

## Tenant Services Management Board

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 27 October 2014 at 18:00.

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### Agenda

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 18th August 2014 (attached) and 15 September 2014 (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 Housing and Community Services - Fees and Charges 2015/16. Report of the Business Support Lead (attached).  
Reporting Officer: Shari Hallett
- 6 Welfare Reform 2014-15 Interim Year Report. Report of the Lettings and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager (attached).  
Reporting Officer: Paul Hadley
- 7 Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and Policy Update Report. Report of the Lettings and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager (attached).  
Reporting Officer: Paul Hadley
- 8 Verbal Report on Police Innovation Fund. Verbal report of the Director of Housing and Communities.  
Reporting Officer: James Barrah
- 9 Dates for Tenant Services Management Board Meetings for 2015. Report of the Tenant Empowerment Manager (attached).  
Reporting Officer: Martin Price

The following items are likely to be considered after the exclusion of the press and public because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be

disclosed relating to the Clause set out below of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

- 10 Confidential Report on Shared Services Structure for Property and Development.  
Report of the Assistant Director of Property and Development (attached).  
Reporting Officer: Kene Ibezi
- 11 Confidential Report on Shared Services Structure for Housing and Community Development. Report of the Director of Housing and Communities (attached).  
Reporting Officer: James Barrah

Bruce Lang  
Assistant Chief Executive

09 December 2014

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.

Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, 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](http://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 the Corporate Support Unit on 01823 356414 or email [r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:r.bryant@tauntondeane.gov.uk)**

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**Tenant Services Management Board Members:-**

Mr R Balman  
Councillor R Bowrah, BEM  
Mrs J Bunn  
Ms M Davis  
Mr M Edwards  
Mr D Etherington  
Mr D Galpin  
Mrs J Hegarty  
Mr K Hellier  
Mr I Hussey  
Mr R Middleton  
Councillor Miss F Smith

**Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 18 August 2014 at 6pm in Newton Road Community Hall, Newton Road, Taunton.**

**Present:** Mr Dustyn Etherington (Chairman),  
Mrs J Hegarty (Vice-Chairman),  
Mrs J Bunn, Mr M Edwards, Mr D Gaplin, Mr K Hellier, Mr R Middleton, and  
Councillor Bowrah.

**Officers:** Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Phil Webb (Housing Manager – Property Services), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead) and Emma Hill (Corporate Support Officer).

**Others:** Councillors A Wedderkopp.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

**1. Apologies**

Mr I Gould, Councillor Miss Smith and James Barrah

**2. Public Question Time**

No questions received for Public Question Time.

**3. Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Bowrah and Councillor Miss Smith declared personal interests as several members of their families were Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenant.

Mr Etherington, Mrs Hegarty, Mrs Bunn, Mr Edwards, Mr Galpin, Mr Gould, Mr Hellier and Mr Middleton declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

**4. Verbal Feedback Update from Tenant Participation Advisory Services Conference (TPAS).**

The Board Members gave a verbal update regarding their attendance to the TPAS conference from 9 July to 10 July 2014 at Chesford Grange Hotel, Kenilworth.

Below was a summary from the Board Member visit to the TPAS Conference 2014:

- The venue was Chesford Grange Hotel, which was 158 miles each way.
- The Board representatives were Cllr Bowrah, Mr Gaplin and Mr Hellier.
- The Hotel and rooms were excellent but however the food was not brilliant in some cases.
- The following points of interests at the Conference were:
  - a) Use of old laptops, refurbished and then sold to tenants at a reduced price.
  - b) Tenants advised to send photographs of faults so possible to diagnose repair before arrival of engineer.

- c) Form a RAMP's for Taunton Deane (Repairs and Maintenance Panels)
- d) Residents support in finding the cheapest rates for utilities, Job Help, and Credit Unions.
- e) TSMB members should have individual training on Scrutiny.
- f) One to One sessions for tenants arranged out of official Council venues.
- g) Does the TSMB have "teeth"?
- Overall the conference was useful, not so much interaction as some of the sessions were dominated by various individuals. Three certainly did not get a chance to interact with the many. It did not help with the World Cup being on the TV in the Hotel both nights and many people went straight to their rooms after dinner.
- TDBC should continue to support this Annual Event if possible.
- Would the Council consider finding a neutral or central location other than the Council offices for tenants and/or the public to book appointments to talk about their issues with officers, so they didn't have to come into The Deane House?

Below were the Officers comments to the Board Members Feedback from the TPAS Conference:

- The role of the Board was the same as the role of Scrutiny Committee mentioned. The Board take a much wider view of the reports, unlike Scrutiny Committee Members look and scrutinise reports in much greater detail.
- The Council had organised separate training programs for both Board Members and Scrutiny Committee.  
*Board Members should be fully trained to understand their specific scrutiny role within the system.*
- The Board did have teeth. The opinion and recommendations of the Board Member were taken into account and acknowledged by Council Officers, the Executive Portfolio for Housing and the Leader of the Council.

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

- Instead of just attending the conference, the Council and TSMB should be looking into being part of the conference or a seminar to promote the TSMB to other representatives.  
*This was a good idea. The Tenant Empowerment Manager would investigate this option and speak to TPAS regarding space at the 2015 conference.*
- The new Board could look into holding more informal meetings/sessions out in the Borough to explain to Tenants what the Board was about.
- Increasing tenants awareness of the Boards existence and they can approach Board Members outside of the meeting to raise any concerns or issues.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

## 5. **Taunton Deane Borough Council's Council Tax Support Scheme Proposals for 2015/16**

Reference minute No. six of the meeting dated 16 June 2014, considering the report previously circulated, concerning the Council Tax Support Scheme Consultation for Change 2015/16.

Officer had requested Board Members to read the previously circulated report and the enclosed leaflet and provide comments on both.

Below was a summary of the attached and previous report regarding the consultation for proposed changes for Council Tax Support Scheme 2015-16:

- Decided to limit the maximum help we give to working age people through Council Tax Support to 80%.
- This meant all working age people had to pay at least 20% towards their Council Tax bill.
- Increase the amount of earned income we ignore when working out income for Council Tax Support.
- Increase non-dependant deductions.
- Treat child maintenance as income when working out Council Tax Support. Previously we had ignored it when working out Council Tax Benefit.
- Abolish Second Adult Rebate. Before 1 April 2013 a person whose own income was too high to receive Council Tax Benefit was able to get a reduction on their Council Tax of up to 25% if they had other adult(s) on a low income in their household.
- Create a Discretionary Council Tax Assistance Fund, to protect the most vulnerable. There is a limited pot of money available to provide short term help to people who qualify for Council Tax Support but are still experiencing exceptional difficulties affording their Council Tax.

There were three main options relating to £900k shortfall, they were

- Option 1 – No change to Council Tax Support limiting the maximum help for working age people to 80%
- Option 2 – Pass on the full grant cut
- Option 3 – Pass on some of the cut

Below were the main proposals for change for the Council Tax Support Scheme from 1 April 2015:

- Proposal 1 – Reduce the maximum support
- Proposal 2 – Protecting people with disabilities
- Proposal 3 – Extra help for people with disabilities
- Proposal 4 – Protecting lone parents with children under 5 years old
- Proposal 5 – Extra help for lone parents with children under 5 years old
- Proposal 6 – Non dependants
- Proposal 7 – No longer treat Child Maintenance as income
- Proposal 8 – Protecting people with caring responsibilities

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

- A review of the Council Tax Banding would mean those with higher earnings and larger houses should feel more of an increase to their Council Tax bill than those on lower incomes and smaller houses. This would give relief to those at the lower end of the scale.
- If the Council was to increase anymore this would tip some people of the edge and they would become unable to pay their Council Tax bill as well as those receiving support would struggle even more.

- None of the options and proposals were nice or welcomed but the Council had to find the £900k shortfall somewhere.  
*The Council needed to investigate other options and avenues to find the money to cover the shortfall.*
- The Council should start charging the charity shops business rates as they were not just selling second hand clothing etc now, they were also selling new stuff.
- ‘Link Power’ currently cut the grass and hedges in the Halcon estate, Could the Council Housing department consider paying them to complete these jobs instead of the Deane DLO?  
*In the future, the Council and Link Power may reach a stage where they would be able to compete for the Housing Grounds Maintenance contract for the Halcon estate as well as other areas of Taunton Deane. This was paid for from Council Housing Rent not Council Tax.*
- What was the Board’s Preferred Options?
- It was difficult to support any of these because it would affect somebody.
- Members were not happy with the £900k shortfall within Council Tax Support Scheme but the Board preferred options was Option One until another suggestion or options was found.
- The Board felt there were other options open to the Council that should be investigated i.e. single person support should be reduced by 5 – 10%.

**Resolved** that the:-

1. Officer’s report was to be noted.
2. Preferred Option by the Board Members was Option One but the Board felt there were other options open to the Council and these should be investigated then put forward instead.

## **6. Tenants’ and Leaseholders’ Open Day 2014 – Feedback and the Way Forward.**

Considering the report and analysis data previously circulated, concerning the feedback received from tenants and leaseholders following the Tenants’ and Leaseholders’ Open Day held at the Somerset County Cricket Ground on the 28th April 2014.

The feedback included details of the most popular stands visited from those who responded and the times they visited the event.

- The most popular way of hearing about the event was by Invitation letter (65%) followed by promotion of the event through posters and banners (29%).
- 100% of respondents agreed that there were enough departments available on the day.
- From the respondents who completed the forms it shows the most popular organisation/department visited was repairs, followed by ALHCO, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue and Estate Management.
- 17% of respondents rated the day as ‘Excellent’, 67% as ‘Good’. No respondents ticked ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’.
- The Tenant Services Management Board Annual General Meeting was held on the same day. 67% did not attend, 17% found it very informative, no respondents commented that the AGM was ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’.
- The majority attended in the morning, with a peak between 10am and 11am.

Representatives of the Tenant Services Management Board, Tenants' Forum and Supported Housing Service Development Group met to shape the event for 2014. It was agreed that after the event this group would reconvene to see what lessons can be learnt and plan for future year's events.

The group met on the 21st July 2014 to plan the event for 2015. Main points raised include:

- Question whether the Tenant Services Management Board should hold its Annual General Meeting on a different day to the Open Day to encourage more tenants to attend the AGM.
- Staff to get more involved in publicising the event
- Hold the event into the evening or at a weekend
- Hold more than one event in different locations in the borough – perhaps Taunton and Wellington
- Hold the events in June

The next meeting of this group would be held on September 8th 2014. The Tenant Services Management Board would receive updates throughout the year.

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

- Wellington School hire out a marquee every year for an event at the school, which only takes place over one or days, the Council should enquiry about using the marquee at the school once they have finished with it. The event takes place in July every year.
- The Board should look at making the event more informal, fun and friendly a bit more like a community event. This would encourage people/tenants to attend and social as well as pick up useful information and get access to officer without having to come into The Deane House. The event was seen as an opportunity to moan at officer rather than meet officers and gather information.  
*Using other events, in Taunton Deane communities to display the stalls and information relevant to tenants.*
- Was there any feedback from the stall holders?  
*Some of the stall holders were disappointed with the turnout after initial flurry of tenants and leaseholders. Some the officers felt it was a waste of their time as they were away from their desks and this causes a build-up of other work which would otherwise be dealt with.*
- Maybe the Council should look into drop in events within Communities instead a big single event but include officers from the repairs.
- Did the estate officers arrange and attend drop sessions out in their areas?  
*If you contact the individual estate's officers, they would be able to tell you when and where these sessions were being held.*
- Contact and discuss with other Local Authorities to see if they hold similar events to see how they run there events and get some tips and advice.

**Resolved** that the officer's report was noted.

## **7. Tenant Services Management Board Elections 2014**

The Tenant Empowerment Manager gave a verbal update regarding the forthcoming Tenant Services Management Board Elections 2014.

Below was a summary of the officer's update regarding forthcoming elections:

- The Election Ballot papers had been prepared and sent out.
- The deadline for the return of the ballot papers was 5 September 2014.
- They would be processed and counted in one single session.
- The first meeting of the new Board would be on 15 September 2014.
- There were 10 seats on the Board and 12 candidates standing for the elections.
- The two remaining candidates would remain as reserve Board Members if any Members stood down during the year.

**Resolved** that the officer's report was noted.

## **8. AOB**

Councillor Bowrah suggested that the get a congratulations card for Councillor Miss Smith regarding the birth of her child.

The Chairman said Thank you to all current Members of the Board.

