

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 23 January 2012 at 18:00.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 19 December 2011 (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 Supported Housing Service Development Action Plan 2012 - report of the Supported Housing Manager (attached)
Reporting Officer: Christine Thompson
- 6 Housing Revenue Account Reform Project Dashboard - report of the Community Services Manager (attached)
Reporting Officer: James Barrah
- 7 Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012 – 2042 - Verbal Update from the Community Services Manager
Reporting Officer: James Barrah
- 8 Communities and Local Government Consultation “Reinvigorating the Right to Buy and one for one replacement” - report of the Housing Services Lead (now attached)
Reporting Officer: Stephen Boland
- 9 Housing Estates Team Anti-Social Behaviour Performance - report of the Housing Estates Manager (attached)
Reporting Officer: Paul Hadley
- 10 Council Housing Voids Performance - report of the Housing Estates Manager (attached)
Reporting Officer: Paul Hadley

11 Domestic Abuse Policy, Service Standard and Witness Support Policy - report of the Estate Officer (now attached)

Reporting Officer: Steven Clarke

Tonya Meers
Legal and Democratic Services Manager

08 May 2012

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 or Tenant Services Management Board Members 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.

Full Council, Executive, Committees and Task and Finish Review agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.tauntondeane.gov.uk



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

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please telephone us on 01823 356356 or e-mail us at: enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Tenant Services Management Board Members:-

Mr D Etherington	(Chairman)
Mr M Edwards	(Vice-Chairman)
Councillor R Bowrah, BEM	
Councillor S Brooks	
Mrs J Bunn	
Mrs E Drage	
Mr D Galpin	
Mrs J Hegarty	
Mr K Hellier	
Mrs P Marshall	
Mrs T Urquhart	

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 19 December 2011 at 6pm in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr Etherington (Chairman)
Mr Edwards (Vice- Chairman)
Councillor Bowrah, Mrs Bunn, Mrs Drage, Mr Galpin, Mrs Hegarty, Mr Mrs Marshall and Mrs Urquhart.

Officers: James Barrah (Community Services Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer), Phil Webb (Housing Property Services Manager) and Keith Wiggins (Democratic Services Officer).

Others: Councillor A Wedderkopp

(The meeting commenced at 6.05pm)

81. Apologies

Apologies: Councillor Brooks and Mr Hellier

82. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 21 November 2011 were taken as read and signed.

83. Public Question Time

A statement was received in writing from Mr Martin Aldred, as Chairman of the Halcon North Tenants and Residents Association.

Mr Aldred requested assistance from the Board in obtaining clarification from the Leader of Council regarding his statement at the full Council meeting on 13 December 2011 and the status of the Halcon North regeneration project. He also asked Board members to sign a petition opposed to the Council's preferred regeneration option.

In response to these requests, the Board **resolved** to receive a further report on the Halcon North regeneration project and discuss the other options in more detail.

84. Declaration of Interests

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

- Mrs Bunn
- Mrs Drage
- Mr Edwards

- Mr Etherington
- Mr Galpin
- Mrs Hegarty
- Mrs Marshall
- Mrs Urquhart

Councillor Bowrah declared a personal interest as a family member was a Council house tenant.

85. Decent Homes Standard Definition

Considered report previously circulated regarding the government definition of the Decent Homes Standard and its application in Taunton Deane. .

The Housing Property Services Manager explained that a ‘decent home’ was a property that met a minimum standard and was maintained to that standard thereafter. The property must meet the landlord’s and the tenant’s priorities and meet the following four criteria:

- be free from Category 1 Housing Health & Safety Rating risks;
- be in a reasonable state of repair;
- have acceptable and modern facilities and services;
- provide an acceptable level of thermal comfort.

Each of these four criteria was expanded upon in turn.

The Council had recognised that the national standard did not fully meet residents’ aspirations. Consequently the Council had, in consultation with residents and other stakeholders, developed a Decent Homes Standard which exceeded the Government’s minimum standards in certain areas.

The Council had put in place a work programme to ensure the standard was met or exceeded. Environmental works to estates, security improvements or adaptations for disability were contained within other planned investment work streams.

During the discussion of this item, members of the board made the following comments and asked questions. Responses are shown in italics:

- Could outside lighting be provided on isolated or rural housing? *There were a number of issues within the housing stock and the limited budget needed to be prioritised after assessing each risk;*
- Some homes had an electric heater in the bottom of their airing cupboard but no marking on the switch, which was a potential fire hazard; *safety labelling would be taken up with new contractors from April 2012;*
- Had we achieved the standard across all the housing stock? *Less than 500 homes still required work to fully achieve the standard. All “void”*

homes were updated before re-letting and a programme of maintenance was required within the HRA Business Plan to keep all the stock at decent homes status;

- Was there a public record of people who don't allow access and prevent the Council getting their home up to the standard? *There were a number of reasons why a tenant might choose not have work done on their property and other than for safety work they were entitled to do so.*

Resolved to note the content of the report.

86. Housing Revenue Account Reform Project Dashboard

Considered project progress dashboard report previously circulated, concerning planned reforms to council housing finance in England and the management of those changes by the Council.

The Community Services Manager explained that the draft HRA Business Plan had been approved but the Council still awaited final figures from Government that would determine the final budget requirements and allow the business plan to be completed. The project overall remained on track.

Resolved to note the dashboard report.

87. Gas Servicing Inspection Process where Difficulties with Access Occur

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the procedure for gas safety checks when difficulties with access to properties had occurred.

Taunton Deane Borough Council as a landlord had a legal duty under the Gas Safety (installation and use) Regulations 1998 to ensure that any gas appliance and gas supplies that are provided to its properties are tested every 12 months, for the safety of the tenant occupying the property and the surrounding community.

The majority of tenants allow entry for the gas safety checks to occur. For the a minority of tenants making access difficult TDBC had to have a rigorous procedure to ensure that access was obtained and the necessary gas safety checks completed.

Various methods were used to try and arrange access with the tenant which included:

- Telephone calls to arrange access
- Visits from the tenant's Estate Officer.
- Letters being sent via post and hand delivered by Estate Officers

The letters had an increasing emphasis on the reasons why the gas safety checks were necessary and the consequences of not responding to the request for access.

The revised process was explained and discussed and would normally take 6 or 7 weeks overall if the tenant was still uncooperative.

Resolved to note the improved process and contents of the report.

88. National Tenant Training Programme – Growing Together, HotHouse Training Event, November 2011

Considered report previously circulated, concerning an update from the Tenant Services Development Officer on the training event held in November.

The event was attended by tenants of registered providers across the south west, including members of the Board and Council officers.

The training day covered many areas of co-regulation and scrutiny and had been well received.

Resolved to note the report.

89. Annual Report update

The Tenant Empowerment Manager explained that the final draft of the Annual Report had now been completed.

Copies were circulated around the room for comment.

Resolved to recommend circulation of the Annual Report to tenants.

90. Housing Services and Community Development - Restructure proposals

Considered report previously circulated, concerning proposals for changes to the staffing structure of Housing Services to prepare the service for issues arising from Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Self Financing and the associated new 30 year business plan.

The Community Services Manager explained he was preparing the service for challenges in relation to tenure reform, increased financial responsibility and enhanced expenditure on Council assets and to deliver improving high quality and highly performing services.

Consultation with staff would ensure the service evolved as smoothly as possible. Initial reaction from staff and unions had been positive.

The timetable for progressing the proposals was set out and members asked questions and received replies.

Resolved to note the restructure proposals.

(The meeting ended at 7.50pm)

Declaration of Interests

Tenant Services Management Board

Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants – Councillor Brooks,
Mrs Bunn, Mrs Drage, Mr Edwards, Mr Etherington, Mr Galpin, Mrs Hegarty,
Mr Hellier, Mrs Marshall and Mrs Urquhart

Member of Somerset County Council – Councillor Brooks

Family member a Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenant –
Councillor Bowrah

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 23 January 2012

Supported Housing Service Development Action Plan 2012

Report of the Supported Housing Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

Executive Summary

This report has been produced to share with members details of the action plan prepared following the event held on Thursday 27th October 2011. There has been consultation throughout the process to produce a structured plan to investigate and consider the views of residents in supported housing.

1.00 Background to this report.

The following is a reminder to the work carried out over the past twelve months to formalise the consultation process to enable tenants to effectively get involved in the development of housing related support services.

Date	Activity
23 rd January 2012	Briefing to be submitted to the Tenant Services Management Board.
10 th January 2012	Chair of the Sheltered Housing Forum provided update to Tenants' Forum.
9 th December 2011	Meeting of the Service Development Group to agree priorities
21 st November 2011	Report presented to Tenant Services Management Board to update members on progress.
27 th October 2011	Supported Housing Service Development Event, held in the Long Room, at the Somerset County Cricket Ground.
23 rd August 2011	Report submitted to Tenant Services Management Board regarding proposals to formalise the role of the Service Development Group.
9 th August 2011	Tenants' Forum meeting attended by Chair of the Sheltered Housing Forum to provide update.
28 th July 2011	Draft Terms of Reference agreed by the Sheltered Housing Forum for the Service Development Group.
28 th April, 2011	Report discussed with those who attended the AGM of the Sheltered Housing Forum and authority to proceed with changes.
15 th March 2011	Report presented and discussed with Tenant Services Management Board to formalise the role of the Service Development Group for services to those living in Supported Housing.
21 st February 2011	Consultation with current Chair of the Sheltered Housing Forum.

A report was presented to the Tenant Services Management Board in November 2011 and during the discussion of this item, members of the board made the following comments and asked questions. Responses are shown in italics:

- What was being done about scooters in hall-ways? *This was now subject to “clear hallways policy” while continuing to work with residents at possible solutions including storage;*
- Tenants on estates in other areas volunteered as snow champions;
- What was being done about cold calling? *The Council discourage cold calling wherever it could.*

Resolved: To request officers to prepare an action plan to respond to the queries raised at the event.

