

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board to be held in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton on 5 August 2010 at 18:00.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 1 July 2010 (attached).
- 3 Public Question Time.
- 4 Declaration of Interests
To receive declarations of personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct.
- 5 Guest rooms in Sheltered Housing. Presentation by the Supported Housing Manager.
- 6 Board Membership. Verbal update by the Chairman, Mr Etherington.
- 7 Annual Report to Tenants and Tenant Services Authority. Report of the Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager (attached).
- 8 Feedback from TPAS Annual Conference by the Attendees.
- 9 Future meeting dates.

Tonya Meers
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

01 October 2010

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under “Public Question Time” is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

If a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council’s Planning Committee and details of the “rules” which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet “Having Your Say on Planning Applications”. A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

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Lift access to the John Meikle Room and the other Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

For further information about the meeting, please contact Democratic Services on 01823 356382 or email d.durham@tauntondeane.gov.uk

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Tenant Services Management Board Members:-

Councillor R Bowrah, BEM

Councillor S Brooks

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Thursday 1 July 2010 at 6pm

Present: Mr Etherington (Chairperson), Mr Edwards, Mrs Hegarty, Mr Hellier, Mr Pearson, Mr Watkin, Councillor Bowrah, Councillor Brooks

Officers: James Barrah (Community Services Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Paul Hadley (Housing Estate Manager), Martin Price (Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager) and Isabelle Caillet (Community Business Support Assistant).

Others: Councillor Stuart-Thorn, Councillor Wedderkopp

(The meeting commenced at 6pm)

1. Apologies

Mr Galpin, Councillor Court-Stenning

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 10 June 2010 were taken as read and were signed.

Mr Etherington reported two resignations from the board: Mrs Vanstone and Mr Baker

Mr Edwards volunteered to take over the post of Vice-Chairperson, JH seconded, all in favour.

MP referred the board to clauses 4.13 and 4.14 of the Tenant Services Management Board's Terms of Reference, i.e.

4.13 If a member resigns or relinquishes their position the resulting vacancy will be filled as follows:

A previously unsuccessful candidate who received the most votes will be asked to fill the vacancy.

If the candidate is unavailable or unwilling to be co-opted, other candidates will be considered in the order of the number of votes received.

4.14 Should the above provision fail to find a representative, the board members with the Tenant Empowerment Manager will agree on a representative to be co-opted until the next ballot.

Councillor Brooks suggested recruiting the tenant on the Reserve List. Mr Etherington suggested another tenant who has expressed an interest in the board should be contacted and the situation should be discussed at the next meeting.

All board members were requested to put forward the names of any tenants they feel could fill the positions at the next board meeting.

Mr Edwards asked if he could visit a property that is having disabled adaptations work carried out. He also asked how many properties have been converted for the disabled and what percentage of TDBC's stock this equates to.

SB to provide the board with the figures.

Housing Revenue Account changes – Mr Pearson asked what happens to Tenant Tax Levy when all the debt has been repaid. SB answered that under the system recently distributed for consultation the Government's offer is that if TDBC takes on some of the debt, that the rent receipt would be retained so TDBC would no longer pay £6m to the Government. Mr Pearson queried the future of a £25 tax element of the rental charge. SB said that the rent levels are set by Members and TDBC will be looking for parity with other housing providers' rents.

Mr Pearson asked if the DLO was about to close. MP explained that a decision on the DLO's future will be reached next year.

3. Public Question Time

No questions from the public were received.

4. Declaration of Interests

Mr Etherington, Mr Edwards, Mrs Hegarty, Mr Hellier, Mr Pearson, Mr Watkin and Councillor Brooks declared personal interests as Council house tenants.

5. Core Council Review/Housing Structure

The Community Services Manager gave a presentation on the structure of the Council following the Core Council Review. Phase 5 (restructure of Corporate Management Team i.e. Chief Executive and Directors) and DLO review have yet to take place.

6. Housing Client Review

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the separation of the Housing Client function and the workforce.

As a result of the independent review that had been carried out by consultants Turner and Townsend, reported on the staff resources

required to implement the decision to separate the Housing Client function and the workforce.

A Project Team had been appointed and various subject specialists would be required at key stages in the delivery.

Submitted the governance arrangements for the project.

Budget and staffing cuts necessitated closer working relationships between the Housing Client function and DLO workforce. The review suggested that the Asset Management function should be placed within the client function role.

The current responsibilities of the service were detailed and other activities that were undertaken by the Landlord Service would be included in the review. A list of skills required was reported.

Resolved that the report be noted.

7. Income Management Service Standard

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Income Management Service Standard.

Housing Services were responsible for ensuring that tenants promptly paid their rent and for recovering outstanding debts.

Some tenants had competing debts and it was important that they understood how they could pay their rent, what support could be offered and what actions the landlord would take if regular payments were not made. To meet the requirements of the Rent Recovery Protocol, the Income Management Service Standard would give tenants clear information about this.