Officers informed the Board that Knightstone Housing had taken over Parmin Close and they were due to look funding the re-development of the properties and they were hoping to re-let the VOIDS.

(The meeting ended at 7.40pm)

**Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 15 September 2014 at 6pm in JMR, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.**

**Present:** Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr M Edwards, Mr D Etherington, Mr D Gaplin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey, Mr R Middleton, Councillor Miss Smith and Councillor Bowrah.

**Officers:** Rachel Searle (Housing Development Project Lead), Jo Humble (Housing Enabling Lead), James Barrah (Director of Housing and Communities), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Phil Webb (Housing Manager – Property Services), Paul Hadley (Housing Manager – Lettings & Anti-Social Behaviour), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Kene Ibezi (Assistant Director of Property & Development) and Emma Hill (Corporate Support Officer).

**Others:** Liz Morgan from Galliford Try  
Councillor Mrs Warmington

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

**1. Election of Chairman**

**Resolved** that Dustin Etherington be elected as Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board for the remainder of the Municipal Year

**2. Election of Vice-Chairman**

**Resolved** that Judith Hegarty be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

**3. Welcome and Introduction by Director of Housing and Communities**

The Director of Housing and Communities welcomed the newly elected Tenant Services Management Board Members as well as welcomed back returning Board members and made verbal introductions of officers present at the meeting.

Below was a summary of the Director's verbal update:

- Taunton Deane and West Somerset were facing a huge changes both structural and relating to its budgets position.
- The Council's government grants had been reduced and this affected our overall budgets.
- Although, the Housing Revenue Account was looking fairly buoyant at the moment.
- The Council was embarking Joint Services Project with West Somerset Council this was called JMASS project.  
This would create shared services over both Councils as part of this both Councils were going through a complete restructure.
- The Council would remain separate but they would be serviced and supported by one set of officers.
- The Housing department had a variety of projects and plans for forthcoming months to keep the Board informed of over the next couple months.

- Councillors and Executive Councillor Adkins would make all final decisions, but the Board's suggestions, views and comments would have weight and would be taken into account.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

#### **4. Apologies**

Councillor Mrs Smith

#### **5. Public Question Time**

No questions received for Public Question Time.

#### **6. Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Bowrah and Councillor Miss Smith declared personal interests as members of their families were Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenant.

Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr M Edwards, Mr D Etherington, Mr D Gaplin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey and Mr Middleton declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

#### **7. Creechbarrow Road Project Update.**

Considering the Project Management Board previously circulated, concerning the Creechbarrow Road Development in Taunton. The information was presented in a style used for reporting the progress of many of the Council's projects and was known as a 'dashboard'.

Board Member were advised if they find a particular section useful or had a suggestion for information that could be added to the dashboard, please could they let the officers know.

This development project was due for completion in December 2015 and the officer would like to produce a dashboard that was useful in keeping members of the Tenant Services Management Board updated on its progress.

Also enclosed with the dashboard was a current site layout map provided to reference the plot numbers referred to in the dashboard.

Below was a summary of the status of Key Project Activities for Phase 1:

- Build Programme completed by Galliford Try was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.
- Community Liaison completed by Rachel Searle was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.
- Training Opportunities completed by Rachel Searle was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.
- Finance completed by Rachel Searle was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.

The dashboard summarised the key project accomplishments for both the KHA and TDBC site for the last period of the Development Project as well as detailing the community liaison over the same period through the local community at a variety of community locations.

There were a number of training opportunities available with Galliford Try on the development site.

Also included for the Board's information was the key goals/targets for the development project over the next period as well as detailing any current or ongoing issues with the development.

The development site started at the Lavender Court end and there was at varying different stages of development ranging from very early stages to brick/block super structure.

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

- Concerns about the fencing on the corner of Roman Rd near Lavender Court, the position of the fencing had made the visibility for vehicles very poor coming from Roman Rd and this meant cars were unable to see what was coming down Creechbarrow Rd. My suggestions would be to increase the amount Harris fencing on the corner, increasing the visibility.  
There had been an accident at this location only couple days ago due to the poor visibility.  
*The officers weren't aware of the most recent accident but they were aware of the concerns regarding the poor visibility.*
- What percentage of new housing of the development site would be adapted for people with disabilities and would this include storage and charging points?  
*There was wide variety of property types with both KHA and TDBC, which included blocks of flats assigned to over 60's only. These would include bike/scooter stores, which would include charging points.*
- How regular would the officers be reporting back to the Board?  
*How often would the Board like the officers to report?*
- Reporting quarterly would be fine.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

## **8. Taunton Deane Accommodation Project Verbal Update**

The Director of Housing and Communities gave a verbal update on the Taunton Deane Accommodation Project.

Below was a summary of the Director's update regarding the progress and status of the Council's Accommodation project:

- The Council was currently reviewing and looking in detail at the options open to the Council.
- It was decided that there were two main options, they were either a new build at Firepool or moving to County Hall Block A.

- The decision was made a Full Council to proceed with the next steps in the process for discussions, contracts and designs issues for a move to County Hall Block A.
- County Hall offices were based on the ‘Smart Office’ principle of working meaning majority of officers would not have a permanent desk space.
- The Council would look in more detail at Joint Service provision in relation to the Council’s reception and working with other agencies. This would mean the public would have access to a wider variety of services through one reception.
- The Director would be coming back to the Board meeting to provide progress and update reports on the project.

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

- Had concerns over the very limited parking facilities at County Hall?  
*The Council had secured the same 11 spaces for visitors outside at The Deane House within the vicinity of County Hall. This was a key issue that needed to be looked at parking for staff.*
- It was suggested maybe the Council could retain the parking facilities at the rear of The Deane House to allow staff to park and walk across to County Hall.
- Also the Council could investigate the option of free accessible Wi-Fi connection with reception at County Hall to allow access to services from smart phones and tablets while they wait.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer’s report.

## 6. Performance Indicators Quarter One 2014/15 Report

Considering the Performance Scorecard tables previously circulated, concerning the Health and Housing Quarter one performance Scorecard.

Looking at each section of the performance scorecard for Quarter one, the figures and percentages as follows:

- Managing Finances (housing) - There were 9 measures of which 67% Green, 22% Amber, 0% Red and 11% were N/A.
- Service Delivery (Service Delivery (Satisfaction) – There were 11 measures of which 55% Green, 45% Amber.
- Service Delivery (Decent Homes) – There were measures of 2 which 50% Green, 50% Red.
- Service Delivery (Manage Housing Stock) – There were measures of 18 which 44% Green. 39% Red and 17% N/A.

Below was a summary of the planned actions that were off course:

- Measures for Decent Homes were off course. Average SAP (energy efficiency) rating was below target. Eco funding bid for external wall insulation to around 400 homes being considered along with pilot scheme for 40 Cornish Properties.
- Lettings Measures. 0.9% of dwellings were vacant but unavailable to let, the target was 0.5% 13 of the 99 properties were void over Christmas and 11 of the 13 took around 28 days to complete due to Christmas close down. Re-let times

- had increased to 27.18 days due to work not being able to be completed to 11 properties over Christmas.
- Housing Services Diversity Information. We hold 58% of diversity information this was an increase of 1% since last quarter.
  - Repairs and Maintenance measures 94% of Emergency repairs were completed on time against a target of 98% also 87% of urgent repairs were completed on time against a target of 94%. We also would meet with contractors to ascertain why performance was not making improvement. Changes to IT systems next year will assist us in identifying reductions in performance earlier.
  - Local Authority Major Aids and Adoptions, number of applications. 59 applications were completed against a target of 84 but applications had been referred to the Minor Works budget.
  - Local Authority Major Aids and Adoptions, end to end completion time. The 34 week end to end completion figure was not on target (22 weeks). Removing exceptions the figure would have been 27 weeks.

Below was a summary of the planned actions that had uncertainty in meeting them:

- Local Authority Major Aids and Adoptions, spend against budget. £282,092 committed spend at end of Q4 against a £339,100 budget, underspend predicted.
- Local Authority Minor Aids and Adoptions, spend against budget. £103,256 spend at end of Q4 against a £135,000 budget underspend predicted.
- Housing Services – 4 Satisfaction measures. The 2013 Star survey (conducted every two years) reported satisfaction figures for general needs tenants and sheltered housing tenants which were below target. Council national rankings show that we were in quartile 2 of housing measures and lower quartiles for supported housing. These measures would not change until 2015 when the Star Survey was conducted again.
- Repair and Maintenance. 97% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service, our target is 98%.

Below was a summary of the planned actions that were on course:

- Housing Services- Estate Management. Our arrears figures were below our target of (£360,000) actual at year end £351,209.80.
- Housing Managing Finances – 5 measures were better than target.
- Decent Homes Gas Servicing. 100% of dwellings had a valid gas safety certificate against 100% target.
- Lettings Team Measures – 5 measures were better than target.
- Gas servicing satisfaction measure of 99% was better than target (90%).
- Supported Housing Satisfaction Measure – was better than (100% versus an 86% target).
- Local Authority Major Aids and Adoptions – 100% satisfaction.
- Three Community Development measures were on track.
- Repairs and maintenance – 90% of non-urgent repairs were complete within priority time of 28 days. Target was 85%.
- Local Authority Minor Aids and Adoptions – 347 applications completed at the end of Q4, against a target of 350.

Below were measures under development, not reported or without alerts.

- Housing Services, expenditure against budget. This information was not available until accounts had been closed. Our finance team were currently busy closing our accounts. It was anticipated that the final figures would be reported to the TSMB in July 2014.
- Three Repairs and Maintenance Measures were under development.

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

- Looking at the Amber Alerts concerning tenant arrears were over target at £32,876. What actions were the Council proposing to reduce this?  
*The Council had tracked this over many years and there was a trend and pattern based on the time of year relating to tenant rent arrears. 98.3% pay their rent regularly and on time, it was only 1.7% of tenants who don't and these were being monitored by the estates team. This team carry out regular monitoring of these tenants.*  
*The Council was in the top quartile for this. Over the summer months and in the run up to Christmas, some of the tenants were in the habit to not paying their rent.*  
*There were not a threat to the HRA business plan.*
- What were the number of tenant evictions for last month?  
*The Council issued 36 warrants and eight evictions had been carried out. Some tenants needed to issued 'final warnings' before they pay the owed arrears.*
- Could the Board Members have a breakdown of £32k debt and what the percentages relating to small figures and large figures of rent owed?  
*The vast majority of tenants owed less than £200 but the Council did get tenants who owed more. The Council dealt in individual cases and situations.*
- How did it get to the level of owing rent i.e. up to £1500? Why not try prevention?  
*Before the Council started the legal process after 6 – 7 weeks without paying rent. At each stage of the process, the Council had to issue notice letters as well as applying to court to allow the Council to take any action.*
- How much was written off each year?  
*1.7% was written off over a period. This was a very small amount in comparison to the £20 million rent collected.*
- Something the Council did through the Halcon One Team, TDBC and the CAB to provide money management advice both in Taunton and in Wellington. The scheme had seen 517 people.
- Some didn't understand what help, assistance and support they could apply for as it was a complicated process.
- Was there an issue with Cavity Wall insulation on traditional properties, I was aware that the Council might be creating issues and not just trying to keep them warm.
- Non-Traditional received external cladding.  
*The Council had been going back through their stock with old insulation and those issues or failing insulation, the Council were replacing and updating it.*  
*The Council had completed extensive surveys over the non-traditional stock and they were good for another 30 years apart from a couple individual units, which the Council were dealing with.*

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

## **7. Annual Report Tenant Group – Verbal Update**

The Tenant Empowerment Manager gave a verbal update concerning the next Annual Report.

The current and previous format for the Annual Report was a calendar.

The officers required volunteers from the Board to make up the Tenant Working Group to build the next Annual Report.

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

- The Working Group volunteers were Jessie Bunn, Ivor Hussey and Judith Hegarty.
- If any of the Board Members had any ideas or suggestions for the Annual Report, please pass them onto the Tenant Empowerment Manager.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

## **8. AOB**

The Tenant Services Development Officer requested a volunteer from the Board Members to take part in a photo shoot for the Digital Inclusion Project regarding computer access from 18 September at 10am in The Deane House reception.

The Council had committed funding for five self-service computer kiosks as part of the Digital Inclusion project. These were located a variety of locations throughout Taunton Deane. The locations included Wellington, Priorswood, Milverton and The Deane House. The Council had planned to increase this initial number of kiosks and would name more locations for them.

This allowed internet access for a variety of online services, which included online shopping as well.

