

**Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 22 March 2016 at 6pm in The John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.**

**Present:** Mr R Balman (Chairman)  
Ms M Davis (Vice-Chairman)  
Mr A Akhigbemen, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier and Councillor S Coles.

**Officers:** James Barrahan (Director – Housing and Communities), Terry May (Interim Assistant Director – Property and Development), Stephen Boland (Housing Service Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), and Emma Hill (Democratic Services Officer).

**Others:** Councillors Berry, Miss Smith and Mrs Smith  
Julia Williamson; Vice-Chair, Tenants' Forum

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

**1. Apologies**

Councillor Bowrah and Mr I Hussey

**2. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 25 February 2016 were taken as read and were signed.

**3. Public Question Time**

No questions received for Public Question Time.

**4. Declarations of Interests**

Mr R Balman, Ms M Davis, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr A Akhigbemen, Mr K Hellier declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants.

Councillor Coles declared a personal interest as a member of Somerset County Council.

**5. Verbal Update on Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan Review**

The Director for Housing and Communities gave a verbal update on the review of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan.

Below was a summary of the verbal update on the HRA Business Plan Consultation:-

- The Core Business of the Council should be social rented housing for the most vulnerable in our communities.
- General approval for the proposed new objectives for the HRA.
- It was felt that much more could be done to improve the customer experience of the housing service.

- Understandably Tenant Groups did not want standards in our existing housing stock to fall. But it was felt that the Council could make better use of the current repairs and maintenance spend in order to free up resources.
- An appetite to look at housing products that were closer to the market in order to generate additional income on new build/regeneration schemes.
- An acceptance that our current approach to debt repayment would need to be revised, based on treasury management advice, to achieve a viable business plan and protect services.
- Officer talked Board Members through a draft flow chart for the HRA's proposal of possible tenants' transition through the Council's housing service, from temporary accommodation, introductory tenancy, flexible tenancy, intermediate housing and outside council stock.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:-

- In response to a question relating to what happened if the tenants' introductory tenancy was not renewed making the tenant homeless, the Board was informed that on entering into an introductory tenancy, tenants were supported all the way through the process. If the tenant neglected to adhere to the tenancy then they could be classed as making themselves intentionally homeless, this negated the Council's statutory duty.
- Board Members were informed that there were other external agencies that could step in and provide more intense support if people were evicted by the Council.
- Discussion relating to the turnover of existing housing stock and whether it would be adversely affected by renewal of introductory and flexible tenancies rather than moving on to intermediate housing or out of Council housing.
- Concerns were raised that communities would be split up and that they might not want flexible tenancies introduced but had no choice in it.
- Concerns were raised that tenants on short term tenancies might not bother with keep up of general maintenance of the property, which they would do if they had a long tenancy.
- In response to a question how would officers respond to tenants not keeping up with general maintenance of their property, the Board was informed that general maintenance of the property was part of the tenancy and the condition of the property would affect whether or not the tenancy was renewed.
- In response to a question relating to what would the Council do to help the percentage of people who were not receiving Housing Benefit but could not afford to buy their own property with a mortgage or go into private rented properties, the Board were informed that the Council did not have extensive data regarding this but might get more from pay to stay scheme and could look into small scheme of affordable housing, which was 80% of market rate.
- Discussion on a future consultation regarding improvement to customer service within the housing service.
- Concerns raised over the Council trying to pitch other areas for development and that the Council might be left with only the areas of non-traditional housing for development, when high value assets might be sold off.

**Resolved** that the Information Presentation's report be noted.

## 6. Verbal Update on Repairs and Maintenance Service.

The Interim Assistant Director for Property and Development gave a verbal update on the performance and progress of the Council's Repairs and Maintenance Service.

Below was a summary of the main points from the update on the Repairs and Maintenance Service:

- There was no update of Key Performance Indicators but an update would come to the April meeting of the Board.
- Piece of ongoing work looking at setting the staff establishment within the Deane DLO, which about understanding the required number of tradesmen's as a normal for the numbers of repairs service had.
- Issue surrounding the recording of time spent on individual job tickets, this related to timesheets. Adjustments had been made allowing for appropriate travel time to jobs and sufficient time to complete the job. Working through trade by trade on this.
- Reviewing the different software products services were using and how well they were performing for us.
- Council was considering more software in addition to the current package and migrating functions across to extended new OC package.
- Call Repairs and Work Planners teams had been merged together and training was ongoing ensuring that teams could operate each other's systems.
- We were trialing an expansion to the Area Managers for Surveyors from two to three. This would hopefully, spread the work load better and ease pressure on the service team.
- The upgrade to Version 13 of OC would take place in April 2016.
- Deane DLO were driving the initiative of starting as many traders from their home rather than from the depot. For them to only come to the depot if needed.
- Ongoing piece work relating to reducing the amount of paperwork connected to trades and job tickets as well as making better use of the current resources and streamlining processes.
- Currently, only the repairs team had been issued with PDAs and we were pushing for full introduction, which included the Voids team but we were chasing timescales from SW1.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:-

- Discussion relating to the impact of work load by only having two Area Managers within the Surveyors team. Board Members were informed that this was one of the factors for trialing the extension from April to three Area Managers.
- Board Members requested an update report from officers regarding the progress of the introduction of PDAs to the trade services.