The implementation of the Standard could be met within existing budgets, however the mailing of quarterly rent statements would cost £9,000 each year.

Tenants would be better informed and the Standard would promote the regular and systematic approach to rent payment.

Officers would support tenants unable to access the Standard and ensure that it was understood. The Standard would be available in different formats.

It was anticipated that the Standard would be published at the beginning of September 2010 and the first quarterly Rent Statements would be sent to tenants at the end of September 2010. The impact of the Standard would be reported to the Board in April 2011.

The outcomes expected from the implementation of the Standard included the following:

- Improved information to tenants on the landlord service;
- Increased rental income which would result in greater financial resources available to the Housing Service;
- Greater uptake of available benefits to those tenants who qualified. This would prevent vulnerable tenants from falling into economic poverty;
- Reduction of higher level arrears cases which would result in fewer legal notices and a reduction in County Court referrals; and
- Performance could be monitored.

Councillor Bowrah asked about the current rent arrears figure. PH explained that the current amount is £328,000.

Mr Pearson expressed concern that if housing benefit payments were made direct to tenants as opposed to the landlord this would lead to an increase in the rent arrears total.

Resolved that the Income Management Service Standard be approved.

8. Somerset West Social Housing Partnership – Adaptation Agreement

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Somerset West Social Housing Partnership – Adaptation Agreement.

A group of Social Housing Landlords had been meeting with representatives from Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council, West Somerset District Council and Somerset County Council for nearly a year, to discuss possible improvements to the adaptations and housing options services for social housing residents.

A draft agreement was circulated which aimed to clarify responsibility for the adaptations work. The partnership aimed to improve tenants waiting times, clarification of who would do what and when. An action plan would be produced at a later date.

Councillor Brooks asked if specially adapted properties can be purchased under Right to Buy. SB to check and report back to the board.

Resolved that the work being carried out on the Adaptation Agreement be noted.

9. Update - Housing Revenue Account Consultation

MP explained that the presentation the board had received at its last meeting had since gone before the Corporate Scrutiny Committee and was approved on 17 June 2010. The Executive and Full Council considered the presentation and accompanying report on 24 June and approved a formal response that has been forwarded to the government. TDBC is in favour with some provisos. The comments of the board formed part of the reports to all three Council meetings and were noted at each.

10. Update - Tenant Services Authority (TSA)

The TSA was created in December 2008 from the Housing Corporation in order to regulate the services housing providers deliver. The current Housing Minister has expressed his intention to abolish the TSA. However the latest reports suggest the minister needs to obtain further government clearance and the Chief Executive of the TSA has sent a letter to all housing providers explaining that the TSA is still in place and all regulatory duties are still in force. It should also be noted that the TSA was created by legislation and will therefore have to be abolished by legislation.

After a request from Mr Hellier MP asked for permission to circulate board members' contact details to other board members. All in favour.

MP provided details of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference on 23-25 July 2010 at the Hilton Hotel in Birmingham and requested that if any board members wished to attend to contact him. Mr Etherington asked that any members who do attend to provide feedback on the conference to the rest of the board.

(The meeting ended at 8.40pm)

Declaration of Interests

Tenant Services Management Board

Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants - Mr Baker,
Councillor Brooks, Mrs Drage, Mr Edwards, Mr Etherington, Mr Galpin,
Mrs Hegarty, Mr Hellier, Mr Pearson, Mrs Vanstone, Mr Watkin

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 5 August 2010

Annual Report to Tenants and Tenant Services Authority

Report of the Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager

1. Executive Summary

Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) has an obligation to produce an Annual Report to tenants and the regulatory body for social housing, the Tenant Services Authority, by 1 October 2010. The report, detailing Housing Services' performance up to March 2010 and future plans to meet national and local standards, should clearly demonstrate how tenants and TDBC have worked together to shape local priorities and have methods in place for tenants to monitor how effective the services they receive actually are.

2. Background

On 1 April 2010 the new regulatory regime for social housing came into effect. The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) was set up to act as the regulatory body for all registered housing providers (i.e. housing associations and local authorities) and set national standards for housing services.

The TSA established a new co-regulatory approach, which placed the emphasis on regulation at a local level and puts tenants at the centre of the scrutiny of housing standards. The aim of this approach is to change the focus of regulation from being top down from a central government department to more of a light touch local approach.

The TSA has published the framework of National Standards which will act as the baseline for all housing providers. Underneath this framework will sit the Local Offers which will allow residents to determine their local priorities and measure the organisation against them. The aim is that the local offers will ensure that providers are designing services shaped around tenants' needs.

The Annual Report for Tenants should increase transparency and customer involvement, improving tenants' understanding of the services they receive and the way they are funded.