2.0 Preparation of an action plan

To facilitate the preparation of an action plan, all those who attended the event in October 2011 were invited to a meeting on the 9th December 2011 at Parmin Close meeting hall.

Fourteen tenants attended, from a wide range of schemes, including Robin Close, Parmin Close, Broomfield House, Churchill Way, Normandy Drive, Newton Road, Treborough Close, Moorland Place and Bulford. There were four apologies from tenants at Greenlands, Victoria Gate, Lyngford Place and Taunfield Close.

Attendees worked in three separate groups, facilitated by Supported Housing managers, to consider each of the comments received at the October 2011 event. There were a total of forty six individual comments. It was agreed, by those present, that there are eight common themes, as listed below.

1	General Estates
2	Meeting Halls
3	Property Issues
4	Social Activities
5	Individual requests
6	Security
7	Guest Rooms

Working in groups, each of the comments, were discussed. Firstly to clarify understanding where appropriate and secondly, the group in which they could be dealt with. The group then considered an order of priority for each topic. There was also a request that “communication” be dealt with as a separate subject.

There were a few additional general comments which have been acted on as follows and need no further investigation.

GENERAL COMMENTS

You said	Action taken
We're staunch believers in teamwork	Noted
An annual business plan gathering for tenants	Refer to Tenant Empowerment Team
I feel we have an excellent service, so why change when things are working so well. A great team in supported housing	Message shared
Warwick Road not on list of addresses for sheltered housing	Address to be added
Please could all have copies of today info included (Hazel Clist)	Sent with invitation to attend meeting on 9.12.11

3.0 Next steps

All attendees of the previous meetings will be invited to the meetings planned for the remainder of the year, as shown on the table below. These have been booked and details are available in the Annual Report Calendar for Tenants.

No	Topics	Facilitator	Date of first Meeting	Venue
1A	Communication	Christine Thompson	27 th January 2012	Committee Room 1
1B	General Estates	Gareth Denslow	24 th February 2012	Committee Room 1
6	Security	Gareth Denslow	30 th March 2012	Committee Room 1
3	Property Issues	Gareth Denslow	27 th April 2012	Committee Room 1
5	Individual requests	Sharon Harvey	25 th May 2012	Committee Room 1
4	Social Activities	Sharon Harvey	29 th June 2012	Committee Room 1
2	Meeting Halls	Christine Thompson	27 th July 2012	Committee Room 1
7	Guest Rooms	Christine Thompson	24 th August 2012	Committee Room 1
8	Plan for Tenants Event in October	Christine Thompson	28 th September 2012	Committee Room 1

4.0 Diversity

Information given was provided in large print and staff worked in small groups to enable all present to contribute and to share their views.

The location of the meeting hall at Parmin Close was chosen as it has level access and sufficient space to facilitate the type of exercises carried out at the meeting in December 2011.

5.0 Financial Implications

There are no immediate or known financial implications regarding the development of the suggestions from tenants. Staff time will be needed to work through the list and to work with the Service Development Group throughout 2012.

There is the question of remuneration for tenants who attend meetings and it is suggested that the same benefits should be available for payment of travel expenses and parking as for the Tenant Services Management Board.

A copy of the guide is shown as **Appendix B**, plus a copy of the claim form is shown as **Appendix C**

6.0 Recommendations

- Members note and comment on the report
- Confirm that suggestions in 5.0 regarding the payment of expenses be adopted.
- Officers asked to feedback when a project has been completed with outcomes and recommendations.

Contact Officer:

Supported Housing Manager
Christine Thompson
c.thompson@tauntondeane.gov.uk
01823 356399

Appendix A

Service Development Groups

Group 1A – Communication to be led by Christine Thompson

Meeting date – 27th January 2012

No	You said	What the group will aim to achieve
1	Communication, if report concerns, issue not always informed of progress	To clarify what aspects of the housing service this refers to, To discuss and agree suggestions for improvement.

Group 1B – General estates issues to be led by Gareth Denslow

No	You said	What the group will aim to achieve
1	Help to be provided with cleaning of stairwells of flats	Identify areas where cleaning is needed? Identify cost of carrying out such works? Report back to tenants in October 2012
2	Storage needed to accommodate wheelchairs and bicycles in flats	Identify areas where storage is needed Investigate options available Report back to tenants in October 2012
3	We still need our estate officers in their present state	Advise Estates Officers
4	Information about changes, to keep continuity – ref Estates Officers	Advise Housing Managers
5	Plan for distribution of grit in bad weather	Consider feasibility of providing grit, Consider alternative options,
6	Addressing risks surrounding schemes, ref to wet leaves, snow etc., Where does responsibility lie?	Clarify concerns, risks Identify if there are specific areas
7	Cleaning of stairwells	As 1 above.
8	Storage of mobility scooters	As 2 above
9	Communication, if report concerns, issue not always informed of progress	See 1A
10	Decoration of halls	Clarify areas where decorations needed.
11	Tenants able to do small areas of gardens, economic benefits and sense of more independence, possible social interaction amongst tenants and physical exercise.	Investigate where this is possible
12	Numerous residents have stated worries and problems with the paths leading to their flats as moss and fungus is growing on the surface. When wet or especially when the temperature drops the paths become as slippery as ice. Consider seasonal chemical spray or application of a stiff brush or jetting.	As 6 above
13	During the autumn leaf fall the general safety of the pathing around the flats would be improved by removing them on a more regular basis.	As 6 above

Group 2 – Meeting Halls to be led by Christine Thompson

No	You said	What the group will aim to achieve
1	Increase in bin collections, at meeting halls	Identify where bins are currently and how often they are emptied
2	Halls have a problem still, hang on to them until the bitter end	Review what is available and costs Produce a brochure giving details of halls with permitted number and details of facilities available.
3	Need to know about the meeting rooms and what is on, we were told last year we would have a list	Liaise with group working on social activities and how these can be promoted.
4	Provide information re: maximum capacity of numbers to use meeting halls	Check out info and include in scheme brochure

Group 3 – Property Issues led by Gareth Denslow

No	You said	What the group will aim to achieve
1	Upgraded heating in flats/meeting halls?	Check where this is needed Investigate best type of heating and cost
2	Upgrading of storage heaters	Investigate alternative heating
3	Would like a new front door in Bovet street	
4	Would like a new front door at property	
5	Property alterations, better liaison with tenants	
6	Improvements to bathrooms	Explore where improvement needed
7	All residents complain about the outdated economy 7 storage heaters. This is for various reasons, they are far too expensive to use to heat the flats to a satisfactory degree, even when on full by the time the evening comes they give out only a minimum amount of heat, so putting people's health (lives) at risk during the very cold winter. These problems are going to be increased if there is removal of cold weather payments, which did not cover the full costs anyway.	As 2 above
8	Windows, no access, unable to reach to open	

Group 4 – Social Activities led by Sharon Harvey

No	You said	What the group will aim to achieve
1	An annual coach trip	Establish what is available locally and provide information to all tenants
2	Promotion of more activities at Lodge Close	Establish what is available locally and provide information to all tenants
3	Have a day of showing old films etc & refreshments	Establish what is available locally and provide information to all tenants
4	Awareness and encourage could make a lot of difference to people's lives by getting them out of their homes, through social interaction, improving self esteem and feelings of independence.	Establish what is available locally and provide information to all tenants
5	Supported Housing teams organising day trips and social activities	Establish what is available locally and provide information to all tenants
6	Making residents aware of activities that are happening in the community, help with transport to events	Establish events that are happening in the area and publish information to all tenants

Group 5 – Individual requests to be led by Sharon Harvey

No	You said	What the group will aim to achieve
1	Victoria Gate, tenants moving into new Knightstone flats asked if they could be carpeted before they move in. Would be prepared to accept a lesser disturbance allowance.	Refer to
2	Concerns about the behaviour of neighbour	Concerns to be raised with ASB team

Group 6 – Security to be led by Gareth Denslow

No	You said	What the group will aim to achieve
1	Door locks, security – 3 lever?	Investigate type of locks available and where could be improved.
2	Security – “trade” entrance/ button too long	Investigate where “trade” buttons exist and how long they are available.
3	Fencing of communal gardens to provide a greater feeling of security	Investigate where gardens exist and how they could be made safer
4	Gardens would be a safer environment for visitors	See 3 above
5	There are issues with unwanted access to the flats, via both the front door electric locks and the rear door mortice locks. It is possible for anyone to gain entry to the insides of the buildings almost 24 hours a day. The old, disabled and infirm would feel much safer and happier when not having any worries about unwanted or uninvited persons, such as persons delivering unsolicited mail shots or cold callers, real or not, gaining entry inside to then call at their flat doors. Most of the glass on the doors have stickers, provided by the police, visible informing these people that they are unwelcome and not to call	Investigate preventative measures in place and ensure all are aware of best practice
6	The rear doors would be secure if fitted with the type of lock that latches itself and can only be opened with the use of a key from the outside, but one is not needed on the inside. It is easy to forget to lock behind you or not because of thinking you might be inconveniencing your neighbours.	Identify where rear doors exist and would benefit from change of lock.
7	The combined door bell and lock on the front doors operation could be improves, as the trade button allows entry to anyone for many more hours than is needed. This could be reduced by a simple phone call to the post office and milkman, then resetting the timers for minimal activation. Sometimes or one is operational at three in the afternoon.	See 2 above.
8	Cold calling	See 5 above

TENANT SERVICES MANAGEMENT BOARD

Guide To Claiming Expenses

Approved Duties

Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) will only pay travelling and additional expenses for approved duties. An approved duty is any duty a board member is invited to perform by TDBC or by a body / organisation to which the member has been appointed or nominated to by TDBC. Examples are attendance at Board meetings, committees, working parties, conferences, seminars, etc.

