

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Monday 17 November 2014 at 6pm in JMR, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr D Etherington (Chairman)
Mrs J Hegarty (Vice-Chair)
Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Ms M Davis, Mr D Galpin, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey, Mr R Middleton, Councillor Bowrah and Councillor Miss Smith.

Officers: Tony Knight (Estates Officer ASB), Paul Hadley (Housing Manager – Lettings & Anti-Social Behaviour), Lucy Clothier (Housing Accountant), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director of Housing & Community Development), Caroline White (Housing Development Project Lead – Sustainable Energy), Jo Humble (Housing Development & Enabling Manager), Julie-Anne Gordon (Housing Project Development Officer), Phil Webb (Housing Manager – Property Services), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), James Barrahan (Director of Housing & Communities), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), and Emma Hill (Corporate Support Officer).

Others: Councillors Adkins and Mrs Smith

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

Mr M Edwards and Kene Ibezi

2. Public Question Time

No questions received for Public Question Time.

3. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Bowrah declared personal interest as members of his family were Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenant.

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

4. Verbal Update on Anti-Social Behaviour New Legislation

The Estate Officer for Anti-Social Behaviour provided an update and presented PowerPoint slides regarding the new Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act.

Below was a summary of the information covered during the presentation:

- The officers defined and outlined to the Board Members what was meant by Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).
- There had been a significant number of changes introduced with the new act i.e. Community Trigger and Positive Requirement.
- The ASB Estates Officers had received some training regarding the new legislation following its introduction.

- The Police now had powers to deal with ASB through 'protection notices'.
- Originally there were 19 powers at the Police's disposal but this had been refined and reduced to 6 powers, which included:
 - Injunction
 - Criminal Behaviour Order
 - Community Protection Notice
 - Public Spaces Protection Order
 - Closure Power
 - Dispersal Powers
- The court now had the powers to make criminals and offenders address their behaviour as part of their convictions and punishment i.e. attending AA or going to rehab.

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

- What was the Community Trigger that the Council was using and what was the threshold for the trigger?
The trigger threshold had not been established as yet. The Council would not have a different threshold to the other partner agencies as we were working together with them.
There had been pilot scheme but no threshold set as yet.
- Looking at the Toolkit slide, what was a 'Gating Order'? This was something I had never heard of.
This was part of the old list orders available to the Police. This had been replaced by Community Protection Notice (CPN), Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) and Closure Power.
- What happened to those complaints that didn't become full ASB complaint cases? Were they not being dealt with or recorded?
Before the Council moved across to the new ASB complaints system, there were dozens of complaints not being dealt with? When the new system was introduced, there had to a model to filter out the complaints to the correct departments.
These complaints won't be logged on ASB system but would be dealt with as a low level harassment complaint and would be redirected to Business Support Unit/Estates Management.
The Council receives and deals with 200/250 serious ASB complaints per year.
- If these complaints aren't recorded and someone makes a complaint, it's a complaint regardless and should be recorded for the Council to deal with appropriately. Otherwise, Members weren't getting a clear or accurate picture regarding the level of complaints the Council was receiving.
Estates officer would deal with the low level nuisance cases, leaving the ASB officer to deal with the serious ASB cases.
The ASB team work together with the Estates officers to decide, where these complaints sit.
Our ASB team attended Halcon One team meetings to assist with any particular ASB cases.
Officers with Housing were required to record all and any contact/conversations on the Academy software in the relevant house record.
- Did this apply to all residents not just Housing Tenants?

The Council would have little or no powers to deal with ASB in non-council stock properties. This would be where other agencies such as the Police would lead on these cases.

