

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 21 November 2011 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, 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), Christine Thompson (Supported Housing Manager) and Keith Wiggins (Democratic Services Officer).

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

(The meeting commenced at 6.02pm)

71. Apologies

Apologies: Mr Galpin

72. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 24 October 2011 were taken as read and signed.

73. Public Question Time

Questions and statements were received in writing from Ms Lisa Wychwood and Mr Martin Aldred, Vice-Chair and Chairman of the new Halcon North Tenants and Residents Association.

Written responses to all questions were promised.

In response to a question on funding, the board heard that the association could apply to the Tenants Forum who held a small budget for such purposes.

74. Declaration of Interests

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

- Councillor Brooks
- Mrs Bunn
- Mrs Drage
- Mr Edwards
- Mr Etherington
- Mrs Hegarty

- Mr Helier
- Mrs Marshall
- Mrs Urquhart

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

75. Service Development – Supported Housing

Considered report previously circulated regarding the outcome of the Service Development event held on Thursday 27 October 2011.

The programme for the service development event had included:

- a review of tenant involvement and outcomes achieved over the past year;
- details of the 'hub and spoke model' for providing housing related support, including a staff structure and where they are located;
- a presentation by Steven Clarke on the Respect Agenda adopted by Taunton Deane Borough Council; and
- a session to discuss ideas for service development in 2012.

The event had been supported by representatives from the tenants and sheltered housing forums, the Tenant Services Management Board and Service Development Group.

A majority of the comments and questions at the event had been related hallways and public areas.

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

- What was being done about scooters in hall-ways? *This was now subject to "zero tolerance" while continuing to work with residents at possible solutions including storage;*
- Tenants on estates in other areas volunteered as snow champions;
- What was being done about cold calling? *The Council discourage cold calling wherever it could.*

Resolved to request officers to prepare an action plan to respond to the queries raised at the event.

76. 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.

James Barrah explained that the previous concerns with one workstream – Assets – had now been resolved.

Members also heard that the draft HRA Business Plan had been considered at the Council's Community Scrutiny Committee and had been supported.

The draft Housing Capital Programme was circulated at the meeting. This included details of a new contract for heating.

The board heard that the bid for extra funding, that had been intended to allow more homes to receive air source heat pumps, had not been successful. Consequently there would be no need to proceed with planned changes to their heating over this winter, discussed previously on 24 October.

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

- Was there a specific date when all properties and venues must comply with the Disability Discrimination Act? *The Council had a five year plan to facilitate compliance but was required to take reasonable measures;*
- Was the Council getting rid of all solid fuel heating? *The Council as landlord had to minimise the risks of fire for health and safety. However in some circumstances tenants would be given a choice to retain a solid fuel appliance;*
- The Council should ensure it focussed on energy efficiency.

Resolved to note the dashboard report and support the draft capital programme proposals.

77. Housing Services and Deane Helpline Fees and Charges 2012/2013

Considered report previously circulated, concerning charges for services provided by Housing Services and the Deane Helpline. It was proposed to increase all fees and charges by applying Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation of 5.6% as at the September 2011.

Council housing rents would be set separately in the New Year.

Resolved to support the proposed fees and charges for 2012/2013

78. Performance Indicators Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 2011/2012

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the performance of Housing Services in specific areas and providing important information on the key services provided by the Council.

The reports also contained information comparing the Council's performance against other social landlords such as local authorities, Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) and housing associations.

Members discussed how the information could best be made available to a wider audience, including use of rent statements or Council Tax letters.

Resolved to support the format of the report and agree to receive regular quarterly updates.

79. Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Service Standard

Considered report previously circulated, concerning a new service standard for Tenant Involvement and Empowerment. It outlined the service tenants could expect from Housing Services at Taunton Deane Borough Council and highlighted the importance the council placed on tenants being given opportunities to participate in shaping and improving the service they received.

The Tenant Empowerment Manager explained that the service standard would show the minimum standard tenants could expect to receive in relation to having opportunities to influence housing services in their neighbourhood. The standard would be published as a simple leaflet style document available for tenants to access in different ways.

Resolved to note the report and approve the proposed Service Standard.

80. Verbal feedback from TPAS "Growing Together HotHouse" Event

Those members attending the South West region event felt it was an informative day. There was some concern expressed about the format of parts of the event and being unable to put their views forward. Overall it was felt that that it was well worth attending.

Members heard that there was planned to be an outcome report.

Resolved to circulate the outcome report once received.

(The meeting ended at 7.30pm)