

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 16 February 2015 at 6pm in JMR, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr D Etherington (Chairman)
Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr D Galpin, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey, Mr R Middleton, Councillor Bowrah.

Officers: Rachel Searle (Housing Development Project Lead), Rosie Reed (Housing Development Project Officer), Paul Hadley (Lettings Manager), Lucy Clothier (Housing Accountant), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director of Housing & Community Development), Kene Ibezi (Assistant Director – Property and Development), Jo Humble (Housing Development & Enabling Manager), Phil Webb (Housing Manager – Property Services), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager)

Others: Councillors Adkins and Mrs Smith

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

Mr M Edwards, Mrs J Hegarty and Councillor Miss Smith

2. Public Question Time

No questions received for Public Question Time.

3. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Bowrah declared personal interest as members of his family were Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr D Etherington, Mr D Galpin, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey, and Mr R Middleton declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

4. Verbal Update on Additional Car Parking on Taunton Deane Borough Council Estates

The Housing Development Project Lead provided an update and presented PowerPoint slides regarding the work undertaken on providing additional car parking.

Below was a summary of the information covered during the presentation:

- The officer explained that initially 12 sites were examined and a shortlist of 5 sites has been created. After analysis with departments such as Legal and Highways 2 sites have now been identified:
 1. Taunfield Close – TDBC owns the land. 1 additional disabled car parking space will be created and 5 standard spaces. Consultation will take place on

the 25th February 2015, showing local residents plans of the proposal. Ward Councillors have seen the plan and their reaction has been positive.

2. Bulford - TDBC owns the land. 1 additional disabled car parking space will be created and 6 standard spaces. Consultation will take place on the 20th February 2015, showing local residents plans of the proposal. Ward Councillors have seen the plan and their reaction has been positive.
- The Tenants' Forum has seen the plans and were supportive.

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

- What are the reasons for Robin Close not being considered for additional spaces?
Specific details were not available at the meeting, but the site is still on the list of areas for improvements.
- Are the spaces for residents only? There is a pay car park on the other side of the street that could be used for non-residents.
The management of the car park will be undertaken by Estate Management.
- The Tenants' Forum paid for car park spaces in Bulford
- How does the semi permeable surface work?
It is a stone layer, not tarmac that water cannot run through

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report and supported the scheme. The board noted that it was important that the local residents are happy with what is being proposed.

5. Homefinder Somerset and Allocation of Sheltered Properties

The Lettings Manager provided an update regarding Homefinder Somerset and how sheltered properties are allocated. He also provided board members with a Frequently Asked Questions document.

- Homefinder Somerset was introduced 8 years ago and consists of 44 partners. There are presently 10,781 active applicants (2,855 in Taunton Deane), a 10% reduction from February 2014 as those with no local connection are excluded from the scheme.
- The scheme is based on need, and applications are assessed and then placed in bands – Emergency, Gold, Silver and Bronze.
- The scheme in TDBC adopts the following process
 - Tenant gives 4 weeks' notice when leaving a TDBC property
 - Property is advertised on Homefinder Somerset for 1 week – text can be added to advert to prioritise e.g. preference to TDBC tenants who are downsizing
 - Applicants bid for property (can only bid for a property that meets their needs)
 - At end of cycle (midnight Wednesday to midnight Sunday) Lettings Team shortlists those who have bid (system lists in order of priority)
 - Top person on list contacted to verify their application
 - Applicant taken to property to view it

- If applicant is happy with property a formal offer is made – applicant has 24 hours to decide whether to take property
 - If accepted applicant signs all paperwork with Estate Management
 - 6 weeks after moving in new tenant is visited by Estate Management to ensure there are no problems
- The age profile of applicants in Taunton Deane is 73.5% 16 to 59 years old and 26.5% aged 60+
 - In terms of amount of stock versus number of applicants the chances of being successful in securing a supported housing property are better than general needs
 - When advertising a sheltered housing property the 60+ criteria is advertised clearly and it is exempt from Right to Buy