All social housing landlords must publish the Annual Report in respect of performance relating to the year ending on 31 March 2010 to their tenants and deliver it to the TSA by 1st October 2010, and annually thereafter. The report must demonstrate to tenants and the TSA that the landlord is meeting the TSA's six National Standards for Social Housing, namely on:

1. Tenant Involvement and empowerment
2. Home
3. Tenancy
4. Neighbourhood and community
5. Value for Money
6. Governance and financial viability

(Please see Appendix 1 for full texts of these Standards).

The report must detail how providers will put the 'local offer' in place for implementation by 1st April 2011.

Local Offers

As well as the national standards, the new framework requires registered providers to consult with tenants on local priorities. The requirement is to offer tenants the opportunity to agree how some services can be tailored to meet local needs. However, in doing this, providers should take into account the national standards, including value for money.

There is a minimum requirement to consult on local service offers in relation to:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment
- Home
- Neighbourhood and community

In looking to agree how services can be tailored locally, registered providers should take a number of things into account:

- standards of performance
- how performance will be monitored, reported and scrutinised by tenants
- what happens if the offer is not delivered and what redress tenants can expect
- how and when the local offer will be reviewed

There is no really specific guidance as to what 'local' actually means. It may be that 'local' in this context means the local authority area or a part of it, like a neighbourhood or an estate.

The TSA accepts that factors other than geography may be relevant in tailoring services and gives the example of demographics – for example services tailored for older tenants

There is no expectation to report performance on local offers until the second annual report is due on 1 October 2011.

3. Purpose of Annual Report

There are three principal strands to the Annual Report's purpose. It provides a means of:

- setting out a clear service offer in respect of the national standards so that tenants know what to expect from their provider. The service offer should be developed and agreed with tenants. Expressing it in the annual report serves as a commitment on the part of the provider to deliver the service offer.
- being held to account for delivery of the commitment - through the availability of transparent information - by tenants and ultimately the TSA. Essentially, the service offer is a local expression of meeting the national standards. Therefore it follows that failure to deliver the service offer is a failure to comply with the national standards.
- improving accountability and transparency by involving tenants in the development of the annual report

Expectations of Annual Report

The report should be prepared with tenant involvement and scrutiny and the report should confirm how this has taken place. The report should highlight:

- How Housing Services meets the national standards.
- How Housing Services measures performance against the national standards.
- Where Housing Services do not meet the standards, what plans are in place to meet them.
- How tenants and others check the performance is correct.
- How tenants have been involved in producing the report.
- Information on other Landlords performance on similar services.
- How and where the housing budget was spent.
- Information on our longer term strategies and plans.
- Details of all services and service standards.
- Implementing changes - need to be planned, implemented and monitored
- Increasing the range of opportunities for tenants to be involved
- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

It should be noted that whilst value for money (VFM) is set out as a stand-alone standard, the TSA's expectation is that it should be embedded across the range of provider activities.

Similarly, understanding and responding to equality and the diverse needs of tenants is a cross-cutting requirement that applies to all standards.

Arguably, this first year of “measuring up” to the TSA’s standards is likely to be different to subsequent years when providers, in conjunction with their tenants, will have had time to properly:

- consider and set out a service offer that complies with the national standards (and any local offers)
- monitor performance of the offer and any local offers

4. Finance Comments

The costs of developing and implementing the Annual Report and Local Offers will be contained within the resources already allocated to Tenant Empowerment at TDBC.

The cost of designing, printing and posting the Annual Report is dependent on the format to be used. It may be decided that two different versions are published – a summary to be sent to all tenants and a more detailed version for board members, Tenant Forum members, Sheltered Housing Forum members, tenants requesting more detail, Councillors, staff and the TSA.

5. Legal Comments

The TSA is the regulator of TDBC Housing Services and therefore TDBC has a legal duty to publish the Annual Report.

6. Links to Corporate Aims

The Corporate Priorities for TDBC are:

Tackling Deprivation and sustainable Community Development

TDBC Vision: Deprivation will be tackled so that disadvantaged communities will have better access to jobs, training and local services.

Regeneration

TDBC Vision: The regeneration and growth of Taunton Deane will have been planned and successfully managed. Nationally we shall be recognised as a leading 'Green Knowledge Economy'. Businesses will have moved to the area to provide jobs in line with housing growth. Homes will have been provided to cater for the needs of an expanding and diverse population within communities that people are proud of.

Affordable Housing

TDBC Vision: Everyone will have access to a decent home at a price they can afford, in a place where they want to live and work.

Climate Change

TDBC Vision: Carbon emissions across the Deane will have been reduced through partnership and community action. Local communities will be more resilient to the twin threats of climate change and peak oil.

It is clear from the Corporate Priorities above that meeting the National Standards can have a positive impact across all the priorities. There is also an opportunity to tailor Local Offers that meet both TDBC tenants' priorities and the priorities above.

