

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Thursday 5 August 2010 at 6pm

Present: Mr Etherington (Chairman)
Mr Edwards (Vice-Chairman)
Councillor Bowrah, Mrs Drage, Mr Galpin, Mrs Hegarty, Mr Hellier,
Mr Pearson and Mr Watkin

Officers: Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Donna Durham (Democratic Support Manager) and Martin Price (Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager)

Others: Councillors Mrs Court-Stenning and Stuart-Thorn

(The meeting commenced at 6pm)

33. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 1 July 2010 were taken as read and were signed.

34. Declaration of Interests

The following members declared a personal interest as a Council house tenant:

- Mrs Drage;
- Mr Edwards;
- Mr Etherington;
- Mr Galpin;
- Mrs Hegarty;
- Mr Hellier;
- Mr Pearson; and
- Mr Watkin.

35. Guest Rooms in Sheltered Housing

Considered report circulated, concerning the Guest Rooms in Sheltered Housing project.

Supported Housing Services were responsible for the management of twelve guest rooms, located in Sheltered Housing and Extra Care Housing Schemes, at various locations in Taunton Deane. This included the booking of rooms, cleaning and the distribution of keys.

Details of the addresses of the guest rooms were reported. The use and upkeep of these had incorporated some difficulties, which included:

- 3 were upstairs without a lift;
- Upkeep was expensive;
- The income generated did not meet the cost of providing the service;
- There were limited facilities, and only a few had en-suite bathrooms; and
- Furniture and fittings were dated and needed improving.

Tenants views were sought to consider alternative uses. These were then reported to the Sheltered Housing Forum. The findings suggested that residents took responsibility of some, others could be used by staff and the remainder should have their charges increased. Details of revisions to charges would be reported to the Sheltered Housing Forum in October 2010.

Resolved that further consideration be given to the use of guest rooms, when revised charging figures were available.

36. Board Membership

The Chairman reported that two tenants were interested in becoming members of the Board, one of which had already completed an application form.

Resolved that the tenants be appointed to the Board, subject to the receipt of application forms.

37. Annual Report to Tenants and Tenant Services Authority

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the annual report to tenants and the Tenant Services Authority (TSA).

The Council had an obligation to produce an Annual Report which detailed Housing Services performance up to March 2010 and future plans to meet national and local standards. The report needed to show how tenants and the Council had worked together to shape local priorities and the methods that tenants could use to monitor how effective the services were.

The TSA had been set up on 1 April 2010 to act as the regulatory body for all registered housing providers and set national standards for housing services.

The TSA took a co-regulatory approach which placed the emphasis on regulation at a local level and put tenants at the centre of the scrutiny of

housing standards. A framework of National Standards had been published by the TSA.

All social housing landlords had to publish the Annual Report to their tenants and deliver it to the TSA by 1 October 2010 and annually thereafter. The report had to meet the TSA's six National Standards, which were:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment;
- Home;
- Tenancy;
- Neighbourhood and community;
- Value for money; and
- Governance and financial viability.

The new framework required registered providers to consult with tenants on local priorities. There was a minimum requirement to consult on local service offers in relation to:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment;
- Home; and
- Neighbourhood and community.

In considering how services could be tailored locally, registered providers also needed to consider the following:

- Standards of performance;
- How performance would be monitored, reported and scrutinised by tenants;
- What happened if the offer was not delivered and what redress tenants could expect; and
- How and when the local offer would be reviewed.

The purpose of the Annual Report was to provide a means of:

- Setting out a clear service offer in respect of the National Standards so that tenants knew what to expect from their provider. The service offer should be developed and agreed with

tenants. Expressing it in the Annual Report served as a commitment on the part of the provider to deliver the service offer;

- Being held to account for delivery of the commitment, through the availability of transparent information, by tenants and the TSA. The service offer was a local expression of meeting the National Standards. Failure to deliver the service offer was a failure to comply with the National Standards; and
- Improving accountability and transparency by involving tenants in the development of the Annual Report.

Expectations of the Annual Report were reported and Members of the Board were asked to comment on the content of the report.

Members of the Board agreed that a lot of work would be required to put the Annual Report together. They felt that an A5 booklet summarising the report should be circulated to tenants, explaining that a full version was available, either to download or in hard copy. This booklet could be distributed with the Tenants' Talk publication to avoid additional postage costs.

The Board felt that a working group should be set up, comprising members of the Board and Tenants' Forum, to consider local offers. The working group could then report back to the Board at its meeting in September.

Resolved that a working group be set up.

38. Feedback from Tenant Participation Advisory Service Annual Conference by the Attendees

Three members of the Board had attended the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference recently and reported their findings.

All members who attended the conference, felt they had benefited, mainly from talking to other delegates. In addition, the following information was reported:

- Breaks should be incorporated during meetings, as it gives members a chance to get to know each other;
- TPAS provided e-learning opportunities at a small charge; and
- A free service was available to help deal with problem people and would be a useful contact to have.

39. Future Meeting Dates

Resolved that meetings would be held on the following dates:

- Monday 6 September 2010;
- Monday 11 October 2010;
- Monday 15 November 2010; and
- Monday 6 December 2010.

40. Government Announcements

Board members discussed recent announcements that had been made by the Government, relating to five and ten year tenures.

Board members also discussed how under-occupancy could be addressed and they agreed to progress this further at the working group.

(The meeting ended at 8.00pm)