

**Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 15 September 2014 at 6pm in JMR, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.**

**Present:** Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr M Edwards, Mr D Etherington, Mr D Gaplin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey, Mr R Middleton, Councillor Miss Smith and Councillor Bowrah.

**Officers:** Rachel Searle (Housing Development Project Lead), Jo Humble (Housing Enabling Lead), James Barrah (Director of Housing and Communities), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Phil Webb (Housing Manager – Property Services), Paul Hadley (Housing Manager – Lettings & Anti-Social Behaviour), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Kene Ibezi (Assistant Director of Property & Development) and Emma Hill (Corporate Support Officer).

**Others:** Liz Morgan from Galliford Try  
Councillor Mrs Warmington

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

**1. Election of Chairman**

**Resolved** that Dustin Etherington be elected as Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board for the remainder of the Municipal Year

**2. Election of Vice-Chairman**

**Resolved** that Judith Hegarty be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board for the remainder of the Municipal Year.

**3. Welcome and Introduction by Director of Housing and Communities**

The Director of Housing and Communities welcomed the newly elected Tenant Services Management Board Members as well as welcomed back returning Board members and made verbal introductions of officers present at the meeting.

Below was a summary of the Director's verbal update:

- Taunton Deane and West Somerset were facing a huge changes both structural and relating to its budgets position.
- The Council's government grants had been reduced and this affected our overall budgets.
- Although, the Housing Revenue Account was looking fairly buoyant at the moment.
- The Council was embarking Joint Services Project with West Somerset Council this was called JMASS project.  
This would create shared services over both Councils as part of this both Councils were going through a complete restructure.
- The Council would remain separate but they would be serviced and supported by one set of officers.
- The Housing department had a variety of projects and plans for forthcoming months to keep the Board informed of over the next couple months.

- Councillors and Executive Councillor Adkins would make all final decisions, but the Board's suggestions, views and comments would have weight and would be taken into account.

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

#### **4. Apologies**

Councillor Mrs Smith

#### **5. Public Question Time**

No questions received for Public Question Time.

#### **6. Declarations of Interests**

Councillor Bowrah and Councillor Miss Smith declared personal interests as members of their families were Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenant.

Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr M Edwards, Mr D Etherington, Mr D Gaplin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey and Mr Middleton declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

#### **7. Creechbarrow Road Project Update.**

Considering the Project Management Board previously circulated, concerning the Creechbarrow Road Development in Taunton. The information was presented in a style used for reporting the progress of many of the Council's projects and was known as a 'dashboard'.

Board Member were advised if they find a particular section useful or had a suggestion for information that could be added to the dashboard, please could they let the officers know.

This development project was due for completion in December 2015 and the officer would like to produce a dashboard that was useful in keeping members of the Tenant Services Management Board updated on its progress.

Also enclosed with the dashboard was a current site layout map provided to reference the plot numbers referred to in the dashboard.

Below was a summary of the status of Key Project Activities for Phase 1:

- Build Programme completed by Galliford Try was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.
- Community Liaison completed by Rachel Searle was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.
- Training Opportunities completed by Rachel Searle was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.
- Finance completed by Rachel Searle was Green meaning that all milestones met and project on target.

The dashboard summarised the key project accomplishments for the both the KHA and TDBC site for the last period of the Development Project as well as detailing the community liaison over the same period through the local community at a variety of community locations.

There were a number of training opportunities available with Galliford Try on the development site.

Also included for the Board's information was the key goals/targets for the development project over the next period as well as detailing any current or ongoing issues with the development.

The development site started at the Lavender Court end and there was at varying different stages of development ranging from very early stages to brick/block super structure.

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

- Concerns about the fencing on the corner of Roman Rd near Lavender Court, the position of the fencing had made the visibility for vehicles very poor coming from Roman Rd and this meant cars were unable to see what was coming down Creechbarrow Rd. My suggestions would to increase the amount Harris fencing on the corner, increasing the visibility.  
*There had been an accident at this location only couple days ago due the poor visibility.*  
*The officers weren't aware of the most recent accident but they were aware of the concerns regarding the poor visibility.*
- What percentage of new housing of the development site would be adapted for people with disabilities and would this include storage and charging points?  
*There was wide variety of property types with both KHA and TDBC, which included blocks of flats assigned to over 60's only. These would include bike/scooter stores, which would include charging points.*
- How regular would the officers be reporting back to the Board?  
*How often would the Board like the officers to report?*
- Reporting quarterly would be fine.

