

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Tuesday 15 March 2011 at 6pm in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

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

Officers: Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Paul Hadley (Housing Estates Manager), Sharon Harvey (Support Housing Team Manager), Tim Haynes (Property Manager), Helen Mockridge (Administrative Assistant), Martin Price (Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer), Christine Thompson (Supported Housing Manager), Tracey Vernon (Tenant Services Development Officer) and Lesley Webb (Housing Enabling Lead)

(The meeting commenced at 6pm)

20. Apology

Apology: Councillor Brooks

21. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 14 February 2011 were taken as read and were signed.

22. Public Question Time

A group of tenants asked the Board the reasons why solid fuel and open fires were being removed from Council properties. It was an eco friendly and sustainable source of fuel.

The Property Manager responded that it was because of Health and Safety issues, chimney fires and carbon monoxide poisoning were a particular concern, and the cost of servicing and ongoing costs of maintenance.

23. Declaration of Interests

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

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

- Mr Hellier
- Mrs Marshall
- Mr Watkin

Councillor Brooks declared personal interests as a council house tenant and as a Member of Somerset County Council.

24. Fire Places in Taunton Deane Borough Council

The Property Manager explained that oil burners which had been installed in properties without permission were a concern. Full central heating had been installed to provide adequate heating to each room. This had been done in properties which had chimney fires. Open fires had been bricked up where there were exchanges or voids. Health and Safety was a concern. Chimney fires had increased by 25% and carbon monoxide was a greater risk from open fires. The cost implications of repairs, maintenance and servicing was also referred to.

Resolved that the Property Manager bring more detailed proposals to a future meeting.

25. Regeneration Halcon North

The Housing Enabling Lead updated the Board on the Regeneration of Halcon North.

A business plan was being progressed and information from tenants was being fed into the plan.

Due to poor turn out, surgeries were no longer being held although calling on residents had proved productive.

The Board asked about alternative accommodation. It was explained that people would have to go in temporary accommodation for a while. If required any adaptations for those requiring them would be provided and paid for from the cost of the scheme.

The Housing Services Lead explained that a case had to be made for developing the area. It needed to be clear that this was the right thing to do and how this was best achieved. The whole project was being looked at by the Housing Quality Network Consultancy. Various options were being considered.

Resolved that the update be noted.

26. Passivhaus Construction

The Housing Enabling Lead gave the Board an update regarding this. Passivhaus was a german company. Their houses were heated from dense insulation. Ways were being looked at to reduce carbon emissions. A major

problem was that developers were not interested in putting extras in properties to drive down fuel poverty. Taunton Deane Borough Council was considering carrying out a pilot scheme to build two of these properties. A site in Churchill Way, Taunton had been identified due to its sunny aspect and open space needed. Although the concept had been greeted favourably by residents, the site had not.

More detailed costs were required and would be considered by the Executive in May 2011.

The following questions were asked. Responses are shown in italics:

Could the Council enforce developers to install solar panels etc?
Taunton Deane could not enforce them but could encourage.

Could Passivhaus buildings be multi occupancy?
Yes, they could be built as flats. If successful they could be built at Halcon; and

How long would the properties be monitored once built?
It was thought at least five years.

Resolved that the update be noted.

27. Supported Housing Service Standard

Considered report previously circulated, presenting the revised service standard for the Supported Housing Service. The report outlined the service tenants in designated Sheltered, Low Level and Extra Care Housing Schemes could expect to receive. It provided details of the specific elements of the service, how outcomes would be monitored and what a client could do if they wished to complain that a standard had not been met.

The report aimed to raise the awareness of the Tenant Services Management Board and provide an opportunity for members to comment and shape the format of this service standard.

Service Standards were originally agreed following consultation with tenants in 2004. They were reviewed in 2010 as part of the validation process to achieve the revised Quality Assessment Framework. The standards were reformed to produce a leaflet in the same style as other Housing Service Standards and were shared with members at the meeting.

