoting local customer involvement.
- Local staff – we employ caretakers, cleaners and gardeners on our larger estates to provide a responsive and personable service to customers.
- If there are any arrears, a Local Officer will make personal contact immediately and offer a range of welfare/debt advice and support to all customers.
- Anti-Social Behaviour- should there be any incidents of anti-social behaviour these officers will work with customers locally to resolve them. They look at preventative measures as well as the use of mediation and restorative justice.
- Health & Safety – our Estate Surveyor is responsible for ensuring local equipment e.g. alarms and play areas in local areas are checked on a regular and appropriate basis.

REPORTING TO CUSTOMERS

Each of the areas with bespoke Local Offers has a Customer Involvement Plan which details how customers can be involved and how they will be kept informed. The Involvement Plans reflect each local area and can include:

Managing the Local Offer – membership of the small team responsible for reviewing the delivery of the Local Offer.

Customer Perception Surveys – all customers in the area have the opportunity to participate in the Customer Perception Survey. The results of the survey are disseminated to customers along with the actions that will be put in place in response to the findings.

Cotman News – the corporate Cotman newsletter will provide updates on Local Offers and associated initiatives.

Estate Newsletters – Newsletters are produced locally with customer input to detail progress made on delivering elements within the Local Offer.

Impact Assessment – at the end of each year a document is produced which summarises the progress made with delivery of the Local Offers approach and the changes that have been delivered.