

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 23rd July 2012 at 6pm in the Meeting Room, Parmin Close, Taunton.

Present: Mr Dustyn Etherington (Chairman), Mr Mark Edwards (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Enid Drage, Mrs Judith Hegarty, Mrs Jessie Bunn, Mrs Tammy Urquhart, Mr Robert Middleton, Mr Dennis Galpin, Councillor Robert Bowrah and Councillor Steve Brooks.

Officers: James Barrah (Health & Housing Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Phil Webb (Housing Manager, Property Services), Steve Esau (Property Services Manager, Maintenance), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Norah Day (Housing Estate Manager) and Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer)

Others: Councillor Jean Adkins, Councillor Fran Smith and Alan Murray (ALCHO General Manager for Contract with TDBC)

(The meeting commenced at 6.06pm)

1. Apologies

Kevin Hellier

Clare Hooper - Clare will not be standing as a board member due to family commitments. Tammy Urquhart was welcomed back to the board as a board member.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on the 19th June 2012 were taken as read and signed.

3. Public Question Time

The Chair of the Halcon North Tenants and Residents Association expressed the Association's comments in relation to the Draft Halcon North Resident Questionnaire and Information Sheet. The Association's comments were as follows:

- The questionnaire is too long.
- Confidentiality is an issue when the questionnaire is being completed on tenants/residents doorsteps.
- The Association would like the questionnaire to be left with the tenant/resident to be filled in privately and then returned.
- The Association would prefer if a member of the Tenant Services Management Board or Halcon North Tenants and Residents

Association accompanied TDBC staff when approaching tenants/residents to complete the questionnaire.

- Questions regarding property type, size and number of occupants are not necessary as TDBC should already have the information.
- Q 5 & 6 of the draft questionnaire needs to be re-worded to be directed at council tenants and to reflect the council's involvement with the estate.
- Would new housing be better quality? If the current properties are maintained properly, they are good quality housing.
- Doubts as to whether tenants/residents safety would be improved based on the architects 'concept' drawing which showed an increased number of smaller streets.
- Accurate wording is required for the number of council properties that will remain on the estate. Is it approximately 50 or up to 50?
- The Association requested timescales for the project be added to the proposal.
- The Association was pleased that the consequences of the proposal were clearly stated, with regards to how many council tenants could return to the area.

The Association stated they thought the documents were well written and clear and thanked officers for their hard work and commitment to involving tenants in the process.

During the discussion of this item, the Housing Portfolio Holder made the following comments:

- The Police are part of the consultation for the Halcon project to ensure a safer neighbourhood. The Police feel the current layout of Halcon is poor in terms of safety.
- All planning applications which would include Halcon would need to be seen as an improvement to receive approval.
- The previous drawing of the Halcon regeneration was an architects 'concept' and not a plan or an accurate representation of the designs for Halcon.
- It's the intention that there will be 50 council owned properties if Halcon regeneration proceeds.
- The timescales for the project would depend upon detailed planning if the project proceeds. It could be 8 and half years to do the whole area, with a different timescale for a phased approach.
- Tenants can complete and return the Halcon questionnaire in private if preferred.
- The council is not solely responsible for the condition of Halcon.

4. Declaration of Interest

The following members declared a personal interest as a council house tenants:

- Mr Dustyn Etherington

- Mr Mark Edwards
- Mrs Enid Drage
- Mrs Judith Hegarty
- Mrs Jessie Bunn
- Mrs Tammy Urquhart
- Mr Robert Middleton
- Mr Dennis Galpin
- Councillor Bowrah & Councillor Brooks both declared having family members who are council tenants.
- Councillor Brooks also declared he is a County Councillor.

The board requested that the existing declarations of interests are automatically recorded in the minutes at each TSMB meeting.

5. Gas & Other Heating Quarterly Monitoring Report

Alan Murray from ALCHO presented a Key Performance Indicator (KPI) report for the 1st quarter, including April, May and June 2012, and asked the board to suggest a format for future KPI reports.

The report showed that only 1 property was not covered by a current CP12 during the quarter, which was later obtained through legal action.

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

- The board congratulated ALCHO for 100% of voids servicing completed within the 14 day timescale.
- Does the 1st/2nd/3rd attempt include other things than refused access such as needing to revisit once a part has been obtained for a repair? -
 - *Yes, but ALCHO try to have stocked vans to reduce the need for revisits due to requiring parts.*
- What if tenants are on holiday, at work or in hospital? Is there appropriate notice before formal letters are received?
 - *ALCHO confirmed they start the process of renewing certificates 2 months before they expire. The board were also briefly reminded that the process for gaining access involves telephone calls, estate management and written communication.*
 - *ALCHO confirmed they are investigating evening and Saturday working as well as a new system which involves calling the next tenant once the previous survey is complete to provide a more specific time for an appointment. It was also confirmed that the gas supply can be 'capped' at properties where the tenant is for example in a long stay in hospital until a survey and new CP12 can be issued.*

The Property Services Manager, Maintenance advised the board that ALCHO are not responsible for the contract for communal heating and the contract for communal heating is being revised.

Resolved: to note the report and agree to receive quarterly updates in the current format.

6. Development and Social Housing Development Fund

The Social Housing Development Fund is a fund identified in the new Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012-42. The Health & Housing Manager stated that a clear policy for building new properties, site selection and affordable rents etc is required.

Discussions have been held with partner organisations to learn skills and discuss purchasing some documents for a development manual. All of the partner organisations visited would be keen to be involved in joint schemes if the opportunity arose. The organisations visited include:

- Knightstone
- Magna
- Yarlinton
- Somer

The Health & Housing Manager and Housing Services Lead have visited approximately 40 potential sites for development. 5 have now been shortlisted and are going through a number of checks regarding ownership and servicing issues.

