

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 17 June 2013 at 6pm in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House Taunton.

Present: Mr Dustyn Etherington (Chairman),
Mrs J Hegarty (Vice-Chairman),
Mrs J Bunn, Mrs E Drage, Mr D Gaplin, Mr K Hellier, Mr R Middleton,
Councillor Bowrah.

Officers: Steve Esau (Property Manager - Maintenance), James Barrahan (Health and Housing Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Phil Webb (Housing Manager – Property Services) and Emma Hill (Corporate Support Officer).

Others: Councillors Mrs Smith and Mrs Warmington.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

Mrs T Urquhart and Councillor Brooks

2. Public Question Time

No questions received for Public Question Time.

3. ALHCO Performance Report

Considering the report previously circulated, concerning monitoring information on the performance of the servicing and repair contract with ALHCO. This report was for Quarter Four showing performance data; in addition the report highlights issues with the contract and improvements being made.

The Council had a responsibility as a landlord to ensure that all rented properties had a valid Gas Safety Certificate; an annual gas safety check had to be carried out. In order to ensure that a certificate did not become out of date we had in place a 10 month cycle. This allows for process of gaining access to properties to be carried out before the certificate becomes overdue.

ALCHO was responsible for servicing of solid fuel and oil appliance's together with checking electric storage heaters, servicing of extract fans, smoke detectors and breakdown repairs. Whilst there was no legislative requirement to carry out checks to solid fuel and oil appliances every 12 months, it was considered good practice we follow a 10 month cycle as happens with the gas servicing programme.

The overdue properties reported in Quarter Three had been resolved. At the end of Quarter Four, there were 26 properties overdue this was attributed to a number of reasons namely:

1. Missing assets on certificates, this had been a system issue with Aeromark.
2. Late notification to Taunton Deane from the contractor regarding non access delaying legal action. This was a programming problem with ALHCO.
3. Appliances at the service were failed; however a new install was agreed.

(1 and 3 above had been resolved by making changes within the academy system to show as compliant as the properties have been made safe).

The above overdue properties continued into April with 57 overdue. However, this reduced to 16 in May and this reduced to 7 overdue properties at the beginning of June and the Council and ALHCO anticipate we would be close to 100% compliant by the end of June.

Reactive Maintenance

The following points were covered during the Performance Monitoring Report for Quarter Four:

- The void levels were slightly below average in Quarter Four.
- A resolution for 'First Time Fix' gap relating to variety of different appliances would be done in due course.
- The Council was working on an interface between Academy and Aeromark system relating to the Stock information. Once this was in place, it would improve the KPI score.
- The work ALHCO were responsible for had been carried out on time.
- The Council had carried out 224 Installs. This was following failures at the service or following breakdowns during the year.
- It was agreed with ALHCO to carry out from this year all solid fuel servicing from July to September. These months were when the systems were generally not going to be in use and therefore there was no waiting time for them to cool down, which had been the case to date.
- Storage Heating checks were behind, this was mainly due to efforts to improve the gas servicing situation. A programme was now in place to catch up with this.
- The Council had just commenced installing battery operated CO2 Detectors in all properties which had an open flued appliances.
- The Council was intending to publish an article in the Autumn Edition of Taunton Deane Housing Newsletter about gas highlighting the dangers and insisting tenants give the contractor access to carry out servicing.
- The amount of scrap monies received was shown, these monies were paid back into the Housing Revenue Account.

During the discussion of this item, board members and the public made the following comments and asked questions:- (*Responses shown in italics*)

- Concerns were raised over the difference in figures between arranged appointments and those that were kept.
There were issues around this figures and this would be sorted for the next report to the Board.
- Looking at the scrap revenue figures, could these be broken down in monthly figures for the Board Members.
There had been problems with getting information from scrap metal merchant but the figure of £12,000 was the total for the year so far. The Council was looking producing a monthly figure for the revenue to bring to the Board on regular basis.
- Concerns were raised that the Council needed to keep on top ALCHO regarding the KPI figures and that the Board wanted to see some improvement.

- The Council was 18 months into the Contract with ALCHO and there were still some ongoing issues.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report and will receive information on a quarterly basis.