- How did the team go about it if a person who bought their property through RtB scheme, alters that property affecting the adjoining Council Tenants' properties?
If the alterations affected the Council adjoining property, this wasn't necessarily an ASB case but could be referred to the Council Legal team.
- Did it help when the officers within the ASB team were former police officers?
This might provide an additional advantage due to previous knowledge and experience.
- As Portfolio Holder, I would say that it was a definite advantage for the members of the ASB team to be former Police officers. This meant that the officer had prior knowledge of the law and how it works.
- Was it usually Social Housing Tenants who caused the ASB issues?
It wasn't just Council Housing Tenants who caused the ASB issues.
- Was a Criminal Behaviour Order, a step up from an ASBO?
It wasn't a step up from ASBO, more like a re-working of it. This allowed officers to go to criminal proceeding or request it during proceedings to make them comply with requests and adjustments to their behaviour.
- Community Protection Notice, could this deal with issues regarding motors/caravans affecting tenants?
*Basically, it didn't matter what the type of issue was as long it met the criteria stated, then the order would apply to the issue.
The Portfolio Holder had already impressed on officers that she wanted officers to use the full range of tools available to them with the introduction of ASB Crime and Policing Act.*
- Legal Highs; could the Council target the shops as they were the root cause of additional issues?
*The Council needed to provide the evidence to prove this before we could use any of orders and powers at its disposal.
The Assistant Director and Community & Client Services Manager brought a report recently to Community Scrutiny Committee discussing Legal Highs. The Council was working with the police to try and deal with this and the Council was committed to doing so.*
- There would be tenants who won't complain about such issues. How could we help these Tenants to deal with ongoing issues?
*The Council and the Housing team need to just keep doing what they were doing now, which was publicising the positive feedback and good results to encourage people to use the services available.
The ASB officers were also out there, talking to Tenants and communities. First contact with the officers didn't necessarily need to be the affected person but it could be a friend or neighbour. Tenants needed to be re-assured that they could make complaints confidentially.
Board Member were ambassadors for the Council and could help us to reach those people who didn't want to come directly to us.*
- The Council's ASB complaint services needed to be promoted and published more widely, letting Tenants know how to contact you directly.
- Just a suggestions shouldn't the Council and the Housing team be promoting the members of the Board to Tenants of Taunton Deane so they know who we were. As a new member of the Board, only people who I have told know that I am on the Board.

The results of the recent elections and the new Members of the Board were promoted in Tenants Talk newsletter. This was sent to all Tenants of Taunton Deane. The results are also published on the TDBC website and TV monitors in Deane House's Reception.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

5. Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring Quarter Two 2014-15

Considering the financial figures table previously circulated, concerning the Housing Revenue Account Financial Monitoring for Quarter Two 2014/15 accompanied by a verbal update given by Housing Accountant. The spreadsheets detailed the breakdown of overall performance outturn of Quarter Two 2014/15 split between capital and revenue.

The Revenue Account Performance included such headings as Right to Buy, Income, Expenditure and HRA Revenue.

The following points were covered during the update on Housing Revenue Account Income, Expenditure and Revenue;

- HRA was showing an overall surplus of £207,860. This was a variance of 0.8%.
- Voids had a pressure and the costs were currently higher than budget. This was being monitored by Housing Management and a limit had been introduced. The Council was looking to increase the budget for the next financial year.
- Other Expenditure re: Grounds Maintenance was still being monitored closely. Work was being scaled back.
- General maintenance was forecasted to be overspent (£585k).
- The budget for the Social Housing Development Fund was still unspent but would be put into the earmarked reserves.

The following points were covered during the update on Housing Revenue Account Capital Programmes;

- HRA Capital Programmes had an overall surplus of £868,221.
- £868k of the HRA Capital Programmes had not been programmed to start and so this had gone unspent.
- A review of the non-programmed capital works was underway with a view to accelerate some of not started capital programmes, bringing forward these works into this financial year.
- HRA Development projects were currently expected to complete on target. With Phase One to complete in 2014/15 and Creechbarrow Road in 2015/16.

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

- Concerned were raised regarding the slipping of some of the contracted programmes of works for this year. This money would have been set with the budgets and if these programmes slipped would the costs of these contracted works go up? Also why had they slipped?