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

- How many of sheltered properties are on the ground floor? Can there be a register? Can there be close working with the Supported Housing Officer?
Mobility needs are taken into account and try to let the property to the most appropriate person
- Can applications be checked to verify disability?
Verification takes place after bidding and evidence is seen from Doctor, Occupational Therapist, and Consultant
- TDBC needs to build more bungalows
- This presentation needs to be made to Councillors, especially after the May 2015 elections when there could be new Councillors
- It was suggested that the presentation could be made to Group Meetings and the Frequently Asked Questions should be given to every Councillor
- *About 480 tenants have been effected by the Bedroom Tax. 102 want to downsize, of which 57 have downsized. The Transfer Removal Grant has helped as an incentive to move. This budget has been increased over the last 2 years.*
- How much information do Lettings staff have about the advertised properties?
Staff should get to know properties/areas better
Knowledge of properties is good but could be better. Lettings staff are very experienced and knowledgeable
- How long does it take to register on Homefinder Somerset?
It should take 30 days for application to go live
- How many lettings are there per year?
376 so far in 2014/15 – 10 new lets per week plus 60 mutual exchanges.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

6. Housing Revenue Account Scorecard Quarter 3 2014/15

Considered the financial figures table previously circulated, concerning the Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring for Quarter Three 2014/15 accompanied by a verbal update given by Housing Accountant. The spreadsheets detailed the breakdown of overall performance outturn of Quarter Three 2014/15 split between capital and revenue.

The Revenue Account Performance included such headings as Right to Buy, Income, Expenditure and HRA Revenue.

The following points were covered during the update on Housing Revenue Account Income, Expenditure and Revenue;

- HRA was showing an overall projected overspend of £91,580. This was a variance of 0.3%.
- Voids had a pressure and the costs were currently higher than budget. This was being monitored by Housing Management.

The following points were covered during the update on Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes;

- HRA Capital Programmes had £1,815,900 reprofiled into 2015/16.
- HRA Development projects were currently expected to complete on target. With Phase One to complete in 2014/15 and Creechbarrow Road in 2015/16.

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

- Will the overspends have an impact on budgets for next year?
No.
- Only 26% of Repairs and Maintenance – Planned has been spent so far this year. If this is planned why has this not been spent?
Some contracts are out to tender.
- Are voids costs high because of the repairs that have to be made because tenants wreck the properties?
Sometimes – but TDBC does a recharge for such repairs. TDBC is also reviewing the voids process and looking at the Lettable Standard and doing pre-void surveys.
- If a tenant wrecks a property will they continue to be a tenant of TDBC?
If they remain a tenant TDBC has a better chance of recovering the money.
- Quarter 3 Capital has a low expenditure figure of 25%, is there confidence that there will be such a high level of expenditure in the last quarter of the year?
Some invoices to be paid have not yet been received, some can be 2 months behind. Paying of invoices will catch up by the end of March.
- It seems the true figures will not be known until June or July 2015. At what stage will we actually spend what we have actually budgeted for?
Much more work will start in the new financial year.
- If contracts are planned and there is a recognised lead in period why is it taking so long to get the contracts sorted?
Other priorities have made the process longer and there has also been legal issues. The procurement process is laborious.

- Need more detail than just financial figures, e.g. doors – what does this mean?
How many doors?
Need to look at presenting the information differently.
- If we get invoices 2 months late how do we know if we are over or under spent?
- Are all contracts having to be renewed at once?
HRA Self-financing has changed the landscape of what we can spend on our stock, there is more money to invest in properties.
- How do we know the Creechbarrow Road development will not overspend?
The project is closely managed and we keep track of staged payments.
- The Housing Manager – Property Services stated that he would bring a report to the next TSMB detailing progress against contracts.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report. The board wanted it noted that it was concerned that only 25% of capital expenditure had been spent at Quarter 3 and that it questioned why improvements to properties that had been budgeted for had not been carried out.

7. Performance Indicators Quarter Three 2014-15

Considered the Performance Scorecard tables previously circulated, concerning the Housing and Communities Quarter Three performance Scorecard.

Looking at each section of the performance scorecard for Quarter Three, the figures and percentages as follows:

- Managing Finances (housing) - There were 9 measures of which 56% Green, 44% Amber, 0% Red and 0% were N/A.
- Service Delivery (Service Delivery (Satisfaction) – There were 11 measures of which 55% Green, 36% Amber and 9% were N/A.
- Service Delivery (Decent Homes) – There were 2 measures of which 100% were Red.
- Service Delivery (Manage Housing Stock) – There were 18 measures of which 33% were Green, 11% were Amber, 33% were Red and 23% were N/A.

