

**Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 16 November 2015 at 6pm in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.**

**Present:** Mr R Balman (Chairman)  
Ms M Davis (Vice-Chair)  
Mr A Akhigbemen, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr I Hussey, Ms D Pierowicz, Councillor Bowrah, and Councillor Appleby.

**Officers:** Lucy Clothier (Senior Accountant), Terry May (Assistant Director – Property & Development), Richard Brown (DLO Project Manager), Justin Young (Building Services Area Supervisor), Mike Fletcher (Building Services Area Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Gary Kingman (Senior Supported Housing Development Manager), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), James Barrah (Director of Housing & Communities), Rachel Searle (Housing Development Project Lead) and Emma Hill (Democratic Services Officer).

**Others:** Councillor Beale and Mrs Warmington

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

**1. Apologies**

Mr K Hellier

**2. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 26 October 2015 were taken as read and were signed.

**3. Public Question Time**

No questions received for Public Question Time.

**4. Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Bowrah declared a personal interest as member of his family were Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants and declared a personal interest as family member had applied to the Council's Right to Buy Social Mobility Fund 'Homeownership' Cash Incentive Scheme.

Councillor Appleby declared a personal interest as Leaseholder of Taunton Deane Borough Council property.

Mr A Akhigbemen, Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr I Hussey, Ms D Pierowicz, declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

## 6. Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring Quarter Two 2015/16

Considered report previously circulated, concerning an update on the projected outturn financial position of the Council for the financial year 2015/16 (as at 30 September 2015).

The Housing Revenue Account Revenue (HRA) was budgeted to 'break even' (net of and approved transfers to/from reserves). The forecasted revenue position for 2015/16 at Quarter two had a £102k overspend.

The forecasted general reserves balance at the end of the year was £2,606k. This was £806k above the minimum recommended balance of £1,800k.

The approved Capital Programme was £23,459k. This related to schemes covering 2015/16, 2016/17 and 2017/18. A total of £16,621k was expected to be spent in 2015/16 with the remainder for planned investment to implement approved schemes in future years.

The current forecast outturn for the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was overspend of £102k (0.4% of budget). The major underspends and overspends forecast for year were summarised as follows:

- Rental Income: Weekly rental income was currently due to over-recover by £138k based on rents in Q2. Rent loss due to void properties was currently approximately 0.7%, less than the 1.9% budgeted.
- Other Income: Service charges and charges to leaseholders were also due to over recover by £17k and £19k respectively.
- Housing Management: Ongoing use of agency staff is creating a significant pressure to management costs.
- Specialist Works: Spend on specialist works, largely asbestos testing was currently expected to exceed budget by £98k. This could potentially increase.
- Electrical Testing Contract: The contract had been allocated £600K but would now not start until April 2016, and the budget would not be needed within this financial year.
- Pre-Planned Maintenance: The contract was delayed and only started in September and was likely to be an underspend in the region of £400k.
- Responsive Works: The pressure of £155k was due to General Maintenance.
- Voids: Overall costs was expected to be £73k less than budget.
- Communal Areas: For dwellings was forecasted to be over budget by £180k at outturn.
- Procurement Savings: Prudent budgeting was likely to result in an underspend.
- Interest Payable: Healthy reserves meant external borrowing was not yet needed for the new development schemes
- Provision for Bad Debt: Provision had been made in the Business Plan for an increased level of unrecoverable debt due to Welfare Reform.

A large stock condition survey was being undertaken as part of the HRA Business Plan Review to look at the investment needed in our homes over the next 30 years. This had identified that further work was needed to update our current stock condition data.

Stock condition data, was information held against each dwelling relating to when each individual building component would need to be replaced, and the corresponding estimated costs of replacing each component as required.

This information allowed TDBC to not only identify future plans of work, but crucially to inform the business plan of levels of investment required over the short and long term. Over the last five years some stock condition data had been updated when work had been undertaken, however there had been no proactive surveys.

In order to identify the future works needed, which in turn would inform the Business Plan Review, we need to fully reflect the condition of the stock in our stock condition data.