Car Mileage:

Car mileage is paid at 55p per mile and 5p per mile for each additional passenger. You will need to record the mileage covered and include this on your claim form. Mileage can be claimed for your return journey from home to the meeting venue.

Car Parking:

Taunton Deane Borough Council will reimburse the costs of parking your vehicle in a Public Car Park when attending meetings. Please ensure that your parking payment ticket is attached to the claim form.

Fines or penalty notices will not be reimbursed.

Public Transport:

Taunton Deane Borough Council will reimburse the cost of return bus travel, or taxi costs where bus travel is not viable. Please ensure that bus ticket/s or the taxi receipt is attached to the claim form.

Cycling:

Taunton Deane Borough Council will reimburse cyclists 20p per mile for the return journey to attend a meeting. Cyclists must make a note of the distance travelled and state this on the claim form.

Additional Expenses:

Meals: Meal costs will be reimbursed if attending full-day meetings or training sessions.

Carers: We can reimburse you for Carer costs whilst attending meetings or training sessions.

Receipts for both meals and carer costs must be submitted with the claim form.

Board members will be responsible for Inland Revenue requirements for maintaining records of all income received in relation to expense reimbursement and that such records and any tax liabilities or benefit entitlements arising are the responsibility of the Board Member.

Board members should ensure that they have adequate car insurance that covers them when carrying out duties as a board member.

How to claim:

- Forms are available from Taunton Deane Borough Council's Tenant Empowerment Team and can be submitted on a monthly basis or at the claimants' discretion.
- Receipts must be submitted with the claim form.
- Claim forms must be signed by the claimant and then handed to the Tenant Empowerment Manager who will counter-sign the form.

Payment:

- Once the claim form has been checked, it is passed to the Finance Department for payment.
- Payment is by cheque, sent to your home address or by a BACS transfer into your bank account.

Should a delay in payment occur, please contact the Tenant Empowerment Team who will be happy to investigate the delay.

Appendix C

TENANT SERVICES MANAGEMENT BOARD
EXPENSES CLAIM FORM

Name..... Address

Month (s)

DATE	MEETING / COURSE	MILES /FARE	TOTAL TRAVEL CLAIMED	CARER / MEAL/ PARKING	<u>TOTAL</u>
EXAMPLE 29.04.10	Tenant Services Management Board monthly meeting	Parmin Close to Deane House Car - 2 miles @ 55p	£1.10	£1.60 car park	£2.70
TOTAL CLAIMED					GRAND TOTAL

Details of carer, subsistence and car parking claims, with dates.....

Signed: Date.....

Checked by Tenant Empowerment Manager: Date

Please attach all receipts

AGENDA ITEM 6



HRA Reform Project Dashboard – January 2012

Phase 2: Agreement of Business Plan & Finalising Financial Arrangements

Status Of Project		Last Report	This Report	Comments
HRA Reform – Phase 2		G	G	
Status by Key Project Activities for Phase 1	Workstream Lead	Last Report	This Report	Comments
1. Treasury Management	Maggie Hammond	G	G	
2. Data Checking	Fiona Gudge	G	G	
3. Financial Control & Reporting	Paul Fitzgerald	G	G	
4. Affordable Housing	Martin Daly	G	G	
5. Polices/Best Practice	Martin Price	G	G	
6. Income Management	Stephen Boland	G	G	
7. Business Plan	Stephen Boland	G	G	
8. Stakeholder Engagement	Martin Price	G	G	
9. Assets	Phil Webb	G	G	
10. Baselineing/Benchmarking	Stephen Boland	G	G	

Key	
Red	Unsatisfactory progress – milestones & timescales not being met corrective action or re-plan required
Amber	Issues against some milestones but remedial action will keep project under control overall
Green	All milestones being met & project on target/completed

Key Accomplishments LAST Period
<p>Financial Control & Reporting-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HRA coding structure phase 2 refresh is now in final user-acceptance stage and the budget model is ready to accept the sign off structure for reporting with effect from 1 April 2012. As CLG has issued a settlement payments determination and limits on indebtedness, the draft Prudential Indicators and depreciation policies can be finalised as soon as statutory guidance on accounting requirements is published ready for year-end 2011/12 – publication is expected late January/early February 2012, but it is quite usual for year-end statutory guidance to be issued very close to the period-end. (Target dates have been deferred since CLG determinations are in draft form until 6 January 2012.) <p>Stakeholder Engagement –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article written on the HRA Reform Project for 'Housing' a newsletter that is sent to all tenants.

Treasury Management –

- A meeting was held with the Treasury Advisors, Arlingclose on borrowing.
- A list was given to the Public Loans Work Board on who will be able to perform the borrowing for TDBC.

Business Plan –

- Executive at their meeting on the 7th December 2011 resolved to support the new draft business plan and the draft recommendations.

Key Activities NEXT Period**Financial Control & Reporting –**

- CIH Business Plan is now being refreshed to include 2012/13 indicative budget figures and will continue to be updated as budget figures are finalized and approved by Members.
- HRA balance sheet 'component accounting' preparation will begin.
- Prudential Indicators and depreciation practices can be finalized as and when final guidance is published, ready for the usual approval by Members in March.
- HRA working capital analysis (debtors, creditors, rationale for GF <> HRA charges) will continue to be developed in detail.

Treasury Management –

- Update finance element of the report for Scrutiny and Executive.

Business Plan –

- Business Plan to be updated by Finance to reflect update to the debt settlement figure etc.
- Final draft of Business Plan to be presented to Community Scrutiny Committee, Executive and Full Council, starting with Community Scrutiny on 7th February 2012.

Baselining/Benchmarking –

- Regional Manager at Housemark to be invited to TDBC to present feedback on core benchmarking data analysis outcomes at February 2012 Tenant Services Management Board Meeting.

Risks**Financial Control & Reporting -**

- Statutory accounting guidance on matters like depreciation and prudential indicators must be followed, but historically the guidance is often available only a short time before the relevant financial year (especially if changes are significant). There is a low probability that this will substantially increase the resources required to prepare data and have draft accounts available for audit by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2012.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 23rd January 2012

Consultation: Reinvigorating the Right to Buy and one for one replacement

Report of the Rent Recovery and Voids Manager (This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

1.0 Executive Summary

On 22nd December 2011 the Department for Communities and Local Government published a consultation paper outlining its proposals to increase the cap on Right to Buy discounts; and options for meeting the Government's commitment to ensure that every additional home sold under Right to Buy is replaced with a new home for Affordable Rent.

This report considers the key government proposals and sets out a draft response for the consultation process which ends on 2nd February 2012

Tenant Services Management Board members are asked for their comments on the key proposals.

Tenant Services Management Board members can access a full copy of the consultation document via the link below, with copies also available on request from Housing Services Lead.

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/reinvigoratingrighttobuy>

2.0 Background

Taunton Deane Borough Council tenants, probably, have the Right to Buy, if they are a secure tenant.

Existing qualifying period, cap and discounts:

A)

If a tenant's secure tenancy was in existence before 18 January 2005 (and the tenant has been a tenant continuously since that time) the tenant, probably, has the Right to Buy when they have spent at least 2 years as a public sector tenant. The following discounts and cap apply:

- Houses - 32% of the properties value plus 1% for each year beyond the qualifying period up to a maximum of 60%
- Flats - 44% of the properties value plus 2 % for each year beyond the qualifying period up to a maximum of 70%

B)

If a tenant's secure tenancy was in existence on or after 18 January 2005 the tenant, probably, has the Right to Buy when they have spent at least 5 years as a public sector tenant. The following discounts and cap apply:

- Houses - 35% of the properties value plus 1% for each year beyond the qualifying period up to a maximum of 60%
- Flats - 50% of the properties value plus 2% for each year beyond the qualifying period up to a maximum of 70%

In practice, most Right to Buy discounts are limited to caps set in secondary legislation. In the South West, this cap is set at £30,000.

3.0 Key Government proposals for tenants

Proposals for caps, discount rates and eligibility

There is a balance to be made between offering generous discounts and having enough receipts to fund the building of replacement homes.

The Government are proposing a more generous discount, which the Government believes, will allow a greater number of social tenants to take up their Right to Buy and meet their own home ownership aspirations, support social mobility and help create and sustain mixed communities.

The Government's proposal is to raise the upper limit (the cap) on Right to Buy discount entitlement to £50,000 throughout England, providing a substantial increase in the cap currently set for in the South West.

The Government is interested in views on whether there is a case for changing the minimum and maximum discount rates applying to houses and flats, or the rate at which tenants qualify for increase percentage discounts.

The Government do not intend to change the qualifying period for eligibility.

The Government is planning to implement the proposed changes in April 2012.

Suggested response

The council would prefer to have the ability to decide, locally, the discount (rates and cap) tenants receive. Broad guidelines could ensure there are sufficient funds from Right to Buy sales to build new homes.

Protecting tenants who exercise their Right to Buy

The Government states that it is important that tenants have clear information on what is involved in entering home ownership so that the risks of them being unable to sustain owner occupation are mitigated.

Suggested response

Please refer to Appendix A and the responses given to 'Question 2 and Question 3'

Rural areas

The Government has recognised previous concerns raised over the impact of Right to Buy on rural areas where the original stock of council housing was small and high house prices made owner occupation inaccessible for many local people. The Government would welcome evidenced assessments of the impact on rural affordable housing of the proposed changes to Right to Buy discounts.

Suggested response

Please refer to Appendix A and the responses given to 'Question 4'

Exclusions

Some properties are excluded from the Right to Buy. These include, among others, homes which are suitable for occupation by older people, sheltered housing for older people and those with disabilities.

There are no plans to change the rules on properties excluded from Right to Buy.

