

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 20 February 2012 at 6pm in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

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

Officers: Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Tim Burton (Growth and Development Manager), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Phil Webb (Housing Property Services Manager) and Keith Wiggins (Democratic Services Officer).

Others: Councillor A Wedderkopp, Mrs Beryl Edwards and Nigel Stuart-Thorn

(The meeting commenced at 6.05pm)

12. Apologies

Apologies: Councillor Brooks, Mr Galpin

13. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 23 January 2012 were taken as read and signed.

14. Public Question Time

Questions and a statement were received in writing from Mr Martin Aldred, as Chairman of the Halcon North Tenants and Residents Association.

Mr Aldred requested and received advice on who to contact to complain about council employees.

Mr Aldred asked the Board to become more involved in future regeneration projects and in ensuring better communication with tenants.

In response the Chairman confirmed the Board had already requested a closer involvement in all such projects in the future

15. Declaration of Interests

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

- Mrs Bunn
- Mrs Drage
- Mr Edwards
- Mr Etherington

- Mrs Hegarty
- Mr Hellier
- Mrs Marshall
- Mrs Urquhart

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

16. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012 – 2042

The Housing Services Lead explained that the HRA Business Plan had now been approved, including the provision of a small Social Housing Development Fund to build new homes each year on existing council land – and retain ownership within the HRA.

The Council was hoping that the Public Works Loan Board interest rate would remain at 3.64%, but this would be dependant on the loan rate at the end of March.

Now that the plan had been approved it was intended that a more easily understandable version would be created for tenants and the wider public.

Resolved to note the approval of the plan.

17. Housing Revenue Account Reform Project Dashboard

Considered project progress dashboard report previously circulated, concerning planned reforms to council housing finance in England and the management of those changes by the Council.

The project overall remained on track and was now moving in to the next phase.

Resolved to note the dashboard report.

18. Housing and Community Development Structural Change proposals

The Housing Services Lead updated the Board on the draft proposals they had seen previously, which were designed to provide the capacity to manage council housing assets and implement the HRA Business Plan.

Following consultation with staff and members there had been modifications to some line management arrangements for administrative staff – and a decision to keep staff working on anti-social behaviour in their existing team.

Resolved to note the structural change proposals.

19. Heating Repairs and Maintenance Contract update

The Housing Property Services Manager had circulated a summary report on the procurement process to select a new provider of heating repairs and maintenance.

The report showed the evaluation process for the five tenders which had resulted in the selection of Alhco – who would take over the contract from 2 April 2012.

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

- Would Alcho have a local office and local contacts? *Alcho had already committed to providing a local office and would be taking on many of the existing engineers – through TUPE arrangements;*
- How would the inspection and repair work be monitored? *The contractor would do their own monitoring as part of the contract but this would be checked through our own Clerk of Works and Property Manager;*
- Who was responsible for safety certificates issued before April? *MJJ.*

The Board heard that Alcho were prepared to start work in two weeks, rather than in six weeks.

Resolved to note the update.

20. Consultation: Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership Interim Tenancy Strategy

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a draft tenancy strategy to satisfy the requirements of the Localism Act 2011.

The report showed twenty different proposals that overall would mean that properties would be available on the Homefinder Somerset Choice Based Lettings scheme - at different rent levels and with different tenures depending on the social landlord arrangements with the HCA and social landlords own tenancy policies. Additional advert symbols (highlighting affordable rent and fixed term tenure) together with applicant guidance notes on affordable rent and fixed term tenure would be made available through the Homefinder Somerset CBL Scheme.

Existing tenants who remain in their existing homes would not be affected by affordable rent/tenure change, and would retain their security of tenure if they moved to another social rented home. Mutual exchange tenants were protected within the Localism Act such that they would retain their security of tenure when they moved.

Following the consultation process the Somerset Strategic Housing Partnership was aiming to issue a final Interim Tenancy Strategy which will be available from April 2012.

Resolved to note the report and support all but two of the suggested proposals.

21. Tenant Service Management Board Elections

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the application and election processes for the Tenant Services Management Board.

The Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) was convened in April 2010 to represent the interests of all tenants of Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) at strategic and policy levels. Its role was to monitor and review strategic decisions and ensure the best possible standards of housing service delivery to all council tenants. It assessed the housing service of Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) and where and how it could be improved.

The board's Terms of Reference (which were agreed by the board at its June 2010 meeting) include that elections to the Board should be held every two years.

Resolved to note the report, the election process and timetable.

22. Tenants' Open Day

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the next Tenants' Open Day – which gave tenants an opportunity to gain information on and ask questions about topics that are of interest to them.

The first Tenants' Open day was held at the Somerset County Cricket Ground on 18 April 2011. Over 100 tenants had attended the event, with over 20 stalls available including various departments of Taunton Deane Borough Council and representatives from external organisations who were able to answer questions on a wide variety of housing related issues and other matters.

Last year it was agreed to hold the event on the same day as the TSMB Annual General Meeting. It was also agreed by tenants, councillors, staff and external organisations that the Somerset County Cricket Ground was a success as a venue, especially due to its central location and availability of parking spaces.

As the date of the TSMB AGM had been scheduled for 23 April 2012 the Tenant Empowerment Team had booked the County Room of the Somerset County Cricket Ground for the whole day on this date.

During the discussion of this item it was agreed that the Credit Union should be invited to the Open Day.

Resolved to note the proposals for the Open Day and agreed that the event should be renamed the Tenants and Leaseholders Open Day.

23. Tenant Services Management Board Annual General Meeting

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the date, content and venue of the Board's Annual General Meeting.

Members discussed the arrangements for the meeting at the Somerset County Cricket Ground and concluded it should be held in a different room from the Open Day.

Resolved to hold the meeting at the Somerset County Cricket Ground on 23 April 2012 starting at 4pm.

(The meeting ended at 8.50pm)