

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 1 June 2015 at 6pm in the JMR, the Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr R Balman (Chairperson)
Ms M Davis (Vice-Chairperson)
Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Etherington, Mr D Galpin, Mr K Hellier, Councillor Bowrah.

Officers: James Barraah (Director of Housing & Communities), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director – Housing Community Development), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Jo Humble (Housing Development and Enabling Manager), Julie-Anne Gordon (Development Officer), Caroline White (Housing Development Project Lead), Sam Muckett (Right to Buy Officer), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Tracey Meadows (Democratic Services Officer), Michelle Brooks (Democratic Services Officer),

Others: Councillor Coles

(The Meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

Mr M Edwards, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr I Hussey, Mr R Middleton, Councillor Miss F 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 Tenants.

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

4. Weavers Arms Development, Rockwell Green, Wellington

The planning application for this project was submitted in Early September, with phase 1 to begin in early June. There are two remaining tenants and TDBC is currently working with them to clear the site, however one family is not engaging. A dashboard approach similar to Creechbarrow Road is to be taken.

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

- How long before the tenant will be out?
Looking at legal options. First Stage is to serve notice and wait 28 days, then submit claim for possession to move. County Court will notify of hearing, this could be 7-9 weeks waiting. A Judge will schedule a hearing time whereby both parties submit information for / against possession.
- If the Tenant does not appear at the Court hearing, what happens?
Tenants always encouraged to attend by supporting them through the process, i.e. suitable properties offered, basis of number of bedrooms, location, consideration of work, dependants and school etc. Obviously if the tenant does not turn up, makes a stronger case for the Council.
- Worst case scenario, what happens if the tenant absolutely refuses to move?
Listen to tenant and continue to support, offer reasonable property to move to. The County Court Judge normally schedules a moving date. If the tenant does not move within the timeframe, then a warrant for a bailiff to attend premises is applied for, accompanied by the police if needed.
- What is the cost of this for the council?
The tenant still pays rent, but there is financial support for the tenant decanting – packing service, removals, home loss payment, plus others.
- Are the tenants staying hoping for extra money, extra bedrooms and have they been made aware of the current situation?
The tenants are aware of the situation, a range of support measures have been implemented by the Development Office, definitely gone the extra mile and demonstrated the help and assistance that is available. The area looks more like a building site, with many properties boarded up, considering putting a fence around the whole area to stop items being stolen.

5. Photovoltaic Installations and External Wall installation

An investment of £1.5 m will see installation of 350 photovoltaic systems to TDBC housing stock. Restrictions have been put in place by Western Power Distribution. A mailshot has been sent out, and homes identified, with some, mainly elderly / infirm not wanting intrusion or disruption to their home. Refusal to have work done can work as an advantage, as this allows the pickup of homes that would like it done, but currently are unable due to restrictions. One third of the properties have been completed, and the hope is to have the project completed by August, depending on cooperation with Western Power Distribution. There have been a few complaints to do with scaffolding, these issues are unavoidable and are all being monitored.

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

- Recommendation of a 3 month response survey with results being made available to the Board.
100% post insulation survey good idea, but 6 months recommended, collect bills etc.
- This is a small scheme 350, how can expectations be managed? Some people are asking for it and will be disappointed.
Due to Western Power Distribution limitations and locations, some homes definitely cannot have photovoltaic, and therefore unable to avoid disappointment. The grid requires strengthening to add more houses, and the location of house or the roof not being big enough is also an issue.
- Can TDBC fund grid strengthening? Maybe tenants can pay a small amount.
The budget was £1.5 m and state energy funds reduced some costs. TDBC will review cashflow business plan over next few months.
- Are the houses insulated to a standard?
All houses have an EPC less than D

6. External wall insulation.

Work to start next week on 41 Cornish non-traditional properties to remove cladding and replace it with solid wall insulation. Preparation / installation will take two weeks, with old cladding being inspected for asbestos. Work should be completed by September with the benefit being felt in Bludgeon Hill, Stoke St Mary and Ruishton.

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- Trigger point for problems?
Asbestos surveys need to be carried out. Inspection will show areas for concrete cancer and the surveyors will take this case by case. EWI has the longest life span and The Low Carbon Exchange have been appointed.
- Will Woolaways be fitted?
Retro for Cornish only, Woolaways defective and short life span – need to look at all options.

7. Right to Buy Social Mobility Fund Home Ownership Cash Incentive Scheme

Announced a successful bid for £300,000 from the Right to Buy Social Mobility Fund. This is in partnership with Magna West Somerset and West Somerset and equates to a grant of £20,000 to a potential fifteen applicants. Restrictions and timescales are tight, must be open market property and must have exchanged and in process of competing by 31 Mar 2016. Grant determination letter to be issued from DCLG after consultation with the 151 Officer, once details known further work is required to ensure financial procedures and arrangements are in place.

