

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 19 January 2015 at 6pm in JMR, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

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

Officers: Caroline White (Housing Development Project Lead), Jo Humble (Housing Development and Enabling Manager), James Barrahan (Director of Housing & Communities), Phil Webb (Property Services Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead – Housing & Communities), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager) Simon Lewis (Assistant Director – Housing and Community Development) and Emma Hill (Corporate Support Officer).

Others: Councillors Adkins

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

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 and declared a personal interest as Ward Councillor for Wellington, Rockwell Green and West.

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

4. Update on Regeneration of Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green.

The Housing Development Project Lead and Housing Development & Enabling Manager gave a verbal update and presented some slides to the Board Members concerning the project status of the Regeneration of Weavers Arms.

Below was a summary of the verbal update and presentation slides:

- Officer presented the first stage of Architects designs for the properties.
- There would be 26 units in total including bungalows, flats and 2/3 bedroom semi-detached properties.
- All properties would be built to code level four and had a traditional look in keeping with the properties in the surrounding area.

- Officers had held a public consultation event where approximately 180 residents attended to voice their opinions on the development and designs.
- These were received mostly positively with concerns centring round highways and non-residents using the road to park.
- The two bed properties would be reinforced in the roof space to allow for possible future addition of third bedroom.

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

- The proposed designs and scheme look excellent. I can understand the residents' concerns regarding highways. There was a school nearby and residents were concerned that parents would use the roads for parking.
The concerns regarding Highways would be dealt with during the planning process.
- No complaints regarding this scheme. The designs of the properties looks lovely.
- I was pleased with what I saw at the public consultation event and especially the off-road parking within the new scheme, which residents don't currently have access.
- What about the displaced tenants, had they been offered to return to the new properties or move elsewhere and could they downsize if they wished?
The displaced tenants had offered the opportunity to move on or come back to the finished development as well as downsize if they so wished. This was why the Council had included some bungalows within the development as some existing tenants preferred this option to the flats.
- Looks like a lovely scheme and it was nice to see the outside remaining in keeping with the area but the inside would be modern as well as the property being code level four making them energy efficient.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

5. **Housing Revenue Account Business Plan 2012 – 2042 Review.**

Reference Item No. five of the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2014, the Director of Housing and Communities presented a briefing note on the forthcoming review of HRA Business Plan.

This report provided Members of the Board with the full report detailing the review of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2012 – 2042 and since the last review process a number of significant changes and issues had arisen that impact on the Business Plan, consequently a further review had been undertaken.

Below was a summary of the additional information provided to the Board by the officer:

- The report had been to Community Scrutiny Committee and Executive Committee. It had been well received with only a couple of concerns from members.
- Since the review report had been produced and presented inflation had again fallen and this would need to be factored in by Finance and ArlingClose.

- The adjustments and budget changes stated in the report had not changed since going to the Council Committee meetings.
- Concerning the ring-fencing of the proposed apprenticeship places, this would need further investigation prior to launch. There were equal opportunities elements the Council needed to be aware of through the recruitment process. A report would come forward to the Board regarding the apprenticeship scheme.

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

- Looking at the fixed rate borrowing, what was the length of the fixed rate?
The repaying of the capital element to the major borrowing would be paid off within 18 years.
- Completely agree with the decision to focus on new builds rather than extension to existing stock.
- Another element to limiting the number of extensions would be to review and prove the way the Council did its property allocations, making best use of the current stock.
The Council had been more aware of the adapted properties and were trying to become more efficient with the current stock when allocating.
- Adapted properties; this had been previously discussed by the Board, had the Council created a register of adapted properties to make sure they were only offered to people who required the adaptations?
The Council currently had a traffic light system for adapted Council properties. When the Council advertised these properties on Homefinder Somerset only people who required the specific properties would be able to bid for them.
- The Council had previously had regular drives to encourage tenants to agree and complete mutual exchanges of properties.
- During the recent Board training session, members had discussed requesting a report to come to the Board regarding the Council property allocation service and Homefinder Somerset.
- As the Council pays off and frees itself from more debt creating more borrowing headroom, could they consider re-developing large areas or blocks of the non-traditional properties such as the Woolaways?
*Indeed the Council borrowing headroom would increase as we pay back our borrowing but we also had to consider if the development were affordable.
The Council is concentrating any re-development of non-traditional properties to the Woolaways as they had the short lifespan, whereas the Cornish properties had a longer lifespan and could be maintained much easier.
The Council may not be able to completely re-develop the larger areas of Woolaway on their own and may need to look into partnership development but Rockwell Green regeneration was a good opportunity for a pilot scheme to see how it goes.
The Council had to consider other options not just Woolaway sites but also consider sites that come up for sale and land hungry sites.*
- If the Council had to look for partnerships to re-develop these larger areas of non-traditional properties, Could we consider joining up with a property developer and create a mixed community with Council and Owner occupiers?
- If the Council went into a partnership with a developer, what percentage would the percentage of properties on the site, the Council would want for stock?