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

- The volunteers were Robert Middleton and Dustyn Etherington.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

(The meeting ended at 7.38pm)

## Declaration of Interests

### **Tenant Services Management Board**

- Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants;
  - Mr R Balman
  - Mrs J Bunn
  - Mr M Davis
  - Mr M Edwards
  - Mr D Etherington
  - Mr D Galpin
  - Mrs J Hegarty
  - Mr K Hellier
  - Mr I Hussey
  - Mr R Middleton
- Family Member(s) are Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenant;
  - Councillor Bowrah
  - Councillor Miss Smith

# **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

## **Tenant Services Management Board – 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

### **Housing and Community Services Fees and Charges 2015/16**

#### **Report of the Business Support Lead – Shari Hallett**

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

#### **1. Executive Summary**

This report sets out the proposed fees and charges for Housing and Community Services in 2015/16.

The Tenant Services Management Board is invited to comment on the proposed fees and charges before Corporate Scrutiny considers them in November 2014.

#### **2. Background**

The service charges service users for services that they use. These charges are set locally each year.

#### **3. Proposed fees and charges increases for 2015/16**

It is proposed to increase fees and charges by applying Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation as at the previous September 2014 (September 2014 RPI inflation was 2.3%) as set out in Appendix A.

Council housing rents will be set early in the New Year.

#### **4. Finance comments**

This is a finance report and there are no further comments.

#### **5. Legal comments**

There are no legal implications of this report.

#### **6. Links to corporate aims**

There are no specific links within this report.

**7. Environmental implications**

There are no environmental and community safety implications of this report.

**8. Community safety implications**

There are no environmental and community safety implications of this report.

**9. Equalities impact**

An equality impact assessment is set out in Appendix B.

**10. Risk management**

Not appropriate to this report.

**11. Partnership implications**

There are no partnership implications of this report.

**12. Recommendations**

1. The Tenant Services Management Board is invited to comment on the proposed fees and charges for 2015/16 as set out in this report.

**Contact:** Shari Hallett  
Business Support Lead  
01823 356440  
[s.hallett@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:s.hallett@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

## Appendix A

<b>Housing</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
<b>Service Charges</b>		
Communal areas	£0.59	£0.60
Grounds maintenance	£0.76	£0.78
<b>Combined Service Charges</b>		
Specialised (Extra Care) Sheltered Housing	£48.75	£49.87
Sheltered Housing	£17.64	£18.05
Low Level Sheltered Support	£8.77	£8.97
<b>Garage Rents</b>		
Council tenants	£5.65	£5.78
Private tenants and Owner Occupiers (exc. VAT)	£6.57	£6.90
Private tenants and Owner Occupiers (inc VAT)	£7.88	£8.27
<b>Hire Charges for Sheltered Scheme Meeting Halls</b>		
First hour	£10.20	£10.20
Each half hour thereafter	£4.10	£4.10
6 hours plus	£51.70	£51.70
Total charge for residents in a scheme and community organisations	£13.40	£13.40
<b>Provision of Meals at Kilkenny Court (Extra Care)</b>		
Cost per meal	TBA	TBA
* please note the provision of meal service contract is yet to be awarded.		
<b>Hire Charges for Sheltered Scheme Guest Rooms</b>		
No. of nights per person		
1	£11.30	£11.30
2	£18.10	£18.10
3	£24.90	£24.90
4	£31.70	£31.70
5	£39.10	£39.10
6	£45.30	£45.30
7	£52.60	£52.60

<b>Hostels (rent per day)</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>Service Charge</b>	<b>Gross Per Day</b>
			<b>2015/16</b>	
40 Humphreys Road	£9.57	£8.92	£0.87	£9.79
1 Gay Street	£12.20	£8.92	£3.56	£12.48
Outer Circle				
113 and 113a (studios)	£10.90	£7.59	£3.56	£11.15
115 and 115a (3 bedroom)	£13.93	£9.88	£4.37	£14.25
119 (2 bedroom)	£10.90	£7.59	£3.56	£11.15
119a (2 bedroom)	£8.27	£7.59	£0.87	£8.46
Sneddon Grove				
Unit 1 (2 bedroom)	£12.20	£8.92	£3.56	£12.48
Unit 2 (2 bedroom)	£11.47	£8.17	£3.56	£11.73
Unit 3 (2 bedroom)	£11.47	£8.17	£3.56	£11.73
Unit 4 (3 bedroom)	£14.72	£10.69	£4.37	£15.06
Unit 5 (3 bedroom)	£14.72	£10.69	£4.37	£15.06
Unit 6 (2 bedroom)	£12.20	£8.92	£3.56	£12.48
Unit 7 (3 bedroom)	£14.72	£10.69	£4.37	£15.06
Unit 8 (2 bedroom)	£14.72	£10.69	£4.37	£15.06
Winckworth Way				
Unit 1 (2 bedroom)	£11.47	£8.17	£3.56	£11.73
Unit2 (2 bedroom)	£11.47	£8.17	£3.56	£11.73
Unit 3 (3 bedroom)	£14.72	£10.69	£4.37	£15.06
Wheatley Crescent (4 studios)				
30 (1 bedroom)	£8.27	£7.59	£0.87	£8.46
32 (1 bedroom)	£8.27	£7.59	£0.87	£8.46
34 (1 bedroom)	£8.27	£7.59	£0.87	£8.46
36 (1 bedroom)	£8.27	£7.59	£0.87	£8.46

Note:

Fees and Charges 2015/16 Increases:

In line with the approved HRA Business Plan the Fees and Charges for 2015/16 have been increased across the board by RPI 2.3% as at September 2014 with the following exceptions:

- Garage rents for private tenants and owner occupiers have been increased by 5%;

- Hire charges for the sheltered scheme meeting halls and hire charges for sheltered scheme guest rooms have not been increased and this is to increase the take up of the use of the facilities; and
- Provision of meals at Kilkenny Court will be increased in accordance with the meal service contract.

## Appendix B

### Equality Impact Assessment – pro-forma

<b>Responsible person</b>	<i>Shari Hallett</i>	<b>Job Title: Business Support Lead</b>
<b>Why are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment? (Please mark as appropriate)</b>	Proposed new policy/service	
	Change to Policy/service	
	Budget/Financial decision – MTFP	√
	Part of timetable	
<b>What are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment on (which, service, MTFP proposal)</b>	<b>Housing and Community Services Fees and Charges 2015/16</b>	
<b>Section One – Scope of the assessment</b>		
What are the main purposes/aims of the policy/decision/service?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Proposal to increase the fees and charges from April 2015 for Housing and Community Services as detailed in the attached report.</i></li> <li><i>The proposed increase to fees and charges will ensure sufficient financial resources are in place to deliver the services.</i></li> </ul>	
Which protected groups are targeted by the policy/decision/service?	1. Age; 2. Disability; 3. Gender Reassignment; 4. Pregnancy and Maturity; 5. Race; 6. Religion or belief; 7. Sex; 8. Sexual Orientation; 9. Marriage and civil partnership	
What evidence has been used in the assessment - data, engagement undertaken – please list each source that has been used The information can be found on....	<p>1. Engagement</p> <p>Formal discussion on the proposed fees and charges to be held with the Tenant Services Management Board at its meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014.</p> <p>(A verbal update on the Tenant Services Management Board comments and recommendation are to be presented to Corporate Scrutiny Committee in November 2014)</p>	

**Section two – Conclusion drawn** about the impact of service/policy/function/change on different groups highlighting negative impact, unequal outcomes or missed opportunities for promoting equality

*The proposed fees and charges increases will apply to all services users and as such no potential discrimination amongst the protected groups has been identified.*

*To help support service users on low incomes Housing and Community Services will continue to provide a number of initiatives to enable service users to manage their finances and maximise their income:*

- *Publish clear information on all the fees and charges which helps service users to manage their own finances;*
- *Signpost service users to a relevant benefit agency to help ensure they are maximising their income to meet their living costs;*
- *Take action to raise the awareness of accessing a range of welfare benefits; and*
- *Provide the opportunity to access direct support for service users in checking they are in receipt of the welfare benefits they are entitled to claim*

**I have concluded that there is/should be:**

No major change - no adverse equality impact identified	No major change as no adverse equality impact on the protected groups.
Adjust the policy/decision/service	
Continue with the policy/decision/service	
Stop and remove the policy/decision/service	

Reasons and documentation to support conclusions

#### **Section four – Implementation – timescale for implementation**

The proposed increase in fees and charges will be applicable for April 2015

#### **Section Five – Sign off**

Responsible officer: Shari Hallett  
Date: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014

Management Team: Housing and Community  
Date: 17<sup>th</sup> October 2014

#### **Section six – Publication and monitoring**

Published on

Next review date

Date logged on Covalent

#### **Action Planning**

The table should be completed with all actions identified to mitigate the effects concluded.

**Actions table**

Service area	Actions needed	Who is responsible?	By when?	How will this be monitored?	Expected outcomes from carrying out actions
Identified issue drawn from your conclusions					

# Taunton Deane Borough Council

## Tenant Services Management Board - 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014

### Welfare Reform 2014-15 interim year report

**Report of – Michaela Mullen Welfare Reform Project Officer (WRPO) and Steven Clarke Tenant Services Development Officer**

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

#### Summary

This report covers the first six months of the second year of the Welfare Reforms and its effects on Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services tenants. The report makes the following recommendations for the future activity:

The main points of the report are as follows:

#### 1.0

- Proactive support for tenants who have financial difficulties
- Working with partner agencies to support tenants
- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) are only a short term solution for tenants affected by the welfare reform changes. The application process being intensive and time consuming for staff.
- Highlighted the lack of one bedroom accommodation in our and other local housing providers stock.

But also asks questions in relation to our potential responses to the forthcoming implementation of Universal Credit in Taunton Deane.

#### 1.0 Introduction

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 the Welfare Reform Act 2012 became law, welfare reforms have reduced the level of benefit that applicants can get if they have a spare bedroom in their council home. The changes only apply to housing benefit claimants of working age, and are referred to as the 'Under Occupancy Penalty' or removal of the spare room subsidy and more commonly known as the 'bedroom tax'.

The reduction is a fixed percentage of the eligible rent. The reduction is 14% for one spare bedroom and 25% for two or more spare bedrooms.

Another element of the Welfare Reform legislation was the introduction of the benefit cap which limited the amount of benefits that people could claim:

- Single people £350 a week
- Couples or lone parents £500 a week

The criteria for non dependant deductions have also been adjusted for social housing tenants to bring this in line with the private rented sector. Council Tax Benefit is now called Council Tax Support and all working age residents now have to contribute to their council tax payments. This is a direct result of the government localising council tax schemes.

Universal Credit the new single monthly payment for people who are looking for work or on a low income and will replace:

- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance.
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance.
- Income Support.
- Child Tax Credits.
- Working Tax Credits.
- Housing Benefit.

Universal Credit should not be seen as a re-working of the current welfare system, it is an entirely new benefit:

Most people will apply online and manage their claim through an online account. Universal Credit will be responsive – as people on low incomes move in and out of work, they'll get ongoing support, giving people more incentive to work for any period of time that is available.

Most claimants on low incomes will still be paid Universal Credit when they first start a new job or increase their part-time hours.

Claimants will receive just 1 monthly payment, paid into a bank account in the same way as a monthly salary.

Support with housing costs will go direct to the claimant as part of their monthly payment.

Universal credit will only affect working age tenants; they will be paid in a monthly payment direct into a bank account this amount will include their housing costs. The tenant then will have to pay their rent from this amount.

## **2.0 Method**

Since the WRPO took post over twenty two months ago she has identified the tenants affected by the under occupancy penalty and subsequently the tenants affected by the Benefit Cap. Work is also being undertaken to identify our more vulnerable tenants who would be put at risk of enforcement action being taken against them through non-payment of rent.

### **2.1 Under Occupancy Affected Tenants**

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 there were 393 tenants affected by the Under Occupancy Penalty, this has reduced over the year to 372 of which 200 are in rent arrears. In a recent Inside Housing magazine report 'The Link Group' a housing provider in Scotland of a similar size to TDBC (6147 properties). Has 377 tenants affected by the Under Occupancy Charge of which 196 are in rent arrears. For more detailed information on TDBC, see Chart 1 Appendix A.

## 2.2 Early Intervention

The WRPO is still conducting personal visits to support and assist our tenants maintain their tenancy in light of the changes. The visits which on average continue to last up to one hour. Dependent on the need of the tenant it can take more than one visit to supply the support required. This allows the officer to:

- Explain about the changes and how they affect the individual household.
- Complete financial statements to support applications for DHP's.
- Sign post tenants to support agencies in relation to any debt issues.
- Explain and assist with HomeFinder Somerset applications
- Explain how the Transfer Removal Grant scheme works to assist those households wishing to downsize to accommodation more suitable for their housing needs.
- Explain about the Mutual Exchange process.
- Offer help and support to tenants.

