

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 18 April 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, Mr I Hussey, Councillor Bowrah and Councillor S Coles.

Officers: James Barraah (Director – Housing and Communities), Jan Errington (Project Manager), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director – Housing and Community Development), Lucy Clothier (Senior Accountant - Services), Stephen Boland (Housing Service Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), and Emma Hill (Democratic Services Officer).

Others: Councillor Berry, Beale, Booth and Mrs Warmington
Julia Williamson; Vice-Chair, Tenants' Forum

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Introduction

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

2. Apologies

Mr R Middleton

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 I Hussey, 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. Tenant Services Management Board 2015/16

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

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

- Board had seen a programme of installing Solar Panels starting May 2015, additional wall insulation, and replacing housing stock UPVC Doors.
- The Board hoped the HRA and Council would be able to continue these programmes.
- Seen the results of the New Build programme of Creechbarrow Road and Vale View in West Bagborough.
- The Board had been involved with whole process and was grateful for the regular updates as well as the chance to visit Creechbarrow Road and see inside of some of the finished properties.
- The Board had been very impressed with the high standard of workmanship.
- The Board scrutinised how the Council's Housing service was performing every quarter. This included repairs performance and this area could perform better, which was also highlighted by the STAR Survey.
- This had prompted the employment of Assistant Director Terry May. Since then the performance of this area had improved.
- Part of the Board monitoring role included quarterly financial statements and looking specifically at rent arrears.
- The Board was aware that many tenants would be concerned by the changes in Welfare Reform and the benefits.
- Adding to that, Universal Credit was to be rolled out further, later this year and the Council would not know the extent of the impact until more tenants were taken up.
- The Tenants Employment Support Programme started last month and the Board would receive a progress update report in August.
- Chair thanked all the board members for all their hard work over the last year and also thanked the members for electing him as chairperson.
- Chair thanked the Tenant Empowerment Manager for the support and hard work he puts in on board's behalf.
- Chair thanked all the department Managers and Councillors who without their backing the board would not be able to progress.
- Chair thanked Democratic Service Officer for working away next to him every month.

Resolved that the Chairperson's report be noted.

6. The Year ahead for Housing and Communities

The Director for Housing and Communities gave a verbal update relating to the HRA and the Council projects for the forthcoming year and updating the Board on the wider Council issues as well as local issues effecting this Council and its Tenants.

Below was a summary of the main points from the update:

- The Board would be receiving more updates in the future regarding the HRA Business Plan review. With a view to bringing recommendations before the Board in June/July.
- The key issue that the Council was faced with was our ability to become financially stable and sustainable.
- Following the Council's undertaking of the first phase of JMASS project, the continuing part of that project was about transforming what the Council did and how we did it so we could make more efficiencies.

- The project had taken a pause, allowing reflection on the changes so far as well as the undertaking of a second piece of work including three separate scenarios for both Councils, which would be put to Elected Members later in the year.
- The Council was seeking to implement a new customer access strategy and this would be looking to make the Councils transactions more efficient and trying to move more people to digital transactions and digital communication with Council
- Part of this was reviewing what services the Council provided and how we provide them including a detailed look at our systems and processes.
- The Councils new IT strategy would promote greater IT enablement and this would bring the Council up to date and prepare us for the future ensuring flexible and agile working.
- Officers were looking to increase the Councils commercial opportunities increasing our sources of income.
- The Transformation project team had been out visiting other Councils to get ideas and examples on how it was being done elsewhere as many Councils were in a similar position to us.
- The Councils new Corporate Strategy had been brought before the Board and sat alongside the Transformation Project, which had been put in place in both TDBC and WSC.
- The Councils Accommodation project was being reviewed as the initial offer from SCC for the relocation from The Deane House to County Hall had been significantly and substantially altered due to affordability issues.
- The Council was currently taking stock of that project and re-reviewing the Councils options and make a further decision and come back to Council with an update on that project in the summer.
- Following the offer revision, the decision was taken to pause and review all the options available to the Council.
- Investigation into the options open to the Council, which included the Council occupying The Deane House in a different way to allow us to share it with other partners to help us pay for the cost of running this building.
- A key development for the Councils was Hinkley Point, the Council was waiting for the final investment decision.
- The final decision would trigger a whole variety of activities and would have a profound effect on Taunton Deane and the wider area. This decision would also trigger commercial activities, which would effect the housing sector.
- It would release additional funding for the Council to mitigate some of the impact on Taunton Deane, specifically a housing funding.
- From Day one of investment decision, 750 workers would be descending on us. This figure would double every six months for three years. The impact was that all of those people would require housing, they would impact and invest in our communities.
- There was a significant amount of work still to be done within the repairs and Voids service and the Council needed enforce some good cost control within those areas.
- With the aim to working towards improvement in the quality of the job completed including completing the work first time around, therefore reducing the need for return visits.
- An ongoing project, was about sustaining the work of the One Team areas by continuing to challenge the way the Council works and how other agencies work with individuals, families and communities.
- Welfare Reform was a significant impact on communities and full roll out for Universal Credit in TDBC and WSC had been confirmed as October 2016.