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

- Applaud this scheme, but only 15 is a concern
There is currently no indication of number of people prepared to take this offer up. With reputation to consider, better to fulfil the current allocation and then apply for more in the next bid round.
- £20,000 enough incentive? Big difference between right to buy and open market, should consider ramping up percentage or offering a right to build programme.
Have to look at cost matching, there is a tight time scale. If announce more funding and TDBC successful maybe there will be room for an increase. Right to self-build information on TDBC website, land supply is fundamental and look at better use of land supply.

8. Deane House relocation update.

With Deane House needing significant investment, the Council has carried out occupancy surveys and estimated costs to repair the building. Deane House is deemed too large for current requirement, and there is a need to provide easy customer access and agile and flexible ways of working. This will change the way of working, IT provision will improve and customer interaction will be via the web more often – on the whole cheaper. The Council has considered two options, relocation or new build. After a full DTZ evaluation of both financial and non-financial factors, County Hall was considered the best value for money. A full report is to be submitted to Council pending work to a full business case. Sue Tomlinson is the full time project manager, and is currently preparing a full business case. Approximate dates for submission and sign offs:

- 26 June 2015 – TDBC confirm general requirements
- 24 July 2015 – TDBC sign off concept designs
- Dec 2015 – Full business case to

Points to note:

- Shared reception area (TDBC, SCC, Police, other partners)
- Better ICT, document management
- TDBC smart office principles will offer 40% reduction of desks
- Flexible /agile working – work is an activity not a place
- Staff – big change and all facets affected; relocation, SMART office, multi agencies
- IT – challenge to set up the SMART office
- Tenants – location, environment, ways to pay

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- Parking will be reduced, can the current car parking area be retained?
*Available short term parking for short transactions and Members.
Currently looking into utilising other assets, land holdings and park and ride concessions, biggest impact will be for staff.*
- Suggested name SATIC (Somerset and Taunton Information Centre)
Great idea, all names gratefully received, currently looking at branding.
- How will the SMART office work in County Hall?
The physical environment will use fewer workstations and breakout areas. The desk size will be smaller, with a level of area zoning i.e. housing / planning. As workers can be internally / externally mobile

fewer desks needed, but lockers provided.

- Income from Deane House?
Site surveys will be carried out and consideration of lump sum or commercial regeneration considered. Revenue or return and stake in profit business case work in progress.
- Incentive to use public transport?
Loan scheme for bicycles, mileage for bicycles and car share.
- Will the rent machine / kiosks be available, when will meetings be held?
Assume that all machines / kiosks in the new building. Should be no clash of meetings as County meet in the day, and TDBC in the evening.

9. Introduction of Housing Portfolio Holder and Acknowledgement and Appreciation outgoing Chairman.

James Barraah introduced the new Housing portfolio holder, Cllr Terry Beale.

Formal acknowledgement of work and commitment from Dustyn Etherington, during his time as Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board.

Dustyn took up the Chairmanship in 2010. He has worked to steer engagement, regularly attendance to hear views and has been a credit to benefit all tenants, all the while being fair and confident in his leadership. He has reached many milestones including, but not limited to:

- Creechbarrow Road development, ensuring TDBC received back more properties than it lost and a regeneration that received local and political support.
- New Tenancy Policy that provided security for current and future tenants
- HRA Business Plan - helping shape the priorities and undertaking annual review
- Co-regulation – using performance indicators and financial reports to make sure TDBC is on track to deliver what it is supposed to and not being afraid to ask questions when it is not. Creation of “Top Ten” performance indicators that is available for all tenants to see in the quarterly newsletters and TDBC website.

- Making sure major policies are correct before they are introduced – for example anti-social behaviour and welfare reform

Dustyn was thanked for his support and work over the years, quoting Dustyn from the Tenants' Talk Newsletter – November 2009

Tenants' Talk Newsletter - November 2009

"I started to get involved in local group meetings and also attending Tenants' Forum meeting hoping to make a difference or be part of a decision making process that would help towards improving the lives of those who live in our council housing, from basic home improvements to addressing anti-social behaviour. I do not have all the answers to some problems, but collectively those that live with the problems associated with social housing have a better understanding than those who do not. So tenants should and must be given a say over their own housing because in the end they pay for it in more ways than one."

All agreed that Dustyn had more than fulfilled his intentions and purpose, and should be congratulated on his achievements and all wished Dustyn well for the future.

(The meeting ended at 8:10pm)