## 2.3 Discretionary Housing Payments

Affected households have been encouraged or supported in applying for a DHP to help mitigate the negative financial impact that being unable to move may have. Without the level of DHP available or the positive intervention of the WRPO and other officers more TDBC households would be suffering financial difficulty.

61TDBC tenants were successfully awarded DHP's. The majority of successful applications were completed by or with the assistance of the WRPO. This equates to £24,433.27 of the DHP budget of £132,000.

## 2.4 Rent Arrears

On the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014 there were 385 tenants affected, 187of these households were in rent arrears amounting to a total of £38,704.25. Compared to 100 households with rent arrears amounting to £32,090.54 in April 2013. See chart 2 in Appendix A.

Tenant overall rent arrears figures in April 2014 were £344,242.82 compared to £406,147.69 in April 2013. See chart 3 in Appendix A

## 2.5 Eviction

As a result of the Under Occupancy Penalty 12 tenants have been subject to court action, no-one has been evicted.

## 2.6 Digital Inclusion

With the introduction of Universal Credit in 2015 it will be vital to our business plan to maintain a high level of income and keep rent arrears to a minimum. It is vital that our tenants have access to IT because of the shift to digital by default for the majority of public and private sector services. The government have stated that 60% of Universal Credit claims will need to be completed and updated on line.

Housing services has procured self service kiosks for use by our residents. The initial phase has seen the kiosks placed in the following locations across the borough:

- Deane House x 2
- Wellington Community Office
- Priorswood Resource Centre
- Milverton Community Hall

Each kiosk will enable tenants to access the following Websites:

- TDBC
- SCC
- DWP
- NHS Direct
- Somerset Savings and Loan
- Somerset Advice Network
- CAB
- uSwitch
- Job Centre Plus
- Universal Jobsearch
- My worksearch
- Home finder
- Home Swapper
- The Money Advice Service

The second phase will include kiosks being installed in the following locations:

- Newton Road community hall
- Moorland Place community hall
- Middleway community hall
- Wellesley Street community hall
- Heathfield Drive community hall
- Robin Close community hall

The first 5 kiosks are the initial phase of a broader borough wide installation. This burden should not be borne by the HRA alone and other areas of the council should now build on this initial stage of work by the housing services and commit resources and funds to provide greater access across the Deane for our communities.

### **3.0 TDBC Welfare Reform interim report recommendations:**

- Close working relationships are vital between housing services and the Revenue and Benefits Department, DWP, CAB, and Jobcentre+ facilitated by timely and appropriate information sharing.
- Managing the impact of welfare reform is a whole organisation effort so communication and training for internal staff is a key to success.
- Improve the information and knowledge of our tenants and develop effective communications with them maximising contact opportunities. These are essential steps to secure payment of rent and identify personal or budgeting support needs.
- Ensure that there are sufficient resources in place to provide money management advice and support to residents which is key to protecting the housing service income stream.

#### **4.0 Recommendation**

Tenant Services Management Board is asked to note the contents of this report.

**Contact:** Michaela Mullen  
Welfare Reform Project Officer  
Direct Dial No 01823 356439  
Email address [m.mullen@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:m.mullen@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

Steven Clarke  
Tenant Services Development Officer  
Direct Dial No 01823 356327  
Email address [s.clarke@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:s.clarke@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

Chart 1

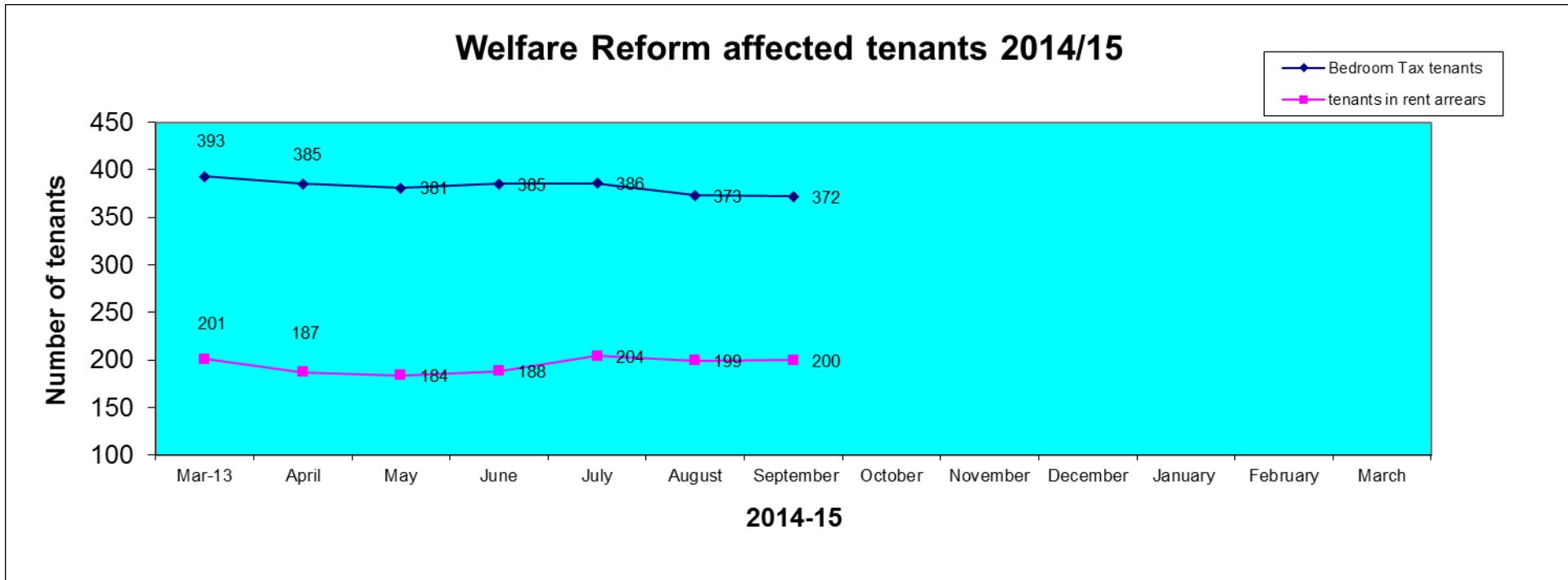


Chart 1 shows number of tenants affected by Under Occupancy Penalty

Chart 2

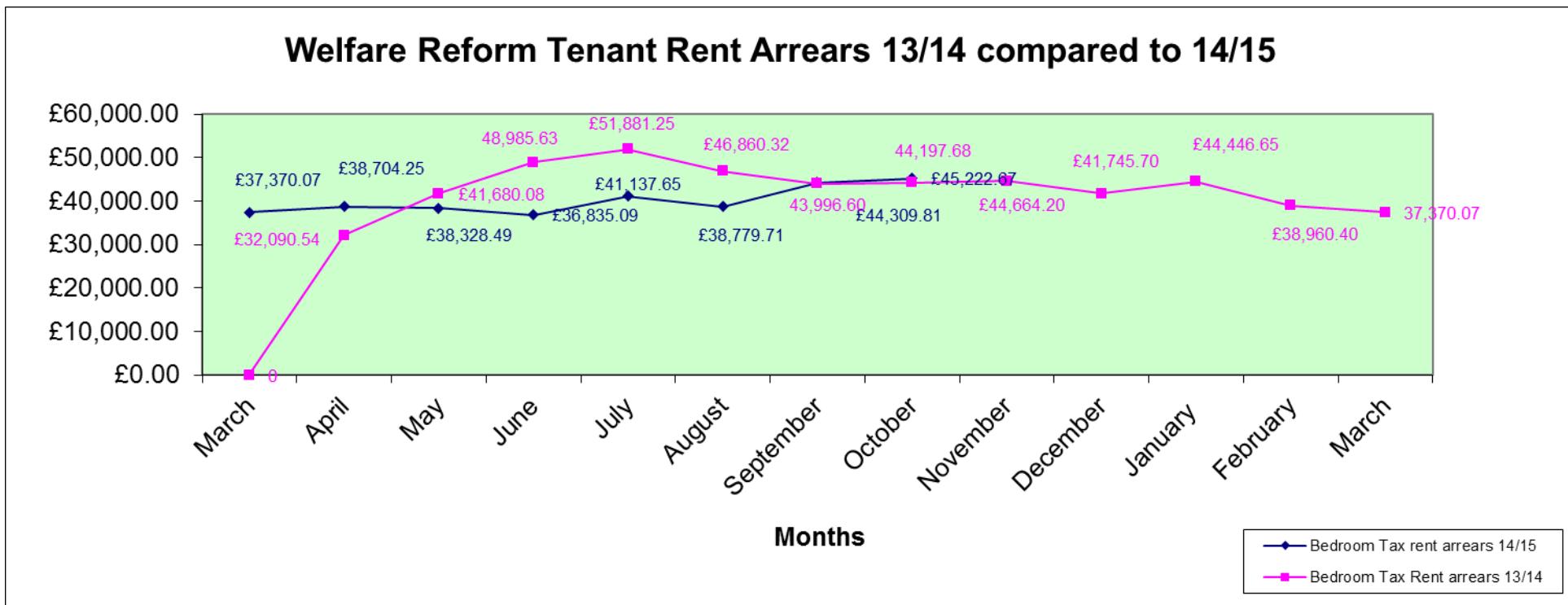
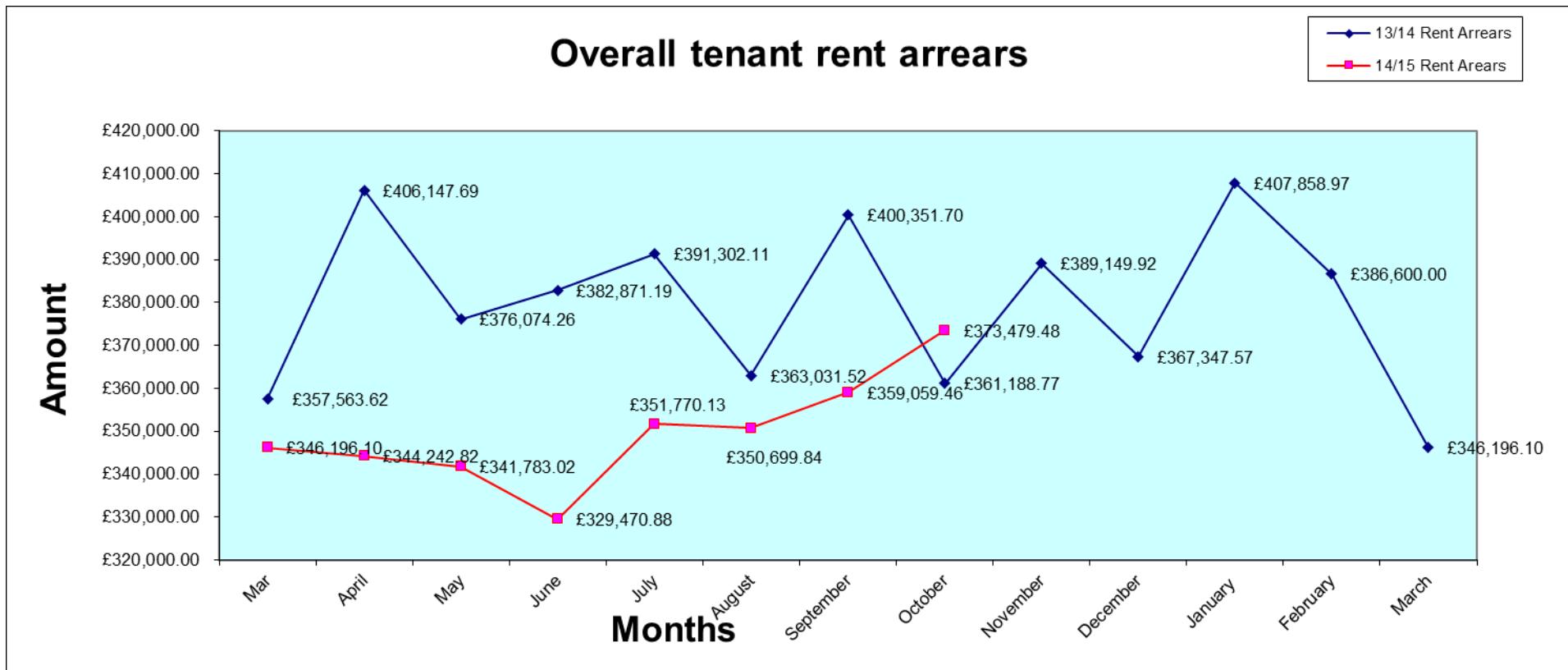