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

## 7. Open Contractor IT System.

Considered the report previously circulated, concerning an update on progress of the Open Contractor IT system, modules and associated software.

The Board had raised concerns on the length of time it had taken to implement Open Contactor (OC) and verbal responses had been provided, with a view of providing a report.

OC was part of a suite of modules of the 'Capita' Open Housing and Open Contractor IT solution for Housing Organisations, being either Local Authority or Housing Association. TDBC purchased a number of modules but had only implemented OC, integration to Kirona DRS, Total Mobile and Insight. There were many others such as, Planned and Asset that had not been implemented.

Implementation was undertaken with limited knowledge, resources and guidance from Capita representatives, and without reviewing and understanding the Business Processes of the DLO service. In addition, there appeared to have been a lack of ownership and a dedicated person to drive implementation and the required change.

The Board was advised that a Health Check of the DRS work planning system was going to be commissioned. A representative from Kirona had carried out this review and provided a report with recommendations that included training was undertaken with specific reference to correct methods for manually scheduling and operative selection.

Work had commenced on reviewing Business Processes in preparation for an upgrade of OC version 11 to version 13 that would provide improved functionality and reporting.

Capita had been asked to provide a report on modules the Council had, what else might be needed, with costs to implement. In tandem to this, the Council was exploring options for specialist support, as we wish to provide dedicated leadership to drive the significant change in implementation and use of IT solutions required. The current temporary Project Manager's remit was split between DLO support with IT improvements and the DLO relocation project.

Kirona's Health Check report confirmed our perception of how the planning system was being operated, being overridden to allow manual scheduling and operative selection, moving and fixing appointments, rather than letting the system choose. Therefore, the Project Manager was developing an Action Plan to implement the recommendations within Kirona's report that included appropriate training. Once the plan was complete and agreed it would be presented to a future Board meeting.

The Business Process review was progressing, with outcomes being considered at the next Project Board meeting. Decisions would be made on how this would feed into the upgrade of OC version 11 that was being undertaken in April.

The Council had to be mindful of an overall review of the Councils IT systems, whilst we review the Housing & Communities Directorate IT systems, in particular, those within Asset, Property and the DLO. However, our requirements had a degree of specialism and the Council had systems in place that were not fully utilised, which we were reviewing, hence the request to Capita for options to further develop what modules we had and how best to use them.

To support appraisal of Capita OC and associated modules, representatives of the project team and the DLO had visited Kensington & Chelsea, and Yarlinton Housing Group to see how they were using OC and understand what issues they encountered during implementation.

There was provision within the TSMB forward plan to update further at the October TSMB. However, if there were significant changes or progress, an early update would be provided.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:-

- In response to a question relating to the prevention of similar implementation issues arising again with the new version of OC, the Board were informed that part of that prevention was the employment of Assistant Director and his previous experience with OC with Yarlington Housing Group as well as introduction of IT Project Management Officer.
- In response to a question relating to whether or the Council was using LEAN principles and who was taking the lead on this, the Board were informed that the Council Asset Database Manager was our inhouse expertise as they had Six Sigma's training and we were now using these principles.
- In response to a question relating to the timescales for the introduction of the new version of OC software as well as any additional software packages for migration, the Board were informed that when Officer had put together a plan for the implementation and had timescales, they would return to the Board with a report.

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

## **8. Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Annual Conference 2016**

Considered the report previously circulated, concerning this year's TPAS Annual Conference. The Conference was maintaining the same format as last year, with the conference being held in July in the same venue near Warwick.

The Board was asked to decide whether to send delegates to the conference, and if so how many.

TPAS was a leading national tenant participation organisation working to promote tenant empowerment. As well as providing training events, it held an annual conference which allowed tenants from all over the country to attend workshops, hear guest speakers and meet with other tenants.

TPAS had decided to hold the conference in the same venue as last year:

- Chesford Grange, Kenilworth, near Warwick
- 13th and 14th July 2016

TPAS were currently finalising the full programme, which included workshops and speakers. The full programme should be available in April 2016. The cost of the conference would be met by existing budgets.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:-

- Discussion relating to the number of representatives that the Board should send and whether or not an officer could attend as well.

- In response to a question about what hotel would the representatives be staying, the Board were informed that this would be discussed with the representatives attending.
- ARCH (Association of Retained Council Houses). Board Members requested if Officers could find out when their annual conference was and how we could attend.

**Resolved** that:-

1. The Officer's report be noted.
2. The Board should send three representative to the conference.
3. The three volunteers attending the conference were Mr A Akhigbemen, Cllr B Bowrah and Mr I Hussey

## **9. Tenant Service Management Board Forward Plan 2016**

Considering the report previously circulated, concerning the development of a forward plan for the Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB).

The Board was asked to review the attached plan and comment on the scheduled dates of the agenda items and decide whether further agenda items should be presented.

The TSMB met on a monthly basis, in order to allow agenda items to be scheduled a forward plan had been developed for 2016. A copy of the developed forward plan was attached to the covering report. At the end of forward plan, there were some agenda items that had been identified but had not yet been allocated to a meeting. This was due to some uncertainty as to when the item would be finalised and ready to come before the board.

**Resolved** that:-

1. The Officer's report to be noted.
2. The attached version of the TSMB Forward Plan be approved and required no changes.
3. There were no additional items for the Forward Plan at this time.

(The meeting ended at 7.19pm)