7. Environmental and Community Safety Implications

The National Standards of Home and Neighbourhood and Community in particular can assist in environmental improvements such as climate change and improving community safety by measures such as reducing anti-social behaviour.

8. Equalities Impact

An Equalities Impact Assessment will be carried out in respect of the Annual Report to measure the impact of any initiatives on tenants and staff and that any services meet the seven equalities criteria of:

1. Race
2. Disability
3. Gender
4. Age
5. Religion or belief
6. Sexual orientation
7. Socio-economic

The local offer will also need to consider how to respond to and understand the diversity of tenants so that their needs will be met.

As previously stated, the understanding and responding to equality and the diverse needs of tenants is a requirement that applies across all standards.

9. Risk Management

There are tight timescales associated with the production of the Annual Report and there is a risk of not meeting the regulatory requirements by 1st October. This will be mitigated by appropriate project management.

There is a risk to TDBC' reputation at both a national and local level if TDBC fails to deliver a relevant response to the TSA standards.

As the TSA is the regulator of Housing Services there is a risk that by not completing an Annual Report TDBC will be subject to robust inspection from the TSA and Audit Commission.

10. Partnership Implications

Housing Services in TDBC do not operate in isolation. Examples of partnership working which are reflected in the National Standards include:

National Standard 2 - Home – contractors undertaking repairs and maintenance

National Standard 3 – Tenancy - countywide Choice Based Lettings allocations system

National Standard 4 - Neighbourhood and community – Avon and Somerset Police working with TDBC to reduce anti-social behaviour

If any of the Local Offers have an impact on any partners it is important that full consultation is undertaken to ensure the offer can be delivered by all parties.

11. Recommendations

That the Tenant Services Management Board:

- Note the report and Appendices 1 and 4
- Comment on Appendix 2
- Comment on Appendix 3

Contact: Officer Name Martin Price
 Direct Dial No 01823 356552
 e-mail address m.price@tauntondeane.gov.uk

APPENDIX 1

TENANT SERVICES AUTHORITY NATIONAL STANDARDS

Standard	Containing requirements relating to the following areas
1. Tenant involvement and empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer service, choice and complaints• Involvement and empowerment• Understanding and responding to diverse needs of tenants
2. Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Quality of accommodation• Repairs and maintenance
3. Tenancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allocations• Rent• Tenure
4. Neighbourhood and community	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neighbourhood management• Local area co-operation• Anti-social behaviour
5. Value for money	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Value for money
6. Governance and financial viability*	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Governance• Financial viability

* This standard does not apply to local authorities.

1. Tenant involvement and empowerment standard

Required outcomes

1 Customer service, choice and complaints

Registered providers shall:

- provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly

2 Involvement and empowerment

Registered providers shall support co-regulation with their tenants by:

- offering all tenants a wide range of opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing, including the ability to influence strategic priorities, the formulation of housing-related policies and the delivery of housing-related services
- consulting with their tenants and acting reasonably in providing them with opportunities to agree local offers for service delivery
- providing tenants with a range of opportunities to influence how providers meet all the TSA's standards, and to scrutinise their performance against all standards and in the development of the annual report
- providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved

3 Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

Registered providers shall:

- treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the seven equality strands and tenants with additional support needs

Registered providers shall set out in an annual report for tenants how they are meeting these obligations and how they intend to meet them in the future. The provider shall then meet the commitments it has made to its tenants. Registered providers shall take the obligations of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard into account in setting out how they are meeting and intend to meet all the other TSA standards.

Specific expectations

1 Customer service, choice and complaints

1.1 Registered providers shall provide tenants with accessible, relevant and timely information about:

- how tenants can access services
- the standards of housing services their tenants can expect
- how they are performing against those standards
- the service choices available to tenants, including any additional costs that are relevant to specific choices
- progress of any repairs work
- how tenants can communicate with them and provide feedback
- the responsibilities of the tenant and provider
- arrangements for tenant involvement and scrutiny

1.2 Providers shall offer a range of ways for tenants to express a complaint and set out clear service standards for responding to complaints, including complaints about performance against the standards, and details of what to do if they are unhappy with the outcome of a complaint. Providers shall inform tenants how they use complaints to improve their services. Registered providers shall publish information about complaints each year, including their number and nature, and the outcome of the complaints. Providers shall accept complaints made by advocates authorised to act on a tenant's/tenants' behalf.

2 Involvement and empowerment

2.1 Registered providers shall consult with tenants on the desirability and scope of local offers in relation to services to meet the following TSA standards: Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, Home and Neighbourhood and Community. In providing opportunities for tenants to agree local offers by no later than 1 April 2011 they shall offer commitments on:

- local standards for performance
- how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants
- what happens if local offers are not met (including procedures of redress)
- arrangements for reviewing the local offers on a periodic basis

2.2 Registered providers shall enable tenants' opportunities to scrutinise the effectiveness of their policies in relation to tenant involvement.

