

Minutes of the Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 17 July 2017 at 6.00pm in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr R Balman (Chairman)
Mr A Akhigbemen, Mrs J Belcher, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty,
Mr I Hussey, Councillor C Booth and Councillor R Bowrah, BEM.

Officers: Simon Lewis (Assistant Director – Housing and Community Development),
Tony Knight (Area Community Manager Halcon), Julie Sabey (Area
Community Manager North Taunton), Paul Hadley (Lettings Manager), Jack
Madge (Estates Officer), Angela Summers (Housing and Community Project
Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager) and Clare Rendell
(Democratic Services Officer)

Others: Councillor R Habgood and Mrs J Warmington.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr K Hellier and Councillor T Beale.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 19 June 2017 were signed and taken as read.

3. Public Question Time

No questions were received for Public Question Time.

4. Declarations of Interests

Mr R Balman, Mr A Akhigbemen, Mrs J Belcher, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, and Mr I Hussey declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

5. Update on Progress of One Teams

The Assistant Director for Housing and Communities gave an update on the latest position of the One Team service.

The One Team model continued to work on the basis of co-locating the Estates Officers to the areas that generated the most demand and to work alongside other partners to provide the best joined up solution for tenants. The report focused on the benefits of the multi-agency approach.

Partnership working continued to be good although austerity had meant there were less officers available to commit as much time to the One Team work. This had been noticed within the Get Set Services, Mental Health Officers and the Police. However, partnership relations had strengthened and improved links with the Get Set

Services and Children's Social Care had been achieved. This was due to regular meetings held between the partners and a better understanding of their parameters.

Feedback on the MIND support had been positive from both tenants and the One Team. The contract was due to end, however, MIND were expected to submit a bid for this. A pilot project had also been agreed in North Taunton for Adult Social Care, Somerset Partnership and Public Health which focused on a small number of high contact households and would provide a stronger joined up support service.

Inspired to Achieve continued to receive referrals to support unemployed tenants. With the recent changes to Welfare Reform, families could be deeply affected financially if they continued to be unemployed. Inspired to Achieve had received national recognition for a best practice organisation due to this kind of support being delivered.

The Taunton Deane One Teams had been recognised nationally for a model of Best Practice and last month won a 'Highly Commended' in the 2017 Municipal Journal Awards in the category 'Delivering Better Outcomes'.

Bath Spa University had undertaken a two-year evaluation on the One Team and was due to report back on this within the next two months. The results were expected to report back that the model added real value to the community and to individual households.

Key points were highlighted within each of the three One Teams, as follows:-

Halcon One Team

- The new Moorland House was due to open soon which would be a hub for public sector agencies to support the community.
- Link Power had delivered thousands of volunteer hours into the community and some of the volunteers had won awards for the work they had carried out.
- Little Pickers had won a number of awards and was well recognised on the estate.
- The One Team Co-ordinator had moved on to another project and had not yet been replaced.
- Police call logs had shown an increase in demand this year, in particular, drug use and anti-social behaviour.

North Taunton One Team

- MIND was working well in the area.
- Chill and Chat (domestic violence group) had become established and had regular attendees.
- The Fire Service was working on a 'Dream Scheme' project for young people within the community.
- Crime and anti-social behaviour was generally high and there were ongoing problems with exclusions from the local Academy School and had impacted on the youth crime in the area.
- There had been issues with engagement of Adult Social Care.

Wellington One Team

- There had been strong community events with good turnout from tenants.
- There was good engagement from MIND and Chill and Chat which was set up for victims of domestic violence.

- The multi-agency approach had been taken to set up a new employment hub.
- There was still a need for better engagement from the Housing Associations and local GPs.
- The Police and PCSO resources had been reduced but had started to improve.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:-

- Members reported to the Board that the presentation with the One Team and Wellington Town Council had been very well received.
- Concern was raised that the current austerity measures would have an impact on the One Team work.
Some of the funding available for the partner agencies had been cut and so this would have an impact. However, joint working could help alleviate that and create a sustainable model of work.
- Members confirmed that agencies were keen to support joint working and believed it was an opportunity as well as a challenge.
- Members queried whether any men had attended the Chill and Chat sessions.
Officers confirmed it was mainly women that had attended but gave information on other help and support that was available for men.

Resolved that the report be noted.

6. Housing Service Complaints Summary

The Assistant Director for Housing and Communities presented his report which provided an overview of the complaints received by the department.

The Board was given a description of what officers classified as a complaint, this was 'when someone had told the Council they were not happy about a service or something the Council had or had not done that had an impact upon them'. This was different to an initial 'request for service'.