4.0 Key Government proposals for council's

Council's transaction, administration and improvement costs

Currently councils can deduct the actual administration and transaction costs of successful sales from Right to Buy receipts, but there is no allowance for costs relating to applications under Right to Buy which do not result in a sale.

The Government are proposing to set a flat rate allowance for each region.

The Government is considering making a further allowance to deduct the costs of handling withdrawn Right to Buy applications.

Currently council's can claim any costs they have incurred improving the sale property in the last three years from Right to Buy receipts. The Government are proposing to remove this allowance, in recognition that improvements increase the value of the property and this will be reflected in the market price and in the Right to Buy receipt.

Suggested response

We would welcome a locally defined calculation of allowable deductions that identifies the actual transaction and administration costs incurred on all sales at the time/date the sales take place. We would welcome the introduction of an allowance that provides for the cost of handling withdrawn Right to Buy applications.

Buyback

Under current arrangements, councils have the option of using Right to Buy receipts to cover part of the costs of buying back former council homes. The Government is considering whether to continue to allow the use of receipts for this purpose once other costs have been covered.

Suggested response

Please refer to Appendix A and the responses given to 'Question 10'

Proposals for apportioning Right to Buy receipts

Where receipts are sufficient to cover all allowable costs and Local Authority and Government assumed income then the Government propose that councils should apportion Right to Buy receipts as follows:

- Housing debt supportable from the income on additional sales;
- Transaction and administration costs on all sales;
- Local authority assumed income; and
- Government assumed income.

Any remaining receipt is then available to support funding for replacement homes. The treatment of the remaining receipt balance will depend on decisions on Buyback and the delivery model implemented for replacement homes.

Note:

The consultation document provides a more detailed explanation of the proposals for apportioning Right to Buy receipts.

Suggested response

It is important that all of the receipt raised is retained by councils, to enable them to quickly invest in affordable housing locally. Taunton Deane Borough Council has in excess of 3,400 'active applicants' registered on its Choice Based Lettings Scheme who are waiting for an affordable home in the area.

Proposals for delivering Right to Buy replacement homes for Affordable Rent

The Government has set out for consultation a range of possible delivery models for managing the replacement programme. These are:

- Local delivery – where receipts for replacement are left with the council where the Right to Buy sale took place for reinvestment;
- National delivery – where receipts for replacement are brought together and then allocated through the Greater London Authority in London and by the Homes and Communities Agency in the rest of England; and
- Combined approaches – with some central direction on use of the receipts but leaving substantial local control

The Government are clear that under all models receipts used for replacement homes will need to be supplemented by borrowing, provider contributions in land or other funding.

Note:

The consultation document provides a more detailed explanation of the proposals for 'Replacement delivery models'.

Suggested response

The replacement model we would prefer is the 'Local model'. It is important that all of the receipt raised is retained by the council, locally, to enable it to quickly invest in affordable housing. Taunton Deane Borough Council in excess of 3,400 'active applicants' registered on its Choice Based Lettings Scheme who are waiting for an affordable home in the area.

5.0 Recommendation:

- Tenant Services Management Board are requested to note the proposals to increase the cap on Right to Buy discounts; options for meeting this Government's commitment to ensure that every additional home sold under Right to Buy is replaced with a new home for Affordable Rent.
- Tenant Services Management Board members are asked for their comments on the key proposals.

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Appendix A

Suggested Officer Comments

Question 1 - We would welcome your views on the proposals for caps, discount rates and eligibility?

The council would prefer to have the ability to decide, locally, the discount (rates and cap) tenants receive. Broad guidelines, issued by central government could also ensure there are sufficient funds from Right to Buy sales to build new homes.

Question 2 - Do you agree that information currently provided to prospective Right to Buy purchasers is sufficient? If not, what else should be included?

Our view is that the leaflets issued by the CLG namely, "Your Right to Buy your home" and "Thinking of buying a council flat", are very informative and helpful. They convey what it is current in terms of the existing Right to Buy scheme very well. Our experience is that existing literature is easy to understand and reader friendly.

Better promotion of the Right to Buy scheme could be achieved by the regular publishing of articles in tenants newsletters. Such promotions could be made a specific requirement and contained within the emerging regulatory service standards.

Question 3 - Are there further steps which could be taken to ensure that tenants who purchase under Right to Buy know about and understand the implications of home ownership, including their obligations on becoming a leaseholder?

In our view more needs to be undertaken to assist leaseholders in recognising the implications of home ownership. This could be achieved by setting specific requirements within a regulatory standard for social housing providers which ensures leaseholders are fully supported in developing their understanding of becoming a leaseholder.

Question 4 - We would welcome evidenced assessments of the impact on rural affordable housing of the proposed changes to Right to Buy discounts?

If the proposed increase in discount leads to an increase in take up of Right to Buy in rural areas, we believe, it will lead to a net reduction in availability of social housing in such areas. We currently have approximately 1300 council housing properties which we consider to be in a rural setting. We would welcome the current restrictions on Right to Buy properties continuing, namely:

- That the property can only be resold to someone who has been living or working locally for at least three years; or

- That if the owner wishes to resell within 10 years of the Right to Buy sale, they must first offer the property to the original social landlord.

Our suggestion is to enhance the existing restrictions on resale. For example: Increasing the living or working locally restrictions period from 3 to 5 years; and increasing reselling period restriction from 10 to 15 years where the seller must first offer the property to the original social landlord.

Question 5 - We would welcome your views on the proposals that a part of the Right to Buy receipts should be used to pay down the housing debt supportable from the lost income from these additional sales?

We welcome the proposal that part of the Right to Buy receipt should be used to pay down the housing debt supportable from the lost income from these additional sales.

We would welcome a formula that identifies the actual housing debt supportable from the lost income from each additional sale at the time/date the sale takes place.

Question 6 - What proportion of Right to Buy applications are subsequently withdrawn in your area?

In response to the above question Table 1 below provides data in relation to Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services.

Table 1:

Year	New Right to Buy applications received.	Total no. of Right to Buy applications received and subsequently withdrawn in the financial year	Total no. of Right to Buy applications subsequently withdrawn in the financial year
2008/09	36	23	(41)
2009/10	22	10	(16)
2010/11	31	14	(16)
April 2011 to 12th January 2012	25	9	(16)

Source: Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services data at January 2012.

Note: Please note that the figures in () are the total recorded against each year and not the actual number of applications received and withdrawn in the respective years. The reason for the difference is that some applications received in a financial year were withdrawn in the next financial year.

Question 7 - What costs are included in managing aborted applications?

Officer time/costs and associated administration costs; legal costs; and surveying costs.

Question 8 - What sources of funding have you used for improvement works in your area?

Taunton Deane Borough Council has used internal revenue contributions to fund capital expenditure through direct revenue funding (DRF), major repairs allowance and borrowings.

Question 9 - We would welcome views on the proposed approach to projected receipts?

Taunton Deane Borough Council welcomes the proposal to protect the projected receipts for the council and central government.

Question 10 - We would welcome any information councils can provide on the use of Buyback properties. We would also welcome views on this proposal?

Although property Buyback is not well used at Taunton Deane Borough Council, we consider, in the new financial era, a decision not to continue to allow the use of receipts for this purpose could restrict our strategic options. We would want to avoid any such restriction.

Question 11 - Do you have any comments on the proposals to not amend section 131 of the Housing Act 1995?

We support the proposal not to make amendments to section 131 of the Housing Act 1995.

Question 12 - We would welcome views on the calculation of allowable deductions?

We would welcome a locally defined calculation of allowable deductions that identifies the actual transaction and administration costs incurred on all sales/withdrawals at the time/date the sales/withdrawals take place.

Question 13 - Which model for delivery of replacement housing do you consider the most appropriate, and why?

The replacement model we would prefer is the 'Local model'. It is important that all of the receipt raised is retained by the council, to enable the council to quickly invest in affordable housing locally. Taunton Deane Borough Council currently has in excess of 3,400 'active applicants' registered on its Choice Based Lettings Scheme who are waiting for an affordable home in the area.

Question 14 - How can housing associations and councils be further encouraged to use receipts from Preserved Right to Buy sales to support provision of replacement homes?

No comment.

Question 15 - If there are any exceptions where administration and debt cost cannot be covered, please provide details?

No comment.

Question 16 - Based on experience, are you able to provide any evidence on the likely percentage of Right to Buy purchasers on Housing Benefit?

Table 2 below provides data in relation to Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services where Right to Buy purchasers have been or have not been in receipt of housing benefit.

Table 2:

Year	No. of Right to Buy sales.	No. of purchasers in receipt of Housing Benefit.	% of Right to Buy purchasers in receipt of Housing Benefit.
2008/09	6	Nil	Nil
2009/10	7	1	14%
2010/11	11	3	27%

Source: Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services data; January 2012.

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 23 January 2012

Housing Estates Team Anti-Social Behaviour Performance – Information Report

Report of the Housing Estates Manager – Paul Hadley

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

1.0 Executive Summary

This report provides the members of the Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) with information on performance of the Housing Estates Team on tackling and dealing with Anti-social Behaviour. This is an information report only.

2.0 Background

Two estates officers were employed in December 2010 to focus on tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB), a direct result of the recommendations made in the Corporate Scrutiny Report of 29th July 2010.

Housing Services aims to ensure that tenants and other residents live peacefully within their own homes and communities. The service recognises that failure to tackle anti social behaviour effectively blights the quality of life of those people living with anti social behaviour and can damage communities.

3.0 Performance Data

A summary of the key performance activities conducted by the Housing Estates team for the 12 months between December 2010 and December 2011 can be found at Appendix 1 this will outline successes, service improvements and plans for future development.

4.0 Legal Comments

There are no legal issues arising from this report.

5.0 Links to Corporate Aims

The delivery of good anti social behaviour services can contribute positively to the following council aims: Tackling Deprivation and Sustainable Community Development; Regeneration; and Affordable Housing and Climate change.