2.3 Registered providers shall inform tenants about the results of their consultations on issues related to the standards.

2.4 Registered providers shall consult with their tenants, setting out clearly the costs and benefits of relevant options, if they are proposing to change their landlord or when proposing a significant change in their management arrangements.

2.5 Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service. They shall ensure that any changes to tenant involvement in governance and scrutiny leads to an enhancement of the overall effectiveness of their approach.

3 Understanding and responding to diverse needs

3.1 Registered providers shall demonstrate how they respond to tenants' needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants.

2. Home standard

Required outcomes

1 Quality of accommodation

Registered providers shall:

- ensure that tenants' homes meet the standard set out in section 5 of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance by 31 December 2010 and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard after this date
- meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard
- in agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section 6 of the Government's Decent Homes Guidance

2 Repairs and maintenance

Registered providers shall:

- provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time
- meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes

Registered providers shall set out in an annual report for tenants how they are meeting these obligations and how they intend to meet them in the future. The provider shall then meet the commitments it has made to its tenants.

Specific expectations

1 **Quality of accommodation**

1.1 The TSA may agree with a registered provider an extension to the 31 December 2010 date where this is reasonable. Providers shall ensure their tenants are aware of the reasons for any extension given.

2. **Repairs and maintenance**

2.1 Registered providers shall ensure a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas. This should demonstrate an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs, and value for money. The approach should include: responsive and cyclical repairs, planned and capital work, work on empty properties, and adaptations.

Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets tenants' needs.

3. Tenancy standard

Required outcomes

1 Allocations

Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. They shall demonstrate how they:

- make the best use of available housing
- are compatible with the purpose of the housing
- contribute to local authorities' strategic housing function and sustainable communities

There should be clear application, decision-making and appeals processes.

2 Rents

Registered providers shall charge rents in accordance with the objectives and framework set out in the Government's Direction to the TSA of November 2009.

3 Tenure

Registered providers shall offer and issue the most secure form of tenure compatible with the purpose of the housing and the sustainability of the community. They shall meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements.

Registered providers shall set out in an annual report for tenants how they are meeting these obligations and how they intend to meet them in the future. The provider shall then meet the commitments it has made to its tenants.

Specific expectations

1 **Allocations**

- 1.1 Registered providers shall co-operate with local authorities' strategic housing function, and their duties to meet identified local housing needs. This includes assistance with local authorities' homelessness duties, and through meeting obligations in nominations agreements. Where, in exceptional circumstances, registered providers choose not to participate in choice-based lettings schemes in areas where they own homes, they shall publish their reasons for doing so.

- 1.2 Registered providers shall develop and deliver services to address under occupation and overcrowding in their homes, within the resources available to them. These services should meet the needs of their tenants, and will offer choices to them.
- 1.3 Registered providers shall provide tenants wishing to move with access to clear and relevant advice about their housing options. They shall participate in mobility schemes and mutual exchange schemes where these are available.
- 1.4 Registered providers' published policies shall include how they have made use of common housing registers, common allocations policies and local letting policies. Registered providers shall clearly set out, and be able to give reasons for, the criteria they use for excluding actual and potential tenants from consideration for allocations, mobility or mutual exchange schemes.
- 1.5 Registered providers shall develop and deliver allocations processes in a way which supports their effective use by the full range of actual and potential tenants, including those with support needs, those who do not speak English as a first language and others who have difficulties with written English.
- 1.6 Registered providers shall minimise the time that properties are empty between each letting. When doing this, they shall take into account the circumstances of the tenants who have been offered the properties.
- 1.7 Registered providers shall record all lettings and sales in the Continuous Recording of Lettings system.

2 Rents

- 2.1 Registered providers shall ensure they meet the following requirements, which derive from the Government's Direction to the TSA of November 2009 and published within Directions to the TSA – Summary of Responses and Government Response, November 2009, CLG.
- 2.2 Subject to paragraph 2.3, registered providers shall set rents with a view to achieving the following as far as possible:
 - 2.2.1. Rents conform with the pattern produced by the rent formula set out in rent influencing regime guidance ('target rents') with a five per cent tolerance in individual rents (ten per cent for supported and sheltered housing) ('rent flexibility level') but subject to the maximum rent levels specified in that guidance ('rent caps').
 - 2.2.2. Weekly rent for accommodation increases each year by an amount which is no more than RPI + 0.5% + £2 until it reaches the upper limit of the rent flexibility level or the rent cap, whichever is lower.
 - 2.2.3. Weekly rent for accommodation that has reached or is above the upper limit of the rent flexibility increases each year by an amount that is

no more than the increase to the target rents.