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

## **8. Taunton Deane Accommodation Project Verbal Update**

The Director of Housing and Communities gave a verbal update on the Taunton Deane Accommodation Project.

Below was a summary of the Director's update regarding the progress and status of the Council's Accommodation project:

- The Council was currently reviewing and looking in detail at the options open to the Council.
- It was decided that there were two main options, they were either a new build at Firepool or moving to County Hall Block A.

- The decision was made a Full Council to proceed with the next steps in the process for discussions, contracts and designs issues for a move to County Hall Block A.
- County Hall offices were based on the 'Smart Office' principle of working meaning majority of officers would not have a permanent desk space.
- The Council would look in more detail at Joint Service provision in relation to the Council's reception and working with other agencies. This would mean the public would have access to a wider variety of services through one reception.
- The Director would be coming back to the Board meeting to provide progress and update reports on the project.

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

- Had concerns over the very limited parking facilities at County Hall?  
*The Council had secured the same 11 spaces for visitors outside at The Deane House within the vicinity of County Hall. This was a key issue that needed to be looked at parking for staff.*
- It was suggested maybe the Council could retain the parking facilities at the rear of The Deane House to allow staff to park and walk across to County Hall.
- Also the Council could investigate the option of free accessible Wi-Fi connection with reception at County Hall to allow access to services from smart phones and tablets while they wait.

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

## 6. Performance Indicators Quarter One 2014/15 Report

Considering the Performance Scorecard tables previously circulated, concerning the Health and Housing Quarter one performance Scorecard.

Looking at each section of the performance scorecard for Quarter one, the figures and percentages as follows:

- Managing Finances (housing) - There were 9 measures of which 67% Green, 22% Amber, 0% Red and 11% were N/A.
- Service Delivery (Service Delivery (Satisfaction) – There were 11 measures of which 55% Green, 45% Amber.
- Service Delivery (Decent Homes) – There were measures of 2 which 50% Green, 50% Red.
- Service Delivery (Manage Housing Stock) – There were measures of 18 which 44% Green. 39% Red and 17% N/A.

Below was a summary of the planned actions that were off course:

- Measures for Decent Homes were off course. Average SAP (energy efficiency) rating was below target. Eco funding bid for external wall insulation to around 400 homes being considered along with pilot scheme for 40 Cornish Properties.
- Lettings Measures. 0.9% of dwellings were vacant but unavailable to let, the target was 0.5% 13 of the 99 properties were void over Christmas and 11 of the 13 took around 28 days to complete due to Christmas close down. Re-let times

had increased to 27.18 days due to work not being able to be completed to 11 properties over Christmas.

- Housing Services Diversity Information. We hold 58% of diversity information this was an increase of 1% since last quarter.
- Repairs and Maintenance measures 94% of Emergency repairs were completed on time against a target of 98% also 87% of urgent repairs were completed on time against a target of 94%. We also would meet with contractors to ascertain why performance was not making improvement. Changes to IT systems next year will assist us in identifying reductions in performance earlier.
- Local Authority Major Aids and Adaptions, number of applications. 59 applications were completed against a target of 84 but applications had been referred to the Minor Works budget.
- Local Authority Major Aids and Adaptions, end to end completion time. The 34 week end to end completion figure was not on target (22 weeks). Removing exceptions the figure would had been 27 weeks.

Below was a summary of the planned actions that had uncertainty in meeting them:

- Local Authority Major Aids and Adaptions, spend against budget. £282,092 committed spend at end of Q4 against a £339,100 budget, underspend predicted.
- Local Authority Minor Aids and Adaptions, spend against budget. £103,256 spend at end of Q4 against a £135,000 budget underspend predicted.
- Housing Services – 4 Satisfaction measures. The 2013 Star survey (conducted every two years) reported satisfaction figures for general needs tenants and sheltered housing tenants which were below target. Council national rankings show that we were in quartile 2 of housing measures and lower quartiles for supported housing. These measures would not change until 2015 when the Star Survey was conducted again.
- Repair and Maintenance. 97% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance service, our target is 98%.

