

Minutes of the Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 16 October 2017 at 6.00pm in Meeting Room C, Flook House, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr R Balman (Chairman)
Mrs J Belcher, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey, Councillor C Booth and Councillor R Bowrah, BEM.

Officers: Shari Hallett (Business Support Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager) and Andrew Randell (Democratic Services Officer).

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

An apology was received from Mr A Akhigbemen.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 25 September 2017 were signed and taken as read.

3. Public Question Time

No questions were received for Public Question Time.

4. Declarations of Interests

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

5. Fees and Charges 2018-2019

The Business Support Lead gave an update on the charges made to tenants for the services they used. The service charges were set locally each year and were in addition to the rent charges which were set by Government.

It was proposed to use the Retail Price Index (RPI) set in September 2017 to increase the housing fees and charges. This was in accordance with the Housing Business Plan. The September 2017 RPI had not been released until the date of the meeting so the report had used the August 2017 RPI of 2.7%. The August RPI figure was used for indicative purposes and once the September RPI figure was published, the report would be adjusted.

The following were exceptions to the rule that the service charges would be increased by the September 2017 RPI:-

Grounds Maintenance Charge. It had been recommended to increase the service charge for grounds maintenance from 81p per week to £1.84 per week from April 2018. The increase would ensure that the service was properly funded and enabled the Council to provide a new improved specification.

Water Rates and Non Mains Sewerage Rates. The charges for properties that were not on mains sewer would be increased in line with Wessex Water increases for 2018-2019. This included sewer standing charges and poundage charges.

Temporary Accommodation. The licence fee charged was in line with the Local Housing Allowance, with higher rates charged for those without key meters and lower rates for those with key meters.

Private Garage Rent. The charge for private tenants would increase from £9.34 to £10.00 per week. This was more than double the RPI. Council tenants charge would only be increased by the RPI.

Guest Rooms and Meeting Rooms. Feedback from tenants had shown that they preferred charges to be rounded to whole numbers. The charges for guest rooms and meeting halls had the RPI applied and then were rounded.

During the discussion of this item, Board Members made the following comments and asked questions (responses shown in italics):-

- Members queried whether the grounds maintenance charge was covered by housing benefit.
The charge was covered by housing benefit because it was a communal charge.
- Members requested clarification on the licence fee charged for Temporary Accommodation.
- Members were pleased that the charge for grounds maintenance had been increased and hoped that the service would be improved.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

(The meeting ended at 6.10pm)