2.2.4. Rent caps increase annually by RPI + one per cent.

2.2.5. Target rents increase annually by RPI + 0.5%.

2.3 Where the application of the Rents Standard would cause registered providers to be unable to meet other standards, particularly in respect of financial viability including the risk that a reduction in overall rental income causes them to risk failing to meet existing commitments such as banking or other lending covenants, the TSA may allow extensions to the period over which the requirements of the Rents Standard are met.

2.4 Registered providers shall provide clear information to tenants that explains how their rent and any service charge is set, and how it is changed, including reference to the RPI benchmark to which annual changes to rents should be linked (except where rents are controlled under different legislation).

3 Tenure

3.1 Registered providers shall publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management. They shall develop and provide services that will support tenants to maintain their tenancy and prevent unnecessary evictions. The approach should set out how registered providers will make sure that the home continues to be occupied by the tenant they let the home to.

4. Neighbourhood and community standard

Required outcomes

- 1 Neighbourhood management
Registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.
- 2 Local area co-operation
Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties.
- 3 Anti-social behaviour
Registered providers shall work in partnership with other public agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.

Registered providers shall set out in an annual report for tenants how they are meeting these obligations and how they intend to meet them in the future. The provider shall then meet the commitments it has made to its tenants.

Specific expectations

- 1 Neighbourhood management
 - 1.1 Registered providers shall consult with tenants in developing a published policy for maintaining and improving the neighbourhoods associated with their homes. This applies where the registered provider has a responsibility (either exclusively or in part) for the condition of that neighbourhood. The policy shall include any communal areas associated with the registered provider's homes.
- 2 Local area co-operation
 - 2.1 Registered providers, having taken account of their presence and impact within the areas where they own properties, shall:
 - identify and publish the roles they are able to play within the areas where they have properties
 - co-operate with Local Strategic Partnerships and strategic housing functions of local authorities where they are able to assist them in achieving their objectives
- 3 Anti-social behaviour
 - 3.1 Registered providers shall publish a policy on how they work with relevant partners to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour (ASB) in areas where they own properties.

3.2 In their work to prevent and address ASB, registered providers shall demonstrate:

- that tenants are made aware of their responsibilities and rights in relation to ASB
- strong leadership, commitment and accountability on preventing and tackling ASB that reflects a shared understanding of responsibilities with other local agencies
- a strong focus exists on preventative measures tailored towards the needs of tenants and their families
- prompt, appropriate and decisive action is taken to deal with ASB before it escalates, which focuses on resolving the problem having regard to the full range of tools and legal powers available
- all tenants and residents can easily report ASB, are kept informed about the status of their case where responsibility rests with the organisation and are appropriately signposted where it does not
- provision of support to victims and witnesses

5. Value for money standard

Required outcomes

1 Value for money

In meeting all TSA standards, including their local offers, registered providers shall have a comprehensive approach to managing their resources to provide cost-effective, efficient, quality services and homes to meet tenants' and potential tenants' needs.

Registered providers shall set out in an annual report for tenants how they are meeting these obligations and how they intend to meet them in the future. The provider shall then meet the commitments it has made to its tenants.

Specific expectations

1 **Value for money**

1.1 Registered providers shall demonstrate to their tenants:

- how expenditure has been prioritised in relation to each of the standards and in the delivery of local offers, and in meeting other needs such as investment in new social housing provision
- how they have ensured value for money has been secured and tested
- plans and priorities for delivery of further value for money improvements

1.2 Registered providers shall have arrangements for tenants to influence the services delivered and the cost of those services that result in service charges to tenants.

6. Governance and financial viability standard

Required outcome

1 Governance

Registered providers shall ensure effective governance arrangements that deliver their aims, objectives and intended outcomes for tenants and potential tenants in an effective, transparent and accountable manner. Governance arrangements shall ensure they:

- adhere to all relevant legislation
- comply with their governing documents and all regulatory requirements
- are accountable to tenants, the TSA and relevant stakeholders
- safeguard taxpayers' interests and the reputation of the sector
- have an effective risk management framework

2 Financial viability

Registered providers shall manage their resources effectively to ensure their viability is maintained.

Specific expectations

1 **Governance**

- 1.1 Registered providers shall adopt and comply with an appropriate code of governance. They shall give the reasons for their choice and explain areas of non-compliance with their chosen code.
- 1.2 Registered providers shall establish and maintain clear roles, responsibilities and accountabilities for their board, chair and chief executive and produce an annual assessment of the effectiveness of their arrangements.
- 1.3 Registered providers shall submit an annual return, on an accurate and timely basis in a form determined by the TSA. This is currently the Regulatory and Statistical Return (and its successor, the National Register of Social Housing).
- 1.4 Where there is a non-regulated element, the registered provider shall demonstrate to the TSA that it has in place effective mechanisms (such as commitments, undertakings or other assurances between itself and the non-regulated element) which ensure that:
 - 1.4.1 it is and will be able to comply with the TSA's standards and other regulatory requirements;
 - 1.4.2 its ability to meet the TSA's standards and other regulatory requirements is not and cannot be prejudiced by the activities or influence of the non-regulated element;
 - 1.4.3 in the event that the registered provider does not or may not be able to comply with the TSA's standards or other regulatory requirements:
 - a. the non-regulated element will give any necessary support or

assistance to enable compliance; and
b. the registered provider has the ability to require the support or assistance of the non-regulated element to enable compliance.
In some situations it may be appropriate for the TSA to be a party to such arrangements.

