

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

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

Officers: Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Donna Durham (Democratic Support Manager), Fiona Gudge (Principal Accountant), Martin Price (Acting Tenant Empowerment Manager), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer), Tracey Vernon (Tenant Services Development Officer) and Lesley Webb (Housing Enabling Lead)

Others: Councillor Stuart-Thorn

(The meeting commenced at 6pm)

64. Apology

Apology: Councillors Bowrah and Brooks, Mrs Marshall and Mr Watkin

Substitution: Councillor Mrs Messenger for Councillor Brooks

65. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 15 November 2010 were taken as read and were signed.

66. 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

67. Regeneration – Halcon North

Considered report previously circulated, concerning the regeneration of Halcon North.

Halcon North comprised of 7.25 hectares of housing land and approximately 220 dwellings. This part of Halcon featured in the top 10% of most deprived wards in the country. Housing was deemed a contributory factor, both due to its fabric and proportion of dwellings with only two bedrooms.

The Council aspired to make Halcon a place that residents were proud of, but a multi-agency approach would be required.

Strong governance and project management arrangements were required, and a full business case to explore the delivery options and potential risks.

Residents had been kept informed and a communication strategy was being prepared which would ensure that residents were kept up to date.

Work had commenced on preparing a robust business case to take the project forward and a first draft was submitted.

Letters had been sent to all residents in the affected roads, to let them know that de-canting would not take place until after Christmas.

Some members of the Tenant Services Management Board had recently visited Plymouth, who had undertaken a similar project. Mrs Hegarty reported that it had been successful and it had been interesting to see what changes had occurred.

The Chairman asked Mrs Webb what the main drivers were for the regeneration of Halcon. Mrs Webb explained that they included the following:

- The Council did not have any land for housing to be built on;
- Halcon was 'land hungry' and most tenants had large gardens; and
- Halcon was one of the most deprived areas in the country.

The Chairman thanked Mrs Webb for her update.

68. Draft Housing Revenue Account Budget

Fiona Gudge gave the members of the Board an update on the draft Housing Revenue Account Budget for 2011/2012.

The proposed rent increase for 2011/2012 was 6.89%. For an average rent of £65 per week, this would mean an increase of £4.50. The Government's aim was to get Council rents to 80% of private rentals.

The negative subsidy for 2011/2012 was £6,965,020 based on the current figures. The Localism Bill included clauses relating to self-financing and what the settlement could be for Councils with retained stock. It was anticipated that in the long term, self-financing would be beneficial. It would be essential to borrow prudently and consider arranging a loan earlier than it was required.

Fiona Gudge suggested that the Board be minded to consider maintenance costs in future years, which currently stood at £7,223,420 for 2011/2012. There was a budget of £1,300,000 for planned maintenance.

The provision for bad debt had been set at £50,000, although it was expected that when a single benefit was paid in 2013, that rent arrears would increase.

There was a deficit of £1,084,070 for 2011/2012.

69. Guest Rooms in Sheltered Housing

The Board expressed their disappointment at the non-attendance of the Sheltered Housing Manager.

This item would be discussed at the next meeting of the Board.

70. Communities and Local Government Consultation ‘Local Decisions: a Fairer Future for Social Housing’

Stephen Boland reported details of the Communities and Local Government consultation, ‘Local Decisions: a Fairer Future for Social Housing’.

The topic of the consultation was:

- Reform of social housing;
- Social housing tenancies;
- Empty homes;
- Social housing allocations;
- Mobility;
- Homelessness;
- Regulation; and
- Council housing finance.

The document set out the Government’s intention to change the legislation governing the way social housing was allocated; how Local Authorities could discharge their main homelessness duty; and the types of tenancies granted to social housing tenants; provisions on these matters would be introduced in the forthcoming Localism Bill. The paper sought the views on the contents of a direction on a new tenancy standard.

A session would be held in the John Meikle Room on 10 January 2011, and tenant groups would be invited to discuss the proposals contained in the consultation. The deadline for responses was 17 January 2011.

71. Dates of Future Meetings

The following dates for future meetings were discussed and agreed:

Monday 13 January 2011;
Monday 14 February 2011;
Tuesday 15 March 2011;
Monday 18 April 2011;
Tuesday 17 May 2011; and
Monday 20 June 2011.

72. Any Other Business

A Christmas dinner would be arranged for 26 January.

(The meeting ended at 8pm)