

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 11 October 2010 at 6pm in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road.

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

Officers: James Barrah (Community Services Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Brendan Cleere (Strategic Director), Donna Durham (Democratic Support Manager), Chris Hall (Highways and Cleansing Manager), Martin Price (Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager), Christine Thompson (Supported Housing Manager) and Tracey Vernon (Tenant Services Development Officer)

Others: Councillors Morrell and Stuart-Thorn

(The meeting commenced at 6pm)

49. Apology

Mrs Marshall

50. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 6 September 2010 were taken as read and were signed

51. Public Question Time

Councillor Morrell was concerned that he had asked questions at a previous meeting, which had not been replied to. In addition, he asked if there was an inventory for all Council owned property.

Stephen Boland responded that he would reply to Councillor Morrell's questions directly.

52. 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;
- Mrs Marshall;
- Mr Watkin.

Councillor Brooks declared personal interests as a Council house tenant and a Member of Somerset County Council. Councillor Morrell declared a personal interest as an owner of an ex-Local Authority property.

53. Direct Labour Organisation (DLO) Update on Internal Transformation

Reference Minute No. 45/2010, Chris Hall, DLO Transformation Manager updated the Board on the current position of the internal transformation.

The Outsourcing option had been put on hold until the summer of 2011, when the results of the Comprehensive Spending Review were known.

Priorities for the Internal Transformation option were reported as follows:

- Provide a lean, efficient and resilient service – the DLO were responsive and it was important that this continued, as the current service level needed to be retained;
- Thriving business focussed on success – commerciality was not just about being financially successful, but also about how the DLO operated. Sales and marketing plans would need to be produced;
- Excellence in performance management – performance indicators would be used and a profit target put in place;
- Excellence in customer service and priority – there was a need to maintain and improve customer satisfaction; and
- Committed and empowered workforce – staff attended regular staff meetings and staff were encouraged to make suggestions. It was recognised that the workforce had the ability to drive the programme forward.

Members of the board asked about how the staff felt about the internal transformation and it was reported that they had been actively involved and were keen to see this option work.

Stock was discussed and it was acknowledged that there was sometimes too much stock held at the depot, but with more mobile working being considered, there would need to be reliance on the depot.

The structure of the internal transformation project was not known, as the project was in an interim situation, until a decision had been made at Full Council.

Staff training was discussed. A skills audit would be carried out to develop a multi-skilled workforce. This was key to the success of the project, but would take time.

The Board suggested that customer feedback forms be given to tenants on the arrival of staff from the DLO to carry out work. This would encourage staff to carry out a good quality job.

Bonuses for staff were questioned, but it was felt that the jobs had been through the Job Evaluation process and staff were employed to do a good job.

The DLO needed to have more competitive rates, as it was often less expensive to employ someone else. It would be important that any private work the DLO did was profitable and that their main focus were Council tenants.

54. Housing Property Services Review Update

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the review of the Housing Property Services.

Following the independent review that was carried out by consultants, Turner and Townsend and advice from the Audit Commission, the Council decided to accept the recommended approach to provide better separation between the Housing Property Services function and the DLO workforce.

Housing Property Services managed the Council's housing stock of 6078 dwellings, as well as garages, meeting halls, shops, land and sewer works. The team also managed the repair, maintenance and improvement of 75 leasehold properties and the external repair and redecoration of 350 leasehold properties.

The funding for this work was from Improvement Works and the Government's Decent Homes' programme.

In addition, tasks performed by the team included Health and Safety issues, Asset Management database, Right to Buy and the sale of land. The current responsibilities were detailed. Additional functions would be required in the new service and these were submitted.

Historical budgets and staffing costs led to a closer working relationship between the Housing Property Services function and the DLO workforce. Whilst this derived some benefits, the consultants suggested that the Asset Management function should be managed within the client role. The Audit Commission expressed concern about the need to demonstrate clear value for money and improving performance.

The review had been run in parallel with the DLO review and emerging issues had been discussed with the Housing Manager (Property Services) and the Strategic Director. Proposals primarily focussed on a new staffing structure for the service, but other issues that needed to be addressed or

required further investigation. Operational and service delivery issues would be included in an Action Plan.

The proposals were as follows:

- The Housing Property Service was included in the Community Services Theme, which would allow it to work alongside the rest of the Housing Service and achieve separation from the DLO;
- Service Management – The Community Services Business Lead would assume responsibility for the support and office based staff in the current structure and the technical side of the structure would be managed by the Housing Manager (Property) and the Property Manager. Their roles would remain largely unchanged and would be subject to further review;
- The current structure included specific posts and roles. The new structure outlined a new surveying team which incorporated the Clerk of Works posts and a Senior Assistant Quantity Surveyor and four new posts of Building Surveyor;
- Void property inspections would be undertaken by the Property Services Team;
- Right to Buy would be the responsibility of the Rents Recovery and Voids Team;
- The Technical Administrative Assistant post would be renamed the Gas Safety Officer; and
- The Community Services Business Support Lead would assume responsibility for the support and office based staff in the current structure. The team would be increased to provide call centre cover and support for staff with the creation of a Housing Property Services Support Supervisor. A new post of Finance and Performance Officer would be created to monitor and process financial transactions for the team.

The proposals were intended to meet the objectives of the review and a list of benefits to tenants was reported.

The Board were keen to see how re-let times could be reduced, as void properties were a large cost to the Council. It was agreed that Mr Galpin would view some void properties, check the turn-around time and quality of work, and report back to the Board.

55. Guest Rooms in Sheltered Housing

Reference Minute No. 35/2010, considered report previously circulated, concerning the possible use of guest rooms at Sheltered Housing Schemes.

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

Concerns about the standard of rooms had been raised by tenants about the lack of disabled access and en-suite facilities.

Tenants were consulted about the future use of the facilities. The outcomes were reported as follows:

| Addresses / Options | Keep as guest rooms, residents to look after | Increase charges to cover cost of service | Use as a base for staff | Use for something else |
|----------------------------|---|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Bulford | 13 | 14 | 11 | 1 |
| Churchill Way | 12 | 6 | 4 | 7 |
| Darby Wayx2 | 7 | 11 | 14 | 3 |
| Heathfield Drive | 10 | 6 | 12 | 1 |
| Hope Corner Lane | 10 | 11 | 1 | |
| Moorland Place | 7 | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| Newton Road | 6 | 6 | 8 | 3 |
| Parmin Close | 6 | 8 | 5 | 3 |
| Robin Close | 5 | 5 | 11 | 10 |
| Taunfield Close | 10 | 9 | 8 | 8 |

The view of the Sheltered Housing Forum was to agree with the proposals, but requested details of what the revised charges would be.

The income that had been generated by the Guest Rooms was submitted.

Charges were low and some of the Guest Rooms were used infrequently. It was suggested that advertising could increase their use, therefore lowering the costs to the Council.

The Board felt that the Guest Rooms needed to be considered on an individual basis, as it was clear that some were rarely used. This would be discussed with the Sheltered Housing Forum and brought back to the Board at a later date.

56. Update on Annual Report to Tenants and Tenant Services Authority

Reference Minute No. 46/2010, Martin Price advised Board members that the Annual Report had been completed and would be sent to the Tenant Services Authority and put on the Council's website on 15 October 2010.

Copies of the full report would be sent to members of the Board, Tenants' Forum and Councillors.

The Chairman thanked the Tenant Empowerment Team for their hard work to complete the Annual Report.

57. Update on Tenant Profile Questionnaire

The questionnaire had been posted to tenants and would help to inform service provision. The data would be input so that reports could be produced that would inform decision making.

(The meeting ended at 7.45pm)