2 Financial viability

2.1 Registered providers shall ensure that:

- effective controls and procedures are in place to ensure security of assets and the proper use of public funds
- effective systems are in place to monitor and accurately report delivery of their plans
- the risks to delivery of financial plans are identified and effectively managed

2.2 Registered providers shall ensure that they have a robust and prudent business planning and control framework. Through this framework they will ensure:

- there is access to sufficient liquidity at all times
- financial forecasts are based on appropriate and reasonable assumptions
- planning sufficiently considers the financial implications of risks to the delivery of plans
- they monitor, report on and comply with their funders' financial covenants

2.3 Registered providers shall provide to the TSA accurate and timely statutory and regulatory financial returns and an annual report on any losses from fraudulent activity.

APPENDIX 2

Suggested content of Annual Report for Tenants 2010

1. Introduction
2. Who runs the organisation? For example, who are the governing body, senior management team and tenant bodies?
3. Summary of the Housing Service's accreditations, benchmarking, peer-reviews and main service-improvements planned for the year ahead.
4. Section from tenant representatives explaining tenants' involvement in the year's housing services and how they will monitor them in the year ahead.
5. Summaries of TDBC's service-provision and performance under each of the TSA's National Standards and how the service will work with tenants before April 2011 to also create Local Service Standards (Local Offers) as required by the TSA.
6. Pullout Freepost return form asking for readers' feedback on what they would like done differently in the Annual Report for Tenants 2011.
7. Profile of TDBC Housing Service. For example:
 - breakdown of types of homes owned or managed
 - the number of lettings during the year broken down by type
 - a breakdown of the types of household to whom lettings were made
 - rent levels
8. Performance measures (eg. percentages of targets met and tenants satisfaction, turn-around times, etc.)
9. TDBC commitments to tenants – a summary of the main Service Standards for housing (eg. Re-letting properties, income management)
10. Set out strengths and weaknesses in the context of their impact on tenants and the service.

APPENDIX 3

Questions for Tenant Services Management Board to consider

- What else would you like to see in an annual report?
- How many pages do you think the annual report should be?
- Should there be a more detailed document available to all Council tenant representatives, Councillors, reception offices and for customers who request full copies and a summary document distributed to all tenants?
- The full report will also be available to download on the Council's website. Where else should the report be available? For example in newsletters.
- How can tenants who are not members of tenant bodies (e.g. board, Tenants Forum, Tenants and Residents Associations, Sheltered Housing Forum) express their opinion on the report?
- Should a tenant "Annual Report Champion" be appointed to lead on the tenants' perspective as the report is being compiled?
- Should there be a separate Working Group of tenants to help in the creation of the report?
- How will your performance on local offers be monitored, reported and scrutinised?
- Local authorities should also be aware that the Governance and Financial Viability standard does not apply to them. Therefore, there is no formal regulatory requirement on local authorities to include an account of Governance and Financial Viability in their annual report to tenants. However, this is an annual report for tenants and tenants might wish to have some coverage of these activities.

APPENDIX 4

EXAMPLES OF LOCAL OFFER PILOTS

Hastoe Housing Association

This pilot aimed to produce a standard on improving the energy efficiency of existing homes.

Spire Homes

Spire Homes' pilot developed a local offer on the standards tenants can expect on moving into a new home.

London Borough of Croydon

Tenants have helped shape Croydon's work on its local offer. Among their priorities are more flexible appointments, repairs surgeries and maintenance days, where a number of repairs on an estate are done on one day.

Moat Housing

Moat's pilot was focused on its estates in Merton, where it developed a new resident-driven inspection regime. The inspections will result in estates getting a bronze, silver or gold rating for security, upkeep and cohesion. Estate 'champions' will play a key role in the process.

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Thursday 5 August 2010 at 6pm

Present: Mr Etherington (Chairman)
Mr Edwards (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Bowrah, Mrs Drage, Mr Galpin, Mrs Hegarty, Mr Hellier,
Mr Pearson and Mr Watkin

Officers: Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Donna Durham (Democratic Support Manager) and Martin Price (Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager)

Others: Councillors Mrs Court-Stenning and Stuart-Thorn

(The meeting commenced at 6pm)

33. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 1 July 2010 were taken as read and were signed.