6.0 Environmental and Community Safety Implications

All of the anti social behaviour cases/investigations received by the Housing Estates Team can have environmental or community safety implications, all cases are managed by completion of a risk assessment.

7.0 Equalities Impact

Any equalities impacts will be considered as part of the receipt of initial complaint.

8.0 Risk Management

Risk assessments will be completed for any significant operational changes that are implemented from a review of operational processes.

9.0 Partnership Implications

There are no specific implications for partners in relation to this report.

10.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Tenant Services Management Board:

- Note this information report.

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**Appendix 1 to
Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)
Performance Information Report
23 January 2012**

TAUNTON DEANE BOROUGH COUNCIL

A SUMMARY OF WORK ACTIVITY DECEMBER 2010 – DECEMBER 2011

The summary of work activity below is divided into specific subject areas for ease of reading. The items are not set in any chronology but provide a summary of work activity across the full spectrum of the service.

WORK ACTIVITY

In the last 12 months the officers have investigated in excess of 215 complaints of anti-social behaviour within our housing stock.

Verbal Abuse and Harassment This is the main reason for people reporting ASB. There has been an increase of 27% (comparison of reports between 2010 and 2011) in the reporting of verbal abuse and harassment. We believe that this increased reporting is due to victims having the confidence to report incidents knowing that they will be listened to and that action will be taken to resolve their complaints.

Noise Nuisance This is the 2nd most frequent reason for reporting ASB. The officers have improved liaison with our colleagues in the Environmental Health Team to improve the overall performance of both teams in tackling this type of nuisance.

Drug Activity Reporting The 3rd most frequent reason why people report ASB. We have seen a 111%(comparison of reports between 2010 and 2011) increase in the reporting of drug activity in the last year. In order to tackle this we work closely with the police to prevent and put a stop to drug activity on our housing estates. Actions taken in these cases have ranged from Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, the implementation of a Local Lettings Plan, Premises Closure Orders, initiating possession proceedings etc. Tackling this type of ASB remains a high priority for both Housing Services and the police.

Hate Incidents There has been no increase in the reporting of hate related incidents.

Garden Nuisance In the last 12 months there has been approximately a 50% reduction in the number of cases related to garden nuisance.

The Colour tables on the final page of this appendix show a breakdown of cases and month by month breakdown of satisfaction levels.

CHARTERED INSTITUTE OF HOUSING CRITICAL FRIEND REVIEW

We have recently completed a “Critical Friend Review” of our service with the Chartered Institute of Housing ASB Team. The review took the form of a discussion with officers to identify areas where service improvements can be made. An action plan has been produced, which focuses on improving our service.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

Service Information Posters These have been produced and located in council offices to provide information on how to access the service.

Group Voicemail A messaging service has been set up to answer reports that service users were having difficulty reporting incidents to officers. When officers return to the office any calls that have not been answered are sent to them via email for action.

Service Email A service email account has been set up and is included on all publications to allow easier reporting. The account is accessed by both ASB officers and their line manager to ensure that casework is not missed whilst individuals are away from work.

ASB Module for Academy IT System An ASB module has been procured for the Academy Housing database. This will improve case management and reduce paperwork. When used with the work management tool it will allow improved workload management and scrutiny.

Case Information for Housing Briefing Officers provide a report to the members of Housing Briefing – councillors, tenants and officers - on all high priority cases on a monthly basis.

Annual Work Review Deane Housing News (DHN) The first of the annual reviews of the teams work has been included in the next edition of DHN which is published at the end of January. It is intended that this will remain a feature to allow us to inform our tenants what is happening with the service.

Case Reporting Recording Reviewed and re-written by officers to streamline the reporting process for complainants. A Risk Assessment has been introduced to allow the receiving officer to make a clearer judgement on the severity of the case to ensure that support and advice are tailored to the specific situation and the complainants needs.

Human Rights Justification Exercise This is an area of work that was completed to ensure that the team considers human rights issues before any decisions to take legal action are considered particularly where vulnerable perpetrators or victims are involved. It serves as a record of the questions/justification asked by the team prior to the decision to take action is made. This exercise will prevent/reduce the occasions when Human Rights Legislation can be used as a defence against possession claims or even prescriptive action being taken by the council.

Community Harm Statement This is used to collate information prior to taking action against a perpetrator to ensure that all relevant information regarding a particular case is available. It contains details of actions/comments made by partner/involved agencies such as the police, mental health team, school, family, elected members and community. This information can then used to show the impact the ASB is having on not just the victim but the community as a whole. It also allows evidence from partner agencies to be introduced to proceedings.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

ASB Strategy This is currently under review, work is being completed to update the strategy.

ASB Policy This was reviewed and amended to ensure that it remains fit for purpose.

Domestic Violence Policy A draft policy covering this area of work will be presented to the Tenant Services Management Board for initial approval on 23rd January 2012.

Respect Charter In the summer of 2011 in order to show our commitment to provide a high quality ASB service we signed up to the Respect Charter. Its purpose is to improve ASB services, and consists of seven core commitments these are:

1. Demonstrating leadership and strategic commitment
2. Providing an accessible and accountable service
3. Taking swift action to protect communities
4. Adopting a supportive approach to working with victims and witnesses
5. Encouraging individual and community responsibility
6. Having a clear focus on prevention and early intervention
7. Ensuring a value for money approach is embedded in the service

These commitments are supported by a series of building blocks based on sector good practice.

SERVICE STANDARDS

ASB and Hate Crime Service Standard This has been produced in conjunction with the tenants groups to ensure that all service users know what to expect from the team when they report an incident of ASB. A copy of the standard is provided to every complainant when they first report ASB.

Victim & Witness Support Standard The standard has been produced in partnership with Victim Support and tenant groups. A copy is provided for all victims of ASB/Crime that is reported to the housing service. It provides information on support and assistance available to victims of ASB or crime.

Domestic Violence Standard The draft standard has been produced for Tenant Services Management Board initial approval on 23rd January 2012.

PARTNERSHIP WORKING

The team has and are continuing to develop strong links with our partner agencies. (Police, Social Services, other housing providers).

Avon & Somerset Constabulary Officers have recently accompanied police officers when they have executed search warrants at our properties. These activities have resulted in the recovery of drugs and stolen property. In addition to these searches our officers have worked closely with the police in obtaining "closure orders" at two of our properties where strong evidence has shown that drug activity was present.

Mental Health Team When investigating cases where the victim or the perpetrator may have mental health issues both officers have called or attended multi agency meetings to discuss with partners how best to proceed with an investigation. This is particularly important where mental health issues are present.

Social Services Close liaison with Social Services is particularly important. This is especially the case where young children or persons at risk may be affected by the ASB.

PERSONAL/TEAM DEVELOPMENT

Personal and team development is critical if service provision is to be maintained to an acceptable standard. Since joining the council both new officers have completed a course of professional development with the Chartered Institute of Housing. Additionally the manager and officers have attended training workshops and seminars to improve knowledge and provide networking opportunities with other providers.

FUTURE PLANS

Without a forward plan the service will very quickly become outdated and potentially not fit for purpose. The team are currently working on a number of projects, which will ensure the service remains effective now and in the future, these are:

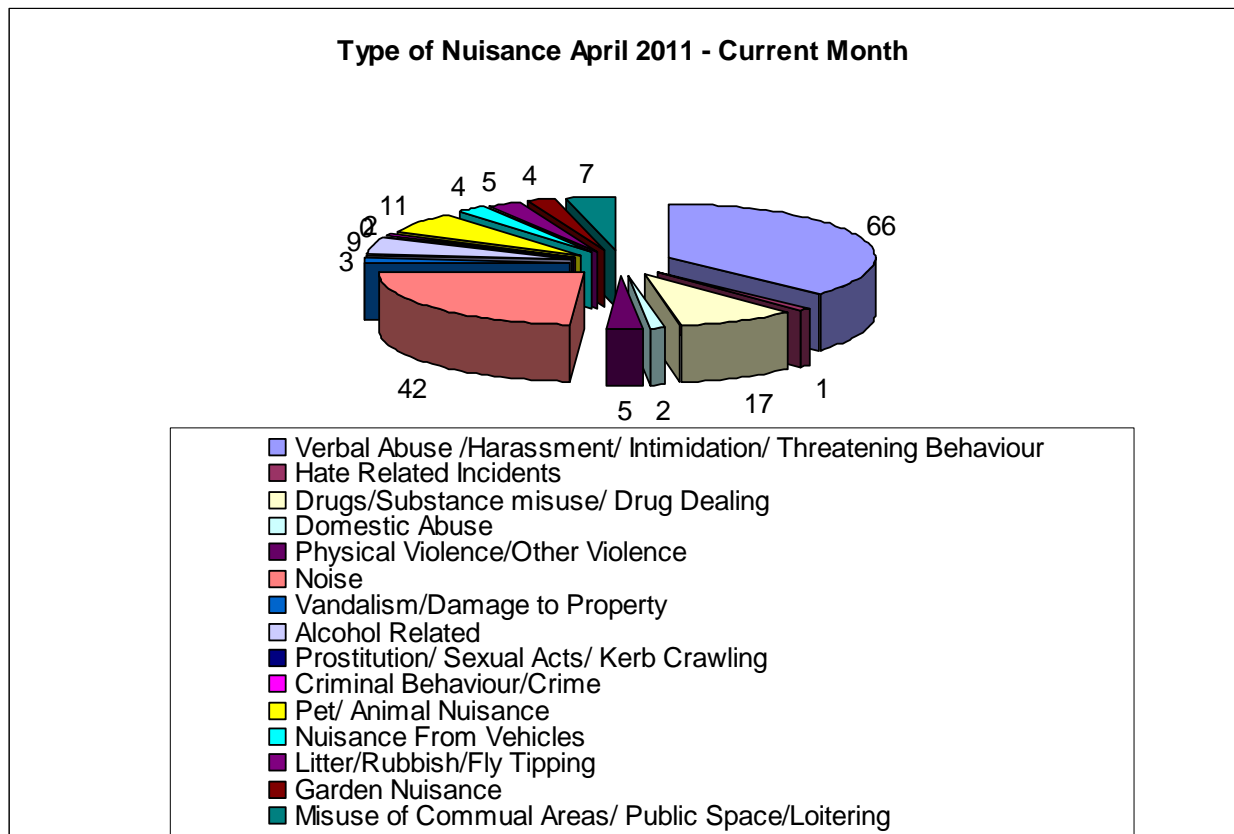
Webstorm This is a police database that records all contacts with the Avon and Somerset Constabulary. Controlled access to this database has been requested and is being considered by the police.

