

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board 20th January 2014

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

Report of the Tenant Empowerment Manager – Martin Price

(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 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 and third events in 2012 and 2013 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 day.

Representatives of the Tenant Services Management Board, Tenants' Forum and Supported Housing Service Development Group met to shape the event for 2014. This report details the conclusions of this group.

2. Background

The three 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 (TDBC) and representatives from external organisations who were able to answer questions on a wide variety of housing related issues and other matters.

Representatives of the Tenant Services Management Board, Tenants' Forum and Supported Housing Service Development Group met on the 6th January 2014 to shape the event for 2014. Issues discussed by the group included timings and venue for the event, guest speakers, publicity and who should be invited to have stalls.

The group has agreed that there will be further meetings to review progress and ensure everything is on track. There will also be further meetings after the event to see what lessons can be learnt and plan for future year's events.

3. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day 2014 – Venue and Date

The group came to the conclusion that the open day should be held at the Somerset County Cricket Ground on the 28th April 2014. The Tenant Empowerment Team has booked a function room at the Somerset County Cricket Ground for the whole day on this date. It should be noted that wi fi access is available at the cricket ground and stall holders should be encouraged to use this to enable them to answer questions at the event where they are dependant on referring to their computer system.

It was agreed that members of tenant and leaseholder groups would be on the front desk of the venue to meet and greet attendees and give feedback forms. It should be noted that by completing the feedback forms tenants and leaseholders will be entered into a prize draw.

4. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day 2014 - Timing

The group agreed that the event should be open from 10am to 5pm. However, it is important that all stalls are set up and ready before the 10am start time. The group felt that Councillor Adkins should be invited to open the event. It was also stated that tea and coffee should be available throughout the day.

5. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day 2014 – Invitations to stallholders

By looking at the organisations that have attended previously and the type of subjects that should be covered a suggested list of organisations and TDBC departments has been drawn up:

Tenant and Leaseholder Organisations – ONE STALL

- Tenant Services Management Board
- Tenants' Forum
- Tenant and Resident Associations
- Leaseholders' Forum
- Supported Housing Service Development Group

TDBC Housing Services

- Estates Management
- Leaseholder Section
- Property Services

- Repairs Section
- Supported Housing
- Housing Options
- Digital Inclusion
- Development Section
- Welfare Reform
- Anti-social behaviour
- Right to buy
- Community Development

Other TDBC Sections

- Revenue and Benefits
- DLO
- Deane Helpline
- Environmental Health
- Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership
- Tone Leisure
- Parks

Non TDBC Organisations

- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Energy saving organisation
- Avon and Somerset Police
- Age UK
- Credit Union
- Devon and Somerset Fire Service
- ALHCO
- Somerset County Council Children's Services
- Community Centres (Halcon, Priorswood, Wiveliscombe)

The group felt that the Repairs section stall should have plenty of room to allow tenants and leaseholders to access staff and have their queries answered. Owing to the number of queries dealt with at this stall in previous years the Repairs section should also ensure that there is sufficient staff available throughout the day.

6. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day 2014 - Publicity

Each tenant and leaseholder will be sent an invitation to the event, detailing time, venue, stall holders and guest speakers. Other methods of advertising the event identified are:

- Tenant and Leaseholder newsletters
- Taunton Deane Borough Council website
- Notice boards across the borough
- Somerset County Gazette and local newspapers
- Posters

- Banner (similar to the one used to advertise the Affordable Housing Open Day)
- TV Screens in reception of Deane House
- Family centres/Children Centres
- Shops/supermarkets
- Post offices
- Local radio stations
- Tenants' Forum notice board in reception of Deane House
- Satellite offices (for example Wellington)
- Front line staff (for example Estate Officers, Supported Housing Officers and DLO)
- Councillors
- Citizens Advice Bureau
- Large sign on the front of the cricket ground

There are other methods of publicity that will be investigated:

- On buses
- At schools
- Quarterly rent statement that is sent to tenants
- Annual rent level letter that is sent to tenants
- At village halls
- In libraries
- At GP surgeries
- In hospitals
- On DLO vans
- On ALHCO vans
- In church halls and in church magazines

Debbie Rundle, Media and Public Relations Officer at Taunton Deane Borough Council, will offer advice and useful contacts to ensure the publicity is as effective as possible.

7. Tenants' and Leaseholders' Open Day 2014 – Guest Speakers

The group agreed that having guest speakers would be a welcome addition to the event. It was decided that there should be two guest speakers, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The topics and times would be widely advertised and the talks would be held in another part of the cricket ground. There would also be an opportunity to have a question and answer session at the end of the talk. The group decided that the two guest speakers to be invited are:

- James Barra, Director – Housing and Communities. To discuss future plans for Housing Services.
- Phil Webb, Housing Manager – Property Services. To discuss future plans for improving the housing stock.

8. 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 3.30pm.

It has already been agreed that the AGM will be held on the 28th April 2014. This date has been publicised in the Annual Report to Tenants and Leaseholders calendar that was sent out in December 2013.

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 in previous years) 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. This is not applicable this year as the TSMB election will be held in May 2014.

9. 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 and other forms of publicity.

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.

10. Legal Comments

There are no legal issues arising from this report.

11. Links to Corporate Aims

The event can contribute positively to the aims of the council as a whole and in particular housing services' aims of:

1. *Securing a long term future for our housing service.*

- This means continuing to invest in the management of the housing stock to ensure it meets tenants' needs, who should be at the heart of decision making.

2. *Tackling deprivation and sustainable community development*

- This means taking action so that disadvantaged communities will have better access to local housing services, training and employment, continuing our support for a range of vulnerable people.

3. *Investing in our housing stock, regeneration and affordable housing*

- This means investing in our existing stock to deliver a standard that meets the needs of the stock and local aspirations. It also means planning and successfully managing the regeneration of our housing estates and communities, providing homes that cater for the needs of an expanding and diverse population within communities that people are proud of.

4. *Climate change*

- This means taking action to reduce carbon emissions across our housing stock through our investment planning, service delivery, partnership and community action to address climate change and reduce fuel poverty.

12. Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from this report.

13. 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.

14. 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.

15. Risk Management

There are no risk management issues arising from this report.

16. 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.

17. Recommendations

It is recommended the Tenant Services Management Board:

- Note this report
- Review and comment on the organisations to invite to the event
- Review and comment on the timing of event
- Comment on the methods of publicity
- Consider the venue and timing for the TSMB Annual General Meeting

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