4. Creechbarrow Road Development Update

The Health and Housing Manager gave a brief verbal report updating the Board on Creechbarrow Road Development Project. These included the following:

- A full update report would follow at the next meeting of the Board. This report would include details of Letting Policy for Creechbarrow Development. This would be jointly between the Council and Knightstone Housing.
- The Council was still working on Planning and Design elements to the Development Project.
- Planning Application would be submitted before the end of the month.
- The procurement process for the Building Contractor would be getting under way soon.
- The de-camp process was going well.
- Five households had asked to return to the site. The Council had allocated properties to them.
- There were at least 20 properties that were now empty or would soon be empty.
- The Council were making good progress with the Buy-Back scheme as well.
- Over a 30 year period, the income would be £5.7 million.
- It would need a level of subsidy of £2 million to make it viable.
- The payback would be within 46 years.
- The next report would include recommendations on how the Council would fund scheme including HRA, Right to Buy receipts and borrowing.
- There was a Capital Budget of £6.7 million, which was already set. Although, with the procurement of a good building contractor building costs would come down.
- The Open Spaces would be designed and built through a specialist architect Swan Paul.
- More details around the Community Hub would follow and Community Development Officer would be leading on this. It would be put through on a separate planning application. The Council were working on the details of the Hub at the moment.

The following summary gives details are The Lettings Policy for the Creechbarrow Road Development:

- The Policy would deal with the allocation process.
- This would give local preference to either overcrowded or under occupied family with the local letting area.
- It would address the way the Council plans to let the properties for the elderly and the disabled.
- It would also allow for mixture lettings from Gold, Silver and Bronze band on the Homefinder List for those properties left unallocated.

- It would include exclusions for those with history of Anti-Social Behaviour and criminal offences.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- What type of access system would the Council be using on the Flats on the Development?
For the most of the flats, there would be individual doors to the flats but there would be a door entry system for the flats allocated to people with disabilities.
- Where was the access for the flats to the parking areas of the current development design?
The proposed plan was being re-worked and this issue would be highlighted and passed on.
- Would there be vehicle access from the Roman Road end straight through the development?
No, the road access from Roman Road end would be restricted to only half way and only pedestrian access at the half way point.
- With procurement of Building Contractor, the Council shouldn't always go for the cheapest but for quality.
- The design looks good. The additional housing on the site of the existing Open Space was a good use of the space.
This additional housing located on the existing Open Space was a new inclusion as the original idea was for Allotments.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

5. Phase One Development Update Report

The Health and Housing Manager gave a brief verbal report updating the Board on Phase One Development. This included the following:

- The Council had made progress with the Phase One sites.
- Milton Close site; this had been placed on the back-burner due to site issues.
- Passiv Housing site; there had been some issues around the garages on this site so the Council would need to find another site for the Passiv Housing project.
- West Bagborough site; the Council need to do further consultation event. Although, it was well received by the residents and Parish Council. The original consultation event was well attended. The Council would be submitting the planning application in July.
- Normandy and Bacon Drive site; the consultation for this site received major opposition. The range of concerns includes street parking, the flats and children as well as shading of the existing properties. The Council was looking at reducing the scheme and then arrange further consultation events in the community.
- Background; the Council need to do more background research around the proposed sites themselves before involving architects.
- Plan B schemes; the Council would need to create a list of plan B schemes as backups or what was next after completion.
- Garage sites; Council was investigating some garages sites as possible development sites.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- Disappointment was expressed by Board Members about the loss of the Passiv Housing site. Although, it was good to hear that the Council had other Phase One developments and were looking into more future developments and backup plans.
- Could the Council tag onto any current contractor new build sites i.e. David Wilson Homes?

The Health and Housing Manager gave a further verbal update to the Board on the following:

- Right to Buys; the Council had sold 37 properties. Only 30% could go on Affordable housing from this income. The Board and the Council need to come up with suggestion on what to spend the income on.
- Acquisitions; Council considering buying back ex-council properties. There had been a regular stream of enquiries for this.
- Acquisition of Flats; the Council would need to build individual business cases for these. Although, flats would be easy to buy back if the council holds the leasehold for the land.
- Considering the potential of buying 'new build' properties as well as competing with housing associations for section 106's.
- There were ongoing grants finding for others.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

6. **Analysis of Performance Indicators Update Report**

Councillor Bowrah gave a verbal update to the Board relating to analysis on Housing Key Performance Indicators Updates. This included the following:

Generally the Council seem to be getting to or achieving targets; however on some the Council takes one step forward and two steps back.