In a partnership with a property developer, the Council would at least need to get the same number of properties back that were originally on the site if not a slight increase in properties and to repay any borrowing.

- I would have concerns with mixed communities as areas such as Bishops Hull development had suffered problems, where companies and engineers had refused to visit certain areas of mixed estates, also owners look after their properties with more care than some Social Tenants, which could have an effect on owner properties.
- Board Members didn't have a problem with the idea of creating a partnership with a property developer to re-develop the larger areas but the Council would need to be aware of any arising issues with mixed communities affecting owner properties.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

6. Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference 2015.

Considering the report previously circulated, concerning the upcoming Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference 2015 at the Chesford Grange Hotel in Kenilworth on 8 and 9 July 2015.

Members of the Board had previously attended TPAS Annual Conferences which had traditionally been held in July. This year TPAS was maintaining the same format as last year, with the conference being held in July in the same venue near Warwick.

The Board was asked to decide whether to send delegates to the conference, and if so how many.

TPAS were currently offering a discount on bookings. This was set at £339 per delegate but must be booked by the 17th April 2015. After this date a place at the conference would cost £389.

TPAS were currently finalising the full programme, which included workshops and speakers. The full programme would be available in April 2015. A conference dinner was to be held on the evening of Wednesday 8th July. This was included in the delegate fee.

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

- Board Members agreed that representatives from the Board should be sent to the conference as it was a very useful experience.
- Would there be any cost to Board Member prior to going to conference?
The cost of the conference and travel would be met by the existing Tenant Empowerment budget.
- Could those who were interested in attending please raise their hands?
Mr R Balman, Mr I Hussey, Mr K Hellier, Cllr B Bowrah and Mr D Gaplin showed interest in attending the conference.
- It was suggested that officers look at alternative accommodation as the cost of the Chesford Grange seemed expensive. The previous attendees believed there was another hotel locally, which other delegates had used.

- Board Members were in general agreement for alternative accommodation as this was Tenants' money.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

7. Update on Somerset Tenant Conference.

The Tenant Empowerment Manager gave a verbal update concerning the Somerset Tenant Conference.

Landlords in Somerset had come together to hold a joint conference to enable tenants from different organisations to meet, learn and swap ideas and share experiences of housing.

The landlords which were involved in this joint conference were:

- Taunton Deane Borough Council
- Yarlington Homes
- Magna
- Magna West Somerset
- Alliance
- Knightstone
- Raglan

The Conference would be held on Saturday 14th March 2015 between 10am to 2.30pm with registration opening at 9.30am. The location for the conference would be the County Room and the Long Room at Somerset County Cricket Ground. Lunch would be provided to all attending delegates.

Between the Landlords, it had been agreed that each landlord could send 14 attendees and the proposed breakdown for the attendees for the Council would be:

- Four from Tenants' Forum
- Four from Tenant Services Management Board
- Four from Supported Housing Development Group
- Two from TDBC staff

The agenda for day had yet to be confirmed but guest speaker Jenny Osbourne; Chief Executive of Tenant Participation Advisory Service would be attending the conference. There would be a mixture of hot topics that had the most impact on tenants, along with workshops. The layout of the venue would allow tenants from different organisations to mix.

The cost of the event would be split equally between the seven landlords involved in the conference.

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

- Could those who were interested in attending the conference, please raise their hands?

Mrs J Hegarty, Ms M Davis, Mr R Middleton, Mr R Balman, Mr I Hussey, Mr D Gaplin and Mr D Etherington had shown interest in attending.

Confirmation of attendees would be decided at the next meeting of the Board in February.

- Had the landlords considering having a competition at the event as well? Something like 'Best Tenant or Tenant of the Year'.
The event had been organised to lend itself more to allow tenants and attendees to mix.
- Housing Service Lead asked if there was any flexibility on the number of TDBC staff attending the event as he felt this would be of benefit to staff who weren't experienced in Tenant led decision making and how the Council worked the Tenants through all our processes and interaction.
It was also a benefit to managers being more aware of Tenants interaction and would benefit the running of the services with this increased understanding.
- If officers could find out, if other landlords hadn't filled all their places, could the Council use those empty places for officers to attend? Or simply could it be increased to four from Tenants' Forum, four from the Board, four from Supported Housing and Four from staff?
- Was there any possibility that if Board Members were interested in attending but were unable to attend all day, could they attend for just an hour?

Resolved that the:-

1. Board noted the officer's report.
2. Board would confirm attendees to the conference at the next meeting in February.

(The meeting ended at 7.03pm)