

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

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

Officers: Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Tim Burton (Growth and Development Manager), Brendan Cleere (Strategic Director), Fiona Gudge (Principal Accountant), Chris Hall (Highways and Cleansing Manager), Martin Price (Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer), Kevin Toller (Strategic Director), Tracey Vernon (Tenant Services Development Officer), Lesley Webb (Housing Enabling Lead) and Natasha Williams (Administrative Officer).

Others: Councillor Stuart-Thorn.

(The meeting commenced at 6pm)

58. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 11 October 2010 were taken as read and were signed, subject to the inclusion of Rosie Reed who was also present.

59. Declaration of Interests

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

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

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

60. Energy Efficiency – Verbal Update by the Strategic Director

Kevin Toller (Strategic Director) informed board members of his specific responsibility for Climate Change. Addressing Climate Change was one of the Council's 4 Corporate Priorities. This year the main focus had been on meeting the 10:10 challenge, which was to reduce the corporate energy use by 10% over the year. Taunton Deane Borough Council was on target to achieve this. An ongoing campaign to raise staff awareness had been implemented.

Beyond this year, the Council would aim to work towards carbon neutrality. Work with the housing stock would play a key part in achieving this across the Borough.

Kevin Toller advised that one of the biggest issues at present, was the availability of Feed in Tariffs. There were now a number of companies that could install solar panels. Tenants could typically get some free electricity, the Council would get some good press and the contractor would receive the Feed in Tariffs. The suggested payback period for a typical home installation was approximately 8-10 years. The Feed in Tariffs were guaranteed for 25 years, so the installer would receive approximately 15 years of Feed in tariffs as profit.

Kevin Toller informed board members that Advantage South West, the social housing procurement group, had put together some proposals. This would essentially mean that Solar PV could be installed and some of the Feed in Tariffs would be returned to the Council, or Housing Associations, who had signed up. The idea of the middle man being cut out of the equation would be investigated further, as well as the possibility of DLO staff being trained to install the Solar Panels.

The Feed in Tariffs were likely to be reviewed from April 2013. Only installations up and running at that time would continue to benefit from the existing tariff scheme. Expectations were that the Feed in Tariffs would reduce beyond 2013, so if the installation of Solar Panels were to be deemed feasible, it was important for installation to occur before 2013.

Kevin Toller would meet with key players, including the Carbon Trust in order to discuss the project further. The aim of the meeting would be to explore the options and issues for Taunton Deane Borough Council to progress installation of Solar PV.

Not all properties would be suitably located for the installation of Solar panels. However, the installation of Solar Panels where possible, could alleviate some fuel poverty. If Taunton Deane Borough Council were to recover the Feed in Tariffs, some funding could be used to install other green energy technology for homes that were not suitable for solar.

Board members were advised of the following points:

- Up to half of a typical homes electricity needs could be catered for by the installation of Solar Panels;
- Planning permission was not usually required;

- The DLO might be able to install the solar panels to Council properties. There were currently no trained staff, but the Council would look at training needs, once the number of properties suitable for installation had been determined. If training was not possible, sub-contracting the work out to another company would be considered;
- Solar panels were measured in KWH.

Board members raised the following points;

- An energy consultant should be employed in order for all Council properties to be evaluated, to rate the property's energy efficiency. Double glazing, as well as loft and wall insulations should be investigated;
- If people were in fuel poverty, it was possible to apply to energy suppliers for a social tariff which could reduce bills;
- Sub-contracting the installation of solar panels could reduce the quality of the installation.

The installation of wind turbines was briefly discussed by the board.

It was queried whether future developments within Taunton Deane would be requested/advised to install Solar Panels. Kevin Toller hoped that this would be the case.

Board members positively viewed the installation of Solar Panels. It was agreed by the board that if possible, DLO staff should be trained to install the Solar Panels and that installation should occur as early as possible.

Kevin Toller advised that a lot of questions were currently unanswered but he would return to a future meeting and present a business case, when more information had been compiled.

61. Regeneration – Halcon North – Verbal report by the Growth and Development Manager and Housing Enabling Lead

Board members were informed that a robust and efficient business case needed to be produced. Stephanie Payne would produce the case for the project and the benefits of undertaking the project would be included. Timescales, as well as the risks would also be identified.

The initial project would be outlined to Community Scrutiny on 7 December 2010. The decision date was not yet known.

Lesley Webb advised that code level 4 was in negotiation but code level 5 was hoped to be achieved. Board members were informed of all the events that had taken place since July 2010.

A visit to Plymouth was currently being arranged in order for interested parties to see what changes had occurred since Plymouth had undertaken a similar project.

Money had been raised and a new notice board had been bought for the Lynx Centre, within Halcon.

Lesley Webb outlined the type of tenure that would be affected within the area and advised that many types of tenure would be built. Statutory compensation was discussed. If tenants had lived within a Taunton Deane owned property for longer than 12 months, compensation could be applied for. Approximately 225 properties would be affected by the regeneration of Halcon.

The regeneration would be financed through various funders.

Board members felt that they should have been consulted earlier. The board requested that Regeneration – Halcon North be a regular agenda item and that a board member be invited to serve on the Steering Group. JH volunteered to be the board representative.

Lesley Webb was thanked for a thorough presentation.

62. Internal Transformation of Deane DLO Services – Interim Improvement Plan – Consultation Draft

Chris Hall outlined the report and advised board members that it was a living document. The consultation period was to highlight quick wins and to make any necessary changes.

Staff consultations had taken place in order for abilities to be highlighted, as it was the aim of the review for all skills to be utilised. The skills audit would hope to formalise any skills with the introduction of training.

Board members were informed that the project was not about making redundancies but about re-deployment and the delivery of better services. A flexible workforce was needed.

Discussions would take place with Human Resources to identify how the trades' salaries would be applied, when a more generic skills base was adopted by the DLO.

Board members asked whether the DLO could undertake large contracts. It was advised the DLO had to be cautious about expanding too quickly.

Tendering was costly, both financially and in staff time, so the DLO would not be able to tender for every job. The DLO aimed to give the 'best price' for a completed job.

Staff would begin to be informed of contracts won by the DLO and the jobs that had been successfully completed.

63. A brief introduction to Housing Revenue Account Budget Setting

Fiona Gudge advised board members that the draft budget would be ready within the next few weeks. A tight timetable would be implemented and

more detailed numbers would be reported to the board at the meeting in December 2010.

Fiona Gudge confirmed that it was not yet possible for the rent increases to be finalised.

64. Fees and Charges 2011/2012

The report was discussed and members agreed that the increases were sensible.

Members queried the position with regard to membership of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, which Steve Boland agreed to investigate.

Board members were advised that the Annual Report had received 93% positive feedback. 97% of the feedback received, indicated that people wanted to see a future report.

The number of hits on TDBC website for the Annual Report and the minutes for the Tenant Services Management Board meeting would be investigated.

(The meeting ended at 8:10pm)