

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 19 March 2012 at 6pm in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

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

Officers: James Barrah (Community Services Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Paul Hadley (Housing Estates Manager), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer), Phil Webb (Housing Property Services Manager) and Keith Wiggins (Democratic Services Officer).

Others: Councillor Williams and Nigel Stuart-Thorn

(The meeting commenced at 6.03pm)

24. Apologies

None – all board members were present

25. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 20 February 2012 were taken as read and signed.

26. Declaration of Interests

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

- Mrs Bunn
- Mrs Drage
- Mr Edwards
- Mr Etherington
- Mr Galpin
- Mrs Hegarty
- Mr Hellier
- Mrs Marshall
- Mrs Urquhart

Councillor Bowrah and Councillor Brooks each declared a personal interest as a family member was a Council house tenant.

27. Communities and Local Government Consultation - Social Housing Fraud

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a draft response to the Communities and Local Government (CLG) Social Housing Fraud Consultation.

The Tenant Services Development Officer explained the background to the consultation and introduced each of the eleven consultation questions in turn.

Members of the board commented on each point and asked questions.

Resolved to note the proposals and request their comments be included in the Housing Services response to government.

28. Annual Report to Tenants 2010/11 Feedback Results

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the feedback received on the Annual Report to Tenants 2010/11.

Feedback forms had been provided to all tenants with the Annual Report to Tenants Calendar. A good response had been received, with over 600 feedback forms being returned by the end of January 2012. The feedback provided was largely positive and in favour of the new calendar format for the annual report.

Members were pleased that the report had been well received but requested that officers respond where possible to any concerns expressed by tenants.

Resolved to note the report.

29. Allocation of accommodation - guidance for local housing authorities in England

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the Homefinder Somerset Partnership's joint response to the Communities and Local Government's consultation - Allocation of accommodation: guidance for local housing authorities in England.

The Housing Services Lead explained the draft proposals were seeking to provide guidance on the allocation of social housing and seeking to redress under occupancy of housing.

There would be support for older tenants to downsize if they wished and estates officers would be available to help families.

Resolved to note the report.

30. Tenant Awards

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the introduction of awards to Council tenants.

The awards would allow the good work Taunton Deane Borough Council's tenants do for their neighbourhood and other tenants to be recognised. Often this work was voluntary and time consuming but made a positive impact to the lives of others.

During the discussion it was suggested that the awards should be linked in with the annual Citizen of the year award ceremony.

Resolved to note the report and support the recommendation for a joint awards ceremony in 2013.

31. Tenants' and Leaseholders Open Day

The Open day would be held at Somerset County Cricket ground on Monday 23 April between 10 am and 5pm.

The Tenant Empowerment Manager requested volunteers for the TSMB stall and received offers from members that would cover the whole day.

32. Tenant Services Management Board Annual General Meeting

The Tenant Empowerment Manager confirmed the Board's Annual General Meeting would be on the same day as the open day, Monday 23 April at 4pm.

(The meeting ended at 7.50pm)

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 23 April 2012 at 4pm in The Long Room, Somerset County Cricket Club, Taunton.

Present: Mr Etherington (Chairman)
Councillor Brooks, Mrs Bunn, Mrs Drage, Mr Galpin,
Mrs Hegarty, Mr Hellier, Mrs Marshall and Mrs Urquhart

Officers: James Barrah (Community Services Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Steven Clarke (Tenant Services Development Officer), Paul Hadley (Housing Manager-Lettings), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Wendy Sharland (Administrative Officer) and Phil Webb (Housing Manager - Property Services)

(The meeting commenced at 4pm).

1. Introduction

The Chairman welcomed all Board members and tenants to the meeting, which was the second Annual General Meeting.

2. Apologies

Councillor Bowrah and Mark Edwards.

3. Public Question Time

A member of the public asked if the new Board was to be voted for by the tenants of Taunton Deane. The Chairman explained that tenants would receive a letter by the end of that week, with ballot papers enclosed.

4. Tenant Services Management Board 2011/2012

The Chairman welcomed those present to the second Annual General Meeting and reflected on some of the Board's work over the past year.

5. The year ahead for the Tenant Services Management Board

The Community Services Manager, James Barrah, outlined the new issues facing the Board for the coming year. These included the following:

- The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan. This was a 30 year plan and the Board would have a crucial role in steering key decisions;
- Policy and Development - changes were being considered with the Right to Buy scheme, rents and tenancies, with the possible introduction of fixed term tenancies. A report would be brought to the next meeting with further information;

- Asset Management - this year's Capital Programme would include some large contracts such as heating installations, which the Board would need to be involved with to determine the type of energy used, depending on areas. Asset Management data would be cleansed and the detailed Asset Management Plan was to be refreshed;
- Staff changes - some changes had taken place and some were underway. A new structure chart was being produced and an update would follow on its completion;
- Regeneration - more clarity was expected on the Halcon Regeneration Project and smaller schemes, such as work to non-traditional properties;
- Social Housing Development Fund - there would be a modest new build programme, requiring protocols to gauge how this would work, where to prioritise sites and to monitor success;
- Supported Housing - re-focussing on the viability of the service was on-going, due to the cuts by Supporting People;
- Energy Efficiency - there was to be some additional Government funding and new initiatives which needed exploring, to see what they could provide for tenants;
- Welfare Reform - it was important to understand the changes and how they would impact on tenants and to understand the financial impact they would have on the Housing Revenue Account;
- Disabled Facilities Grants and Aids and Adaptations – Taunton Deane was to carry out a needs analysis over the next 12 months as Sedgemoor and West Somerset DC's had done. The aim was also to ensure that properties which had been converted for the disabled were used effectively at the point of re-let;
- Performance - the Council would continue to benchmark its performance with others to check it was providing good value;
- Leasehold Service - this was now dealt with by the Income Team and a group would be set up, with the aim to engage with leaseholders and to progress a service improvement plan;
- Resident Involvement and Satisfaction - the aim was to continue focusing on this as a key priority; and
- Regulations – Taunton Deane had a self-regulatory role. Therefore, its duty as a landlord was to work with residents to establish whether the Council was performing adequately as a Landlord. Further measures would be set up to monitor this, such as scrutiny groups, suggestion cards, further mystery shopping and an increase in useful information to the Board.

Mr Barrah thanked the Board for their work throughout the year and the Tenant Services Officers for their work at the Tenants' Open Day.

6. Review of the Terms of Reference and the Code of Conduct of the Tenant Services Management Board

The Tenant Empowerment Manager requested that the Terms of Reference and the Code of Conduct were both considered together. The following slight amendments were agreed:

- Board members should be elected every two years;

- The posts of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson would be subject to elections at an Annual General Meeting (AGM) or the following board meeting, if an election had subsequently been held. Should any post(s) fall vacant before an AGM, an election would be held at an ordinary board meeting;
- An AGM would be held in April each year, or within 15 months of the previous AGM to:-
 1. Receive reports from the outgoing Chairperson on the board's activities during the year;
 2. Elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson if an election had not been held in that year;
 3. Elect representatives to any Sub-Committees or working groups; and
 4. Consider and vote on any resolutions put forward by tenants.

Councillor Brooks asked when the two Councillors were to be re-elected to the Board. The Tenant Empowerment Manager reported that Democratic Services felt it was best to carry out the re-election after Annual Council.

The Board members were thanked for their time and commitment. Mrs Marshall, who had decided not to stand for re-election, was presented with flowers and thanked for her contribution as a Member of the Board.

(The meeting ended at 5.05pm).