It was indicated that the broad plan for the 5 sites is to go forward with 1 being used for a Passivhaus development and 4 for traditional build. To reach this stage the sites would need to go through a notification process and discussions held with partners regarding viability.

The end of the process would be a clear indication of what can be achieved on each of the 5 sites for further consultation.

Contact has been made with Exeter City Council who have recently completed Passivhaus developments. The Health & Housing Manger has also visited the Home & Communities Agency office in Bristol and explained TDBC's intention to begin building.

It was explained that structural surveys and viability assessments are currently being undertaken at a number of TDBC garage sites. The Health & Housing Manager welcomed suggestions for potential development site from the board.

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

- Would new properties built be TDBC or Housing Association ownership?
 - *For small developments TDBC would own the new build properties, the housing associations would just be paid for their assistance and skills.*
 - *For large developments TDBC would need to be flexible over the % of ownership between council and housing association.*
- Would tenants be able to purchase the new build properties through their Right to Buy?
 - *Yes, tenants will still have the RTB for new properties but if they are purchased within 15 years of being built, full market value will be paid by the tenant.*
- Could TDBC focus on building sheltered housing that is exempt from the RTB?
 - *No, there are limited sites that would be suitable for sheltered housing.*
- Can TDBC use the Social Housing Development Fund for extending properties?
 - *The Portfolio Holder's preference is that the development fund be used to increase the number of properties.*
- In the broad plan, why would TDBC build more traditional build than Passivhaus?
 - *The numbers of traditional build or Passivhaus are not set but all new development would need to value for money and cost effective.*
- Would the Homes & Communities Agency provide funding for TDBC building plans?
 - *All of the HCA funding is allocated up to 2015, but TDBC would attempt to receive funding in the future.*
- Will TDBC develop its own skills for development?
 - *Yes, the Health & Housing Manager is visiting Somerset College on the 27th July 2012 to discuss skill development.*

Resolved: The board noted the update on development and the Social Housing Development Fund.

7. Updating of HRA Business Plan 2012-2042

Financial risks are raised with the debt associated with the HRA self financing and there is a need to establish clear governance around the business plan. An annual review will occur around budget setting each year.

A project group has been established with James Barrah as Project Lead and Rosie Reed as Project Manager to start review the business plan, the TSMB will be kept updated on the progress. Due to changes since April, the project group have the following issues to review:

- Componentisation
- Better interest rates
- Asset management database update
- Cost of IT provision
- Welfare Reform – higher debt provision
- RTB changes
- Downsizing/Transfer Removal Grants
- Council Tax provision for void properties
- Increasing Disabled Facilities Grants & Aids and Adaptations budgets
- Review introductory and flexible tenancies
- Social Housing Development Fund
- Tenants' Welcome Pack
- Environmental improvements – including additional parking on estates
- Sustainable energy fund
- Related assets (works to non dwellings)
- Heating replacement

During the discussion the Housing Services Lead explained the work currently been undertaken to look at underoccupying and to help those who want to downsize.

Resolved: The board noted the comments on the business plan review and requested a copy of the key issues.

8. Halcon North Project Questionnaire Update

Internal and external surveys of the properties at Halcon have been completed with the data in a raw state which is currently being collated to form a report. A final decision in the questionnaire will be made once all feedback is received, with the questionnaire sessions commencing a week after the letter is sent to Halcon residents.

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

- When will the report with the survey data be presented?
 - *A specific date is not available at present but the report will be presented to Councillors in the Autumn.*
- Should door knocking with the questionnaire be completed by an independent organisation?
 - *The board's opinion was divided on this issue but a compromise was agreed with tenant representatives who don't live in Halcon accompanying staff.*

Resolved: A tenant representative will be invited to accompany staff when completing the Halcon questionnaires.

9. Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference Feedback

Four Tenant Services Management Board members attended the 2012 TPAS conference in Birmingham and provided feedback on the conference. From the three reports presented the review of the conference was as follows:

- Travel to the conference was much easier by car and preferred by all to the train.
- The conference was well run and the facilities were of the highest standard.
- The opening session from TPAS was well done and highlighted TPAS future aims and objectives well.
- All delegates found their workshops useful and learnt from the content.
- The board members that attended felt proud of TDBC Housing Services and what it achieves.
- The conference is extremely useful for networking and meeting other tenants/housing professionals.

The board provided conference material to the Tenant Empowerment Team for staff and other board members to read.

Resolved: The board noted the feedback from the board members that attended the TPAS conference.

10. Annual Report to Tenants 2011/2012

The Tenant Empowerment Manager explained that it's time to produce the annual report to tenants for Housing Services achievements between April 2011 to March 2012.

The annual report is to be sent to tenants at the end of October/start of November and events to consult with tenants on the content of the annual report will be scheduled for the summer of 2012.

Feedback from tenants on the previous annual report indicated that 88% felt the calendar format was useful and 85% wanted to see the calendar format used for future annual reports.

The board supported the calendar format for this year's reports and felt that the previous cash/other incentive for tenants providing feedback for annual reports was useful and should be used again.

Resolved: The annual report for achievements in 2011-2012 should be in calendar format.

11. AOB

- Changes to Homefinder Somerset Allocations Policy

– The Housing Services Lead is attending a Homefinder Somerset Monitoring Board meeting on the 26th July 2012 and will provide feedback to the TSMB. It was confirmed that no changes will be made to the policy without consulting the TSMB.

- The board requested a future report on the contractor's progress of bathroom refurbishments.

- The Housing Manager, Property Services will provide a position statement at a future TSMB meeting.

- The board requested a report on current contracts.

- The Housing Manager, Property Services confirmed a list is currently being compiled that highlights what contracts are being done with timescales and any ongoing issues.

(The meeting ended at 8.25pm)