Below was a summary of the planned actions that were on course:

- Housing Services- Estate Management. Our arrears figures were below our target of (£360,000) actual at year end £351,209.80.
- Housing Managing Finances – 5 measures were better than target.
- Decent Homes Gas Servicing. 100% of dwellings had a valid gas safety certificate against 100% target.
- Lettings Team Measures – 5 measures were better than target.
- Gas servicing satisfaction measure of 99% was better than target (90%).
- Supported Housing Satisfaction Measure – was better than (100% versus an 86% target).
- Local Authority Major Aids and Adaptions – 100% satisfaction.
- Three Community Development measures were on track.
- Repairs and maintenance – 90% of non-urgent repairs were complete within priority time of 28 days. Target was 85%.
- Local Authority Minor Aids and Adaptions – 347 applications completed at the end of Q4, against a target of 350.

Below were measures under development, not reported or without alerts.

- Housing Services, expenditure against budget. This information was not available until accounts had been closed. Our finance team were currently busy closing our accounts. It was anticipated that the final figures would be reported to the TSMB in July 2014.
- Three Repairs and Maintenance Measures were under development.

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

- Looking at the Amber Alerts concerning tenant arrears were over target at £32,876. What actions were the Council proposing to reduce this?  
*The Council had tracked this over many years and there was a trend and pattern based on the time of year relating to tenant rent arrears. 98.3% pay their rent regularly and on time, it was only 1.7% of tenants who don't and these were being monitored by the estates team. This team carry out regular monitoring of these tenants.*  
*The Council was in the top quartile for this. Over the summer months and in the run up to Christmas, some of the tenants were in the habit of not paying their rent.*  
*There were not a threat to the HRA business plan.*
- What were the number of tenant evictions for last month?  
*The Council issued 36 warrants and eight evictions had been carried out. Some tenants needed to be issued 'final warnings' before they pay the owed arrears.*
- Could the Board Members have a breakdown of £32k debt and what the percentages relating to small figures and large figures of rent owed?  
*The vast majority of tenants owed less than £200 but the Council did get tenants who owed more. The Council dealt in individual cases and situations.*
- How did it get to the level of owing rent i.e. up to £1500? Why not try prevention?  
*Before the Council started the legal process after 6 – 7 weeks without paying rent. At each stage of the process, the Council had to issue notice letters as well as applying to court to allow the Council to take any action.*
- How much was written off each year?  
*1.7% was written off over a period. This was a very small amount in comparison to the £20 million rent collected.*
- Something the Council did through the Halcon One Team, TDBC and the CAB to provide money management advice both in Taunton and in Wellington. The scheme had seen 517 people.
- Some didn't understand what help, assistance and support they could apply for as it was a complicated process.
- Was there an issue with Cavity Wall insulation on traditional properties, I was aware that the Council might be creating issues and not just trying to keep them warm.
- Non-Traditional received external cladding.  
*The Council had been going back through their stock with old insulation and those issues or failing insulation, the Council were replacing and updating it.*  
*The Council had completed extensive surveys over the non-traditional stock and they were good for another 30 years apart from a couple individual units, which the Council were dealing with.*

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

## 7. Annual Report Tenant Group – Verbal Update

The Tenant Empowerment Manager gave a verbal update concerning the next Annual Report.

The current and previous format for the Annual Report was a calendar.

The officers required volunteers from the Board to make up the Tenant Working Group to build the next Annual Report.

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

- The Working Group volunteers were Jessie Bunn, Ivor Hussey and Judith Hegarty.
- If any of the Board Members had any ideas or suggestions for the Annual Report, please pass them onto the Tenant Empowerment Manager.

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

## 8. AOB

The Tenant Services Development Officer requested a volunteer from the Board Members to take part in a photo shoot for the Digital Inclusion Project regarding computer access from 18 September at 10am in The Deane House reception.

The Council had committed funding for five self-service computer kiosks as part of the Digital Inclusion project. These were located a variety of locations throughout Taunton Deane. The locations included Wellington, Priorswood, Milverton and The Deane House. The Council had planned to increase this initial number of kiosks and would name more locations for them.

This allowed internet access for a variety of online services, which included online shopping as well.

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

- The volunteers were Robert Middleton and Dustyn Etherington.

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

(The meeting ended at 7.38pm)