

Minutes of the Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 26 February 2018 at 6.00pm in Meeting Room C in Flook House at The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr A Akhigbemen, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Councillor C Booth and Councillor R Bowrah, BEM.

Officers: Steve Boland (Housing Services Lead), James Barrah (Director – Housing and Communities), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director – Housing and Community Development), Rich Prewer (Property Services Manager), Steve Clarke (Tenants Service Development Officer) and Clare Rendell (Democratic Services Officer).

Others: Julia Williamson.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apology

An apology was received from Mr I Hussey.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 29 January 2018 were signed and taken as read.

3. Public Question Time

No questions were received for Public Question Time.

4. Declarations of Interests

Mr A Akhigbemen, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty and Mr K Hellier declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants. Councillor Bowrah declared a personal interest as a Member of Wellington Town Council.

5. Quarterly Performance Reports

The Assistant Director for Housing and Community Development and the Property Services Manager presented their report which gave the Board an update on the performance levels for Property Services, Building Works and Housing and Communities.

Within Property Services, the performance scorecard showed mainly greens, with one amber. This was for completion times on emergency repairs. Further improvements were expected. The figures included significant system downtime caused by IT complications. Officers were confident that 99% of emergency jobs had been completed within time.

Officers highlighted that the new gas system had been nominated for an award by the Association of Gas Safety Managers based on the improvement in the service.

Building Works also showed that majority of the processes had been completed, with only one operational process marked as in progress. This process was to deliver cashable savings in the void repairs budget.

Within Housing and Communities, most of the scores remained green which was positive. There were four ambers that were highlighted:-

- HC 2.7 – new tenants satisfied with the lettable standard of the property;
- HC 2.8 – tenants satisfied with the most recent repair;
- HC 4.2 – completion of repairs within the priority target times; and
- HC 4.8 – tenants that had received their annual review of support plans or review of their needs and risks.

Officers highlighted that although the lettable standards had dropped, they had not received any complaints in the last couple of months.

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

- Board Members requested clarification on the difference between major and minor works.
Major works normally consisted of two capital elements, for example, a new kitchen and bathroom.
- Concern was raised on the percentage of arrears shown in HC 1.1 and whether once the cash machines were removed, would the figures worsen.
There had been no indication that the removal of the machines would cause arrears. The introduction of Universal Credit had impacted on the arrears figures due to the delay in the initial payment, which for most was six weeks. Officers had to factor this into the calculation of the arrears.
- Board Members queried whether officers had to spend more time with tenants that were on Universal Credit.
Yes. Due to Universal Credit being an online based benefit, more support was given to help tenants submit claims and manage their online account.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

6. Compliance Report

The Property Services Manager presented his report which gave the Board an update on the Compliance Status of Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC).

Statutory property regulations were founded in a complex set of regulations, assessments and inspections, which the Council must undertake to comply with current government legislation.

Domestic premises were currently audited on six keys areas of statutory and regulatory compliance, there were as follows:-

- Asbestos Management Surveys;
- Gas Safety;
- Electrical Safety;
- Energy Performance Certificates;
- Fire Safety; and

- Water Hygiene.

The Council continued to work towards best practice with regards to property compliance of the HRA properties. TDBC was aware of the liabilities and understood the work and measures to be 100% compliant in all areas of property compliance.

However, there was still much more to do, which the Council had recognised and therefore made satisfactory financial and dedicated resources within the Asset Management Team to deliver and maintain the Council's legislative, statutory and regulatory requirements for property compliance.

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

- Board Members queried whether TDBC was compliant with their HRA properties.
Yes, there were.
- Information about gas safety had been published in the tenant's newsletter. Officers queried whether this was the best way to communicate such matters.
Yes, the Board agreed that was the most appropriate way to communicate with tenants.
- Board Members queried whether all tenants sought permission before they carried out any alterations to their properties.
No they did not. However, TDBC could recharge tenants once they had left their properties if they had not rectified any works they had carried out.
- Concern was raised on how asbestos was dealt with.
Staff would always treat any work where there was a suspension of asbestos with the highest level of care.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

7. Transformation Update

The Director for Housing and Communities gave the Board an update on the Transformation Project and presented them with the Consultation Document.

The main themes that the Transformation Project championed were People, Place and Prosperity. The three themes would be at the centre of how the Councils would operate in the future.

Due to the changes in the social environment plus a shift in customer and government expectations, the Councils needed to transform for their customers. This included the following:-

- Social Enterprise;
- 24/7 Access;
- Incredible Experiences;
- Focus on what matters;
- New Localities; and
- Great Usability.

To achieve the ambitions set within the project, the organisational design would need to break down the silos that currently existed. The proposal included the creation of seven functional areas:-

- Customer;
- Communications and Marketing;
- Performance and Business Change;
- Strategy;
- Localities;
- Commercial Investment; and
- Major Programmes.

Within the functional areas, new job families would be created for staff. These included Customer Services, Specialists, Case Managers, Operational Management and Locality. Clarification was given on how the job families would work together.

The recruitment process was broken down into two phases. Phase one covered leadership roles plus the functional areas for Communications and Marketing and Performance and Business Change. Phase two included the other functional areas and the main bulk of staff would fall within the Customer area.

The Behaviours Framework was highlighted to the Board. The Framework would be the foundation used to outline the ways of working that all staff would adopt in order to give customers the best possible service and deliver the Councils objectives. It supported what staff did and was in addition to the skills needed for individual jobs.

The Framework was made up of four behaviours:-

- Working Together – to share ideas and best practice;
- Agile – empowered to make decisions;
- Commercial Awareness – to add value every day; and
- Ownership – to see things through to the end.

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

- Concern was raised on data protection with the lack of defined departments.
Information was currently shared between the different areas of the Council and this would continue within the new structure.
- Board Members queried how staff felt about the project.
There had been mixed responses from staff. Many were excited and eager to progress within the new design and some were anxious over the changes.
- Board Members queried whether the decision from Government about the creation of One Council would affect the Transformation Project.
The main principles of the project could still be used by both Councils whether a New Council was created or not.
- Board Members queried whether the project would affect the rent reduction set by Government.
Government had already decided not to extend the rent reduction, so there would be no impact.
- Board Members queried the progress made on TDBC Building Programme.
Works had started on the Weavers Arms site. There had been some issues with utilities and staffing which had caused delays. An update on the

Woolaway Project was due to be presented to the Board, however, this had to be postponed and would be added to the March agenda.

- Concern was raised that there had been some criticism of the Weavers Arms tenure.

The tenure consisted of a mix of rented accommodation, affordable housing and shared ownership.

- Board Members queried how many of the new builds at Monkton Heathfield would be allocated for affordable housing.

The figures were not known, however, there would be a percentage allocated to affordable housing which would be set within the planning obligations.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's presentation.

8. Tenant Services Management Board Matters Arising

The Tenants Service Development Officer led a discussion with the Board on matters that had arisen since the last meeting.

The Tenants Service Development Officer raised the date of the next Tenant Services Management Board election and advised the Board Members of the internal and external quotes he had obtained for the cost of an election.

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

- Board Members requested that they received hard copies of the agendas instead of electronic versions. They found it difficult to read the agenda on their devices.
- Board Members had signed and returned their updated Terms of Reference.
- The Tenants Service Development Officer asked the Board Members whether there was any training they would like to receive. He advised that there was a training event being held for the Chairman and Vice Chairman to attend.
- Board Members requested more reports and information on rural matters because they found that the Board mainly focused on Taunton Town Centre.

(The meeting ended at 7.40pm)