Having considered the possible options, officers recommended the Council commissioned a new stock condition survey of the housing stock. It was recommended that a 50% survey, approximately 2,900 inspections was undertaken.

The cost of commissioning this number of surveys, along with fully updating our system to ensure that it was fit for purpose, was expected to be in the region of £250k.

The following points were covered during an update on HRA Capital Programme Budgets:

- The approved HRA capital programme was £23.459m, of which £12.927m related to works on existing dwellings and £10.532m for the provision of new housing through development.
- £9.202m of the capital budget in the HRA related to major works on existing dwellings and included works such as kitchens, bathrooms, heating systems, roofs, doors and windows.
- £2.216m related to other works such as disabled facilities adaptations, asbestos removal, external wall insulations and extensions. This was expected to be largely on track.
- The IT Development Budget was also likely to slip by £0.207m.
- £1.509m related to the new budget for adding solar PV systems to dwellings. This was currently underway and was close to completion.
- The remaining budget of £10.532m was for the provision of new housing through the Creechbarrow Road, Phase one sites and Weavers Arms new builds and the buyback of dwellings previously sold through Right to Buy.

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

- Was there any mileage in giving short term contracts to those agency staff that had been there above a certain length of time?  
*The Council had looked into short term contracts but there were penalties from the Recruitment Agency. The Council was looking more to the recruitment side.*
- Had the stock condition survey been started yet?  
*The survey hadn't been started yet. Contractors for particular programmes of work would survey but also the Council was looking to complete a large stock condition survey to make sure the correct information was stored by the system*
- Wanted to check if I understand this correctly, it seemed pointless and silly to have the contractor Mi-Space to survey just the bathroom and then have someone come back and complete a whole house survey.  
*Mi-space was one programme of works contractors and they were in a contract for a length of five years. The whole house stock condition survey would be undertaken and completed by Savills to update the information on entire*

*properties to plan ahead.*

*There would always be pre-work required on work programme contracts and this was factored in the tender price. Also this currently included surveying the bathroom as they were aware that the Council's data was not as good as it could be.*

*The stock data issue was a historic issue, as officers in our property team were focusing on doing the work with less focus on maintaining the stock data. Following the JMASS restructure, priorities had been refocused and as a result of this a stock condition survey was being undertaken to start filling the gaps of stock data.*

- Concerning Voids, it was good to see the Council were making progress and were now on track.
- Looking at Asbestos works - expected to exceed budget by £98K. Why had this figure suddenly increased? Had the Council found lots of properties with Asbestos?

*This was due to new regulations that came in requiring Council to complete a refurbishment and demolition survey on any property undergoing refurbishment such as a new kitchen for example as well as Councils were required to have 100% Asbestos management surveys but the Council was not in that position so reviewing our compliance issues. These requirements were statutory and legislative and need to be done, also there was cost to complete this.*

*Savills were helping the Council with the assessment of asbestos in properties.*

- Where did officers arrive at the figure of £98K and could it potentially increase and what figure at this stage, did officers think it would increase to?

*The Council had a piece of work around the potential cost implications as well as to understand what the Council needed to do. The Council was working with a critical friend with Savills who was completing a route and branch survey of Asbestos, which included our management plan, paperwork, strategy and procedures. They would create an action plan from this survey and this would give the Council good guidance as to what we need to do.*

*Until the Council received all the information regarding where the Council needed to be and what work needed to be done officers couldn't forecast the potential increase and overspend to the budget.*

*There was a £50k rolling baseline for this work but it was not finalised.*

- Annex B, capital works. Members approve a budget every year, but yet again the Council was carrying over £7 million. I am aware, the competition for skilled labour was intense. To budget for something and then not spend it?

*Officers were having conversations with contractors relating to underspend budgets in programme of works and these would be rolling over or would be spent. The heating contract was going through the tendering process and should be spent by the end of the year.*

*The Council had been too slow to put contracts in place quickly enough as well as getting skilled staff in place.*

**Resolved that:-**

1. The officer's report regarding the HRA's performance as at the end of Quarter two be noted.
2. To support the approval of a supplementary estimate of £250,000 funded from reserves. To commission a survey of 50% of the housing stock, and the updating of the stock condition database.

