

Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on Wednesday 16 December 2015 at 6pm in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr R Balman (Chairman)
Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Mr R Middleton and Councillor Bowrah.

Officers: Paul Hadley (Housing Manager - Lettings & Anti-Social Behaviour), Tony Knight (Estates Officer - ASB), Steven Clarke (Estates Officer – Pre-Void & Tenancy Enforcement), Michaela Mullen (Welfare Reform Project Officer), Vanessa Flook (Estates Officer – Pre-Void & Tenancy Enforcement), Terry May (Assistant Director – Property & Development), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director - Housing & Community Development) and Emma Hill (Democratic Services Officer).

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

Ms M Davis, Mr A Akhigbemen, Mr I Hussey, Ms D Pierowicz and Councillor T Beale

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 16 November 2015 were taken as read and were signed.

3. Public Question Time

No questions received for Public Question Time.

4. Declarations of Interests

Councillor Bowrah declared a personal interest as member of his family were Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants and declared a personal interest as family member had applied to the Council's Right to Buy Social Mobility Fund 'Homeownership' Cash Incentive Scheme.

Mr R Balman, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr R Middleton, Mr K Hellier declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

6. Anti-Social Behaviour Activity Briefing

Considered briefing report previously circulated, concerning an update on the performance within the Anti-Social Behaviour Service.

Satisfaction with the service remained high, at end of Quarter two 2015/16 95.4% (target 66%) of tenants who reported ASB in year to date rated the help and advice received as good or excellent. This was a 0.6% reduction since the last update, but we

continue to enjoy very high satisfaction responses from those affected who return surveys after case closure.

There were 33 Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases recorded and opened between 1 July 2015 – 30 October 2015, which included seven cases of harassment, two cases of hate crime, three physical violence and four cases involving drugs.

20 cases were closed during the period (1 July 2015 – 30 October 2015), of these 15 were resolved. Two cases were closed as unfounded complaint and two others were closed as the tenants terminated their tenancy. One other case was closed as no action was required.

Officers provided the Board Members with a summary of the current High Profile/Risk Cases and their current status as well as what the next step was.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

7. Pre-Void Inspection and Tenancy Enforcement Activity Briefing

Considering the briefing report previously circulated, concerning an initial feedback and comments on the progress within the Pre-Void Inspection and Tenancy Enforcement Service.

Initially Estates Officer's work was focused on Pre-void inspections, although towards the end of this initial period, this then began to engage in Tenancy Enforcement tasking.

The Total inspections completed with this period 37 Pre-void and three Tenancy Enforcement. Below was a breakdown of the work relating to Pre-Void Inspections and Tenancy Enforcements:-

- Ten inspections were commissioned as the result of either the death of the tenant or the tenant moving into residential care. Officers had been assured the properties would come back in a good condition and had been emptied of all belongings.
- Nine inspections were on properties that were either neglected or contained a large quantity of belongings. The approximate cost or potential re-charges were £3,778.00 including admin costs of 15% and VAT.
- Five properties had required re-visits to monitor progress and ensure work was completed as agreed.
- To date no tenants that had been contacted had refused to carry out the work requested.
- To date one next of kin refused to agree to an inspection.
- Work had been carried out on three households where the properties were being neglected largely due to hoarding. These households would require longer term support which was aimed at bringing the property back to a more manageable condition.
- These properties were located in Wellington, Bishops Lydeard and Taunton.

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

- Thank you to the Housing Manager for this informative update report. Members recognise that issues regarding hoarding in tenants houses wasn't necessarily a physical issue but might be a mental issue. The outcomes from the officer's efforts was well worth the expenditure.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

8. Welfare Reform Activity Briefing

Considered briefing report previously circulated, concerning an update on the performance within the Welfare Reform project.

The number of tenants affected this month were 330, however this was subject to change on a daily basis due to tenants moving in and out of employment.

The breakdown of tenants that had now downsized were:

- 2 Direct Match approved and completed
- 47 Successful moves on CBL completed
- 1 Successful bids pending a move on CBL
- 0 Mutual Exchange's being processed
- 23 Mutual Exchanges Completed
- 1 Moved to private sector

All affected tenants were being offered advice on Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) and assistance to help them complete the application form. Since the start of this financial year 69 DHP's had been awarded to TDBC's tenants.

The Benefit Cap was currently affected two TDBC tenant households.

Rent Arrears

- 1st April 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £41,483.73 with 179 tenants in rent arrears.
- 1st May 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £44,874.09 with 192 tenants in rent arrears. With an increase in rent arrears of £3,390.36 on the previous month
- 1st June 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £41,762.32 with 184 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £3,111.77 on the previous month
- 1st July 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £38,152.16 with 162 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £3,610.16 on the previous month
- 1st August 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £38,765.54 with 164 tenants in rent arrears. With an increase in rent arrears of £613.38 on the previous month
- 1st September 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £37,920.78 with 167 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £844.76 on the previous month
- 1st October 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £34,660.97 with 149 tenants in rent arrears. With a decrease in rent arrears of £3,259.81 on the previous month

- 1st November 2015 Bedroom Tax rent arrears were £35,663.44 with 170 tenants in rent arrears. With an increase in rent arrears of £1,002.47 on the previous month

Universal Credit went live on 20th April 2015. To date the Council had 18 tenants who had submitted a claim. Officers had been working closely with these tenants and the level of help and support needed was substantial and this needed to be tailored to each of their personal circumstances.