The slippage was within the office and the Council had some legal challenges to work through.

The Council couldn't guarantee that the prices connected to the contracts wouldn't increase as this depended on the contractor and the market situation.

The works programmes were on a five year cycle. The Council were looking at combined maintenance programmes to reduce future work required on the housing stock.

The works programme budget would be earmarked.

- Looking at Void costs, the loss of rent and cost of Voids had off set each other and the Council's losses weren't of great concern.

The Council's was reviewing the way it completed its repairs and programmes of works on both Voids and non-Voids. This was to try and find the most cost effective and best maintenance of housing stock.

- Looking the planned extensions to housing stock, there continues to be no spend from that budget?

The Council had just gone through an application process for extensions to Housing Stock. We had the applications down to two particular properties and the work was planned to be started this year and the spend of the budget was due next year.

- Could the Council look at extending some of the empty properties to allow people on the waiting list to get into an appropriate sized property quicker? This would then use this budget up.

- What was meant by unadopted areas?

This related to maintenance of areas within the housing stock such as rear accesses to properties etc.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

6. Performance Indicators Quarter Two 2014-15

Considering the Performance Scorecard tables previously circulated, concerning the Housing and Communities Quarter Two performance Scorecard.

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

- Managing Finances (housing) - There were 9 measures of which 56% Green, 44% Amber, 0% Red and 0% were N/A.
- Service Delivery (Service Delivery (Satisfaction) – There were 11 measures of which 45.5% Green, 45.5% Amber and 9% were N/A.
- Service Delivery (Decent Homes) – There were measures of 2 which 50% were Red and 50% were Amber.
- Service Delivery (Manage Housing Stock) – There were measures of 18 which 39% were Green, 17% were Amber, 28% were Red and 17% were N/A.

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

- One measure for Decent Homes was off course. Average SAP (energy efficiency) rating was still below target.
- Housing Services Diversity Information. We hold 69.98% of diversity information this was an increase of 11.98% since Quarter One.

- Three Repairs and Maintenance measures were off course. The COSY system replacement went live at the beginning of September. This should enable us and the DLO to report completions more accurately.
- Local Authority Major Aids and Adaptions had received 33 applications, which had been completed against a target of 84. This service was currently an officer down.

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

- Local Authority Major Aids and Adaptions the expenditure on both major and minor aids and adaptations were unlikely to reach budget (these was demand led).
- Estate Management Team, the current tenant arrears were now £6,766 over target. This was an improvement on Q1, which was £32,876 over.
- Housing Debt – the debt level for September had increased since July but factors such as service charge bills being issued had influenced this.
- Dwelling with a valid gas safety certificate – one property was inaccessible due to the tenant being in hospital.
- Lettings Team – the percentage of vacant dwellings but unavailable for rent were slightly over target.

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

- Managing Finances had five measures on target.
- Satisfaction had five measures on target.
- Housing Stock had three measures on target with the biggest improvement being the percentage of closed ASB cases.
- Community Development had three measures on track.
- Minor Aids and Adaptations was on target with the number of completed applications.

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

- Repairs and Maintenance had three measures were under development.
- Extra Care Housing Service – the tenant satisfaction had not been completed yet.

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

- Looking at Tenant Rent Arrears, currently the arrears were only £6,766 from £32,876 and there was only one outstanding gas safety certificate. This was good to see.
- What was the progress of the new IT software at the DLO replacing the COSY system?
The new system was called 'Open Contractor' or OC. There had been some issues with getting accurate spend figures and data but we have been informed that those issues had now been resolved so only time would tell if we would more accurate spend figures.
Part of the problem with the COSY system and the inaccurate spend figures was relating to the time it took for supervisors to close jobs but with OC and the new hand held PDA's, the job would be closed when the officer/staff

leaves the property, says the job was complete and moves onto the next job ticket.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

7. Report on Photovoltaic Systems fitting to existing Housing Stock

Considering report previously circulated, concerning the proposal to design, install and commission 350 Photovoltaic systems to the retained housing stock provided the opportunity for TDBC to make a significant contribution towards our commitment to reducing Carbon emissions and alleviating Fuel Poverty by reducing tenants' electricity bills.