A copy of the Service Standard was submitted. It aimed to provide clear information to prospective and existing tenants as to what they could expect from Taunton Deane Borough Council, how this would be monitored and what tenants could do if a standard had not been met.

The cost of implementing this would be met within existing budgets and incorporated into the welcome pack for new tenants.

The outcomes expected as a result of the revised service standard were detailed.

Resolved that

- (1) The content of the supported housing service standard leaflet be agreed and provided to all new tenants; and
- (2) Officers be tasked to update the website, monitor and scrutinise the standard and provide the sheltered housing forum AGM in April 2011.

28. Tenant Involvement in developing Supported Housing Services

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the work undertaken by Taunton Deane Borough Council to involve tenants in developing housing related support services. It outlined the process in place together with the role of the members of the Sheltered Housing Forum, Supported Housing Service Development Group. The report considered how the role of the Sheltered Housing Forum currently worked in relation to the Tenant Services Management Board.

The Council had just over a thousand properties in Low Level (Hardwired, non-estate) Sheltered and Extra Care Housing.

There were a number of ways for tenants to influence how the Council met their landlord responsibilities. The Department of Communities and Local Government recommended that there be a more formal process for the Council to scrutinise their performance against standards.

The Constitution and aims of the Sheltered Housing Forum were submitted.

A small number of tenants had formed a Service Development Group. The projects they had been involved with were detailed.

It was proposed that the Sheltered Housing Forum would take on a more directive role, work with officers in service development and then submit reports to the Tenant Services Management Board.

Resolved that the report be noted.

29. Estate Management Service Standard

Considered report previously circulated regarding the proposal for a new service standard for Estate Management for Taunton Deane Borough Council Landlord Services. It outlined the service tenants in council housing could expect from landlord services on managing their estates. Landlord services were committed to working with their tenants to promote a sense of pride and respect for the area where they lived.

The Standard aimed to provide a simple leaflet for tenants to access. A copy of the proposed standard was submitted. Costs would be met from within existing budgets.

Resolved that the Standard be approved in principle before going to the Tenant's Forum.

30. Satellite Housing Office in Wellington

Considered report previously circulated regarding the establishment of a Satellite Housing office based in Wellington.

In 2007 the Housing Estate Officers from the Wellington area made greater use of the facilities at the Wellington Community Office to improve services to tenants. That same year a locality based working project was commissioned to look at bringing together partner agencies to provide a 'one stop shop' facility for Housing, Benefits, Tourism, Social Services and the Police. The report was to provide the TSMB with the opportunity to consider a comment on the on the proposal to establish a Satellite Housing Office in Wellington.

It was proposed that a Satellite Housing office be set up in the Wellington Town Council which would be the base for two estate officers. Details of the costs involved were reported. The benefits included a reduction in carbon emissions and a reduction in travelling time.

Resolved that the proposal be approved.

31. Fire Project

Considered report previously circulated regarding the actions and progress made in relation to fire safety for council housing blocks of flats.

Work had been carried out by the various sections of the Council to blocks of flats in Taunton following an arson attack at a block of flats in Dorchester Road.

Five key action areas were identified in the report and supported by the Fire Brigade. Information regarding the progress to date in each of these key action areas was submitted.

Resolved that the actions and progress to date be noted

33. Tenant Services Management Board Annual General Meeting

A Tenant's Day would be held on Monday 18 April 2011 at the Somerset County Cricket Club from 11am until 9pm. The day would be opened by the Mayor of Taunton Deane. The Tenant Services Management Board Annual General Meeting would be held at 5pm.

Members of the Board agreed that a mail shot should be sent out to tenants to publicise the event at a cost of £1847.

32. Tenant Participation Advisory Service Annual Conference

The Tenant Empowerment Manager reported that the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Annual Conference would take place on the 28th and 29th July 2011. The cost would be £499 per delegate. It was suggested that the Board send three members.