Currently only single unemployed people were able to make claims for UC, which accounts for the small number of affected tenants at this time. However as the role out of UC became wider and involved more families, the result was a significant increase in the number of tenants claiming UC.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

9. Verbal Update on Repairs Performance.

The Interim Assistant Director for Property and Development gave verbal update on the performance of the Repairs Service.

Below was a summary of the performance of the Council's Repairs Service:

- With Open Contractor (OC), there had been significant improvements in relation to Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) figures but this was not reflected in academy and SAP finance.
- Officers were meeting with the 'Out of Hours' team to establish proper procedure for closure of job tickets and the opening additional job tickets as well as process to track the progress of the job tickets.
- Repairs Service performance was above target (98%) during quarter one at 99.16%.
- The improving KPI's linked into more IT work that needed to be done.
- On the 1st April, the service would be reviewing how it reported to the Board in relation to the service's performance. For example, splitting up the work between what was being completing by the DLO and that was completed by Contractors as well as presenting a joint average.
- The Housing Service were looking to update their current version of OC to OC 13, which would improve on some of the IT issues.
- The officers were hoping that the service's performance position would be better by quarter four.
- The use of the PDA's was bedding in well within the workforce. The service was completely off paper tickets.
- The service structure was currently going through a merger of work teams as well as training on the appropriate and relevant services. The physical office location merger was behind schedule but hopefully this would be complete in the New Year.
- Capita were carrying out refresher training sessions for the work planners.

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

- Could the officer looked into an issue where tenants were organising for surveyors and engineers to come round but then they contact the tenants to re-arrange but the engineer turns up at the original date. There appears to be an issue with communication.
- No complaints about the actual worked completed at the properties.
Currently, the department was reviewing its structure as well as employing some temporary staff. The communication between the planners, tenants and engineers needed to be worked on and improved. Officer would look into this and report back to the Board.
- When would the DLO be coming round to clear the guttering on the properties on Valley Road? Some of the guttering on the properties were very overgrown and blocked.
Currently, there was no maintenance contract for the clearing and maintaining of housing stock guttering. But the Housing department were looking into re-instating a maintenance budget for this.
- Concerning the Grounds Maintenance, specifically grass cutting.
The budget for grass cutting only had one or two cuts left in it before end of the year which be in the spring but we were having a mild winter so the grass was still growing. The grass regime needed to be looked at as the number of cuts had been cut repeatedly.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

10. Verbal Update on Sheltered Housing Service and Charges

Reference minute No. eight of the meeting dated 16 November 2015, considering the report previously circulated, concerning the proposed new Sheltered Housing Service and Charges for the Council's Sheltered Housing Scheme.

The Housing Services Lead gave verbal update accompanied by a PowerPoint presentation on the proposed new service for Sheltered Housing Scheme. The officer updated Board Members with the feedback from Community Scrutiny Committee, Executive Committee and then Full Council on 15 December 2015, where the proposals were supported and approved by Members.

The Council and officers were moving into the implementation stage of the approved proposal. This included working with officers to help them to prepare for the new way of working as well as working on the background elements of the Council's Academy system installing the approved new charges.

Officers talked through the overall details of the approved new Sheltered Housing Service. Although with the new service, it would not mean huge change in what officers were required to do or their responsibilities but Managers were planning to complete one to one sessions with Sheltered Housing officers to refresh, remind and make sure they were aware what they were expected to do as well as putting in place training where there were any gaps.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

11. Verbal Update on Creechbarrow Road – Feedback from Board Members Site Visit.

The TSMB Board Members gave verbal feedback from their visit to the Creechbarrow Housing Development site.

Below was a summary of the feedback provided by those Board Members who visited the Creechbarrow Road Development site:

- The Board Members were very impressed with the development properties.
- There were nice fixtures and fittings on the inside.
- Only concern for regarding fixtures was there were no cooker extractor hoods within the properties with open plan kitchen/dining and living rooms.
- Currently, there were no tenants in the new properties. Units hadn't been handed back to the Council.
- Spyholes within the flats in the adapted properties were not at the correct height for someone in a wheelchair.
- Security Chains – due to the position of the chain and the way the wall came out next to it, tenants wouldn't be able to look through the gap whilst using a chain as the wall prevented it.
- Officers would send out another invite to Councillors, Members and Board Members to arrange more visits to the site before hand over of the properties.
- The properties were well spread out and didn't seem to be built on top of each other.
- Board Member said they were glad, that TDBC had stuck to traditional construction i.e. brick/block and not timber frame as it had a longer lifespan.

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

- Wondered if other Council Tenants would be interested in seeing these types of properties in other parts of the estates?

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

(The meeting ended at 7.25pm)