Photovoltaic panels (PV) harness sunlight to create electricity, therefore utilising an infinite resource, making it a renewable energy source. Whilst their orientation required a Southerly aspect it was not necessary to have bright sunshine. PV Panels continue to generate electricity in all daylight hours, even on overcast days.

By the Council installing 350 systems to our housing stock, the Council could save approximately 11,015 tonnes of Carbon over 20 years.

The scheme provided significant financial benefits to our tenants through free electricity generated by the PV Panels and was calculated based on the Government Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP Gov't) with a saving on average of £247.54 per annum per household on current electricity bills.

The Council would generate income through the feed in tariff (FIT) which was guaranteed for 20 years as detailed within the Energy Act, it was Indexed Linked and, based on Government SAP calculations, would generate a positive cash flow of £1.2m over the fixed 20 year FIT.

The initial capital investment for 350 properties would be £1,509,000 for fitted systems. The systems should be paid back within the first 13 years and the revenue stream was then additionally guaranteed for 7 years.

The Council completed a desktop study and identified roughly 700 suitable properties that had a southern orientation, the correct roof pitch and suitable construction type. The Senior Leadership Team had chosen to focus on 350 of these 700 identified properties, to allow for tenant refusal and to borrow an amount that the HRA account could feasibly permit.

Tenants would be written to explaining that their home may be suitable for PV panels and promoting the benefits to the tenants during a consultation process as well as informing the tenant a full survey to be carried out on the property. Tenants would be told they were to receive free electricity whilst the Council receive the Feed in Tariff income.

Installation of the PV panels

The installation would be completed by approved sub-contractors and they would carry out the survey, design and gain the District Network Operator's permission to access the National Grid.

The PV panels offered via the framework were Bosch and available for supply only at a cost of £1,142 per kWh, with the average semi-detached house required 3kWh systems (approx.12 panels). Resulting in an average purchase price per 3 bed property as £3,426, plus installation cost.

The Feed in Tariff would be collected by The Low Carbon Exchange (LCX), a company responsible for the maintenance and management of the systems.

The PV panels were MSC (Microgeneration Certification Scheme) accredited and had a 25 year guarantee. Installation errors would not be covered and should be addressed under the installer warranties.

Although the PV panels had a 25 year guarantee, The CSA state study showed their lifespan could be up to 40 years, with efficiencies of the panels dropping by only half a percent per annum.

This meant tenants would continue to receive free electricity long after the FIT TDBC received had ended.

Tenants who had PV panels installed were still able to purchase their property under the Right to Buy Scheme but the panels would be removed prior to a Right to Buy purchase completed.

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

- How long did these PV panel systems last?
The Bosch panel were under a 25 year guarantee with The Low Carbon Exchange (LCX) but studies had shown that had lasted up to 40 years with only a 0.5% drop per year.
- Congratulations, this was well overdue for the Council's housing stock. Brilliant.
- Would PV fitting scheme be extended beyond the stated number of properties?
This would depend on being able to increase our borrowing head room and the buyback tariff of the electricity.
- What consultation had be done by officers with Elected Members on their opinion about how many properties the Council should be aiming for?
*This was a balancing act between what the Council wanted to do and not over stretching ourselves including borrowing money.
Officers had already consulted tenants and started to gather interest of those who wished to have the panels installed, this had been difficult and slow process.
The Council needed to have further conversations about promoting the scheme and any other Council projects.
During the review of the HRA Business Plan, the Council would be reviewing our 'Borrowing Head Room'.*
- Could the Council get 350 properties completed by January?
The January deadline was for getting interested tenants signed up to the scheme by not the installation of the panels.
- Could the Council make this compulsory for tenants?