(The meeting ended at 9.12pm)

Minutes of the AGM meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 18 April 2011 at 5pm in The Long Room, Somerset County Cricket Club, Taunton.

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

Officers: James Barra (Community Services Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Nora Day (Housing Estate Manager), Simon Lewis (Strategy and Corporate Manager), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Phil Webb (Housing Manager – Property Services) and Natasha Williams (Administrative Officer).

Others: Councillor Morrell and Councillor Stuart-Thorn.

(The meeting commenced at 5pm).

1. Introduction

The Chairman welcomed all board members and tenants who attended the meeting and gave a brief history of the formation of the Tenant Services Management Board.

2. Tenant Services Management Board 2010/2011

The following issues raised at previous Tenant Services Management Board meetings were highlighted:-

- Service Standards;
- Housing Revenue Account Reform;
- Guest rooms in Sheltered Housing;
- Property Services Review;
- Annual Report to Tenants and Tenant Services Authority;
- Direct Labour Organisation Transformation Project;
- Energy Efficiency;
- Halcon North – Regeneration;
- Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget and
- Council House Voids

A 'welcome pack' had been produced for new tenants. The Audit Commission had commented that the 'welcome pack' included useful information for new tenants.

The Chairman thanked all board members for their time.

Councillor Bowrah thanked Dustyn Etherington for being Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board. Councillor Brooks concurred.

3. The year ahead for the Tenant Services Management Board

Mr Boland (Housing Services Lead) welcomed all at the meeting and advised that the Tenants Open Day had been a success.

The next 12 months were important as a new era for council houses was emerging. Mr Boland explained the need for self-financing and advised that this was the preferable route for Taunton Deane Borough Council to follow.

The Halcon North regeneration project was briefly outlined and tenants were advised that the Ward would be consulted throughout the project.

The recent status survey identified that 90% of tenants were satisfied with the Landlord service provided. This was an increase on last year and was deemed a positive insight and very good result. In 2008, the best landlords in the country received approximately a 90% satisfaction result, so Taunton Deane Borough Council had done well.

A new business plan was to be in place shortly. Strategic objectives would be included and shaping delivery of services for tenants.

4. Election of Chairman

Dustyn Etherington was appointed as Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board.

5. Election of Vice-Chairman

Mark Edwards was appointed as Vice-Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board.

6. Public Question Time

Councillor Morrell raised three issues with board members. It was requested that a review occur with regard to the general fund and the cost of director charges.

It was also requested that the Tenant Services Management Board review the current level of vandalism to properties and consider where savings could be made. An increase in inspections could make savings in the long run.

Councillor Morrell also suggested that the board consider the disposal of land to registered social landlords.

Mr Barrah advised that Councillor Morrell's questions regarding the budget had already been received at a previous meeting and were currently being looked into.

Councillor Brooks advised that a breakdown of the cost of directors would be useful.

7. Declaration of Interests

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

- Mrs Drage
- Mr Edwards
- Mr Etherington
- Mrs Hegarty
- Mr Hellier
- Mrs Marshall
- Mr Watkin
- Councillor Brooks

Councillor Brooks also declared a personal interest as a Member of Somerset County Council.

8. Budget Strategy Project

Mr Lewis explained the significant pressure over the coming years on the Councils General Fund. The Budget Review project was seeking to create savings options equivalent to a 40% reduction over the four years from 2012/13 to 2015/16.

Taunton Deane Borough Council would look into current assets, procurement as well as technology. Current terms and conditions of staff would be reviewed as well as contracts with partnerships.

Mr Barrah advised board members that unprecedented change was going to occur to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

Mr Barrah outlined the issue of self financing and that this would go live from April 2012. However, a range of options in the management and asset expenditure that would allow the Council to respond to other challenges facing the HRA.

It was requested that self-financing be put on the forward plan for the next meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board.

The board members were thanked for their time and commitment.

The next meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board would be held on 17 May 2011.

(The meeting ended at 6:10pm).