## 7. Performance Indicators Quarter Two 2015/16

Considering the Performance Scorecard tables previously circulated, concerning the Housing and Communities Quarter Two performance Scorecard.

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

- Managing Finances (housing) - There were 8 measures of which 56% Green, 33% Amber, 11% Red and 0% were N/A.
- Service Delivery (Service Delivery (Satisfaction) – There were 12 measures of which 33% Green, 17% Amber, 50% were Red and 0% were N/A.
- Decent Homes – There were measures of 2 which 50% were Red and 50% were Amber.
- Staffing – There were 3 measures of which 33% were Green, 67% were Amber, 0% were Red and 0% were N/A.
- Operational Delivery – There were 21 measures of which 67% were Green, 14% were Amber, 19% were Red and 0% were N/A.

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

- Two customer complaints response measures – the Council were not currently hitting the response times 100% of the time however performance has improved on Q1.
- Housing Services – had three customer satisfaction measures that were off course. Officers were developing an action plan to address the satisfaction issues and ensure this improves in key areas.
- One Measure for Decent Homes was off course. Average SAP rating for energy efficiency was below target.
- Lettings – had one customer satisfaction measure off course. This related to the satisfaction of tenants regarding the lettable standard of the properties. Although it was below target, there had been an increase on Q1 to 79%.
- Housing Services Diversity Information – was now holding 66% of diversity information. This was increasing slowly.
- Two Repairs and Maintenance measures were off course. Related to the completion of Emergency and Urgent priority jobs within the target timescale. These had both increased since Q1.
- One Sheltered Housing Tenants measure off course – Percentage of Tenant Support Plan that had been reviewed in 12 months had dropped since Q1 to 60% from 85%.

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

- Estate Management Team – had one measure which was uncertain. Rent arrears were not on target but expected to be back on target by the end of the year.
- Housing Debt Measures - had two measures which was uncertain. Debt has increased due to rent arrears and a development bill that would be credited soon.
- Housing Services – had two measures which was uncertain. Sheltered Housing Tenant Satisfaction with Landlord Services was 88%. This remained unchanged. Also tenant satisfaction with their most recent repair.

- Decent Homes – had one measure which was uncertain. Due to three properties were not serviced and had no valid certificate. This was now resolved.
- Learning and Development - had two measures which was uncertain. Not all staff had received a performance review in the last 12 months.
- Housing Stock Re-let – had one measure which was uncertain. Due to problems experienced with Sheltered Accommodation relets. Despite average re-let time being over target.
- Extra Care Facility - had one measure which was uncertain. Number of Extra care tenants with a support plan reviewed in last six months was increasing but below target.

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

- Managing Finances had five measures were on target.
- Satisfaction had four measures were on target.
- Staffing had one measure was on target
- Operational Delivery had 14 measures were on target.

The following points were covered during an update regarding the software Open Contractor (OC):

- OC did work but there were issues understanding the individual processes.
- The Council had appointed a new trainer as well as developing a new training package
- Officers were using a tick list systems with the schedule of works to prioritise jobs as well as using the messaging system on the PDAs.
- The Council had been back in touch with Capita regarding more support with challenges and issues of implementation of OC.
- The performance would improve with increased staff training. Officers were seeing less days with major incidents relating to OC. This had been since going paperless completely.
- The Council would be building on the support and training for staff regarding the understanding and using of OC and the technology.
- 99% of Priority One tickets were completed on time. The completing of tickets and job reporting was what effected this.
- Board Member should see big improvement with KPI and targets by quarter three.

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

- When was Open Contractor introduced?  
*It was introduced in September 2014. The officer had only been in place two months and the department was now overcoming some major issues, this included increasing the number of PDAs being used on the ground by the workforce.*  
*Teams were being brought together and would be situated in the same room. The Council was also looking at integrated roles to help with cover when required as well as increase understanding.*  
*There had been a key error made by the Council, which was going live with Open Contractor too soon, before we were ready. There was not enough testing and training completed as well as having all the procedures in place.*

- Concerning Priority One Tickets, if they were issued after 11:00pm, could the job ticket be completed by the end of the day due the time constraints?  
*The priority for staff visiting the property of a priority one job ticket was to make safe the property and make an assessment of the work required. These job ticket may require further works, which another ticket would be raised to complete the work on another day.*

**Resolved** that the Officer's Report be noted.

## **8. Sheltered Housing Service and Charges**

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the proposed new sheltered housing service and charges for sheltered housing.