1. **Health and Housing** – The Council's ranking was very rarely high nationally; can the Council learn something from those Housing providers who figure in the Top 20? Did the Council have, or can they get just one set so the Council can compare? Rent Arrears at the end of Quarter four showed a downward trend, was this being maintained?
2. **Service Delivery; Satisfaction** – Tenants were obviously quite critical that their views were not taken into account, can the Council publish positives in the Housing Newsletter or when we find we cannot after things, explain fully.
3. **Service Delivery; Decent Homes** - Asset Management must be improved and given more priority, in two cases i.e. energy efficiency and gas. The Council were 197 out of 233 and 175 out of 199 comparisons.
4. **Service Delivery; Managing Housing Stock** – The 'old chestnuts' of lettings and repairs/maintenance shows as with Decent Homes Standards, the Council were very poor nationally but as discussed by the TSMB, the Board encourage DLO to address these issues and look forward to much improved figures over the next quarter. As mentioned before, the green assessments are too dark to be able to read properly.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- Could the Council learn from other Authority Housing Providers who were within the top 20 to see what the Council need to improve on and how to improve?
The Council could refer to the list in House Mark then seek help and advice.
- Rent Arrears was on a downward trend, had this been maintained?
The Council had still maintained the downward turn on Rent Arrears.
- The Council need to prompt and publish good comments and their achievements. Could this be done in the Tenants Newsletters?
The Council would now include a section Tenants Newsletters relating 'You Said, We Did' promoting the positive outcomes and comments. Although, some of issues were still ongoing.
- In relation to Decent Homes standards, the Council's asset management needs to be improved.
- The SAP energy rating; how up to date was it?
The Energy Rating was out of date and there was no refresh date as yet. The current rating was used as an indicator or baseline. The Council hadn't got into the detail of how to alter the energy rating to make it more accurate. Health and Housing challenged the DLO that the Council would take the work elsewhere if it doesn't improve. The Council would be working with the DLO to improve all areas so they meet their targets.
- Would it be cheaper to sub-contract out the work of the DLO? Could the DLO sub-contract out to help catch up with the back log of work?
This had been debated during the Transformation Project of DLO. Outsourcing was still an option. But the DLO had moved and improved since the initial transformation project talks. Challenges around target times for job had been completed. Sub-contracting would effect the DLO profits but they can sub-contract out and had done it the past.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

7. Feedback from TSMB on STAR Survey 2013.

The Housing Services Lead gave a verbal report regarding STAR Survey. This included the following:

- The STAR Survey was completed every two years.
- The Council could use the information received to change and provide detail with any raised issues.
- In addition to the full version received by the Board Members, a user-friendly version would be going out in July to all tenants via the tenants' newsletter.
- Overall satisfaction dropped by 4 points from 90%. Although, more people 'sat on the fence' rather than saying yes or no.
- Customer Contact satisfaction had dropped as well.
- Board Members to lead scrutiny on STAR Survey results. The Council would be asking Board Members discuss, decide and nominate two areas for the Council to review over the next 12 months.

- The number of people surveyed where as follows; 1500 surveys sent out and 800 received back. The Council currently had 6000 properties.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- Customer Services and Estate Services both dropped in satisfaction levels from the last STAR Survey.
- Executive Councillor suggested that Board Members receive and review a user-friendly copy of the STAR Survey results before feeding back to the officers and the Council at the next meeting of the Board.
The Housing Services Lead would send a copy out to the Board Members to enable to feedback at the next meeting of the Board.
- Board Members would feedback and give the Officers a steer as to which areas from the STAR Survey that they suggest the Council review.

Resolved that the:-

1. Board noted the officer's verbal report.
2. Board to review User-Friendly version of STAR Survey results and provide feedback at the next meeting of Board.
3. Officers to provide briefing for missing Members of the Board to update them about providing feedback on STAR Survey results for next meeting.

8. TPAS Tenant Central Training Update.

It was noted that this item be deferred to the next meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board.

9. AOB.

Board Members enquired whether or not Solar Panels would be installed on the new builds at the Creechbarrow Road Development and whether or not there was an active programme of works for other Council properties.

A discussion took place on this item; board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- Could existing Council Tenants put Solar Panel on their Council property themselves?
The tenant would need to ask the Council's permission before installing them. The Council would make it decisions on case by case basis as there were responsibilities that would fall to the Council if the tenant were to move out after installation. The Council would need to look at a business model to see what would be expected of them.

(The meeting ended at 7.50pm)