

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 28 April 2014 at 3:30pm at Somerset County Cricket Ground, Taunton.**

**Present:** Mr Dustyn Etherington (Chair),  
Mrs Judith Hegarty (Vice-Chair),  
Mrs J Bunn, Mr M Edwards, Mr D Galpin, Mr K Hellier, Mr R Middleton  
and Councillor Bowrah.

**Officers:** James Barraah (Director – Housing & Communities), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Phil Webb (Housing Manager; Property Services), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director – Housing & Community Development) and Emma Hill (Corporate Support Officer).

**Others:** Councillors Adkins, Mrs Smith and Jane Warmington.

(The meeting commenced at 3.30pm)

**1. Introduction**

The Chair welcomed all Board Members and Tenants to the meeting, which was the fourth Annual General Meeting.

**2. Apology**

Councillor Miss F Smith

**3. Public Question Time**

No questions received for Public Question Time.

**4. Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Bowrah declared personal interest as members of his family were Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants. Mr Etherington, Mrs Hegarty, Mrs Bunn, Mr Edwards, Mr Galpin, Mr Hellier and Mr Middleton declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

**5. Tenant Services Management 2013/14**

The Chairman of Tenant Services Management Board gave a verbal update welcoming those present to the fourth Annual General Meeting and reflected on some of the Board's work over the past year.

Much has happened over the last 12 months which reflects not only the role of the board but also the changes that were happening in the world of housing as a whole and more specifically in Taunton Deane.

The following was a summary of the Chairman's reflection of the Board's activity over the past 12 months:

- Highlighted the excellent progress made on the Creechbarrow Road regeneration project. It was exciting to hear that the Council was building again after gap of several decades.
- The Board continued its regular scrutiny of the Housing Services performance either across the whole of housing, or looking closely at a particular part of housing. This included reviewing performance reports every three months
- The STAR Survey questionnaire was sent out to the Tenants and the results and comments provided the Council and the Board with a clear picture of the tenants' satisfaction with their homes and the service.
- Outside organisations such as Somerset County Council Children's Centres and Halcon One Team seeking the views of the board.
- The Shared Services project with West Somerset Council as well as the creation of the Joint Management Structure helped secure the financial future of both councils.
- HRA Business Plan came into enforce in 2012, the Board had noted the importance of all tenants being made aware of future plans for the Housing Service as well as how the finances would be spent.
- Welfare Reform was an area of concern for both the Board and Tenants, and practical measures had been approved by the Board and being carried out by council staff to help and advice any tenants affected.
- The Board received regular updates as to how tenants were being helped and kept up to date with the government's plans. This was something that would continue into the next year and beyond.
- Officers had approached the board as part of consultation with Government's plans to alter the 'World of Housing'. The Council had approached the Board for their comments and opinions on those proposals.
- Thank you to members of the Tenants' Forum and Supported Housing Service Development Group who came together to improve services and tenant information.
- Thank you to volunteers from Tenants' Forum who completed the Tenant Inspections of empty council properties to make sure they were acceptable before re-renting by the Council.
- It showed the importance of the Board, when we had Executive Councillors for Housing and Communities as well as other Councillors, Senior Members of Council Staff attending the Board meetings.

Below was a summary of the STAR survey results within the Chairman's reports:

- 84% of tenants would recommend Taunton Deane to family or friends.
- 86% were happy with the overall service they receive from Taunton Deane and 84% the value for money for rent.
- 88% of tenants were also satisfied with the quality of their home and 84% were satisfied with the condition of their property.
- 81% of tenants were satisfied with the appearance of their neighbourhood and 72% with the overall estate services provided by Taunton Deane.
- Only 58% of tenants were satisfied with the grounds maintenance provided (58%), with 32% dissatisfied.
- Key issues within neighbourhoods were car parking, dog fouling and rubbish/litter.

- 47% of Taunton Deane's tenants had access to the internet.

Thanks were given to the other Board Members for all their work over the past year.

During the presentation of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- It was added by Executive Councillor thanks to the Board Members for their work over the last year. Also she was looking forward to working with the Members of Board after the forthcoming Board Elections.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Chairman's report.