The Council had a two-stage internal complaints procedure. Stage one was normally handled within the service which the complaint related to. The target response time was within 20 working days. Where the customer remained unhappy with the outcome of the complaint, it would be escalated to stage two. At this stage the complaint would be handled by the Assistant Director for the service concerned.

Between the 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, 141 complaints had been received across the Housing and Communities department. 60 were for Housing and Community Development and 81 were for Property and Development. The service area that received the most complaints was Repairs and Maintenance, which was not surprising due to the high degree of customer interaction.

Since the Housing staff had received additional complaints training in 2016, there was a clear downward trend in complaints received and an improvement in the response times in complaints being handled on time.

Standard of service was the most common reason for complaints across the department and analysis of this showed that there was no real pattern to the reason for the complaints. However, the most common issue identified in this category was the lack of response from officers. This would be an area that managers would encourage improvement on.

A piece of work was currently being carried out on the Housing Maintenance Standard. This included a consultation with the Tenants Forum. Once the work had been finalised and approved by the Tenant Services Management Board, officers would be able to ensure that tenant's expectations matched the service standards. Officers were hopeful that this would reduce the number of complaints. Work would continue to be carried out with the work force, systems and IT to improve the skills and equipment needed to undertake quality repairs and maintenance in an efficient manner.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:-

- Members queried the rates of repairs and whether sheltered housing was different.
The officers were not sure what standards were being used, so would report back to the Board.
- Tenants had struggled to get in contact with the repairs helpline.
Officers would feed this back to the team. There had been a new phone system installed which might have caused some issues.
- Members queried what was the main route complaints had been received.
Customers would normally email the team with a complaint. This was then logged on the system and the customer would get a response within 48 hours to advise what would be done.
- Members queried whether officers had access to mobile phones.
Yes they did. Officers had been issued with new mobile phones. If customers could not get through, they should leave a voicemail and the officer should then call them back.

Resolved that the report be noted.

7. **Anti-social Behaviour Update**

The Housing Manager for Lettings and Anti-Social Behaviour gave a verbal update on the service.

The service had carried out a performance review and had sent forms out for tenants to complete. The results from the forms that had been returned, was that 95% of tenants were satisfied.

The service had 42 new cases and had advised the Board that these cases were not routine cases and were high level complex cases that involved substance dependency and mental health issues. Cases of drug and alcohol abuse had increased whilst cases of domestic violence, harassment and hate crime had reduced. Over the last 12 months, 18 cases had been closed.

The Housing Manager reported some of the details of the high profile cases the team had worked on:-

Drugs, noise and callers to the property – The tenant was a young vulnerable female who had been supported by the YMCA, the Halcon One Team and the Police. She had been issued with an Anti-social Behaviour Order to allow the tenant to moderate those that attended the property. This had been unsuccessful. Therefore the team had sought legal advice from SHAPE and had served the tenant notice of a court date and possible possession of the property. The tenant was likely to lose her tenancy.

Noise, excessive drinking, physical and verbal abuse and criminal damage – Due to the behaviour of tenant, a leaflet drop was carried out and officers managed to get volunteers to come forward who gave evidence that they had witnessed the tenants behaviour. Formal legal action had begun against the perpetrator.

Longstanding case – An injunction had been granted against the tenant in relation to a neighbour. The injunction was due to end and the team had requested an extension to the injunction which would allow the neighbour some rest bite. This was a complex case and was difficult to manage. Officers had worked with the Portfolio Holder for Housing and the Leader of the Council.

Noise, drug activity and untaxed vehicles – The case had originally been dealt with by the Wellington One Team but had been handed over to the Anti-social Behaviour Team. An action plan was being worked on and the officers had liaised with the community to advise them on the progress made on the case.

Lifestyle conflict with two neighbours – Officers aimed to defuse the tension but this was unlikely to happen due to lack of tolerance. This case would be monitored.

Domestic violence, noise and child neglect – Different agencies had been involved in the case, however, the victim had not engaged with any of them. The Police had arrested the perpetrator, but no action was taken.

Drug activity – The Police had carried out a drug raid but not enough evidence was found. Complaints had been received from the neighbours that the activity was still occurring. Officers were working on how to move forward with the case.

Single male with mental health issues – After the consumption of alcohol the tenant became abusive towards his neighbours. This case was due to go to court and officers expected a suspended possession order would be granted.

