

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Tuesday 21 May 2013 at 6pm in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House Taunton.

Present: Mr Dustyn Etherington (Chairman),
Mrs Judith Hegarty (Vice-Chairman),
Mrs J Bunn, Mrs E Drage, Mr M Edwards, Mr D Galpin, Mr I Gould, Mr K Hellier, Mrs T Urquhart, Councillor Bowrah and Councillor Brooks.

Officers: Phil Webb (Housing Manager; Property Services), Steven Clarke (Tenant Services Development Officer), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), James Barrah (Health and Housing Manager), Paul Hadley (Housing Manager), Norah Day (Housing Estate Manager), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Michaela Mullen (Welfare Reform Project Officer), and Andrew Randell (Corporate Support Officer).

Others: Councillor F Smith.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

No apologies received.

2. Halcon One Team

Police Sergeant Andy Murphy gave a verbal report and presentation regarding the new Halcon One Team.

The problems in the area were detailed. Historically there were 1800 crimes per year in the area in comparison with an area such as Galmington which had 300. Parts of Halcon were in the top 4% of deprived neighbourhoods in the country.

Since the project there had been a 27.9% reduction in overall crime with a 45.5% reduction in youth crime victims. As a result of the project there was a better relationship with the residents of Halcon, with problems on the estate being collated and work being linked to The Troubles Families initiative.

The overall aim was of the Halcon one Team was for it to lessen the demand that would be put on the police and the government resources.

Issues with residents of the estate not being able to obtain employment was discussed, it emerged that there were 12 people of the estate who were taking up voluntary roles (Link Power) which through the project were adding to their CV's, which as a consequence they had improved employment prospects.

In reference to the Link centre in Halcon it was recognised that the ability to discuss confidential matters without members of the public overhearing should be addressed.

It was requested that all Councillors were made aware of the project to change the impression that they have of the Halcon estate.

The combined rent arrears of residents on the Halcon Estate stood at £90k

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments -
(Responses shown in italics)

- Congratulations should be given to the Housing Officers dealing with anti-social behaviour and issuing the ASBOs (Anti-Social Behaviour Orders). Please pass this on.

Resolved that the Board noted the Police Sergeant's presentation.

3. **Welfare Reform Update**

Considered the report previously circulated, concerning The Welfare Reform update with details of work currently being undertaken by the Welfare Reform Project Officer (WRPO). It outlines what progress Housing Services had made in responding to the implications of the Welfare Reform changes.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 came into force bringing changes to the welfare benefit system that would impact on our tenants who were of working age and claim benefits. In response to the implementation of the Welfare Reform Act, a Project Officer was appointed. The officer is responsible for providing support and assistance to our tenants who are affected by the changes.

The 4 main changes are:

- Under occupation (bedroom tax);
- Benefits cap;
- Non dependant deductions; and
- Universal credits.

Following the development of the Welfare Reform Strategy and Action Plan a number of objectives were given to the WRPO. The objectives were as follows:

- Improve the information that we hold about our tenants to enable us to provide them with appropriate advice and support;
- Ensure tenants were claiming all benefits they were entitled to;
- Improve money management skills;
- Help tenants resolve any debt problems;
- Enhance tenant access to bank accounts, which allow payment of bills by direct debit;
- Help improve tenant access to low cost credit and opportunities for saving;
- Enhance tenant access to the internet;
- Invest in community development to improve opportunities for employment and skills for tenants.

Some of results achieved to date were as follows:

- The Tenants' Forum held an Open Day event in Taunton for all affected tenants
- 380 visits completed with affected tenants
- 152 of the affected tenants had stated they intend to remain in their current home and would ensure they pay their weekly rent

- 112 tenants were not at home for visit, 2nd visit required
- 61 tenants wish to downsize to a smaller property
- 15 tenants had completed moves to a smaller property
- 26 affected tenants were in receipt of Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP)

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

- A more detailed analysis was requested in relation to correlation in rent arrears with regard to the impact of changes in the benefit system.

Resolved that the:

1. Board noted the Officer's report.
2. Requested an update report to be presented to the Board in three months time. This to include comparisons with other landlords and local authorities as well as the Council's performance against the Council's Business Plan.