Information Sharing We recognise that we cannot provide an effective service on our own, we have good information sharing protocols in place with the police but we are seeking to improve these and wish to establish a broader protocol with other housing providers in the area. As a catalyst for this improved information sharing we intend to hold a "Get to know you" event and to invite other partner agencies from the area to attend.

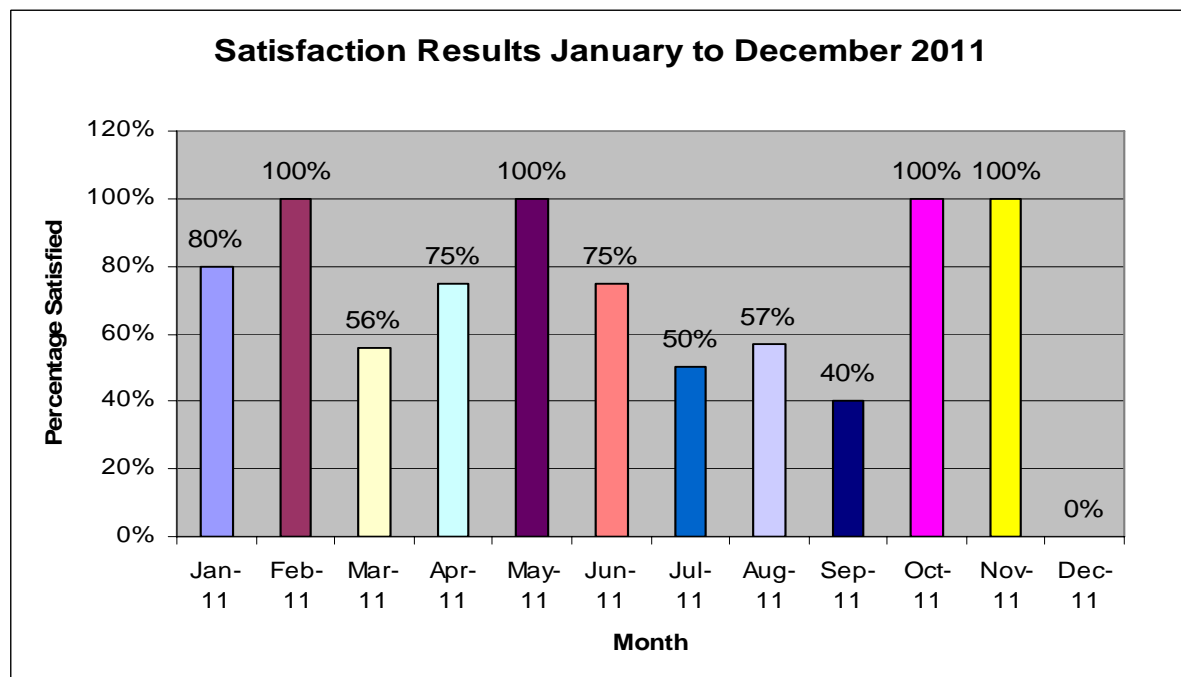
Local Lettings Plan (LLP) We are currently working on an LLP for areas within the Halcon estate to tackle problems in certain locations.

This has been a very busy year for all those involved in providing the ASB service. Without the commitment of all involved the service would not be in the healthy position we find it in today. Both officers are proactively investigating new cases on a daily basis. They both have a full work load but continue to seek "win-win" resolutions to their cases getting the best result possible for Housing Services and those affected by ASB.

The table below provides a breakdown of cases by type and number received in the period April 2011 to January 2012.



The table below provides a month by month breakdown of satisfaction of those complainants who have had their case closed, the performance target for ASB satisfaction for the year 2011/12 is 66.6%. The team has achieved an average satisfaction result of 68.00% up the end of November 2011 (figures for December were not available at the time of this report):



Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 23 January 2012

Council Housing Voids – Information Report

Report of the Housing Estates Manager – Paul Hadley

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

1.0 Executive Summary

This report provides the members of the TSMB with information on void property performance in relation to council owned housing stock. This is an information report only.

2.0 Background

This report provides details of voids management and performance following the advice and assistance visit conducted by the Audit Commission in 2009. The commission identified a number of strengths and areas for improvement during their audit. The report was a main driver for the review of internal TDBC operational processes which was conducted in March 2011.

Following the review a number of changes were implemented as part of a pilot to improve void performance.

The Housing Estates Team was restructured. It remains organised in two teams but is now structured so that one team consists of a manager and eight estates officers who are responsible for managing a particular geographic patch of properties. The second team consists of a manager, the two estates officers who focus on anti social behaviour, four estates assistants, one void assistant and the two void officers.

A surveying team of four officers was set up in early 2011 within the Property Services Team. The team conducts a physical inspection of each void property, prepare a works schedule and instruct contractors, and oversee the void works until satisfactory completion. The property is then re-let by the estates team.

3.0 Performance Data

Housing Services have been conducting benchmarking of void and re-let performance against other providers in our region using the Housemark benchmarking club, since late 2010. The tables below show a comparison of performance between Quarter 1 to Quarter 3 of 2011/12 and indicates progress made in the specific areas of performance. Additionally they provide information on the number of re-lets completed during same period.

Quarter 1 2011/12 (Apr – Jun 2011)

Description	Performance	Rating
Average re-let time (calendar days)	31.76	3 rd quartile
Percentage of properties accepted on the first offer	70.18%	Top quartile
Total number of re-lets in quarter	122	

Quarter 2 2011/12 (Jul – Sep 2011)

Description	Performance	Rating
Average re-let time (calendar days)	25.76	2 nd quartile
Percentage of properties accepted on the first offer	69.59%	2 nd quartile
Total number of re-lets in quarter	134	

Quarter 3 2011/12 (Oct – Dec 2011)

Description	Performance	Rating
Average re-let time (calendar days)	28.24	** quartile
Percentage of properties accepted on the first offer	75.00%	** quartile
Total number of re-lets in quarter	136	

Note: ** Figures are unavailable at time of preparing report

The reduction in performance for average re-lets times in Quarter 3 compared to Quarter 2 is associated with the re-let of two specific properties. One proved hard to re-let (Void on 17/10/11 – re-let 19/12/11 on 7th formal offer) and the second was a property that had been recovered from squatters.

The continued improvement in properties being accepted on first offer means that properties are being let more quickly and rental loss to the council is being reduced as fewer properties are having to be offered to more than one applicant.

Total number of re-lets in year to end of quarter 3 (31/12/2011) is 392 this represents an increase of 115 re-lets when compared to the same period in the previous year. This figure confirms that the period has been both challenging and very busy for the small voids team and other officers working on re-letting the council's social housing stock.

4.0 Finance Comments

Expenditure on the preparation of void properties for re-let is controlled by the property services and monitored and controlled by Tim Haynes – Property Services Manager.

5.0 Legal Comments

There are no legal issues arising from this report.

6.0 Links to Corporate Aims

Good voids management performance can contribute positively to the following council aims: Tackling Deprivation and Sustainable Community Development; Regeneration; and Affordable Housing and Climate Change.

7.0 Environmental and Community Safety Implications

Void properties that are left empty for a long period of time can negatively affect the local environment. Void properties can be a magnet for attracting crime and anti-social behaviour and so need to be effectively managed.

8.0 Equalities Impact

There are no specific equalities impacts from this report.

9.0 Risk Management

Risk assessments will be completed for any significant operational changes that are implemented from any review of operational processes.

10.0 Partnership Implications

There are no specific implications for partners in relation to this report.

11.0 Recommendations

It is recommended that the Tenant Services Management Board:

- Note this information report.

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Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board – 23 January 2012

Domestic Abuse Policy Domestic Abuse Service Standard Witness Support Policy

Report of the Estate Officer

Executive Summary

This report has been produced to propose the new Domestic Abuse Policy, Domestic Abuse Service Standard, and Witness Support Policy for Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services.

It outlines the strategic overview that tenants in council housing can expect from Housing Services on managing Domestic Abuse and Witness Support.

It provides details of the specific elements of the service.

It will show how and what the Housing Services can and will deal with in relation to Domestic Abuse and Witness Support that is caused by council tenants or visitors.

The Policy is a living document and will be reviewed on a regular basis to reflect changes in legislation and people's behaviour. It also will link into the revised Anti Social Behaviour Policy that has recently been agreed.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

Housing Services priority is to improve the quality of life for people and communities now and in the future. Part of that vision is we are committed to being responsive to the needs of our tenants and to ensuring that all our tenants can access our services easily and on equal terms. Through these policies we can ensure that all staff in housing services adopt a common approach to giving advice, guidance and assistance to tenants.

2.0 Background to this report

Housing services are responsible for ensuring tenants comply with their tenancy agreement and do not behave in an anti social manner within our communities. The service house's some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in our society and we must show support to them.

Our policies will show to tenants the minimum standard they can expect from Housing Services in relation to the support they can receive in relation to the

reporting of Domestic Abuse and the support for Witnesses of Anti Social Behaviour.