The Housing Manager highlighted that a significant amount of work had been involved in all the cases and included working with multiple agencies to gain their support.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:-

- Members queried what the success rate was when cases got referred to the courts?
Taunton Deane had 100% success rate.
- Members suggested whether tenancy demotions could be used.
Officers confirmed that all options were looked into before they sought eviction. The officers took reasonable and proportionate measures when they dealt with these types of cases.

Resolved that the report be noted.

8. Meeting Hall Use Strategy

The Housing and Community Project Lead presented her report which outlined the proposed vision, priorities and actions to provide more flexible and comprehensive use of the 13 meeting halls and ensured the assets provided value for money.

A Conditions Survey had been completed which identified works that were required to meet all necessary regulations, to ensure halls were compliant with, which included:-

- Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Health and Safety, and
- Fire Safety

Works were divided into high, medium and low priority risks. Property Services had commenced works on Middleway, Tauntfield and Darby Way Meeting Halls to make them legally compliant. Officers had produced a works programme for the remainder of the year which included the other 10 halls.

Sheltered Housing Officers and Community Development Officers had been working with Zing Somerset and Age UK and had arranged a number of new activities in the meeting halls. The activities had received a mixed review. For example, the Healthy Eating sessions at Wellesley Street were not well received and had been cancelled after two weeks. However, the Indoor Sports sessions at Moorland Hall were a success. Computer Kiosk and IT Training sessions had also been organised at different halls and had empowered tenants to develop new skills. Officers continued to work on new activities to meet the demands and interests of the tenants.

Last year 13 tenants from the Creedwell Orchard Sheltered Housing Scheme had been contacted to ascertain whether they would like to take part in a Wi-Fi Pilot. The Pilot enabled them to use their own devices to access the internet in the hall. A total of 6 tenants had registered and used the Wi-Fi connection. To enable the rollout of Wi-Fi access in all the meeting halls, a survey was required of all the sheltered housing tenants, which would determine how often the internet would be used and therefore provide the Council's ICT Manager with the best solution on how to proceed with the installation.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:-

- Members queried what methods were used to advertise the activities held at the meeting halls.
Electronic mailshots had been sent to the NHS, Community Groups, The One Teams and Partner Organisations. Officers hoped that an online booking system would be added to the new Council website.
- Concern was raised because Priorswood and Wiveliscombe were not mentioned within the report.
There was not a meeting hall located in those areas. There were other facilities available for tenants to use.
- Members requested could a list of all the meeting halls be sent around to all Councillors so that they were aware what facilities were available in their wards.
- Members requested confirmation on the differences between meeting halls and community halls.
Meeting halls were smaller and normally located within the Council housing estates.
- Members queried why there had been a delay in Wi-Fi availability in the halls.
This was being investigated by the IT team. The Council only had 200 licences and if all tenants were allowed access to the Wi-Fi system, it would crash due to the limited availability. The officers hoped this would be rectified by October 2017.
- Members raised concern that they could not always gain access to the meeting halls, especially at Robins Close because the numbers had worn away on the keypad.
Officers would ensure this was investigated and rectified.
- Concern was raised about parking at the meeting halls.
Officers wanted to promote local residents to use the halls, therefore there should be no need for additional parking because tenants should be able to walk to the halls.

- Concern was raised that some of the meeting halls had been closed down. *Officers suggested that this was because they were not utilised enough.*

Resolved that the report be noted.

9. TPAS Annual Conference 2017 Feedback

Two of the Board Members had attended the 2017 TPAS Annual Conference.

The following details were the highlights of their experience:-

- The accommodation and food were of a very high standard.
- The delegates were given goodie bags with useful contacts and information.
- Over 200 hundred people had attended the conference from all over the UK.
- Other local Councils had attended from the South West and Taunton Deane's attendance had been noted.
- The sessions they had attended were very interesting and informative and covered items from the Housing Ombudsman and Social Housing Tenants that included a Fireman and a Teacher. The sessions also discussed many items and included 'What formed a good community?' and 'How to obtain funding'.
- A good discussion was held on Supported Housing and what would happen if all of the funding got cut over the next four years.
- Information was given on how to make communities more financially viable.
- Information was given on Loan Sharks and how they exploited tenants.
- The delegates enjoyed the conference and thought it was worth attending in the future.
- The Board Members thanked the Tenant Empowerment Manager for his support which enabled them to attend the conference.

10. Venues for future Tenant Services Management Board meetings

The Tenant Empowerment Manager advised the Board Members that future meetings would be held at the Brittons Ash Community Hall whilst the Accommodation Project was carried out at the Deane House.

(The meeting ended at 7.20pm)