- The Council was aware from the several cases, we had the support required was significant just to navigate the system and to release that they had to take ownership of their own affairs, that the system would not do it for them.
- Following the announcement, the Council was just reviewing its action plan corporately and was in communications with Home in Sedgemoor and Sedgemoor District Council as their roll out was May 2016.
- The Council had ongoing new build projects, which included the new depot at Wellington. Officers were preparing for the logistics of moving services and staff from Priory Depot to the new building.
- The Creechbarrow Road development was behind schedule but the finished product was very smart.
- Officers would be coming back with reports to the Board as the Local Letting policy comes into play in that area and trying to maintain and promote a community feeling.
- There were some big challenges for the Council to address.
- Officers thanked the Board for their ongoing engagement and input over the last 12 months and looked forward to the next 12 months.

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

- In response to a question enquiring if the Hinkley Point Developments would cause an increase in the requests for Housing, the Board were informed that Sedgemoor District Council and West Somerset Council would receive the majority of the requests but there would be a percentage requesting housing in Taunton Deane.
- Members raised concerns that this increase would have a knock on effect of Landlords choosing higher paid workers over Councils tenants.
- In response to a questions asking if these workers would be classified as essential workers for housing purposes, the Board was informed they would not and would remain in the open market

Resolved that the Officer's report be noted.

7. Verbal Update on Extra Care Housing Service Review Project

Reference Minute No. 4/13October/2015 updated Board Member on the Review of the Councils Extra Care Housing Schemes. The Project Manager gave a verbal update on the Review of the Council's Extra Care Housing schemes.

Below was a summary of the main points from the update provided by the Project Manager:

- The Council had two Extra Care Housing schemes (ECH).
- The County Council (SCC) were recommissioning the service.
- There had been delays in the process of the service review and its recommissioning
- Additional options and variations on the commissioning of service had been submitted and required consideration.
- The latest date for the new contract was April 2017 with the tendering process in the summer of this year, leading to decision on new provider.
- October 2015, the Board supported the recommended option to allow SCC to procure an integrated care and support provider for our ECH schemes.

- A service level agreement (SLA) between TDBC and the provider would ensure effective joint working and monitoring of the service by TDBC.
- November 2016, Community Scrutiny supported the recommended option subject to an updated report in the event of SCC changing the service model and its commissioning intentions.
- Despite additional options being reviewed, the recommended option remains the same.
- The alternative option presented by SCC was for TDBC to provide the weekday housing related support in an interim contract. There would be no service integration although an SLA would promote joint working. Staff restructuring would be required.
- The recommended option was stronger as it was in the best interests of tenants, by delivering greater benefits to tenants in terms of Help, Flexible Responsive Service and reflected the tenants' aspirations.
- The SLA would ensure effective monitoring and joint working and help guard quality for the tenants.
- Recommended option delivery structure created a part time post at TDBC. This would manage the additional housing management with line management support from the existing specialist post of Senior Supported Housing Development Officer.
- The post would be on site at each scheme weekly to hold drop in sessions.
- Tenant Empowerment Manager would work closely with the provider to ensure regular tenant meetings etc.
- Through the Tender process, TDBC tenants would be consulted and involved in design and evaluation.
- TDBC officer were involved in stage 2 evaluation. This gave the Council some influence in procurement
- Officer would be providing information to Community Scrutiny for context on the revised proposed ECH service charge in advance of tenant consultation and the Fees and Charges approval cycle.
- The proposed change reflected the service and costs more accurately and was lower in the recommended option than the alternative.
- The proposal was to protect affected existing tenants from the increase.
- Tenants were being kept informed and officers visited the ECH schemes.
- The tenants' main concern was to know what was happening when and who to go to rather than the complexities of the process.
- Key to managing the transition would be high level of step by step communication with tenants and staff.