4. Performance Indicators Quarter Four 2012/13

The Health and Housing Manager gave a verbal update accompanied by tables detailing the Health and Housing KPI Performance Report for the period covering Quarter Four of 2012-13. The tables detailed the overall KPI performance of Quarter Four and the Top Ten Quarter Four Performance Indicators selected by the Tenant Services Management Board during Quarter One performance report.

The Quarter Four overall KPI performance report included such headings as Managing Finances, Service Delivery Satisfaction, Service Delivery Decent Homes and Service Delivery Managing Housing Stock.

The Officers informed the Board Members that there was an increase in the number of green KPI (those on target) to 61%, as well as decrease in number of red KPI (those off target) to 21% and the number of amber KPI's had remained the same.

The Housing Scorecard Summary table continues to be displayed to tenants and the public through the following media outlets

- Tenants' Newsletter
- TDBC Website

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

- The position had not changed significantly since the previous report with the outturn financial scorecard due at the next meeting.
- The lettings turnaround time slipping back over the last quarter was discussed.
- Could the green ink be lightened for the next report so that it could be read.
- Why other councils were doing better and the possibility of a review done to assess this?
- Questioning took place in relation to the DLO with the possibility looked into that it was understaffed. Taking on Apprentices was suggested as a solution.

Resolved that the:

- 1 Board noted the Officer's report.
- 2 Request that Councillor Bowrah reviews the performance indicators and at the next meeting of the TSMB highlights 5 or 6 areas where improvements should be made and these to be benchmarked and/or investigated.

5. STAR Survey

Considering the report previously circulated, concerning the commissioned resident satisfaction survey done by Feedback Services.

STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) was launched in July 2011. It provides social housing landlords with the essential means of discovering how satisfied tenants and residents were with the services provided by them and also allows landlords to benchmark satisfaction results with each other.

The full survey report was distributed at the meeting.

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

- Could the survey be broken down to each area so that greater detail could be provided;
This wasn't done so that the questionnaire remained anonymous.
- 1500 Tenants responded making up around 25% of the authority's social housing tenants.

Resolved that the:

1. Board noted the Officer's Report
2. Tenant Services Management Board to read the survey and highlight any areas that should be investigated with a view to identifying improvements. Comments to be returned in the self addressed envelopes provided by the 10th June.

6. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day Feedback.

Considering the report previously circulated, concerning the feedback received from tenants and leaseholders following the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day that was held at the Somerset County Cricket Ground on the 15th April 2013.

The third Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day was held at the Somerset County Cricket Ground on the 15th April 2013 between 10am and 5pm. 129 people attended the open day, an increase from the 2012 event.

18 stalls were available including various departments of Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) and representatives from external organisations who were able to answer questions on a wide variety of housing related issues and other matters.

The Prize Draw was drawn and results were 1st Prize to Oxford Place, 2nd Prize to Monmouth Road and 3rd Prize to Holway Road.

Overall the feeling was that it was informative and it was rated by the Tenants and Leaseholders as either a very good or excellent event.

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

- Requested in addition to Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day that two additional half-day events; One at Halcon and One at Priorswood. Consideration of transport to be provided to and from the event, along with a separate event to be considered at Wellington for their tenants.
- Marketing and advertisement of Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day; every tenant would receive a letter informing them of the Open Day. Additional advertisement on local radio was recommended.
- Requested that changing the day of the open day to a Saturday as opposed to a weekday to allow for a greater number of people to attend would be looked at.

Resolved that the:

1. Board noted the Officer's report.
2. The Comments and suggestions provided by the Board Members above be noted.

7. Tenant Central Training.

The Tenant Empowerment Manager gave a verbal update detailing the following training for Tenants which was being run by TPAS.

The course would be held on 12 June and would be free to tenants and cost £100 to members of staff. It was requested that the board send representatives to the training.

Resolved that the following Members of the Board had put their names forward:

1. Kevin Hellier
2. Tammy Urquhart
3. Councillor Steve Brooks
4. Ian Gould
5. Judith Hegarty (as back up)

8. Community Reporters Training.

The Tenant Empowerment Manager gave a verbal update detailing training for Tenants.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's Report

9. TPAS Annual Conference.

The Tenant Empowerment Manager gave a verbal update detailing the TPAS Annual Conference which will be held in September.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's Report

10. Apologies for June 2013 Meeting.

Councillor Brooks gave his apologies for the TSMB meeting to be held on the 17th June 2013

(The meeting ended at 8.30pm)