- Would the installation on panels on one property cause problems with surrounding neighbours i.e. those with and those without.
It might do but the Council were committed to supporting and helping 'hard to heat' properties and stock in turn.
- Had the Council at connecting the PV systems to the tenant's water heating systems to help ease this as well?
The diversion technology could be installed for a small additional cost to heat the water but this was only compatible with emersion heating systems.
- Could Tenants receiving the PV systems request the additional water heating system as well?
This would depend on the individual properties and whether it was appropriate for that property.
- Was the Council looking at including PV panel systems on our new builds projects?
The Council were looking existing housing stock as all the Council's new build stock was 'Code Four' and efficient enough not to require PV systems. If we were to install them to new build stock then it would be profit making from selling the electric back to the national grid and that would depend on the tariff.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

8. Regeneration of Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green.

Considering report previously circulated, concerning the proposals to demolish and redevelop the recently acquired site 'Weavers Arms' the adjacent public toilet block and ten Woolaway properties in Rockwell Green, Wellington, where it was proposed to build new council homes.

The scheme was currently being designed with an estimated delivery of 26 new homes.

Deane Housing Development seeks permission and budget approval to progress this scheme to provide additional affordable housing in Rockwell Green.

The development contributed to the Council's overall stock providing increased housing options to those in housing need.

With the purchasing the pub and the proximity of the jointly owned redundant public toilets site as well as a row of ten semi-detached Woolaway houses, together these three areas provided an opportunity to regenerate underutilised land and buildings, to provide much needed additional affordable housing.

Rockwell Green was predominantly in need of one and two bedroom properties. The Council were seeking to facilitate a sustainable community by providing a mix of properties 1,2,3 & 4 to meet the housing need for the area, with the majority being 1 bed flats and 2 bed houses, with some wheelchair suitable properties.

The indicative mix of units was as follows:-

- 1 bed flat = 10
- 2 bedroom house = 9
- 3 bedroom house = 6

- 4 bedroom house = 1

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

- If the Council were to follow the Creechbarrow Development Project and the inclusion of the community and residents, this project would be great for the community and residents of Rockwell Green.
The Project team were using the Creechbarrow Project as a template as well as approaching the tenants of Creechbarrow Project to help us work with the tenants of Rockwell Green affected through this process.
- How many properties in the Rockwell Green area were Woolaway (non-traditional) properties?
There were 28 properties but the majority of the Council's Woolaway stock was in Taunton in the Priorswood area, roughly 200 properties.
- Were all the Woolaway properties owed by the HRA?
The Council were retained all the stock at Rockwell including the new properties which would replace the Woolaways.
- Could the Council do something radical with the design of the new properties?
- Executive Portfolio Holder commented the request for radical design with the new properties at Rockwell, that the residents, tenants and communities preferred new properties to be in keeping with the existing area.
During the pre-planning meeting with the Planning department, it was indicated that the preference was to keep the new properties design in keeping with the area i.e. slate roofs and rendered properties.
- What was the orientation of the site at Rockwell Green?
The orientation of the site was northwest.
- Would the Council be looking at other Woolaways with the Taunton Deane to re-develop?
The Council would be using the Rockwell Green site as an example for future development of the Council's banks of non-traditional properties.
- Why was it costing the HRA £10,000 to purchase the land behind the Weavers Arms from the General Fund when the Council had sold land for £1?
The Leader of the Council wanted to know why the General Fund was only selling the land for £10,000. This was the price agreed with the Council for the HRA to purchase the land from the General Fund.
- What was the market value of the site?
The Council didn't look at the market value of the site and the properties.
- Would these properties have gardens and not be packed in?
The new properties had to include gardens and parking beyond the curtilage.
- Was the Council looking into putting Fibre Optic Broadband connection to the new properties or would it be possible?
This depended on what was available at the local telephone change and this was something the project team could look into.
- There were lots of things to consider, the Council needed to strike a balance between number of properties and including bells and whistles. By including additional extra on the properties, this would mean the Council would be building fewer properties on this site. Additional extras could mean difference of an additional property on the site.