34. Declaration of Interests

The following members declared a personal interest as a Council house tenant:

- Mrs Drage;
- Mr Edwards;
- Mr Etherington;
- Mr Galpin;
- Mrs Hegarty;
- Mr Hellier;
- Mr Pearson; and
- Mr Watkin.

35. Guest Rooms in Sheltered Housing

Considered report circulated, concerning the Guest Rooms in Sheltered Housing project.

Supported Housing Services were responsible for the management of twelve guest rooms, located in Sheltered Housing and Extra Care Housing Schemes, at various locations in Taunton Deane. This included the booking of rooms, cleaning and the distribution of keys.

Details of the addresses of the guest rooms were reported. The use and upkeep of these had incorporated some difficulties, which included:

- 3 were upstairs without a lift;
- Upkeep was expensive;
- The income generated did not meet the cost of providing the service;
- There were limited facilities, and only a few had en-suite bathrooms; and
- Furniture and fittings were dated and needed improving.

Tenants views were sought to consider alternative uses. These were then reported to the Sheltered Housing Forum. The findings suggested that residents took responsibility of some, others could be used by staff and the remainder should have their charges increased. Details of revisions to charges would be reported to the Sheltered Housing Forum in October 2010.

Resolved that further consideration be given to the use of guest rooms, when revised charging figures were available.

36. Board Membership

The Chairman reported that two tenants were interested in becoming members of the Board, one of which had already completed an application form.

Resolved that the tenants be appointed to the Board, subject to the receipt of application forms.

37. Annual Report to Tenants and Tenant Services Authority

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the annual report to tenants and the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

The Council had an obligation to produce an Annual Report which detailed Housing Services performance up to March 2010 and future plans to meet national and local standards. The report needed to show how tenants and the Council had worked together to shape local priorities and the methods that tenants could use to monitor how effective the services were.

The TSA had been set up on 1 April 2010 to act as the regulatory body for all registered housing providers and set national standards for housing services.

The TSA took a co-regulatory approach which placed the emphasis on regulation at a local level and put tenants at the centre of the scrutiny of

housing standards. A framework of National Standards had been published by the TSA.

All social housing landlords had to publish the Annual Report to their tenants and deliver it to the TSA by 1 October 2010 and annually thereafter. The report had to meet the TSA's six National Standards, which were:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment;
- Home;
- Tenancy;
- Neighbourhood and community;
- Value for money; and
- Governance and financial viability.

The new framework required registered providers to consult with tenants on local priorities. There was a minimum requirement to consult on local service offers in relation to:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment;
- Home; and
- Neighbourhood and community.

In considering how services could be tailored locally, registered providers also needed to consider the following:

- Standards of performance;
- How performance would be monitored, reported and scrutinised by tenants;
- What happened if the offer was not delivered and what redress tenants could expect; and
- How and when the local offer would be reviewed.

The purpose of the Annual Report was to provide a means of:

- Setting out a clear service offer in respect of the National Standards so that tenants knew what to expect from their provider. The service offer should be developed and agreed with

tenants. Expressing it in the Annual Report served as a commitment on the part of the provider to deliver the service offer;

- Being held to account for delivery of the commitment, through the availability of transparent information, by tenants and the TSA. The service offer was a local expression of meeting the National Standards. Failure to deliver the service offer was a failure to comply with the National Standards; and
- Improving accountability and transparency by involving tenants in the development of the Annual Report.

Expectations of the Annual Report were reported and Members of the Board were asked to comment on the content of the report.

Members of the Board agreed that a lot of work would be required to put the Annual Report together. They felt that an A5 booklet summarising the report should be circulated to tenants, explaining that a full version was available, either to download or in hard copy. This booklet could be distributed with the Tenants' Talk publication to avoid additional postage costs.

The Board felt that a working group should be set up, comprising members of the Board and Tenants' Forum, to consider local offers. The working group could then report back to the Board at its meeting in September.

Resolved that a working group be set up.

38. Feedback from Tenant Participation Advisory Service Annual Conference by the Attendees

Three members of the Board had attended the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference recently and reported their findings.

All members who attended the conference, felt they had benefited, mainly from talking to other delegates. In addition, the following information was reported:

- Breaks should be incorporated during meetings, as it gives members a chance to get to know each other;
- TPAS provided e-learning opportunities at a small charge; and
- A free service was available to help deal with problem people and would be a useful contact to have.

39. Future Meeting Dates

Resolved that meetings would be held on the following dates:

- Monday 6 September 2010;
- Monday 11 October 2010;
- Monday 15 November 2010; and
- Monday 6 December 2010.

40. Government Announcements

Board members discussed recent announcements that had been made by the Government, relating to five and ten year tenures.

Board members also discussed how under-occupancy could be addressed and they agreed to progress this further at the working group.

(The meeting ended at 8.00pm)