

Taunton Deane Borough Council

Tenant Services Management Board - 20th February 2012

Tenant Services Management Board Elections

Report of the Tenant Empowerment Manager

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

1. Executive Summary

The Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) was convened in April 2010 to represent the interests of all tenants of Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) at strategic and policy levels, monitoring and reviewing strategic decisions and ensuring the best possible standards of housing service delivery to all council tenants. It assesses the housing service of Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) and says where and how it can be improved.

When setting up the board it was suggested that board members serve for two years. This was subsequently set out in the board's Term of Reference (which were agreed by the board at its June 2010 meeting). The purpose of this report is to detail the election timetable and process.

2. Background

On the 11th August 2009 Taunton Deane Borough Council agreed to the creation of a Tenant Services Management Board of ten tenant representatives and two Councillors from April 2010.

In order to shape how the board should operate TDBC worked in conjunction with tenants culminating in a consultation event in November 2009. It was suggested that board members should serve two years, but with the opportunity to seek re-election. This was included in the Information Pack sent to all tenants in early 2010 and subsequently included in the board's Terms of Reference which was agreed by the TSMB at their June 2010 meeting.

As the two year period is now coming to an end it is prudent to review the application and election processes and ensure that the board is aware of the procedures that will be employed.

3. Process for applying to be a board member

Any tenants wishing to become a board member will nominate themselves for election. This is done by completing a short application form. This form consists of:

- Details of candidate (name, address, telephone numbers, date of birth)
- Date tenancy began or date partner or spouse of a tenant living at the same household
- Equality and Diversity Monitoring Form
- Election statement – no more than 100 words giving a small amount of background information such as:
 - why they want to be a board member
 - what they can bring to the board
 - any experience, knowledge, skills, qualities, abilities, positions held, membership of groups
 - any particular areas of interest they have in relation to housing services

All applicants are also asked to sign that they meet the Eligibility Criteria (please refer to Section 4 of this report)

All application forms are then checked and verified by TDBC officers to ensure that the Eligibility Criteria has been met. Those eligible will go forward for election. Applicants are then invited to have their photograph taken which will accompany the ballot papers.

4. Eligibility Criteria

Tenants are not eligible to be elected or serve on the Board if:

- they are not a tenant or partner or spouse of at least 5 year's standing of a tenant living at the same household
- they are under 18 years old
- they are in serious breach of their obligations as a tenant
- They become incapable due to a mental disorder
- They do not have a good rent payment and tenancy history
- They are a Councillor of Taunton Deane Borough Council
- They are a member of staff in Taunton Deane Borough Council's Housing service
- One of their family members is a current member of the Board

It should be noted that tenants can stand for election if they are already a member of the Tenants' Forum and/or a Tenants and Residents Association and Sheltered Housing Forum. Current members of the TSMB can also seek re-election.

5. Election Process

The election process is a postal vote to all TDBC tenants. It is important to note that this is each tenant, not based on each property. Therefore if there are joint tenants (Mr and Mrs X) in a property each will have a Ballot Pack and be able to vote. A ballot paper is sent out with:

- covering letter
- Candidate profile (photograph and election statement)
- Pre- paid envelope

Tenants would then vote for up to 10 candidates and return their ballot paper. The successful candidates are the 10 with the most votes, irrespective of where they live in the borough. Unsuccessful candidates will remain on a “reserve list”. If a board member position becomes vacant the seat will be offered to the candidate with the next highest number of votes

6. Election timetable

The timetable is currently awaiting confirmation. The draft key dates are detailed below:

- Information booklet detailing the importance of the TSMB and election process sent to all tenants at the start of March 2012
- Application forms to be returned by 28th March 2012
- Application forms checked for eligibility and candidates invited to have photograph taken
- Ballot papers designed and printed by 24th April 2012
- Ballot papers sent to all tenants by 27th April 2012
- Tenants have at least 2 weeks to vote and return ballot paper – i.e. 11th May 2012
- Votes counted and announcement of successful candidates by 16th May 2012
- New TSMB meets for first time on 22nd May 2012

7. Councillor Board Members

The two main Party groups (reflecting the political composition of the Council) nominate one member each to serve on the board. This can be any Councillor of the two main party groups except a member of the Executive.

8. Finance Comments

The cost of design, print, postage and counting the ballot papers can be paid from existing budgets.

9. Legal Comments

There are no specific legal comments.

10. Links to Corporate Aims

There are no specific links to corporate aims.

11. Environmental Implications

There are no specific environmental implications.

12. Community Safety Implications

There are no specific community safety implications.

13. Equalities Impact

It is important that tenants do not for any reason feel unable to put themselves forward as a TSMB member. If a tenant meets the eligibility criteria detailed in this report they will be able to receive any assistance necessary including:

- information translated into a different language
- documents in Braille
- documents in large print
- information on audio tape or CD

Members of the Tenant Empowerment Team will be accessible throughout the whole process to offer any advice and help required.

14. Risk Management

There are no specific risk management issues.

15. Partnership Implications

There are no specific partnership implications.

16. Recommendations

It is recommended the Tenant Services Management Board:

- Note this report

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