Resolved that the:-

1. Transfer the Rockwell Green public convenience land from General Fund to the HRA for £10,000.
2. Approval for the demolition of ten non-traditional properties (1-10 Oaken Ground) and the Weavers Arms, including associated buildings, public toilets and site clearance to facilitate new development.
3. Approval to serve Initial and Final Demolition notices for 1-10 Oaken Ground, the Weavers Arms buildings and public toilets.
4. Approval to allocate a budget of £3,500,000 for the development
5. To approve in principle the borrowing of £2,426,000 to fund the scheme within the Housing Revenue Account.

9. Verbal Update on External Wall Insulation.

The Housing Development Project Lead for Sustainable Energy provided the board with an update regarding the Council's progress their External Wall Insulation Project for HRA Housing stock.

Below was a summary of the officers update:

- The funding sources that the Council were looking into for this project had fallen through or been cancelled.
- The Council were now looking to proceed with this project but with a reduced number of properties and fund this reduced number themselves.
- The Council would continue to look for additional funding sources to fund more properties within the housing stock.
- The current number that would be funded from the Council's budget would 40 properties.

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

- Board Members were happy with for the officers to go ahead with the planned and funded 40 properties to have External Wall Insulation.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

10. Information Report on Current Tenant Rent Arrears

Considering requested information report previously circulated, concerning an update on the Council's rent arrears performance data as at 10 November 2014.

The data showed the detail of the actual amount of current tenant rent arrears across the Council's nine rounds, as well as the target rent arrears figure for each round.

Below was a summary of the information update report on rent arrears data:

- The rent arrears overall target for 2014/15 was £360,000 with the outstanding amount as at 10 November being £350,711.68.

- The Council's overall aspirational target for rent arrears was £329,000 and only when this figure was achieved would the 'All rounds' barometer show as 'green'.
- Six out of the nine rounds were over target. The highest over target was round seven.
- The three of nine, which under their rent arrears target round eight was the highest under their target.

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

- Had the officers got any figures from other local authorities, which were now using universal credit?
*The officers had some contact with Bath & North East Somerset Council but they had six claimants but had not got any data yet.
When it's implemented locally, the Council would be able to refine their collection process for rent.
Universal Credit only effected people of working age, also this would be implemented through a phased approach, which would help the Council deal with individual cases.*
- Was the Council offering financial management advice and skills?
The Council had a package of help that included training. This was either completed by the Council or Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Did the Council have a target figure of tenants who thought or knew would default on their rent when Universal Credit was introduced?
*The Council had criteria and advice regarding vulnerable tenants and these were being monitoring and this work was ongoing.
The Council would be looking at the profiles of our tenants.
The Council were also looking into the housing element of Universal Credit paid directly to the Council preventing an increase in rent arrears.
60% of the Council's tenants claim housing benefits but would not be claiming Universal Credit.*

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

11. Verbal Update on Feedback from Community Scrutiny Committee on Tenancy Policy.

The Housing Services Lead provided the committee with an update regarding the progress of the proposed new Tenancy Policy for Taunton Deane.

Below was a summary of the officers update:

- The officers report and the proposed new policy was presented to Community Scrutiny Committee on 4 November 2014.
- Scrutiny commented on the policy and its contents but made no changes to the recommendations.
- Members commented on the new restrictions regarding tenancy succession through family members and this had to be altered and restricted but the Council needed to also be mindful of individual cases.
- The Report and Policy would not be moving forward onto Executive Committee but a formal decision would be made by the Executive Portfolio

Holder for housing. This would be signed off and published in the Weekly Bulletin as per the normal procedure.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's update.

(The meeting ended at 9.00pm)