Chart 2 shows the rent arrears of tenants affected by the under occupancy penalty

Chart 3 shows the overall tenant rent arrears comparing 13/14 to 14 /15



## Appendix A

Chart 1

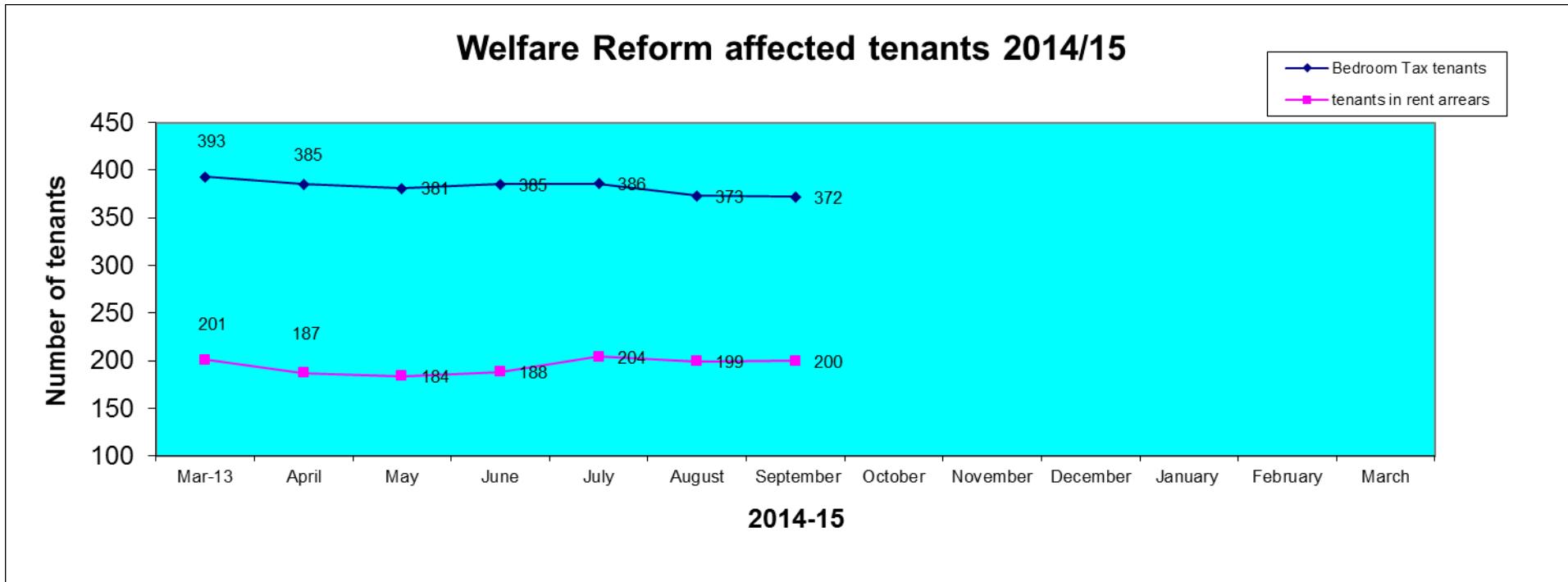


Chart 1 shows number of tenants affected by Under Occupancy Penalty

Chart 2

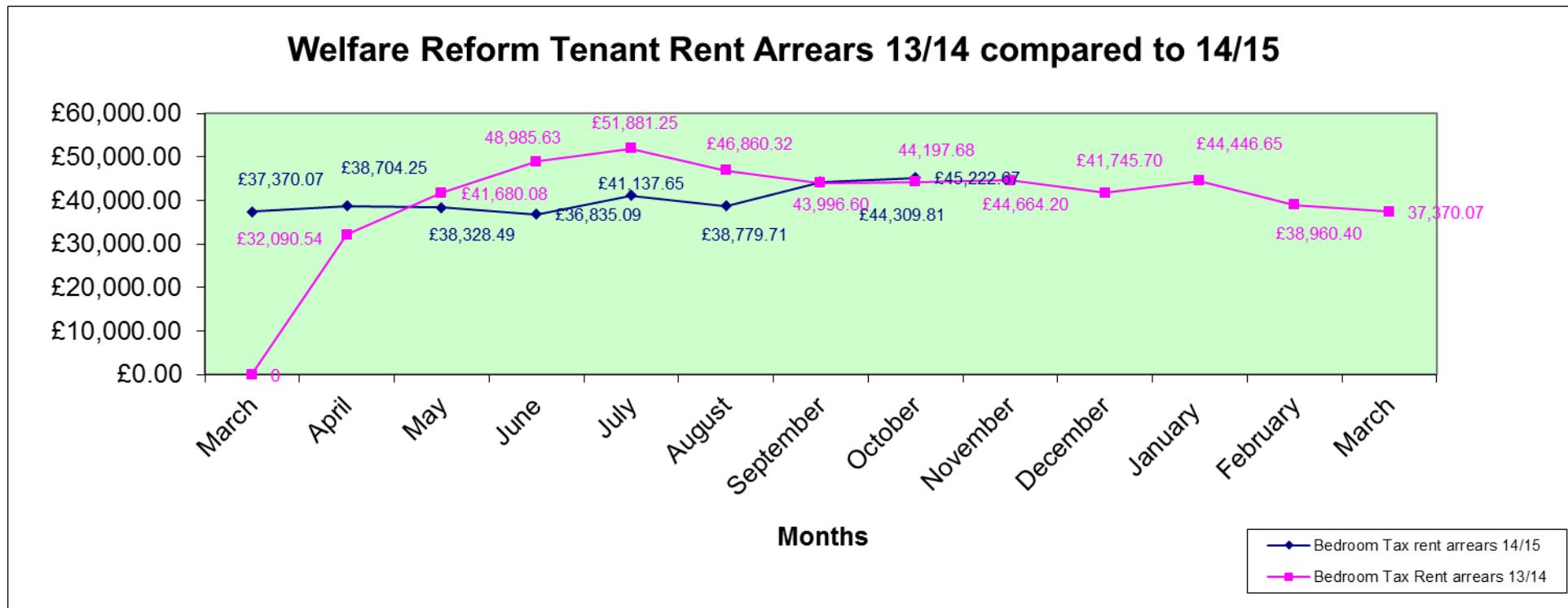
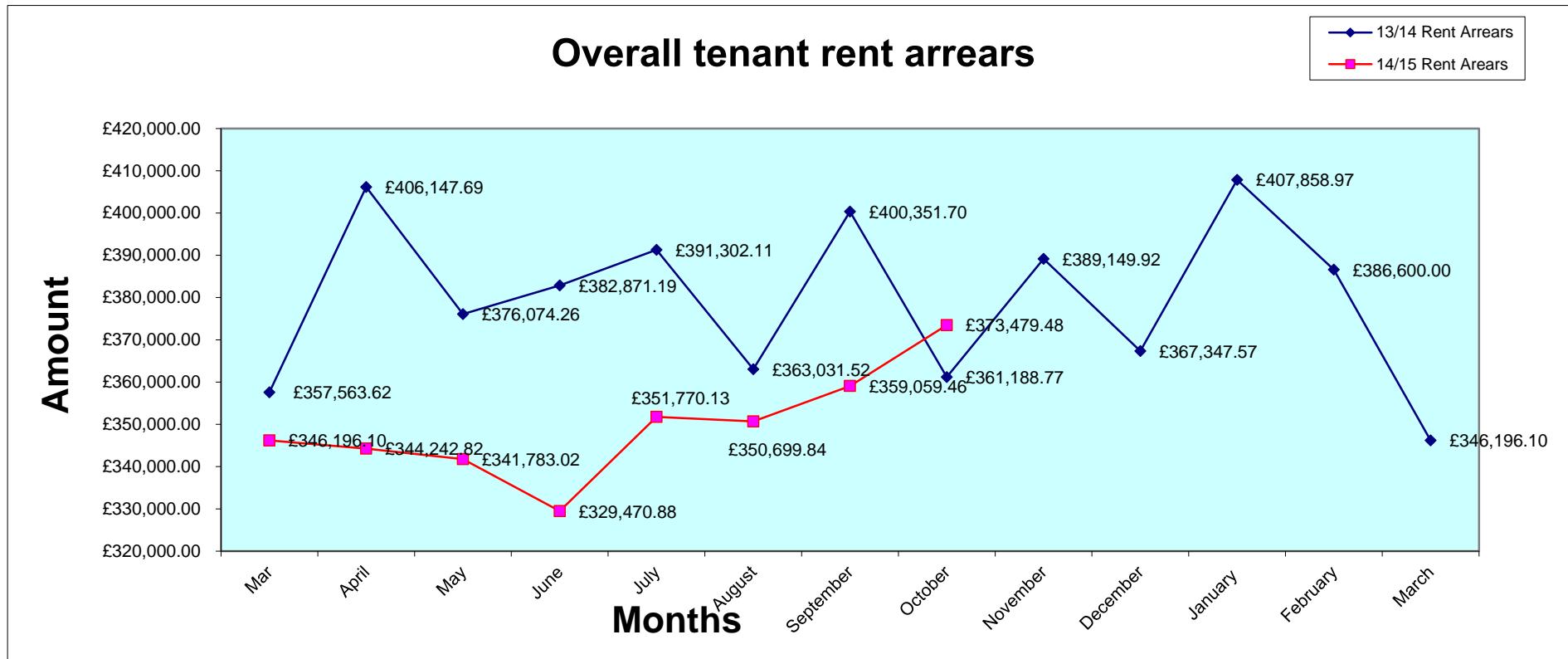


Chart 2 shows the rent arrears of tenants affected by the under occupancy penalty

Chart 3 shows the overall tenant rent arrears comparing 13/14 to 14 /15



# **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

## **Tenant Services Management Board – 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

### **Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and Policy updates**

#### **Report of – Paul Hadley Lettings and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager**

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

#### **1.0 Executive Summary**

This report has been produced to propose updates for the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and Policy for Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services, as a direct result of the introduction of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014. The updated policy is attached as Appendix 1.

It outlines the strategic overview that tenants can expect from Housing Services in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

The ASB policy details the organisations arrangements for managing the risk of ASB to tenants within the councils housing stock.

The strategy and policy are living documents and will be reviewed on a regular basis.

#### **2.0 Purpose of the report**

The purpose of the report is to propose changes to the ASB strategy and policy in light of the introduction of new powers in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

#### **3.0 Background**

This Government has set out a new approach to crime, policing and community safety, based on a fundamental shift from bureaucratic to democratic accountability through directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners, increased transparency, and increasing professional discretion. This new approach includes overhauling the whole system of dealing with ASB to ensure agencies are putting the needs of victims first.

Previously the police, councils and others have started to adopt a range of effective mechanisms that improve the response they provide to victims, which ensures that vulnerable victims are better supported.

In terms of the behaviour itself, what is seen as ‘anti-social’ will vary from victim to victim, and community to community. It no longer focuses on the behaviour, but on the impact it has on the victim.

The correct response will depend on a range of factors, but most importantly, on the needs of the victim and the impact the behaviour is having on their lives.

#### **4.0 Aim**

To give tenants clear information on what they can expect from housing services, and the support and assistance available to them.

#### **5.0 Approximate costs**

The cost of implementing this policies will be met within existing budgets.

#### **6.0 Impact on tenants**

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

#### **7.0 Equalities impact**

An equality impact assessment has been carried out and views and feedback have been obtained from tenants. This is attached as Appendix 2.

#### **8.0 Risk management**

No risks have been identified from the equality impact assessment

#### **9.0 Diversity**

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

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

#### **10.0 Recommendation**

Recommend that the Tenant Services Management Board approve the strategy and policy. The policy will then be forwarded to the portfolio holder Councillor Jean Adkins for affirmation.

**Contact officer:** Paul Hadley

Housing Manager – Lettings & Anti-Social Behaviour

[p.hadley@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:p.hadley@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

Appendix 1

# Anti-Social Behaviour Policy

Policy	
<b>Policy Number</b>	Let1
<b>Title</b>	Anti Social Behaviour
<b>Author</b>	Steven Clarke
<b>Responsible Officer</b>	Stephen Boland
<b>EQIA Date</b>	
<b>Date Agreed by TSMB</b>	
<b>Date agreed by Housing Portfolio Holder</b>	
<b>Next Review Date</b>	Sept 17
<b>Version</b>	1.2

## **Anti-Social Behaviour Policy**

Definition of anti-social behaviour

Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) uses the definition of anti-social behavior in the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, which is:

'Acting in a manner that caused or was likely to cause harassment, alarm or distress to one or more persons not of the same household as (the defendant).'