## 6. The Year ahead for Housing Services

The Director for Housing and Communities gave a verbal update outlining the new issues facing the Board for the coming year. These included the following:

- There would be ongoing issues with the shrinking of the General Fund, hopefully the Housing Revenue Account would continue to be buoyant.
- There would be increasing and ongoing pressure throughout the Local Authority with shrinking budgets and increasing costs. The Council would be pressurised to reduce their costs but still provide the same level of services.
- There was the Council's ongoing accommodation project. A decision would be made regarding whether to design and build a purpose built building or move into space at County Hall.
- The Council was losing an increasing number of Council properties to Right to Buy. This stands at around 80 homes in the last 12 months.
- There was now ongoing visual progress with the Creechbarrow Road project. The contractor was on site removing and demolishing the old buildings.
- The Council was now a member of the Affordable Homes Partnership.
- The Council had made some progress in increasing its housing stock after selling through RtB. It had bought back seven ex-council properties.
- Planned review of the Council's non-traditional stock as well as reviewing each type of property and their maintenance etc.
- A seven million capital projects programme to complete.
- Planning to re-visit Solar PV projects and chasing external cladding programmes as well.
- A continuing review of the repairs service as well as the COSY system replacement with an aim to be more customer driven and a need to re-focus how the repairs service completes repairs.
- Since April 2011, there had been 32% reduction in crime in Halcon. This was since the introduction of the Halcon One Team.
- There would be a reduction in Supporting People Grants so there would be challenges for Supported Housing provision in the near future.
- The leasehold service had made improvements to the service over the last 12 months.

- Looking to continue the involvement progress with Tenants' Forum and the Board in the Council's Housing Business.

The officer thanked the Board and Tenants' Forum Members for their effort and ongoing interest, also thanks to Councillors and Housing employees.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- Was there enough land available for building more new Council homes and what about buying land from other land owners or agencies?  
*Most of the Council land available for building had ongoing issues of wide variety. There were different levels of issues with the land and this depended on a variety of variables, there were no easy sites. When the Council committed to building properties on land, they wanted it to go smoothly so these issues needed to be sorted or find another piece of land for that project.*  
*The Council hadn't got as far as looking for land to purchase but now they were part of Affordable Housing Partnership, they would get sight of land for sale for development.*
- Thanks given to Tenant Empowerment Manager. He was invaluable to the Board for the support and advice he provides.

**Resolved** that the Board noted the Officer's report.

## **7. Review of the Tenant Service Management Board Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct.**

Considered report previously circulated, which was to review the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct of the Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB).

These documents, detailed the roles, aims, objectives and expected conduct of the board, were agreed at the start of the board's existence.

Point 21.2 of the Terms of Reference state that "The Terms of Reference will be reviewed every two years". The last time they were updated was at the TSMB Annual General Meeting (AGM) in April 2012. The two years had now elapsed, meaning the TSMB should reconsider the documents and put forward any amendments it felt this was necessary.

Board Members had been issued copies of the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct with the previously circulated report.

During the discussion of this item, board members made the following comments and asked questions. Responses shown in italics:

- Looking at paragraph 4.0 relating to Board Membership. Having spoken to Tenant Empowerment Manager previously, should we consider increasing the Membership to include other political parties or keep as the same? As

currently we had only two Councillor Representatives from two of the parties.

- Executive Councillor for Housing opinion was there should be more Tenant representation on the Board before increasing the number of Councillor Representation.
- If the Board was to make extra provision for additional Councillor Representation then there should be extra provision for two more Tenant Board members.
- This should be a Tenant driven Board.
- Officers could facilitate individual invites to other Councillors from the Chairman of Board to attend Board meetings.  
*Included with the invites to Councillors should be a copy of the Chairman's' and Director's reports.*
- It was suggested that more should be included about the Board in the Tenants' Talk to encourage Tenants to come along to the Board.  
Maybe the Board could consider associate members as well.
- Include more explanation as to what the Board does.
- Board Member informed other Members that if he was re-elected he had been invited to Lodge Close to explain how they could get involved.
- Did the Officers invite Tenants and the Public to the AGM?  
*The Council did invite by letter all Council Tenants to the AGM as well as putting out public adverts including a banners and posters etc.*
- In relation to Substitutions, was this allowed or not?
- There was a point previously that when Cllr Brooks stood down that we had a substitute Lib Dem representative until a replacement was organised but concerning substitute Board Members, it should be left as it was with NO substitutions. We need to make this more aware to existing and new Board Members.

**Resolved** that the officer's report was noted.

## **8. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

**Resolved** that the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item because of the likelihood that exempt information would otherwise be disclosed relating to Clause 3 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act, 1972 and the public interest in withholding the information outweighed the public interest in disclosing the information to the public.

## **9. Confidential Report on Housing and Community Restructure.**

The Director of Housing and Community gave a confidential verbal update concerning the Housing and Community department proposed restructure.

The Officer approached the Board Members for their opinion and comments as part of the consultation on the proposed restructure plans for the department.

## **10. Confidential Report on Housing and Community Development Restructure.**

The Assistant Director of Housing and Community Development gave a confidential verbal update concerning the Housing and Community Development department proposed restructure.

The Officer approached the Board Members for their opinion and comments as part of the consultation on the proposed restructure plans for the department.

(The meeting ended at 5.20pm)