

# **Queenswood Tenants & Residents Association**

## **Promoting Pride & Harmony throughout our Community**

Chairman Mr. J. Christie

Civic Hall Speech of 31<sup>st</sup> October 2007

Dear people

I represent the tenants and residents of the tower block Queenswood Heights in Headingley. We have 47 dwellings on 12 floors. There are two entrances, two lifts and two stairwells, shared by all occupants. Each flat has a balcony that borders our next door neighbour thus; who comes to live next door to you is of great importance for, if that someone is anti-social, it will have a very damaging effect on your quality of life. Such behaviour adversely affects all others living within the building. If you are old and or infirm, you will be in constant fear of crossing paths with such persons.

### **What kind of problem tenants am I referring to here?**

1/ We have an alcoholic aged about 50, who constantly plays loud music. This person has on one occasion set fire to her flat, putting us all in danger.

2/ We have a drug-addicted criminal, whose door has been kicked in several times by the police. In January last, his door was smashed in half by the police and haphazardly repaired by the council. Tenant entry was then via padlock and the door wasn't renewed until August. It was an eyesore to us, but visitors to our block must have thought they were in a ghetto?

3/ We have a twenty two year old, who regularly goes out clubbing, loses her keys and then has no problem whatsoever at two and three in the morning to ring flat by flat until someone lets her in. If people refuse, she becomes very abusive and threatening. She has caused much physical damage to the building and on the 10th of this month, was together with a female friend, at just after 3 a.m., involved in a violent assault on a taxi driver on the car park. I can speak of this, because I personally witnessed it from my top floor flat. The police have charged both women and the case is ongoing.

4/ We also have one tenant who has an extremely serious and infectious disease that can be transmitted via blood contact. If this person were to cut themselves, depositing blood on say, a lift button? Then another person with an open wound also presses this lift button, is there then not a serious risk of cross-contamination?

- a) Placing this person in a multi-occupancy building puts all other tenants at constant risk. Equally at risk are all visitors such as friends and relatives of residents, service personnel, Postmen, other delivery people and the police.
- b) Isn't this gross-negligence on the part of the persons responsible for allocating this tenant to this property?

c) Is the council insured for such 'obvious' high risks?

Of course this person has to live somewhere but, surely in a single-occupancy dwelling, with its own entrance, reducing risk to a minimum? This isn't rocket-science; it's plain common sense that most of us have? For the record, this person does not behave anti-socially and is further a good tenant. Two other tenants periodically behave very anti-socially.

After many complaints, we spoke to Kirkstall Housing (which is now WNWH) and learned that they were in fact no longer responsible for allocating properties within their ward? They then invited the allocations office up at Weetwood to send a representative to discuss the problems with us.

The first person that came to us was a [redacted] We put our concerns across to [redacted] and he gave us his reply in the most arrogant and condescending tone imaginable. [redacted] basically said; "things are the way they are, they'll stay that way, and there's nothing you can do to change it!" and then; "if you're not happy with the behaviour of a tenant, then complain to your local housing office". I reminded [redacted] that his office had caused these problems, not Kirkstall Housing? To which he replied; "we only decide who lives where, we're not here to sort out any problems you have with these people, that's up to Kirkstall housing, complain to them". In the face of such bad attitude, I'm sure you can all understand just how angry we felt? We complained bitterly to Kirkstall Housing about [redacted] attitude, and a [redacted] came to talk to us. [redacted] took the same attitude and stance as [redacted] informing us that she had the final say on all matters.

### Our Solution?

We strongly believe that all Allocations and Terminations should be carried out wholly by the local housing office and not some office up at Weetwood that hasn't got a clue what's going on, dumping problem people into otherwise peaceful communities, turning them into battlegrounds and effectively destroying them.

One's local Housing Office used to allocate, and when something went wrong, it was their job to terminate the tenancy. This system is a proven, tried and tested success; we ask that it be restored? We want peace and harmony returned to our Community.

We have a good relationship with WNWH and in particular, Housing Manager Judith Wray and Estate Management Officer Daniel Massey, have done their best for us. We would also like to express our gratitude to Councillor John Illingworth for his positive involvement in our Community.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to express our feelings to you all, here today.

John Christie