Below was a summary of the planned actions that were off course:

- 2 Measures for Decent Homes are off course. Average SAP (energy efficiency) rating is below target. Dwellings with a valid gas safety certificate – 99.89% - 5 properties were not serviced (tenant passed away, two were in hospital, two will be serviced in Jan 2015).
- Housing Services Diversity Information. We hold 77.5% of diversity information. The Diversity Information survey has been redesigned and we are developing processes to collect incomplete data so this figure should continue to improve.
- 3 Repairs and Maintenance measures are off course. 93.83% of emergency repairs were completed on time against a target of 98%. 90.97% of urgent repairs were completed on time against a target of 94%. 83.71% of non-urgent repairs were completed on time against a target of 85%. The COSY replacement went live at the beginning of September, and there have been a number of problems including ticket closure. Once these are resolved it should enable us and the DLO to report completions more accurately and establish where there are issues or not.

- Local Authority Major Aids and Adaptions – 35 applications have been completed and 50 are predicted against a target of 84. The target will need to be reviewed as 84 may be unrealistic given the complex needs of many clients.
- Average Re-let Times - 26.25 days against a target of 21 days. Data for Q3 incomplete, a number of properties that should have been recorded as major works have been recorded as minor works, therefore performance figure is showing higher average than it should.

Below was a summary of the planned actions that had uncertainty in meeting them:

- Aids and Adaptions (2 measures) – expenditure on both major and minor Aids and Adaptions are unlikely to reach budget, these are both demand led.
- Estate Management Team – rent arrears at the end of week 39 are £440k against a target of £360k, due to the Christmas period. Last year similar levels of debt were reported in Q3 and arrears were back on target by Q4.
- Housing Debt – the debt level for December has increased slightly since September due to Housing debt.
- Housing Services – 4 Satisfaction measures. The 2013 Star survey (conducted every two years) reported satisfaction figures for general needs tenants and sheltered housing tenants which were below target. Council national rankings show that we are in quartile 2 for housing measures and lower quartiles for supported housing. These measures will not change until 2015 when the Star Survey is conducted again.
- Lettings Team – the % of dwellings vacant but unavailable are slightly over target. The historic trend of our performance in this area is on or below target. We don't feel this is anything to be concerned about as performance just fall back in line with our targets in the coming months.
- Local Authority Major Aids and Adaptions. Performance for end to end completion time is 27 weeks, 5 cases were completed within the 22 week target, and 7 were delayed due to clients.

Below was a summary of the planned actions that were on course:

- Managing Finances – 5 measures are on target.
- Satisfaction – 6 measures are on target.
- Housing Stock – 6 measures are on target.

Below were measures under development, not reported or without alerts.

- % of tenants satisfied with the Extra Care Housing service – a survey has not currently been completed
- Repairs and Maintenance – 3 measures are under development.
- Community Development – tonnage removed measure not reported.

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

- Aids and adaptations is demand led and will be near target at the end of the year.
- Lettings – major voids recorded incorrectly and no work done over Christmas period.
- Diversity Information – those tenants where we hold no information will receive a reminder and form to complete next week.
- SAP rating will be improved by External Wall Installations
- Gas safety – 5 not completed, 1 tenant passed away, 2 in hospital and 2 were done in January.
- Repairs times – issue with IT system
- Can we let tenants know when appointments will not be kept
- 1 in 10 tenants not getting an emergency repair done within target time and performance is getting worse, as well as target has never been achieved. The target should be 100%, not 98%.
- Why are we not meeting the repairs targets?
The information is not accurate and Property Services is meeting with the DLO and will have a plan of action.
- If the figures are not accurate why have they been presented to the TSMB?
The information gives an indication.
- When will the IT system work correctly? Have we bought the right IT system?
The problems of the system are being rectified but do not know when they will be fixed.
- There are problems with IT projects and resources are a problem with all the projects that are taking place.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

8. Tenant Services Management Board Annual General Meeting

Considered verbal update from Tenant Empowerment Manager.

Resolved that the Board's Annual General Meeting would take place on the 20th April 2015, replacing the usual board meeting.

9. Somerset Tenant Conference

Considered verbal update from Tenant Empowerment Manager on event to be held on 14th March 2015 at Somerset County Cricket Ground.

Attendees from the board will be:

- Marion Davis
- Robert Middleton
- Richard Balman
- Ivor Hussey
- Kevin Hellier
- Dennis Galpin

Any Other Business

The Chairperson read out an e-mail sent by the Vice Chair of the Tenants' Forum congratulating Dennis Galpin for the work he has undertaken to support the procurement of new contracts

The Chairperson informed board members that drop in sessions would be held at the new developments at Bacon Drive and Vale View

The Chairperson on behalf of the board congratulated Emma Hill on the birth of her daughter.

(The meeting ended at 8.45pm)