Following Somerset County Council's (SCC) review of commissioned housing related support services in 2013/2014, Taunton Deane Borough Council's (TDBC) Housing and Community Service was having to make changes to the services it delivered and the charges it applied in respect of its sheltered housing service.

The Council currently owned, managed and provided housing related support services to a total of 880 (on 1 November 2015) sheltered housing council tenants.

TDBC's sheltered housing currently comprised of two separate but highly related elements, they were designated accommodation and housing related support.

This review did not concern TDBC's two extra care schemes at Kilkenny Court, Taunton and Lodge Close, Wellington as services at these schemes were being reviewed separately.

Over the last few years TDBC's contract with SCC to provide housing related support to its sheltered housing tenants had reduced significantly.

Following SCC's review, the key elements of the service were redefined. This included service contract specification.

A direct consequence of a significant reduction in the housing related support contract value and changes to the service specification issued by SCC, TDBC was having to make changes the housing related support service it currently delivered to its sheltered housing tenants.

The Council had delivered a housing related support service to its sheltered housing tenants for many years. The service was generally well regarded by all sheltered housing tenants achieving consistently good levels of satisfaction ratings.

The proposed new sheltered housing service for tenants would continue to respond to the aging population on our sheltered housing schemes. The service would have a positive social impact, helping tenants to lead active and independent lives. The service would aim to achieve and maintain a high level of tenant satisfaction.

Tenants would be offered a service that provides that community touch, helping tenants to feel part of their scheme. The services would reflect the occupancy and interests of those living on them.

Listed below was what a tenant should expect from the proposed new sheltered housing service:-

- Additional housing management
- Community development
- Tenant involvement and empowerment
- Housing related support service
- Deane Helpline and Emergency Response service:

Currently, the amount of weekly service charge a tenant pays for their sheltered housing service depends on the type of sheltered housing scheme on which they reside.

The current sheltered housing service charges applied to sheltered housing tenants rent accounts for 2015/16, however some tenant had a tenancy that had 'protected rights' in relation to the sheltered component of their service charge:

- Sheltered Housing – Current Weekly Charge £12.97
- Low Level Sheltered Housing – Current Weekly Charge £4.47

In the proposed new service a new single rate sheltered housing service charge would be applied to all sheltered housing tenant rent accounts from April 2016:

- Additional housing management; Community Development and Tenant involvement and empowerment – Proposed Weekly Charge £10.04

Some tenancies where 'protected rights' were applicable in relation to the sheltered component of their service charge would retain their protected status. No existing sheltered housing tenant would be financially worse off as a consequence of this proposal.

Sheltered housing tenants on low incomes would be entitled to apply for housing benefit.

The figure quoted (i.e. £10.04) related to 2015/2016 charging values and would be subject to the normal annual inflationary assessment at April 2016 onwards.

The housing related support element of the proposed new service would continue to be grant funded by SCC and subject to a formal contractual agreement.

It was proposed that the actual weekly cost of the Deane Helpline and Emergency Response service be applied as a charge to all sheltered housing tenants rent accounts, unless they were exempt due to being in receipt of housing benefit.

A summary was provided stating the current and proposed new service, along with details of the funding that was available to help with the cost.

There were currently nine sheltered housing officers (SHO) in post within the sheltered housing service.

Subject to approval from the Council's Executive Committee, it was proposed the new sheltered housing service and charges would be operational with effect from the start



of the next finance year i.e. 04/04/2016. Prior to this date officers and managers within Housing and Community Services would be working to update administrative systems to enable tenants to receive full details and formal notification of the new service and charges.

