

**Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Thursday 21 July 2011 at 6pm in Lodge Close, Wellington.**

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

**Officers:** James Barra (Community Services Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Tracy Vernon (Tenant Services Development Officer), Rosie Reed (Tenant Services Development Officer), Alison North (Performance & Client Lead), Chris Hall (Highways & Cleansing Manager), Sharon Harvey (Supported Housing Team Manager), Christine Thompson (Supported Housing Manager), Gareth Denslow (Supported Housing Team Manager) Phillip Webb (Housing Manager - Property Services)

**Others:** Councillor James Hunt, Cathy Osborn (Savills), Nigel Stuart-Thorn, Beryl Edwards

(The meeting commenced at 6.12 pm)

**32. Apologies**

Apology Councillor Brooks and Councillor Bowrah

**33. Minutes of Last Meeting**

Beryl Edwards and Nigel Stuart-Thorn requested their attendance be recorded on the minutes

The minutes of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011 were taken as read and were signed

**34. Declaration of Interests**

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

- Mr Etherington
- Mrs Drage
- Mr Edwards
- Mr Galpin
- Mr Hellier
- Mrs Marshall
- Mrs Hegarty

### **35. Housing Revenue Account Business Plan**

Cathy Osborn from Savills circulated printed copies of the intended powerpoint presentation for the HRA Business Plan 2012-2042.

Savills together with the CIH consultation team have been developing a 30 year business plan for TDBC which reflects:-

- Complete picture of the current service to include the views of residents.
- Future aspirations and objectives for the housing service
- Understand the current position
- Understand the risks and opportunities for the future
- Prepare for self financing.

Cathy Osborn provided an overview of Governments proposals for self financing including:-

- Housing Revenue Account is ring-fenced from other Council finances
- The end of the national subsidy system
- Calculations required for the value of each Councils housing stock and the level of debt the business can support which will result in a one off payment to Government, although Government retain the right to change the settlement terms.
- The level of debt the Council is left with reflects the value and is affordable.
- A draft settle to be issued in February 2011 and updated with a determination in December 2011 /Jan 2012
- Will be implemented by end of March 2012.

In terms of what this means for TBDC:-

- A large increase in housing debt (£87 million)
- 17% Uplift in cost allowances
- Cost of debt should be less than the current subsidy payment and debt is capped at the start
- Long term planning is possible to ensure financial viability and delivery of TBDC's objectives Decisions are required around setting new strategic objectives and priorities for action and to measure whether these have worked and been successful.
- There will be new risks and responsibilities together with new opportunities.

The financial model sets out the financial resources required. The model and document sets out the current position and future aims and objectives of the service, including the risks that have to be managed to meet targets for self financing and planning for the long term.

All background information will be collected by July 2011 and analysed by August 2011. Consultation to review the current strengths and weakness of the service and to develop new strategic objectives will be undertaken by September 2011.

The model will be updated and a draft document will be ready mid October 2011.

Interest accrued on the new proposed debt will be more cost effective than paying into the existing subsidy system and to assist in planning for the future for programmes of work.

TDBC need to consider the importance of changes occurring locally and the changes to legislation which are of importance including the localism bill, comprehensive spending review and Welfare benefit reform etc.

A comprehensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders will be required over the coming months. This will assist with building up a picture of current service delivered and gain the views of residents including where they would like to see the service going in the future.

In September stakeholder consultation days are planned and will need to identify an understanding of the current strengths and weaknesses of the service.

The board were asked for their views on issues that should be considered within the business plan. Responses included:-

- Benefit payments reform converting to universal credit may have a major impact on rental payments made to landlord. The impact of the Government policy (Localism Bill) and those who under occupy accommodation will also create problems. There should be provision for the tenants in the form of removal grants to assist households to move.
- The plan should incorporate building of new houses by TDBC and include renewable energy sources.
- Discussion were had on Right To Buy receipt constraints.

The board were also asked for their views on the current level of service TDBC provide and whether any improvements could be made, responses include:-

- Higher decorating standards should be achieved wherever possible
- A choice of heating should be made available, especially considering tenants in rural areas
- Energy certificates should continue to be made available including details of average fuel costs.
- Non-traditional houses should be regularly assessed to identify and determine whether it is more cost effective to repair or consider demolition. This should include realistic timeframes for works.
- Consider Community issues, i.e. problems with parking on estates and the use of gardens. These should also be identified within new builds.
- Bathrooms in flats need to come up to a higher standard especially for those disabled tenants. Walk-in showers should be made available for rather than going through Disabled Facility Grant process.
- Fuel poverty for tenants, this should be a high priority for TDBC.

The timescales for disabled adaptations were discussed and whether improvements to this service could be made to include the Homefinder Somerset choice based lettings system.

The TSMB was considered to be forward thinking and could feed updates from the meetings to the Tenants Forum and all tenants.

**Resolved** that the presentation be noted and that the board's responses be taken into account when formulating the business plan.

### **36. Housing Revenue Account Reform Project Dashboard**

The Community Services Manager introduced the report. The first project dashboard was discussed at the previous TSMB meeting, all work streams feed back to the project brief and are currently on track with key people in place and progressing well within the timescales. These have been awarded a green light status.