We will be clear about

- What our responses will be to their report
- What support Housing Services can give if you are a witness to Anti Social Behaviour or a victim of Domestic Abuse.

3.0 Aim of the Policies

To meet the requirements of the Domestic Abuse, Witness Support policies, and Domestic Abuse Service Standard. To give tenants clear information on what they can expect from Housing Services, and the support and assistance available to them.

4.0 Approximate Costs

The cost of implementing this policies will be met within budgets. It is the intention that the polices will be incorporated into the Housing Services sharepoint website that will shortly be available for all tenants and staff

5.0 Impact on Tenants

Tenants will be better informed on what to expect from Housing Services and what is expected of them and the implications of their behaviour.

6.0 Equalities Impact

Any equalities impacts will be considered as part of the receipt of initial complaint.

7.0 Risk Management

Any equalities impacts will be considered as part of the receipt of initial complaint.

8.0 Diversity

Some people may need specific help to fully access the policies. Additionally information may be required in different formats:

- Large Font
- Audio Version
- Different Languages
- Website page

9.0 Timetable

23rd January 2012 – Draft Policies and standard reviewed by Tenant Services Management Board implemented with immediate effect if approved.

1st February 2012- Incorporate policy onto sharepoint website

10.0 Outcomes

The outcomes that can be expected from the implementation of these policies are:

- Improved information to tenants on the Housing services.
- Tenants more aware of services provided by Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services.

11.0 Information Plan

When implemented all tenants will be informed of the policies by an item posted on the Housing Website and providing information in the next edition of Deane Housing News.

12.0 Recommendation

We recommend that the Tenant Services Management Board approve:

- Witness Support Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Domestic Abuse Service Standard

Once approval is obtained policies will be forwarded to Councillor Jean Adkins the portfolio holder for affirmation.

13.0 Contact Officers:

Steven Clarke, Estates Officer, 01823 356332 Ext 2693,
<mailto:s. Clarke@tauntondeane.gov.uk>

Domestic Abuse Policy

Definition of Domestic Abuse

Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services uses the Home Office's definition of domestic abuse:

"Any violence between current and former partners in an intimate relationship, wherever and whenever the violence occurs. The violence may include physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse".

Source

(Home Office Multi-agency Guidance for Addressing Domestic Violence 2000)

Housing Services recognises that domestic violence occurs across society regardless of age, gender, race, sexuality, wealth and geography.

It involves abuses of power and controlling behaviours:

- Physical behaviours such as assault, indecent assault, rape, destruction of property and threats.
- Non-physical behaviours such as destructive criticism, pressure tactics, belittling, breaking trust, isolation, oppressive control of finances and harassment.

The physical manifestations of domestic abuse are criminal offences; the nonphysical forms may also amount to offences, under the Protection from Harassment Act. (Home Office Multi-agency Guidance for Addressing Domestic Violence 2000)

Domestic violence impacts upon children, the whole family and the community.

The frequency and/or severity of abuse often escalates over time, sometimes only ending with the death of the victim.

Research shows that domestic violence:

- Claims 150 lives each year (79% women, 21% men)
- Accounts for almost a fifth of all violent crime
- Has more repeat victims than any other crime (on average there will be 35 assaults before a victim calls the police)

Domestic violence impacts on the health and welfare of children and young people.

Children are often aware of what's happening and they are likely to be affected by the fear, distress and disruption to their lives. There is also an overlap between abuse of women and abuse of children. Where the safety and welfare of children are a concern Housing Services will deal with it in

accordance with Taunton Deane Borough Council's Child Protection policy (currently being updated).

Why do we have a Domestic Abuse Policy?

To respond to our tenants needs

Housing Services priority is to improve the quality of life for tenants and communities now and in the future. Part of that vision is we are committed to being responsive to the needs of our tenants and to ensuring that all our tenants can access our services easily and on equal terms. Domestic Abuse often has consequences for the housing situation of those affected and they will therefore turn to Housing Services for help. Through this policy we can ensure that all staff in Housing Services adopt a common approach to giving advice, guidance and assistance to tenants.

Work effectively in partnerships

Domestic Abuse is a complex issue – it affects not only housing issues, but also finances, children etc. People from ethnic minority groups, elderly people, people with disabilities, mental health problems, drug or alcohol dependency might have special needs. It is therefore essential that we work together with other agencies where appropriate.

Legal obligations/statutory duties

The council has statutory duties:

- To act in accordance with the European Convention of Human Rights (Human Rights Act 1998, particularly Articles 2 and 8)
- To provide for the well being of its citizens (Local Government Act 2000) to do all it reasonably can to prevent crime and disorder in its area (Crime and Disorder Act 1998)
- To assist people fleeing domestic violence with finding suitable accommodation (Part VII of the 1996 Housing Act)
- To secure alternative accommodation for those who are accepted as homeless through domestic violence (Part VII the Housing Act 1996)
- To protect children and young people (Children Act 1989, amended by Children's act 2008)

The list is not definitive and has been reviewed by the Legal Services

Policy Statement

Housing Services believe

- That every person has a right to be safe from fear and abuse.
- That domestic abuse is unacceptable and should not be tolerated.
- That violence in relationships is an abuse of power as well as likely to be a criminal offence.
- Anyone experiencing domestic abuse should be supported and protected from further abuse.

Housing Services will where appropriate

- Provide a supportive and enabling environment that encourages people to report domestic abuse.
- Provide information and advice to increase the safety of those experiencing domestic abuse.
- As a landlord take action against perpetrators who are tenants, family members or visitors where possible.
- Put the customer's safety first and ensure confidentiality.
- Respect the choices of the tenant.
- Explore possible options for survivors of domestic violence, such as added security to their homes if they wish to stay put, or consider re-housing if they do not wish to stay in their homes.
- Give advice as to how to apply for temporary accommodation where necessary to those fleeing domestic abuse.
- Signpost survivors to relevant agencies and positively support action against alleged perpetrators.
- Provide training for all staff on domestic abuse issues.
- Provide support to housing staff that work with people experiencing domestic abuse.

Key Principles

We will adopt a 'victim centred' approach to people experiencing domestic violence. Our aim is to empower them by advising them of their options and giving guidance so they can make their own decisions.

Safety and confidentiality are paramount. Taunton Deane Borough Council will only involve other agencies or divulge information with the consent of the customer, unless required to do so by law or unless that information is necessary for the protection of people at risk.

Service provision – what customers can expect

- We will arrange for you to speak to a member of staff in private and in a safe environment.
- If possible we will arrange for you to speak to a member of staff who is of the same sex or ethnic origin if you feel more comfortable with this.
- If required we will arrange for an interpreter or signer. We will always use a professional interpreter or signer.
- We will listen to you and give you time to explain your situation.
- We will advise you of your options and let you make your own decisions.
- We will advise you on how to apply for temporary accommodation.
- Where we cannot help we will refer you to other agencies.

Reviewing policy

This policy will be reviewed every two years. It will also be reviewed if there is a change in legislation.

Literature List

Domestic Violence: Break the chain multi-agency guidance for addressing domestic

Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services

violence (Home Office)

Relationship breakdown: A guide for social landlords (DETR)

British Crime Survey 2002/03

The provision of accommodation and support for households experiencing domestic violence in England (ODPM 2002)

Safety and Justice: The Government's Proposals on Domestic Violence (Home Office)

Homelessness – Code of Guidance for Local Authorities (ODPM 2002)

Reducing domestic violence ...what works? Accommodation provision (Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, Home Office Research 2002)

Reducing domestic violence ...what works? Meeting the needs of children (Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, Home Office Research 2002)

Loves me, loves me not (leaflet published by Home Office 2002)

www.crimereduction.gov.uk/dv01.htm

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/crime/domesticviolence/index.html

Domestic Abuse Service Standard

This leaflet explains what you can do if you are experiencing domestic abuse.

Housing Services know that domestic abuse can ruin lives and we are committed to:

- Supporting anyone suffering from domestic abuse
- To provide you with a safe and secure place to live.
- To support and advise you if you are suffering from domestic abuse.
- To work with you to help you to find the best solution.

Our promise to you:

We are fully committed to dealing with any issues relating to domestic abuse
We will:

- Not tolerate domestic abuse
- Provide advice and support to help you find a safe and secure place for you to live and we will support you if you are suffering from domestic abuse
- Work with you, and with other agencies, to deal with the problem; and
- Promote equal opportunities and value diversity (people's differences) to make sure that you get the right services.

What is domestic abuse?

Domestic abuse means threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between adults who are partners or family members. It affects straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and transexual relationships. We are committed to supporting all victims of domestic abuse. There are different types of domestic abuse, including physical, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional abuse, and being cut off from your family and friends.

Domestic abuse is one person taking control of another and using power over them. Children are affected by domestic abuse in the home, either by seeing abuse or violence, or by being abused themselves (child abuse). If this happens it becomes a child protection issue and must be reported to the police.

We take all domestic abuse reports seriously and we are committed to providing a sensitive and private service to anyone who asks us for help.

What can you do?

You can help us tackle domestic violence and make your community safer by reporting domestic abuse to us, and the police.

Speak to us

Don't suffer in silence – we're here to help you, we will speak to you in a sensitive way and agree what action we are going to take. You can find our contact details on this leaflet.

Help us to help you

We are committed to tackling domestic abuse. If you are a victim, we have a better chance of helping you if you give us the information we need to support the police and other agencies to take action. If it is safe for you to do so, you should keep a written account of all incidents so agencies have a record of everything that has happened.

Phone the police

You can contact the police if you are a victim of domestic abuse. Domestic abuse can be a criminal offence so the police will investigate and offer you advice and support.

Get legal advice

We recommend that you get your own legal advice. This is particularly important for housing advice if you have a joint tenancy, with the person who is abusing you.