### **1.0 Policy Statement**

TDBC are committed to providing an excellent anti-social behaviour service. On delivering our housing service we will actively seek to prevent anti-social behaviour. When allocating empty property we will undertake an assessment of the risk of anti-social behaviour involving the housing applicant, historical incidents of anti-social behaviour within the neighbourhood and the design of the property. With reference to 3.7 of the Homefinder Somerset Common Lettings Policy, which stipulates who are not able to participate in bidding for Social Housing across the whole sub-region. This includes those who have broken their previous tenancy conditions due to ASB. This would mean that if they are evicted and subsequently reapply for social housing all partner-housing providers might refuse to re-house them.

Where appropriate we will advise housing applicants where there are risks of anti-social behaviour, for example, if we feel the property is prone to noise travel. At the start of a tenancy we will make residents aware of their tenancy obligations on anti-social behaviour. Through the management of our communal areas we will actively deter anti-social behaviour (such as vandalism/graffiti, abandoned vehicles or misuse of communal areas). When developing new properties or undertaking re-investment or improvement works we will consider how we can prevent anti-social behaviour through these works. We will also utilise our community development resources to prevent anti-social behaviour; this may include youth, parenting projects or projects to foster greater community cohesion.

### **2.0 Dealing with reports of anti-social behaviour**

We will not tolerate anti-social behaviour and will always seek to resolve the problem with the complainant (the complainant is the person reporting anti-social behaviour) remaining in their existing accommodation. We will only consider rehousing the complainant in exceptional circumstances (for example where there is a risk of serious physical harm). In line with Home finder Somerset Lettings Policy.

We recognise that retaining resident confidence and involvement is critical to the success of each anti-social behaviour case and the service as a whole. To achieve this we will normally only take action on a case agreed with the complainant. We will usually expect the complainant to undertake certain actions to assist us in dealing with the anti-social behaviour, this may involve

keeping details of the incidents that occur or reporting incidents to another agency such as the police or the local authority environmental health noise team.

We will advise the complainant in writing of the outcome of the investigation and discuss any further action we propose with them. We will advise complainants when action has been taken against a perpetrator and will monitor the case for any further incident. We will also write to the alleged perpetrator advising them of the outcome of the investigation. We will agree with each complainant how often we will contact him or her. As a minimum we will contact complainants at least once a month to update them of progress and/or receive updates on the situation if these have not already been forwarded to us. If we plan to close an anti-social behaviour case we will write to the complainant first to inform them and invite them to complete a satisfaction survey on our handling of their anti-social behaviour case.

### **3.0 Aim of this policy**

Through the delivery of this policy, we aim to:

Enable residents to live peacefully within their homes without unreasonable disturbance from others

Encourage reporting and make it easy to report anti-social behaviour

Respond quickly and in a robust manner to incidents of anti-social behaviour

Ensure residents are clear on their tenancy obligations

Inspire confidence amongst residents that anti-social behaviour will be challenged

Ensure complainants are kept informed of actions being undertaken on their complaint

Use a full range (and where appropriate a combination) of measures (such as diversion, education, enforcement, prevention, engagement and rehabilitation) to tackle anti-social behaviour and its underlying causes

Provide a framework for supporting victims, witnesses and vulnerable perpetrators

Deliver a 'zero tolerance' approach towards abuse on staff

### **4.0 Who is covered by this policy?**

Our anti-social behaviour policy relates to all TDBC residents including persons residing visiting the property or otherwise engaged in lawful activity in the locality. Our policy is designed to protect residents in the areas where we work. We may act to protect owner-occupiers or those in other sectors from our residents and equally, may take action against people in other tenures to protect our residents.

Where our residents experience criminal activity, we will give advice on what action to take and any available additional support. Where the anti-social behaviour takes the form of a hate crime/incident or domestic violence we will comply with the service standard.

## **5.0 Types of anti-social behaviour**

We will use the following categories recommended by Housemark (a housing industry benchmarking organisation) for the different types of anti-social behaviour we deal with:

Noise (managed by Environmental Health)  
Verbal abuse / harassment / intimidation / threatening behaviour  
Hate related incidents (harassment based on race, sexual orientation, gender, disability, religion or age).  
Vandalism or damage to property  
Pets and animal nuisance  
Drugs / substance misuse / drug dealing  
Alcohol related  
Domestic abuse  
Physical violence  
Litter / rubbish / fly-tipping  
Garden nuisance  
Misuse of communal areas  
Prostitution / sexual acts / kerb crawling  
Criminal behaviour (other than listed above)

Dealing with noise nuisance

Noise is the most common type of anti-social behaviour reported to TDBC. These complaints are investigated by Environmental Health Department.

We are keen to:

- Respond effectively to resident complaints of noise nuisance
- Be realistic about the action we can take to deal with reports of excessive noise.

TDBC does not normally consider everyday living noises (such as toilets being flushed, washing cutlery) to be anti-social behaviour even if they are disturbing the complainant. In these cases we will normally expect neighbours to be tolerant and respectful of each other's lifestyle and needs and minimise the noise they create.

We recognise that there are certain properties that do not have good soundproofing and are prone to noise travel. In these cases even everyday living noises (such as walking around the flat during the day with outdoor shoes) can cause annoyance to their neighbour(s). From our experience we have found it very difficult to prove that the noise heard in these cases is anti-social behaviour except where statutory noise nuisance levels have been breached. This can result in cases remaining open for significant periods of time with the complainant reporting persistent problems (as well as the other party making counter-complaints) yet TDBC have insufficient evidence to take any formal action on the case. We have also found that in these cases mediation has proven to be very successful in resolving the problems. Therefore where we have identified a property as prone to noise we will only investigate a report of excessive noise where:

-The noise nuisance has been witnessed by local authority noise teams or recorded on sound recording equipment

Or

-Where we suspect these noise levels were breached.

Where there is no evidence of excessive noise nuisance or we suspect that the noise reported would not breach these levels we will invite all parties involved to undertake mediation. If both parties do not accept this we will close the case and only investigate further if noise nuisance is witnessed.

## **6.0 Definition of harassment**

TDBC defines harassment as behaviour that is abusive to individuals or groups and which is deliberate. It can take many forms and includes, but is not limited to:

Abusive or insulting behaviour

Threats of violence

Physical assault

Vandalism to property

Arson or attempted arson

Threatening, abusive or insulting graffiti

Repeated and unfounded complaints against a resident or residents

Attempts to deter a person from occupying a particular property

Abusive telephone calls

Uninvited visits to someone's home

Deliberate noise

Excrement, rubbish or offensive materials near or in the victim's home

Harassment may be directed against an individual, family or group of people. It is often motivated by prejudice against the characteristics of the individual or group. For example sexual harassment is the interference with a person's comfort or safety on grounds of their gender or sexuality. To distinguish harassment from domestic violence, the harasser is not usually a person with whom the complainant has previously been associated.

Harassment may be based on race, sexuality, gender, disability, religion or age

## **7.0 Definition of Hate Crime**

There is a distinct difference between a hate incident and a hate crime. Hate incident is defined as:

'Any incident, which may or may not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any other person, as being

motivated by prejudice or hate.'

Hate crime is defined as:

'Any hate incident, which constitutes a criminal offence, perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or Hate crime.'

It is vitally important to note that all hate crimes are hate incidents. However, some hate incidents may not constitute a criminal offence and therefore are not hate crimes.

The following are examples of different types of hate incidents. This list is not exhaustive:

- Racist incident
- Homophobic incident
- Transphobic incident
- Faith related incident
- Sectarian incident
- Disablist incident

The following are examples of actions effected by perpetrators of Hate Crime. This list is not exhaustive:

- Physical attacks on people and property;
- Intimidation and torment;
- Graffiti;
- Arson or attempted arson;
- Offensive comments;
- Abusive or threatening behaviour – language, letters, phone calls
- Deliberate and targeted acts intended to deter residents from living in their home or to force them to move away.

Domestic abuse is not included within this policy

## **8.0 Responsibility to deal with anti-social behaviour**

There are many agencies that have a responsibility to tackle anti-social behaviour these include the police and local authority Environmental Health teams, local Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships as well as housing associations. We will work in partnership with these agencies where appropriate to share information, best practice and provide a co-ordinated response to resolve the problems

## **9.0 Resident obligations**

TDBC tenancy agreement includes contractual terms forbidding residents or their visitors from causing anti-social behaviour. We will take further action where there is evidence of anti-social behaviour.

## **10.0 Taking action to resolve anti-social behaviour**

When deciding on action our main aim will be to stop the anti-social behaviour. Unless the reported ASB is particularly serious, every effort will be made to resolve the issue without the use of legal action. Where the allegations involve threats of violence or actual violence we will consider whether it is appropriate to take emergency legal action to protect personal safety.

## **11.0 Assessing potential actions in dealing with anti-social behaviour**

Part of the investigation into the anti-social behaviour a risk assessment is completed. We will consider the information gathered and decide what further action to take. If there is a lack of information to support the report this may limit the action we can take.

The action we take on a particular incident will depend on a number of factors, which include:

The seriousness of the incident (e.g. where there is intimidation or a threat of violence we may take immediate legal action on one incident; whereas on the first report of noise nuisance we may serve a warning letter).

The number of previous incidents that have occurred

The level of evidence we have on the reported ASB

Any legal advice received on the case

Whether the people involved have vulnerability.

We understand that the circumstances will vary with each case and this will affect the action taken. However we will aim to resolve lower category ASB with non-legal action at first and only consider legal action where problems persist.

We will write to the complainant and the alleged perpetrator after we have completed our investigation confirming whether the reports of anti-social behaviour are proven or not and what further action will be taken. Where anti-social behaviour is not proven we may issue warnings that on the consequences if anti-social behaviour is proven in the future.

Where anti-social behaviour is proven we will take firm proportional action. Where non-legal action fails to stop the anti-social behaviour we will consider taking legal action.

Actions taken to resolve the anti-social behaviour could involve a combination of the following:

### **11.1 Non-legal actions**

Warning letters

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs)  
Referral to mediation  
Monitoring with diary sheets  
Referral to Safer Somerset Partnership  
Parenting contract (informal)  
Parenting courses  
Referral to the Environmental Protection Team  
Referral to Supported Housing or other support package  
Referral to Family Focus Team  
Referral to the Mental Health Team  
Referral to the Youth Offending team

## **11.2 Legal actions**

Demotion Orders,  
Possession proceedings,  
Criminal Behaviour Orders,  
Closure of premises  
Recovery of possession of dwelling houses  
Public spaces possession orders  
Community Protection Notices  
Injunctions under 153a, 153B, 153C, 153D of the 1996 Act (including with the power of arrest attached)  
Or other legal action e.g. Community triggers ASB & Police Act 2014, Environmental Protection Act 1990 or criminal prosecution).

## **12.0 Confidentiality**

Complainants will be encouraged to allow us to share information with other agencies, including the police and partner agencies, to ensure that the full range of civil and criminal action can be pursued and appropriate support provided. However all information provided by the complainant will be treated with the utmost confidence and only passed to external agencies with proper consent. The exception is where we consider a child is at risk in any situation or if there is a high risk of serious harm to anyone involved. The Community Services Manager or Housing Services Lead will approve any disclosure without the complainant's consent.

There may be situations where the complainant has requested that no action is taken on a report. However where we consider the situation to be serious we may feel that we have little option but to pursue an issue against their wishes. In such circumstances we will take appropriate action to protect all those affected.

## **13.0 Providing support and tackling the causes of anti-social behaviour**

When we first investigate a report of anti-social behaviour we will undertake an assessment of the support needs of the complainant, witnesses and perpetrators and with their consent refer them to an appropriate support provider. When taking action we will consider the various factors that may be

causing the anti-social behaviour and will seek to take appropriate action to tackle these causes identified. This may include making a referral to an anger management course where aggressive behaviour has occurred or referral to the local Community Mental Health team where mental ill-health is identified as contributing to the anti-social behaviour. Throughout the case (including at the end) we will re-assess the support needs of those involved and take appropriate action.

We realise that the active co-operation of complainants and witnesses is vital to the success of the service. Therefore we will support residents by:

Providing them with information on our service and what we can do to help them

Agreeing with them what action we will take on the case

Providing regular updates on the progress of the case

Regularly assess their support needs

Suggest providers of appropriate support.