In summary, the recommended option to allow SCC to procure an integrated care and support provider received support at each stage last year as the most beneficial to tenants, meeting theirs and SCC's aspirations, lower risk and would not require subsidy from TDBC. In both options ECH service charges would be revised to reflect the costs of additional housing management accurately. The service charge was lower in the recommended option and the service charges would be picked up through Fees and Charges for approval in due course.

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

- In response to a question enquiring if Tenants had received an update regarding the ECH scheme review progress, the Board were informed that Officers visited the schemes individually and the most recent occasion being the previous week. Tenants continued to inform the Council, they did not want specific detailed

information on review but information on what would affect them, which included staffing and service cost.

Resolved that the Officer's update report be noted.

8. Review of the Performance Indicators for 2016/17

Considered the report previously circulated, concerning the review of the Housing and Communities Performance Indicators for 2016/17.

Historically, Housing and Communities had collected and reported a wide range and number of performance indicators that covered all of its housing service and many had previously been prescribed by government as statutory performance indicators or were ones the Council collected to use as part of a benchmarking set for Housemark.

The collection, monitoring and reporting of these measures was time consuming and for some measures, the value in collecting them had been questionable. So the government had made efforts to reduce the burden on councils to collect and report on performance indicators and over the past couple of years, the Housing Service decided to stop collecting and submitting Housemark data due to the burden of work on the Business Support team as well as that many Housing Providers now collected and report data in a different ways.

The Council had agreed to cut back performance measures as far as possible to retain accountability but to reduce the burden both in terms of collecting and reporting and within this context that Housing and Communities had undertaken a review of its performance indicators.

Managers had been working to identify one compact set of performance indicators that focus in on and capture the key business and service areas of the housing service. These measures needed to ensure the service was accountable but also drive the housing business and service delivery in key areas as well as needing to align with the emerging HRA Business Plan and particularly the 'stronger business' focus that the new Business Plan would require and remain relevant to tenants and TSMB and as previously reported to the Board, the 'top 10' measures was largely unchanged.

One of the Councils requirements was to move away from having different sets of performance measures for different purposes to having one suite of measures that would be used to report for all purposes but there was recognition that services and teams would still retain some additional internal measures as part of the good management of those services. However unless these were key measures, they would not be included to be reported externally.

The attached with covering report was a copy of the proposed performance indicator suite showing the list of 22 performance indicators that would be collected and reported. Below was a breakdown on the proposed new suit of indicators:

- 21 were relevant to the Council and would appear in all the Councils performance reports and publications;
- 5 were relevant for West Somerset Council and would appear in WSC performance reports.

- The table included reference to those that are part of HouseMark benchmarking in case the Housing Service chooses to re-join this, or seek benchmarking data from other housing providers.

For comparison purposes, Board Members were provided with a copy of the previous 'top 10' performance measures for TSMB as well as a copy of the previous full suite of 46 measures used in 2015/16.

Manager felt that the performance measures presented as appendix with the covering report were now fit for purpose for the Housing Service but acknowledge that with a new HRA Business Plan being written and a range of other projects taking place that, the Council might choose in future to report back on additional outcomes and this might form part of the performance indicator suite.

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

- In response to a question enquiring whether or not the Council had the facility to re-house tenants if the repair to their property was significant enough to require it, the Board was informed that the Council did have this facility and even in an emergency situation.

Resolved that:-

1. The Officer's report be noted.
2. The proposed Performance Measures presented to Board Member for ongoing quarterly reporting from April 2016 be approved

9. Review of Tenant Service Management Board Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct.

Considered the report previously circulated, concerning the review the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct of the Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB). These documents had been in existence since the introduction of the board in 2010 and the Terms of Reference state that they should be reviewed every two years. The last time they were updated was at the TSMB AGM of April 2014. The documents were included as appendices the covering report.

The Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct detailed the role, aims, objectives and expected conduct of the board, were agreed at the start of the board's existence and were subsequently reviewed and updated at the TSMB AGM of 2012 and 2014.

Point 21.2 of the Terms of Reference state that "The Terms of Reference would be reviewed every two years". The two years had now elapsed, meaning the TSMB should reconsider the documents and put forward any amendments it felt were necessary.

Resolved that:-

1. The Officer's report to be noted.
2. The attached version of the TSMB Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct be approved and required no changes.

10. Any Other Business

In response to a question by a Member enquiring if the Council had borrowed money for the Creechbarrow Road New Build project, did the Council own those properties, the Board was informed that the Council did in fact own those property despite borrowing money to complete the project.

(The meeting ended at 7.00pm)