More help and advice

Taunton Deane borough Council

Both in and out of hours.....01823 356356
ASB officers Voicemail.....01823 356322

Citizens Advice Bureau.....01823 282235

Police

Unless it is an emergency, you should call the Avon and Somerset Police on **101** at any time.

In an emergency (a crime is happening, someone suspected of a crime is nearby, someone is injured, you are being threatened or you are in danger) call **999**.

If it's not an emergency, you can also contact your local neighbourhood police team at www.avonandsomerset.police.uk.

You can also report a crime to the police on their website at <https://www.avonandsomerset.police.uk/contact/crime-reporting/crime-report.aspx>

Victim Support

Phone: **0845 30 30 900**

Typetalk users: **18001 0845 30 30 900**

(To keep your number private, press **141** before you dial the number).

Website: www.victimsupport.org.uk

Email: supportline@victimsupport.org.uk

National Domestic Violence helpline

A national helpline which is available every day of the year.

Phone: **0800 2000 247**

Refuge – women and children victims

The national charity for women and children experiencing domestic violence.

Website: www.refuge.org.uk

Women's Aid – female victims

Website: <http://womensaid.org.uk>

Rights of women – female victims and legal advice

Website: www.rightsofwomen.org.uk

MALE – male victims

Phone: 0808 801 0327

Website: www.mensadvice.org.uk

Broken Rainbow National Helpline - LGBT

Provides services to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people who are experiencing domestic abuse and violence.

Phone: 0300 999 5428 (Opening hours Monday and Thursday 2pm to 8pm, Wednesdays 10am to 1pm)

Website: www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

ChildLine

Information and advice for children and young people affected by domestic abuse and violence.

Phone: 0800 11 11

Website: www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC

Information and advice if you are worried about a child or young person Phone: 0808 800 5000

Website: www.nspcc.org.uk

Forced Marriage Unit

Information for if you are worried that you might be forced into marriage or are worried about a friend or relative.

Phone: 020 7008 0151

Website: http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/CrimeJusticeAndTheLaw/VictimsOfCrime/DG_4016878

Co-ordinated Action Against Domestic Abuse (CAADA)

Website: www.caada.org.uk

Concerned about your own abusive behaviour?

RESPECT phone line: 0845 122 8609

Website: www.respectphoneline.org.uk

You can phone this number if you are worried about your own abusive behaviour, or you are a professional or victim looking for help for an abuser

Witness Support Policy

This Policy explains what support you can expect from Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services if you are a victim of or witness to Anti-Social Behaviour.

A Witness is

A person who can give a firsthand account of something seen, heard, or experienced. A person who furnishes evidence, or is called on to testify before a court.

A Victim is:

A person, who suffers from some adverse circumstance, is harmed or made to suffer from an act.

Housing Services recognises that one of the biggest problems it experiences in tackling Anti-Social Behaviour in our communities is encouraging people to act as witnesses. Witnesses are crucial to tackling Anti-Social Behaviour whether they are victims of Anti-Social Behaviour directed against them specifically, or residents who witness Anti-Social Behaviour directed at the community.

The direct evidence available from a witness of Anti-Social Behaviour is of a higher quality than hearsay or professional witness statements and can cover more incidents than a surveillance operation. It demonstrates the true distress and annoyance of Anti-Social Behaviour and it shows how Anti-Social Behaviour damages our communities.

We are aware of the distress and fear that Anti-Social Behaviour can cause. Providing you with support when you report incidents is an extremely important part of our approach for dealing with these issues. Witnesses may need to be supported the whole length of the witness pathway from report, to trial, remedy and beyond. This policy states how we will support victims and witnesses of Anti-Social Behaviour once they report an incident to us.

Housing Services aim is to:

- To support all victims and witnesses of Anti-Social Behaviour in our communities.
- Record your complaint on the Housing Services database which records complaints of Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Provide you with advice on how to complete incident diaries and regularly collect these diaries from you.
- Speak with other members of the community (with your consent) to see if they are experiencing similar problems.
- Give you advice about legal action and being a witness in court.
- Notify relevant support agencies such as Victim Support.

Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services

- Take strong enforcement action where appropriate against any of our tenants, family or visitors who are responsible for the harassment or intimidation of witnesses.
- Work with other agencies such as the Police to take action against anyone responsible for the harassment or intimidation of our witnesses.
- Consider re-housing for our victims and witnesses who suffer from serious intimidation and harassment.

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 23 January 2012 at 6pm in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr Etherington (Chairman)
Mr Edwards (Vice- Chairman)
Councillor Bowrah, Councillor Brooks, Mrs Bunn, Mrs Drage, Mr Galpin, Mrs Hegarty, Mr Hellier and Mrs Marshall.

Officers: James Barrah (Community Services Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer), Phil Webb (Housing Property Services Manager) and Keith Wiggins (Democratic Services Officer).

Others: Mrs Beryl Edwards and Nigel Stuart-Thorn

(The meeting commenced at 6.05pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies: Mrs Urquhart

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 19 December 2011 were taken as read and signed.

3. Public Question Time

Questions and a statement were received in writing from Mr Martin Aldred, as Chairman of the Halcon North Tenants and Residents Association.

Mr Aldred requested advice on who to contact regarding an empty property in Halcon and on membership of the Board and received replies.

Replies were promised to his further questions and statement on the Halcon North regeneration project.

4. Declaration of Interests

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

- Mrs Bunn
- Mrs Drage
- Mr Edwards
- Mr Etherington
- Mr Galpin

- Mrs Hegarty
- Mr Hellier
- Mrs Marshall
- Councillor Brooks

Councillor Bowrah declared a personal interest as a family member was a Council house tenant. Councillor Brooks declared a personal interest as family members were Council house tenants.

5. Supported Housing Service Development Action Plan 2012

Considered report previously circulated regarding an action plan to address the views and concerns of residents in supported housing.

The Supported Housing Manager explained the action plan was as a direct result of the consultation process over the past year to enable tenants to get involved in the development of housing related support services.

Members discussed travel claims and the payment of expenses.

Resolved to note the content of the report and the method for the payment of expenses.

6. Housing Revenue Account Reform Project Dashboard

Considered project progress dashboard report previously circulated, concerning planned reforms to council housing finance in England and the management of those changes by the Council.

The project overall remained on track.

Resolved to note the dashboard report.

7. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012 – 2042

The Community Services Manager explained that the draft HRA Business Plan had been approved but the Council still awaited final figures from Government that would determine the final budget requirements and allow the business plan to be completed.

The modelling for the business plan now showed lower interest rates and a potential to repay the required new borrowing by year fifteen of the plan.

This had allowed a revision to the plan to provide a small fund to build two or three new homes each year on existing council land – and retain ownership within the HRA.

During the discussion of this item, members of the board made the following comments and asked questions. Responses are shown in italics:

- What rent increases were planned after 2014? *The Business Plan assumptions were that rents would increase by RPI + ½% after 20014/15;*
- Exeter City Council had been building new Council homes so why hadn't Taunton Deane? *Finance was the reason. If the council had borrowed money to build new homes then "right to buy" would leave the council with the loan repayments but only receiving one quarter of the sale proceeds;*
- Any new Council homes should be built to passive housing standards.

Resolved to note the progress towards finalising the business plan and support the principal of the small "home building" fund.

8. Consultation: Reinvigorating the Right to Buy and one for one replacement

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a draft response to the Government consultation on its proposals to increase the cap on Right to Buy discounts and options for meeting the commitment to ensure that every additional home sold under Right to Buy was replaced with a new home for Affordable Rent.

The proposals for tenants related to right to buy entitlement, discount level and cap. The proposals for councils covered costs of the system, methods for distribution of receipts and approach to provision of affordable homes.

Resolved to note the report and support the suggested responses to the consultation. .

9. Housing Estates Team Anti-Social Behaviour Performance

Considered report previously circulated, concerning performance of the Housing Estates Team on tackling and dealing with Anti-social Behaviour.

Housing Services aimed to ensure that tenants and other residents live peacefully within their own homes and communities. The service recognised that failure to tackle anti social behaviour effectively blighted the quality of life of those people living with anti social behaviour and can damage communities. Two estates officers had been employed in December 2010 to focus on tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB).

The Housing Estates Manager explained that the two new officers were now part of “circle of information” and had helped create the confidence that those complaining about anti social behaviour would be listened to.

A new voicemail service had recently been introduced to allow problems to be reported out of hours. Members discussed concerns that although anti social behaviour had reduced in some parts of Taunton there were still significant issues – and often over the weekend period.

Resolved to note the report

10. Council Housing Voids Performance

Considered report previously circulated, concerning void property performance in relation to council owned housing stock.

The report provided details of voids management and performance following the advice and assistance visit conducted by the Audit Commission in 2009. The commission identified a number of strengths and areas for improvement during their audit. The report was a main driver for the review of internal TDBC operational processes which was conducted in March 2011. Following the review a number of changes had been made to the Housing Estates Team.

The Housing Estates Officer explained how the surveying team conducted a physical inspection of each void property. They then prepared a works schedule and instructed contractors. The property was then re-let by the estates team. Overall void performance had improved with 75% accepted on first offer.

Members of the board discussed the issue of access to sites and annual gas inspections.

In response to a question on repair costs for damage, members heard that the majority of tenants leaving homes now had some form of repair recharge. Full figures would be provided.

Resolved to note the report

11. Domestic Abuse Policy, Domestic Abuse Service Standard and Witness Support Policy

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the new Domestic Abuse Policy, Domestic Abuse Service Standard, and Witness Support Policy for Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services.

The report outlined the strategic overview that tenants in council housing could expect from Housing Services on managing Domestic Abuse and Witness Support.

Members were highly supportive of the new policies and the approach being taken.

Resolved to approve the policies and service standard.

(The meeting ended at 8.55pm)