## **14.0 Safeguarding children and vulnerable adults**

Whilst delivering our anti-social behaviour service, if we consider a child or vulnerable adult to be at risk of harm we will be take appropriate action in line with our vulnerability policy and relevant local authority safeguarding procedures.

## **15.0 Closing an anti-social behaviour case**

We will close an anti-social behaviour case in the following circumstances:

The anti-social behaviour as finalised

There have been no reports of further incidents for at least one month

An investigation has been completed and there is no evidence of ASB

The complainant has not co-operated with requests from the authority making it difficult to progress further with the case.

## **16.0 Abusive behaviour towards staff**

We will not tolerate abusive behaviour, threats or violence towards our staff members or contractors. We will work with the police and other agencies to take action where this occurs. This action may involve exclusion from office premises and legal action.

### **16.1 Staff training**

TDBC provides training for all staff dealing with anti-social behaviour complaints. This programme includes:

- training on policy and procedures, good practice and legal remedies in tackling anti-social behaviour, domestic violence and hate crimes/incidents
- health and safety training
- training seminars
- informal training and coaching from supervisors.

### **16.2 Best Value and Continuous Improvement**

TDBC is committed to continuously improving its service to residents. To this end we will develop an annual ASB Strategy, which will draw upon best practice and value for money considerations to set the direction of service development.

In tackling anti-social behaviour we aim to use our resources effectively so that the maximum number of residents can benefit from our service. Through engaging with our external partners we will endeavour to lever-in their resources to resolve anti-social behaviour within our stock. On an annual basis we will assess the cost of providing our anti-social behaviour service as a cost per property and benchmark these costs with those of other organisations. We will also set targets to reduce the average amount of time taken to resolve cases.

### **16.3 Key Performances Indicators**

We will routinely monitor our performance in implementing of this policy and report on our performance to the TDBC Senior Management, Tenant Services Board and Elected members.

Indicators we use to measure of the service include:

The number of ASB cases in total

The number of hate crimes reported per category

The number of cases closed

The number of actions taken to resolve ASB (such as evictions due to ASB, CRSBOs, Injunctions, Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, referral to the Safer Somerset Partnerships)

The satisfaction of complainants on closed cases

We will publish in the TDBC annual report:

The number of evictions due to ASB action

The number of Criminal Behaviour Orders obtained

The number of Injunctions obtained

### **17.0 Relevant legislation and regulatory documents**

Respect Standard for Housing Management

Respect Performance Toolkit

Housing Quality Network “The Respect Standard: What Social Landlords should be doing and what inspectors are looking for”

Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 (Section 12)

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

ASB & Police Act 2014

Disability Discrimination Act 2001

Data Protection Act 1998

Housing Act 1985

Housing Act 1996

## **18.0 Equality and diversity**

Housing Services recognises that it operates in a community within which there is wide social diversity, and is committed to providing equal opportunities and valuing diversity.

Through the management of our empty properties we aim to treat all customers fairly, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status. To enable all residents to have clear information and equal access to our available properties, Housing Services publishes clear information in a range of appropriate languages and formats and through a range of media on request.

Feedback is also accepted through a variety of different routes to reflect individual tenant's preferences or needs.

To help demonstrate our approach our Tenancy Management Policy is in keeping with our equality and diversity aims and objectives, we collect equalities information on satisfaction with the void management process, the re-let standard, and the quality of advice provided to prospective and existing tenants, to feed into our monitoring and review processes. We will carry out diversity impact assessments on all new and reviewed policies.

Full details of our approach are set out in our Equality and Diversity Strategy.

## **19.0 Customer involvement**

Housing Services recognises the importance of working in partnership with our customers to develop and continuously improve our services and raise standards. Housing Services actively involves all tenants in at the beginning of decision making processes and ensures tenants are empowered to play a part in wider consultation and involvement structures, as detailed in full in our Resident Involvement Strategy.

To demonstrate this commitment, we will:

- Review the policy in consultation with service users and customers;
- Involve customers in the monitoring and testing of service delivery standards, laid out in this policy and relevant procedures;
- Publish information in relation to performance against the aims and standards set down by this policy;
- Develop and review this policy in light of customer feedback, comments and complaints.

## **20.0 Policy monitoring and review**

This policy will be reviewed by Housing Services every three years unless there is a change in legislation or regulation.

Where there has been a change in legislation which has an impact on the policy, the policy will be reviewed within 3 months of the legislation or regulation coming into affect.

## **20.1 Responsibility**

The Housing Service lead will retain the overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.

The Housing Lettings and ASB Manager is responsible for the operational delivery of this policy and the associated procedures. This includes responsibility for monitoring and review, staff awareness and training, policy development and communication to customers.

## Appendix 2

### Equality Impact Assessment – pro-forma

<b>Responsible person</b>	<i>Paul Hadley</i>	<b>Job Title ASB and Voids Housing Manager</b>
<b>Why are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment? (Please mark as appropriate)</b>	Proposed new policy/service	
	Change to Policy/service	
	Budget/Financial decision – MTFP	
	Part of timetable	
<b>What are you completing the Equality Impact Assessment on (which, service, MTFP proposal)</b>		<b>Housing Service</b>
<b>Section One – Scope of the assessment</b>		
What are the main purposes/aims of the policy/decision/service?	<p><i>The aim is to add amendments following introduction of new ASB powers from Anti-social behaviour, police and crime act 2014</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Amend policy to reflect new powers</i></li> <li>• <i>Amend policy to remove old powers</i></li> </ul>	
Which protected groups are targeted by the policy/decision/service?	<i>All council tenants regardless of race, religion, sex, ethnic background, Sexual orientation, Disability, Age</i>	
What evidence has been used in the assessment - data, engagement undertaken – please list each source that has been used  The information can be found on....	<p>Data collected from all previous reports of Anti- Social Behaviour.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Number of reports</li> <li>2. Type of reports</li> <li>3. Outcomes of the reports</li> </ol> <p>Engagement has been undertaken with the following</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Police</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tenant groups</li> <li>• Family Focus staff</li> <li>• NHS protect</li> <li>• Social services</li> </ul> <p>Information can be found on</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Housing Service Neighbour Nuisance Statistical reports</li> <li>2. Initial ASB reporting forms</li> <li>3. ASB module)</li> </ol>
<b>Section two – Conclusion drawn</b> about the impact of service/policy/function/change on different groups highlighting negative impact, unequal outcomes or missed opportunities for promoting equality	
There will be no impact in service or on policy in relation to the different groups. It will reinforce current policy and procedures in the reporting and investigation of Anti Social Behaviour. It shows support for victim and witness of Anti Social behaviour and links into other agencies and support networks available to our tenants.	
<b>I have concluded that there is/should be:</b>	
No major change - no adverse equality impact identified	No major change in the service provision.
Adjust the policy/decision/service	
Continue with the policy/decision/service	
Stop and remove the policy/decision/service	

Reasons and documentation to support conclusions	
<b>Section four – Implementation</b> – timescale for implementation	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Consult with partners Aug 14</li> <li>2. Consult with tenants groups representatives Sept/ Oct 14</li> <li>3. Report to TSMB Oct 14</li> <li>4. Sign off by housing portfolio holder Nov 14</li> </ol>	
<b>Section Five – Sign off</b>	
Responsible officer Paul Hadley Date	Management Team Housing Voids and ASB Manager. Date
<b>Section six – Publication and monitoring</b>	
Published on	
Next review date	
Date logged on Covalent	

### Action Planning

The table should be completed with all actions identified to mitigate the effects concluded.

Actions table					
Service area			Date		
Identified issue drawn from your conclusions	Actions needed	Who is responsible?	By when?	How will this be monitored?	Expected outcomes from carrying out actions

# **Taunton Deane Borough Council**

## **Tenant Services Management Board – 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014**

### **Dates of Tenant Services Management Board Meetings 2015**

#### **Report of the Tenant Empowerment Manager – Martin Price**

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

#### **1. Executive Summary**

The purpose of this report is to agree the dates of the Tenant Services Management Board meetings for 2015.

#### **2. Background**

The Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) meets on a monthly basis. Members of the public are welcome to attend (although they may be asked to leave a meeting if confidential issues are being discussed). In order to give board members and members of the public plenty of notice it is prudent to set the dates for 2015 in advance. The dates will also be publicised to tenants and leaseholders.

#### **3. Proposed dates for 2015**

**The proposed dates for 2015 are:**

- Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2015
- Monday 20th April 2015
- Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015
- Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015
- Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015
- Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2015
- Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015
- Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2015
- Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015

You will see from the above that there is one meeting date booked for a Tuesday – on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June. The TSMB may choose to hold its meeting on a Monday as usual but at a venue different from the John Meikle Room in the Deane House.

Board members may also remember that traditionally the April meeting has been the TSMB Annual General Meeting which in previous years has been amalgamated with the Tenants and Leaseholders Open Day. There is currently a tenant working group planning the 2015 open day. This group is considering holding the event in June.

The TSMB may therefore need to consider whether to hold its Annual General Meeting separately from the open day.

The John Meikle Room has been reserved for the above dates except the August meeting to ensure a venue has been booked. The TSMB will be asked to consider a venue for this meeting at a later date.

**4. Finance Comments**

Not applicable.

**5. Legal Comments**

There are no legal implications of this report.

**6. Links to Corporate Aims**

There are no specific links within this report.

**7. Environmental Implications**

There are no environmental implications of this report.

**8. Community Safety Implications**

There are no community safety implications of this report.

**9. Risk Management**

Not appropriate to this report.

**10. Partnership Implications**

There are no partnership implications of this report.

**11. Recommendations**

The Tenant Services Management Board is asked to consider and agree the proposed dates of meetings for 2015 as detailed in this report.

**Contact:** Martin Price— Tenant Empowerment Manager  
01823 356552  
[m.price@tauntondeane.gov.uk](mailto:m.price@tauntondeane.gov.uk)

**Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 27 October 2014 at 6pm in JMR, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.**

**Present:** Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr D Etherington, Mr D Galpin, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey and Councillor Bowrah.

**Officers:** Shari Hallett (Business Support Lead – Housing & Communities), Paul Hadley (Housing Manager – Lettings & Anti-Social Behaviour), Michaela Mullen (Welfare Reform Project Officer), Tony Knight (Estates Officer ASB), Phil Webb (Housing Manager – Property Services), Kene Ibezi (Assistant Director of Property & Development), James Barrah (Director of Housing & Communities), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), and Emma Hill (Corporate Support Officer).

**Others:** Councillors Mrs Smith and Mrs Warmington

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

**1. Apologises**

Mrs J Hegarty, Mr M Edwards, Mr R Middleton and Cllr Miss Smith

**2. Public Question Time**

No questions received for Public Question Time.

**3. Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Bowrah declared personal interest as members of his family were Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenant.

Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr D Etherington, Mr D Galpin, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey and declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

**4. Housing and Community Services – Fees and Charges 2015/16.**

Considering report previously circulated, concerning the proposed fees and charges for Housing and Community Services in 2015/16.

It was proposed to increase fees and charges by applying Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation as at the previous September 2014 (September 2014 RPI inflation was 2.3%). Board Member were presented with a revised version of the new Fees and Charges breakdown for 2015/16.

Council housing rents would be set early in the New Year.

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

- There was no inclusion of the new fees and charges concerning tenants with septic tanks. Would tenants be notified of any changes?

*The officer would look into any changes to fees and charges for septic tanks and come back to the Board with the information.*

- How many garages in the Council had on their books and how many were being rented out?

*The Council had roughly 1500 garages as stock. Currently, there were 60 garages advertised for rent but there were a number under repair before being putting up for rent.*

- Was the Council promoting and advertising the Council's garages which were for rent and could the Council target specific areas of the borough?

*The Council had garages available for rent all over the borough so the Council couldn't target specific areas but their availability was advertised on regular basis.*

- What did the Council do when they found out tenants were using rented garages as storage and not for their cars?

*All tenants were made aware that their tenancy excluded the use of their garage for storage.*

*When Estate Officers discover those who were using their garages for storage, the Council would start proceedings to take action against these tenants.*

- When would tenants be notified of any fees and charges changes?

*This information would be sent out to tenants as notification in February 2015.*

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

## **5. Welfare Reform 2014-15 Interim Year Report.**

Considering report previously circulated, concerning the first six months of the second year of the Welfare Reforms and its effects on Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Services tenants. The report makes the following recommendations for the future activity:

The main points of the report were as follows:

- Proactive support for tenants who had financial difficulties
- Working with partner agencies to support tenants
- Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) were only a short term solution for tenants affected by the welfare reform changes. The application process being intensive and time consuming for staff.
- Highlighted the lack of one bedroom accommodation in our and other local housing providers stock.

