

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 17 May 2016 at 6pm in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.**

**Present:** Mr R Balman (Chairman)  
Ms M Davis (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr A Akhigbemen, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey, Councillor Bowrah and Councillor S Coles.

**Officers:** Martha Dudman (Community Development Officer), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director – Housing and Community Development), James Barrahan (Director – Housing and Communities), Terry May (Interim Assistant Director – Property and Development), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), and Emma Hill (Democratic Services Officer).

**Others:** Councillor Beale and Mrs Warmington  
Julia Williamson; Vice-Chair, Tenants' Forum

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

**1. Apologies**

Councillor C Booth

**2. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 22 March 2016 and 18 April 2016 were taken as read and were signed.

**3. Public Question Time**

No questions received for Public Question Time.

**4. Declarations of Interests**

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

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

**5. Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Project.**

Considering the information and data tables previously circulated, concerning the Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Project. The Community Development Officer gave a verbal update to support the previously circulated information.

Below was a summary of the main points from the update provided by the Community Development Officer:

- The project emanated from the Housing Service's STAR Survey, which was completed every two years. Looking at Tenant and Leaseholder satisfaction of the Housing Service.
- Following the last STAR Survey, there had been a decline in satisfaction across certain areas of the Housing Service with our tenants and leaseholders.
- The Project team would be looking at the particular areas of the survey, which received poor or unsatisfactory opinion from tenants and leaseholders.
- The project had eight key project activity areas included on an action plan, which were split between ten responsible officers. This included Grounds Maintenance, Repairs & Maintenance, Feedback Compliments & Complaints and Service Standards.
- The action plan would detail what the service needed to or required to do to address the issues presented to the Council through the STAR survey.
- This project started at the beginning of March 2016 from the STAR survey results being brought before the Board. The Project team responsible met once a month.
- Following the start of this project, the Project Manager pulled out statistically the priority areas off the back of the survey.
- This led to several of visits to and with tenant and leaseholder groups as well as input from staff.
- Following further research to hone the details of the suggested options to resolve the highlighted issues, an action plan would be created detailing the implementation of the Project Outcomes and brought back to the Board for their opinions and feedback.
- This report would include rough financial costings and timescales for each of the options. From this some decision would need to be made against the context of HRA Business Plan as well as against the available budgets, as to which options the Council and Housing Service take forward.
- There was project consultation next week being held at three locations, which Board Members were welcome to attend.

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

- It was suggested that the biggest complaint relating from Tenants was relating to Grounds Maintenance and the mess/debris left after the staff had completed grass cuts near properties and this mess left behind on paths posed a safety hazard to tenants.
- In response to a question concerning the gathering of research and solutions to each issue for phase two before the end of May, the Board Members were informed that the officer had made progress with the headline issues and more research was required to complete the finer detail. As to progress of the other unique area, this was something that was dependent on individual service/officer workloads.
- Discussion regarding the issues relating to Grounds Maintenance currently completed in certain areas of Councils Housing Stock, which included the maintenance of hedges and the Board felt there was no set standard of work that all staff adhered too when it came to completing jobs for Housing Stock.

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

## 6. Verbal Update on DLO Relocation Project

The Director for Housing and Communities gave a verbal progress update concerning the Deane DLO depot build and relocation project.

Below was a summary of the main points from the update provided by the Director of Housing and Communities:

- As the project proceeded and made more progress, officers would provide the Board with a more structured progress update report.
- Copies of the newsletter were circulated to Board Members, providing them with pictures of the new depot progress.
- The Project Team and Delivery Team had monthly meetings and the project sponsor was Director of Housing and Communities.
- The contractors were making progress with the site and were currently three weeks ahead of schedule.
- The move to the new Depot location would take place in December 2016.
- The Build was being undertaken by Somerfield.
- The Council had put robust governance in place to monitor the project progress and performance.
- The Delivery Team were working preparing and making progress on the extensive project and task of getting the Deane DLO offsite at Priory Way to the new site located at West Park Business Park near Wellington.
- The biggest challenge for the project team was the move from the existing site to the new location near Wellington.
- Service managers were reviewing and disposing of the accumulated variety of 'stuff' currently located at Priory site. This included selling items that would not be required at the new site. The meant only the essential equipment would be taken and unwanted items that required selling off could be done through places like eBay, which we were making a good return on.
- As buildings at Priory site were emptied, they were being secured and were no longer in use.
- Service managers were completing a documents audit to review and reduce the amount of historic paperwork being stored. This was being indexed and transferred to the new electronic storage on Sharepoint for easier access and storage.
- The project team were undertaking an extensive HR project to support employes affected by the site location change. This was monitoring the impact on staff of the change as well as training for staff and managers on areas such as Sharepoint use.
- Part of the HR project and location change was an increased number of staff starting from home rather the depot.
- Project team had organised a number of site visits with service managers. This has included a visit to adjoining business unit, which was similar in site and style to the new Depot location.
- The Project team had seen some press activity as well as the promoting of the sites progress through internal information and the newsletter.
- The new facilities at the new location would fall under the existing facilities management service.
- The Councils legal service was currently working on the transfer of lease for the existing site to the respective businesses wishing to use the land following the DLOs departure for the site.