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

- Looking at the list of Sheltered Housing Schedule with the report, were any of these paying the 'Lower Rate' for their accommodation i.e. £4.47?  
*There were 880 Sheltered Housing Properties and about 700 tenants of those properties paid the £12.59. Of the 180 properties remaining some of tenants were told when Supporting People was introduced that they would be protected and wouldn't be affected. This would be in effect until that tenant either moved or die. The next tenant would be required to pay the standard rate with no protection. All tenants were consulted about the historical protections currently in effect and all tenants that responded were pleased and happy that the historical protections would be remaining for those tenants who received them.*
- SCC were reducing the grants by £90k over a three year period, was the Council making the assumption that SCC would be reducing the grants next year?  
*SCC had issued a contract for four years of grant £153K each until 2018. What the Council had to plan for and take into account in the finances, SCC there may come point where they withdraw the grant completely. The Council had to have that assurance that it could sustain the service if and when SCC withdraw the grant funding completely.*

**Resolved** that the Officer's report be noted and made comments on the proposed new Sheltered Housing Service.

## 9. Your Guide to Asbestos Leaflet

Considered information guide previously circulated, concerning a guide to Asbestos for Council Tenants and Leaseholders.

Board Members were presented with an update version of the leaflet, which provided residents with improved advice and information regarding Asbestos.

The leaflet would be in the December issue of the Deane Housing Newsletter and would also be in the Information Packs when Tenants signed up.

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

- Were all the Council properties being done?  
*The advice given to the Council was not to remove the asbestos unless absolutely necessary.  
The Council would be issuing copies of the surveys to the Tenants following the survey but a Tenant Friendly version.*
- Did the Council have any data on their properties regarding Asbestos?  
*The Council data was improving all the time. So yes, the Council did hold information and data regarding asbestos in its housing stock.*
- What do Tenants do, if Wessex Water put a water meter into a property and they disturb asbestos panelling?

**Resolved** that the Officer's updated version of Guide to Asbestos for Tenants and Leaseholders be noted

## 10. Creechbarrow Road Development Update

Considering the Development Project Performance Scorecard previously circulated, concerning the Creechbarrow Road Development in Taunton.

Below was a summary of the status of Key Project Activities for Phase 1:

- Build Programme completed by Galliford Try was Amber meaning there were issues against some of the milestones but remedial action would keep project under overall control.
- Community Liaison completed by Rachel Searle was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.
- Training Opportunities completed by Rachel Searle was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.
- Finance completed by Rachel Searle was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.

The dashboard summarised the key project accomplishments for the both the KHA and TDBC site for the current period against the previous period of the Development Project as well as detailing the community liaison over the same period through the local community at a variety of community locations.

Included for the Board's information was the key goals/targets for the development project over the next period as well as detailing any current or ongoing issues with the development.

Looking at Community Liaison, returning decanted tenants had been taken on a site tour and visited the plots that would be their futures homes. Play Ranger sessions had been funded by TDBC, Knightstone Housing and Galliford Try but managed by Barnardos during the school holidays due to the removal of the old play area. The contract to provide and install the new play equipment was out to tender.

Build Programme issues related to the project remaining behind schedule against original timescales. The project was now working against a revised programme.

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

- On Wheatley Road, the residents had a chronic parking and it was also on a local bus route and contractors were ignoring the red cones and parking there, making it difficult for the buses to get through.  
*The officer asked Residents and Board Members to make note of the vehicles registration number for the site manager. This would enable them to apply direct pressure to those contractors who were parking there. Rather than just making a general appeal to all contractors. The site entrance on Wheatley Road was now closed so there was no need access and no need to park on the road there.*
- Would there be fines for the developers for the delay on the project being completed? Could officers give some more detail on how this would work?

*This was written into the contract but the Council didn't want to focus on this at moment, we wanted to focus on the delivery and the completion of the project. The Council was looking into compensation for the delay and loss of rent. The contract made provision for some delays or the contract deadline could be extended, which had been done and will expire on January 2016. What the Council didn't know was the scale of the claim until we knew how many properties were delayed or unfinished when the extended deadline passed. There would another update in due course.*

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

(The meeting ended at 20.10pm)