But it also asks questions in relation to our potential responses to the forthcoming implementation of Universal Credit in Taunton Deane.

Since the WRPO took post over 22 months ago the officer had identified the tenants affected by the under occupancy penalty and subsequently the tenants affected by the Benefit Cap. Work was also being undertaken to identify our more vulnerable tenants who would be put at risk of enforcement action being taken against them through non-payment of rent.

Under Occupancy Affected Tenants on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014, there were 393 tenants affected by the Under Occupancy Penalty, this had reduced over the year to 372 of which 200 were in rent arrears. In a recent Inside Housing magazine report 'The Link Group' a housing provider in Scotland of a similar size to TDBC (6147 properties) has 377 tenants affected by the Under Occupancy Charge of which 196 were in rent arrears.

Early Intervention concerning personal visits were conducted by the Council Welfare Reform Project Officer. These supported and assisted our tenants to maintain their tenancy in light of the changes. The visits which on average continue to last up to one hour. Dependent on the need of the tenant, it can take more than one visit to supply the support required. This allowed the officer to:

- Explain about the changes and how they affect the individual household.
- Complete financial statements to support applications for DHP's.
- Sign post tenants to support agencies in relation to any debt issues.
- Explain and assist with HomeFinder Somerset applications
- Explain how the Transfer Removal Grant scheme works to assist those households wishing to downsize to accommodation more suitable for their housing needs.
- Explain about the Mutual Exchange process.
- Offer help and support to tenants.

Households affected could apply for Discretionary Housing Payments had been encouraged or supported in applying for a DHP to help mitigate the negative financial impact that being unable to move may have. Without the level of DHP available or the positive intervention of the WRPO and other officers more Council households would be suffering financial difficulty.

61 Council tenants were successfully awarded DHP's. The majority of successful applications were completed by or with the assistance of the WRPO. This equates to £24,433.27 of the DHP budget of £132,000.

Looking at rent arrears, on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014, there were 385 tenants affected, 187 of these households were in rent arrears amounting to a total of £38,704.25. Compared to 100 households with rent arrears, which amounted to £32,090.54 in April 2013.

Tenant overall rent arrears figures in April 2014 were £344,242.82 compared to £406,147.69 in April 2013.

Concerning evictions, as a result of the Under Occupancy Penalty 12 tenants had been subject to court action, no-one had been evicted.

The Council's Digital Inclusion Project was building up to the introduction of Universal Credit in 2015. It would be vital to the Council's business plan to maintain a high level of income and keep rent arrears to a minimum. It was vital that our tenants had access to IT because of the shift to digital by default for the majority of public and private sector services. The government had stated that 60% of Universal Credit claims would need to be completed and updated on line.

Housing services had procured self-service kiosks for use by our residents. The initial phase has seen the kiosks placed in the following locations across the borough:

- Deane House x 2
- Wellington Community Office
- Priorswood Resource Centre
- Milverton Community Hall

Each kiosk would enable tenants to access a variety of websites including TDBC, SCC, DWP, NHS Direct, Somerset Advice Network, CAB and Somerset Savings and Loan

The second phase would include kiosks being installed in a variety of community locations including Newton Road, Moorland Place, Middleway and Wellesley Street.

The first five kiosks were the initial phase of a broader borough wide installation. This burden should not be borne by the HRA alone and other areas of the council should now build on this initial stage of work by the housing services and commit resources and funds to provide greater access across the Deane for our communities.

Below are the Council Welfare Reform interim report recommendations:

- Close working relationships were vital between housing services and the Revenue and Benefits Department, DWP, CAB, and Jobcentre+ facilitated by timely and appropriate information sharing.
- Managing the impact of welfare reform was a whole organisation effort so communication and training for internal staff was a key to success.
- Improve the information and knowledge of our tenants and develop effective communications with them maximising contact opportunities. These were essential steps to secure payment of rent and identify personal or budgeting support needs.
- Ensure that there were sufficient resources in place to provide money management advice and support to residents which was key to protecting the housing service income stream.

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

- Had there been any feedback on the IT Access Kiosks?  
*The Council currently only had two months feedback from the Kiosks. The Kiosks situated at The Deane House and the Priorswood Centre were being heavily used but the feedback on the kiosks situated at Wellington Community Centre were not being widely used but the Council were looking into this.*
- Would users have access to assistance if they required it?  
*This particular feedback had been taken on board and officers were looking into a variety of sources for kiosks assistance as well as providing an appointment booking system.*
- Was DHP only going to those tenants or residents who expressed interest or who had applied to downsize?  
*They had to physically apply for DHP. This could been down through the Revenues and Benefits principal benefit's officer.*  
*The face to face contact via the Council's reception and officers was very important as people didn't always want to talk about their issues.*
- How difficult was it to find the information?

*Each case varies and it can take several visits from officers or agencies before the family or persons trusts the officer enough to discuss their underlying issues and for officers to gather the information they need for DHP.*

- Is the support provided the Welfare Reform Project Officer (WRPO) helping with the money management problems?  
*The Council officers complete some very basic and minor debt management solutions then we refer them to the CAB to tackle their larger debt issues.*  
*The Council aims to work with other departments and agencies to resolve debt issues.*
- Could the Council look into moving elderly residents into smaller two bed properties and then moving those young families stuck in two beds to the then freed up three and four beds properties?  
*Unlike other agencies, the Council had always looked to make the best use of our housing stock. The normal procedure would to downsize elderly tenants and residents into one bed properties, unless they had a specific need to be moved into two bed property.*
- Could the Council look into having WiFi in the community areas and meetings halls?  
*Officers were looking into this and ways to restrict use and access to the networks as well as limiting what the network can used for.*  
*The officers had approached and produced a list of Digital Champions who had volunteered to support user of computer or kiosk facilities. But this had reduced from the original number, which was ten volunteers.*

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

## **6. Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and Policy Update Report**

Considering report previously circulated, concerning an update on the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and Policy for the Council's Housing Services, as a direct result of the introduction of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The report outlined the strategic overview that tenants could expect from Housing Services in relation to Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

The ASB policy details the organisations arrangements for managing the risk of ASB to tenants within the councils housing stock.

The strategy and policy was a living documents and would be reviewed on a regular basis.

This Government had set out a new approach to crime, policing and community safety, based on a fundamental shift from bureaucratic to democratic accountability through directly elected Police and Crime Commissioners, increased transparency, and increasing professional discretion. This new approach included overhauling the whole system of dealing with ASB to ensure agencies are putting the needs of victims first.

Previously the police, councils and others had started to adopt a range of effective mechanisms that improve the response they provide to victims, which ensured that vulnerable victims were better supported.

In terms of the behaviour itself, what was seen as 'anti-social' would vary from victim to victim, and community to community. It no longer focuses on the behaviour, but on the impact it had on the victim.

The correct response would depend on a range of factors, but most importantly, on the needs of the victim and the impact the behaviour was having on their lives.

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

- After reading through this report, strategy and policy as a tenant and resident I felt safer and more secure even while reading it.

**Resolved** to recommend to the Portfolio Holder for Housing Services Councillor Adkins the approval of the Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy and Policy.

## 7. **Verbal Report on Police Innovation Fund.**

The Director of Housing and Communities gave a verbal update concerning the Council's application to Police Innovation Fund.

Below was a summary of the Director's verbal report to Board Members:

- The new model of working for the Council and other agencies known as the Halcon One Team had produced great results on the Halcon estate with the families and the community.
- The Council and the One Team agencies were planning to roll this model out to other areas within the borough.
- Cllr Warmington and representatives had already presented the model of the Halcon One Team at variety of conferences and seminars and it had been taken up in a variety of other areas across the country.
- Council Officers and Cllr Warmington had put together an application for funding to roll out this model throughout the borough.
- The funding application to the Police Innovation Fund would cover further work in Halcon as well as extending to North Taunton and Wellington. This funding would allow work to continue or start for this year as well as next year.
- This funding would support data analysis across multiple agencies to build intelligence on those families most in need of support and assistance.
- The Council were in the process of locating an administrator and area managers for the areas.
- The interim staff for these areas were:
  - Halcon – Sgt James Turner
  - Wellington – Paul Chamberlin
  - North Taunton – Dean Chedzoy
- The funding was to bring all this together and co-ordinate the projects areas and pull all the agencies together.
- The demand on this service related to particular core demand within each targeted area.
- There were roughly 2000 properties within each area.
- The Council and other agencies were also looking to include lower demand rural areas as well as working in the higher demand urban areas.
- The project model plans would come back to a future meeting of the Board in due course.

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

- Were there any prospective savings and not just monetary terms?  
*The aim was to reduce the demand on agencies services by reducing and solving the debt issues for tenants and residents in areas of the borough. This also included solving other issues such ASB.*  
*Starting with areas such as benefits at an individual family level, when these issues were resolved it had a benefit at community level.*  
*This new model for agencies was all about working differently with existing data and resources rather than employing new staff, the idea was to pool and use the existing resources as well as funding some additional support.*  
*The officer helps families make sure they were claiming the correct benefits and what they were entitled to but also helping them to live on a low income.*
- Were Parish Councils be included and have an effect on this?  
*The Parish Councils were not currently involved with the single area model as urban central areas of Taunton including Halcon were not parished but as the model moved into new and other areas, we would aim to make contact and include Parish and Town Council such as Wellington Town Council. The solutions for each area would be different as it would depend on the individual needs and issues of the area.*
- Did the senior partners of the Halcon One Team meet regularly and would representatives of all three areas meet to co-ordinate and make contact?  
*The Council were working on a new governance structure for this new three area approach and this would be reported back to the Board Members in due course.*
- Would there be an overarching executive committee monitoring all the agencies in these areas?  
Yes, there would be an overarching Executive monitoring the areas, partners and agencies.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

## **8. Report on the Dates for Tenant Services Management Board Meetings for 2015.**

Considering report previously circulated, concerning the dates of the Tenant Services Management Board meetings for 2015.

The Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) met on a monthly basis. Members of the public were welcome to attend. In order to give board members and members of the public plenty of notice it was prudent to set the dates for 2015 in advance. The dates would also be publicised to tenants and leaseholders. The proposed meetings dates for 2015 were as follows:

- Monday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2015
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> February 2015
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2015
- Monday 20th April 2015
- Monday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2015
- Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2015
- Monday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2015

- Monday 17<sup>th</sup> August 2015
- Monday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2015
- Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015
- Monday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2015
- Monday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015

Board Members would notice from the above that there was one meeting date booked for a Tuesday – on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June. The TSMB may choose to hold its meeting on a Monday as usual but at a venue different from the John Meikle Room in the Deane House. Also the meeting on 17 August 2015 would need to be held away from The Deane House as the John Meikle Room was not available.

Board members may also remember that traditionally the April meeting had been the TSMB Annual General Meeting which in previous years had been amalgamated with the Tenants and Leaseholders Open Day. There was currently a tenant working group planning the 2015 open day. This group was considering holding the event in June.

The TSMB may therefore need to consider whether to hold its Annual General Meeting separately from the open day.

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

- Board Members were happy with the planned meeting date for the Board for 2015.
- Training could be held before the Board meeting but could these be staggered and not before every month's meeting?
- The first training session could be before the November meeting starting at 4:30pm and running until 5:30pm to allow time for a break before going into the Board meeting at 6pm.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

## **9. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

## **10. Confidential Report on the West Somerset and Taunton Deane Joint Management and Shared Services Project.**

Considered confidential report previously circulated, concerning the Management and Shared Services Structure for Housing and Community Development.

The Director for Housing and Communities provided the Board Members with an updated summary the shared services structure for Housing and Community Development.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

**11. Confidential Report on the Confidential Report on the West Somerset and Taunton Deane Joint Management and Shared Services Project.**

Considered confidential report previously circulated, concerning the Management and Shared Services Structure for Property and Development.

The Assistant Director for Property and Development provided the Board Members with an updated summary of the shared services structure for Property and Development.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

**12. Confidential Report on the Confidential Report on the West Somerset and Taunton Deane Joint Management and Shared Services Project.**

Considered confidential report previously circulated, concerning the Management and Shared Services Structure for Business Support for Housing and Communities.

The Business Support Lead for Housing and Communities provided the Board Members with an updated summary of the shared services structure for Business Support for Housing and Communities.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

(The meeting ended at 8.10pm)