- All the temporary housing units located on adjoining piece of land to the existing site had been vacated and the project team were organising to have the units secured and demolished.
- The new IT infrastructure and support was a key risk area for the Project team and an officer had been seconded from West Somerset Council to the project team to ensure the procurement of the appropriate IT equipment for the new site, which included a modern telephone system.
- The Project team were currently focusing on the preparation for the move off the existing site.
- The Project team were developing a summary performance scorecard to bring before the Board to allow the monitoring of the project progress.

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

- In response to a question enquiring if DLO staff were required to come into the depot to report in every morning, the Board Members were informed that traditionally some trades had to come into the depot every morning to collect vans, equipment and their job tickets for the day but this was slowly changing and that any trade that could start from home in the mornings and receive their job tickets either their PDA was being actioned and only those staff who were required to collect equipment such as grass cutting equipment etc were coming in and their rounds were being altered/adjusted to start from new depot site. We were also investigating the possibility of delivering essential parts for job tickets to the location preventing the need to come back to the depot during the day. The investment in available new technology was helping with this.

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

## **7. Verbal Update on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan Review**

The Director of Housing and Communities gave a verbal progress update on the review of the HRA Business Plan and the connected work streams including Council and Service priorities.

Below was a summary of the main points from the update provided by the Project Manager:

- Following the review of the HRA Business Plan, the Council had settled on three key priorities, which were providing quality homes, better service, supporting vulnerable people and stronger business.
- An action plan had been produced connected to the priorities and planned work streams.
- The next set of data from the Councils Stock Condition survey was due. This data would be added to the HRA financial module to review baseline positions for HRA.
- As part of the adjustment of baseline position following the survey results, the Council had found its Capital would be slightly higher than expected but we had also there was room for more efficiencies within our revenue costs, which would balance out the higher than expected capital costs.
- With the revised debit repayment plan, this would form part of the revised baseline position and financial module for the HRA Business Plan. This new position included a target of 15 new build home per year as well as reviewing

the Councils work streams and staffing costs, such as its work as part of the One Team project.

- The HRA and General Fund were still required to make more savings as part of the wider transformation project.
- Project team would bring a report concerning the options for HRA budgetary savings to the Board for them to consider the options available to the HRA. This would include some recommendations for decisions.
- The key unknown for the future of HRA Business Plan was the Councils ambitions and there or not HRA and the Councils could afford those ambitions.
- The HRA Business Plan review was made up of many different work streams, which came together to form it.
- The Housing and Planning Bill had become an Act. Provisions had been put in place following this but these needed to be enacted in the Housing and Planning service.
- Part of this was the introduction of the Pay to Stay scheme. With possibility of increased rent for those wanting to live in Council accommodation who were on higher salaries. Officers felt that this would have a side effect that tenants would not see the benefit of the increased rent and decide to go for Right to Buy instead.

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

- In response to a question enquiring about the average number of RtB per year and whether the number was higher than the desired annual new build target, the Board were informed that currently the interest in RtB was static at 35 requests per year so effectively the Council would be going backwards and not increasing its stock of houses.
- The ambition was to keep RtB stable allowing for some increase in stock and so far with the Council New Build Programme and Buy Back projects, we had made a good impact on this but the likelihood as time went on that things would get away from the Council.
- In response to a question concerning the extension of the pay back of debt to the Government and what the extent of the difference in years, the Board Members were informed initially it was 18 years remaining but the Council was looking to extend this to 60 years, officers were waiting for confirmation from the Councils s151 officer before proceeding with this. The HRA and Council simply could not afford to pay back the debt over the current timescale of 18 years or over if it was extended to 30 years. This was due to 1% reduction in Housing rent that the Government had imposed on Local Authorities and Housing Associations.
- In response to a question regarding why there had been an increase in cost for Voids and Repairs service, the Board Members were informed that the cost for these services had not increased overall but after benchmarking and comparison, the Councils costs for Voids and Repairs were comparatively higher than other Housing providers. The Council took this as a sign of higher standards of property maintenance for our tenants.
- Discussion regarding the choice between repaying the debt or maintaining services for tenants and the people of Taunton Deane. The Board Members mentioned that tenants were concerned with the bigger picture of the Councils finances, more about maintaining and preserving services.
- Officers informed the Board, the asset value of the Councils Housing stock was £200/250 million and there was still value locked up in the stock for the Council

**Resolved** that the Officer's update report be noted.

**8. Verbal Update on The Deane House Relocation Project**

Reference Minute No. 6/18April/2016, the verbal update of the Director for Housing and Communities regarding progress of The Deane House Relocation project. The Director reiterated this verbal update on the project's progress.

The Director informed the Board that when there was any further progress or anything to report that the Board would receive an update report at a future meeting.

**Resolved** that the Officer's update report be noted.

**9. Exclusion of 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 2 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 Building Services and Property Services Restructure.**

The Board considered a previously circulated confidential report from the Interim Assistant Director for Property and Development concerning the restructure of Building and Property Services. The report identified further improvements to the service through transformation by the aligning of the work streams and priorities of the Property and Building Services.

**Resolved** that the Officer's confidential report be noted.

(The meeting ended at 7.27pm)