Key accomplishments give specific examples of what has been done to move the project forward - key activities will be undertaken during the next period. Further details will be brought to future TSMB meetings. A risk register will be circulated at the next meeting to identify issues that can go wrong and how these are managed.

The timetable for business plan is now in place to identify key dates. Community Scrutiny is meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> August and a Members Session on HRA reform will be organised so everyone has and understanding of the business plan.

The next meeting will set out what options are available for securing the funding and a Housing Accountant will be asked to attend the next TSMB meeting to explain this in more detail.

Comparisons with other Local authorities has been undertaken to share in experiences. The Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) is currently looking at the merits of Local Authorities working together with a view to applying for a bigger loan and improved rate of funding.

**Resolved** that the that the actions and progress to date be noted

### **37. Halcon North Project**

The Project Manager for Halcon North provided an update. The Performance and Client Lead took over the project in January 2011 with the aim to ensure the project progresses within timescales. A draft project brief and dashboard is currently being produced and this will be available for the TSMB to give their views and comments.

The project has a 4 stage process – at the beginning of the process focus was around the importance of the project, to collect evidence by working closely with residents in Halcon. Savills have assisted with figures for the project.

In September a full appraisal and consultation with members and the board is required to identify how this project can be delivered before progressing to Stage 2.

The Halcon North Project is very complex and requires a clear business case. There will be lots of activity from September 2011 onwards. Tenants and stakeholders will be involved, looking at the proposals in detail and pulling together a brief of who will deliver the project and procurement which will also involve tenants

Feedback will then be brought back to the TSMB.

The following concerns were raised by the TSMB members:-

- Aids and adaptations and allocation of properties
- The use of Tenant removal grants
- How disabled tenants currently living in Halcon North were being supported by moving to another property.
- How decants of the properties will be dealt with and the need to be well organised and planned.

The Performance and Client Lead advised that an Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken as part of the project.

Further details of the cost of the scheme will be available at the next TSMB meeting in August and Shirlene Adam as Project Sponsor will also attend to assist with further detail.

**Resolved** that that the update and board concerns be noted.

### **38. DLO Internal Transformation – Final Proposals**

The Highways and Cleansing Manager provided a comprehensive update on the DLO transformation Theme 3 of the Core Council. Copies of the report were circulated.

Following the Core Council review back in 2009 an option appraisal was carried out looking at possibilities for the future delivery of the DLO service which included the possibility of outsourcing.

Outsourcing DLO services was rescheduled pending the completion of a four year budget strategy and revised specification for DLO services.

In December 2010, the Executive approved the interim proposals to concentrate on the DLO internal transformation to identify how TDBC can improve the delivery of services to include area-based and generic working methods to assist in improving the business and developing services.

The difficult but necessary decision to change the structure of the team will place 12 employees at risk of redundancy, reducing Supervisory Management and Administrative posts. Some of the new posts will be ring-fenced.

There will also be the creation of new posts for multi-skilled staff and a new Business Support Team.

The proposed changes will make efficiency savings of £1 million within year one. The DLO savings created will not come as surplus at the end of the year but will be used to reduce charges for customers.

All staff have been briefed and consulted with the changes. The consultation will continue until 29<sup>th</sup> July so further ideas can be put forward.

Some of the key proposed changes included in the delivery model:-

- Method of working – how work is received, handed over and completed.
- The changes to the supervisory structure will enable the supervisors to concentrate on delivering the work rather than getting involved in the day to day tasks.
- This will be combined with new technology to support the transformation, to include hand held devices to streamline the work involved in stores and the necessity for administration processing.
- Home working, where practical, will also assist with productivity and may include vehicle tracking.
- The area working model differs from open spaces areas etc. so they will vary in each case and will need to take a common sense approach for a cost effective service.

An ongoing commitment is to look at every part of the service and to challenge this before concluding with recommendations

Further details are contained with the report.

**Resolved** that that the proposals be approved.

### **39. Board Members' Responses to Draft Asset Management Strategy**

The draft Asset Management Strategy was circulated at TSMB June meeting. Setting out key issues, choices and change around the asset management strategy. This document will become a key part of the business plan and provides comprehensive details to cover the next 30 years.

It identifies what TDBC have to do to maintain the stock to Decent Homes Standard and the cost of works required for the lifecycle of works.

Details will be profiled into the action plan and suggestions from the TSMB and tenants can assist with setting priorities for future investment.

TSMB reiterated the suggestions for improvements as per the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan and included:-

- How older tenants can be supported to remain in their homes when mobility becomes a problem. I.e. Opening windows/ doors etc.

- Tenants to be consulted on design of a property, this is a widespread problem.
- Contractors carrying out work vary in standards delivered.
- Tenants should help shape contract procurement process.
- Air source heat pumps and solar panels should be considered to combat fuel poverty.

**Resolved** that progress and comments of board be noted

**40. AOB**

A TSMB BBQ is planned for 14 August 2011 at Newton Road Community Hall from 2pm -6pm. This invitation is open to all TSMB members and staff. Attendees are welcome to bring partners and food/drink along for the event.

The next TSMB meeting is scheduled for 6pm on Tuesday 23 August 2011 at Deane House, Taunton.

(The meeting ended at 8.11pm)