

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board 18th February 2013

Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day Tenant Services Management Board Annual General Meeting

Report of the Tenant Empowerment Manager

(This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Jean Adkins)

1. Executive Summary

A Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day is an event which typically runs all day (morning to evening, times to be agreed) and gives tenants and leaseholders an opportunity to gain information on and ask questions about topics that are of interest to them. The day is informal in terms of tenants and leaseholders can pop in at any time during the day; appointments do not have to be made.

The first such event was held in April 2011 and received a very positive feedback with over 100 tenants attending. The second event in 2012 proved even more successful in terms of numbers attending and feedback.

The Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) has previously taken the decision to hold its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the end of the open days. A decision on continuing this practice is needed for the 2013 AGM.

2. Background

The two Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open days have been held in April since their introduction in 2011. The venue has been the Somerset County Cricket Ground and over 100 tenants and leaseholders have attended each event, with over 20 stalls available including various departments of Taunton Deane Borough Council and representatives from external organisations who were able to answer questions on a wide variety of housing related issues and other matters.

A questionnaire was circulated in order to seek the views of those attending the event. Results from 2012 included:

- 36% of respondents rated the day as 'Excellent', 42% as 'Good'. Two respondents considered the event to be 'okay', and nobody stated it to be 'poor' or 'very poor'.

- 100% of respondents agreed that there were enough departments available on the day

The Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) was presented with a paper on feedback from the event at its meeting on the 22nd May 2012. It should be noted that at the meeting of the 17th May 2011 the TSMB resolved that the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day should be an annual event.

3. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day 2013 – Venue and Date

There seems to be common agreement amongst tenants, leaseholders, councillors, staff and external organisations that the Somerset County Cricket Ground was a success as a venue, especially due to its central location and availability of parking spaces.

As the date of the TSMB AGM has been scheduled for the 22nd April 2013 the Tenant Empowerment Team has booked a function room at the Somerset County Cricket Ground for the whole day on this date.

4. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day 2013 - Timing

The 2011 event ran from 11am until 7pm. It should be noted that the amount of tenants attending the event reduced significantly after 5pm. TDBC also received feedback that some of the organisations left the event early and perhaps a shorter day would be more effective. It was therefore agreed by the TSMB that the 2012 event should be open from 10am to 5pm.

5. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day 2013 – Invitations to be stallholders

By looking at the organisations that attended last year and examining the feedback forms a suggested list of organisations and TDBC departments has been drawn up:

a) Tenant and Leaseholder Organisations

Tenant Services Management Board
Tenants' Forum
Leaseholders' Forum

b) TDBC Housing Services

Estates Management
Leaseholder Section
Property Services
Repairs Section
Supported Housing
Housing Options
Community Development

c) Other TDBC Sections

Housing Benefits

DLO
Deane Helpline
Environmental Health
Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership
Housing Enabling (developing new homes)

d) Non TDBC Organisations

Citizens Advice Bureau
Centre for Sustainable Energy
Avon and Somerset Police
Age UK
Job Centre
SCAT
Devon and Somerset Fire Service
ALHCO

The feedback from last year's event contained a question on how to improve the event in the future. The replies received stated:

1. More repair assistants as the stall was very busy on when they went there. This was also the recommendation of the TSMB at its meeting on the 22nd May 2012.
2. More councillors should be there.
3. Some of the stalls went home early.

6. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day 2013 - Publicity

Analysis of feedback from attendees shows that the most popular way of hearing about the 2012 event was by Invitation letter (92%) followed by "other" (5%) and Taunton Deane Borough Council's website (3%). No respondents indicated they heard about the event via a Housing Officer, the newspaper article or neighbours.

It is therefore the intention that each tenant and leaseholder will be sent an invitation to the event, detailing time, venue and stall holders. Even though other forms of publicity did not prove to be particularly popular it would not be time consuming or expensive to advertise the event in the Somerset County Gazette, on the TDBC website, on the TV screens in the reception of The Deane House and at satellite offices in the borough.

7. Tenant Services Management Board AGM – Timing and Venue

The Terms of Reference of the TSMB state that:

"An Annual General Meeting will be held in April each year, or within 15 months of the previous AGM"

Last year the AGM of the TSMB formed part of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day, with the formal meeting held at 4pm.

It has already been agreed that the AGM will be held on the 22nd April 2013. This date has been publicised in the Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders calendar that was sent out.

As well as the date detailed in the Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders calendar if the TSMB agrees to hold the AGM on the same date as the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day (as it did last year) information could form part of the invitation letter sent out to all tenants and leaseholders.

There is no set format to the AGM. However, it is customary to include agenda items such as:

- reports from the outgoing Chairperson on the board's activities during the year
- reports on issues that face the TSMB and Housing Services in the coming year
- Consider and vote on any resolutions put forward by tenants
- Elect the TSMB's Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

8. Finance Comments

The cost of hiring a function room at the Somerset County Cricket Ground is free up to 5pm, with an additional charge to keep the venue open until 7pm. There would also be a cost to provide lunch for stall holders (dependant on how many stall holders are at the event) and teas/coffees/water throughout the day.

There would also be a cost of sending invitation letters to each tenant and leaseholder.

The main costs of the AGM would be the hire of the venue and publicity. However, if the TSMB agrees that the AGM will be held at the same venue of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day the expenditure will be included in the cost of this event.

The cost of the event can be funded from existing budgets.

9. Legal Comments

There are no legal issues arising from this report.

10. Links to Corporate Aims

The event can contribute positively to the following council aims: Tackling Deprivation and Sustainable Community Development; Regeneration; and Affordable Housing and Climate change.

11. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

12. Community Safety Implications

The event gives the opportunity for tenants and leaseholders to hear what TDBC does to tackle anti-social behaviour and be able to ask questions of the relevant officers.

13. Equalities Impact

A function room of the Somerset County Cricket Ground has been chosen as it has easy access for all.

The invitation letter will include a section that will allow tenants and leaseholders to have the information translated into a different language if necessary, in Braille, large print, audio tape or CD.

14. Risk Management

There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

15. Partnership Implications

The main aim of this event is to provide information to tenants and leaseholders that they will find interesting and worthwhile. It is therefore important to invite TDBC's partners to allow a wider amount of information.

16. Recommendations

It is recommended the Tenant Services Management Board:

- Note this report
- Review and comment on the organisations to invite to the event as detailed in Section 5
- Review and comment on the timing of event as detailed in Section 4
- Comment on the methods of publicity as detailed in Section 6
- Consider the venue and timing for the TSMB Annual General Meeting as detailed in Section 7

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