

Minutes of the Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 11 December 2017 at 6.00pm in Meeting Room C in Flook House at The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

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

Officers: Paul Harding (Senior Transformation Project Lead), Rachel Searle (Development and Regeneration Manager), Paul Hadley (Housing, Lettings and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager), Steve Boland (Housing Services Lead), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager), Steve Clarke (Tenants Service Development Officer) and Clare Rendell (Democratic Services Officer).

Others: Julia Williamson.

(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 13 November 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 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. Transformation – Process Review

The Senior Transformation Project Lead presented an update on the Transformation Project.

The Board Members were given some background information on the vision and design principles and the key points of the project were highlighted.

The three pillars which needed to align to deliver the change were:-

- People change – structures and behaviours;
- Technology to support the new ways of working; and
- Process change – working efficiently and ensuring the right people were involved at the right times. The right people included elected Members, current staff, customers, partners and other organisations.

The Senior Transformation Project Lead explained that the purpose of the Process Design was to:-

- Improve the customer and staff experience;

- Improve Council efficiency through the redesign of transactional processes for a smaller organisation;
- Prevent and reduce customer demand;
- Promote a customer centric ethos across the One Team; and
- Allow people to do more for themselves if they could.

The Process Design would be delivered by:-

- Making sure the right people did the right tasks;
- Ending processes that delivered no business benefit;
- Promoting the take-up of online services for those who could; and
- Focusing on customer journeys and the needs of the customer.

During the discussion of this item, Board Members asked the following question (Responses shown in italics):-

- Members queried was there much opposition to the project.
There had been a consultation on the project. Many of the Councils main partners were very supportive. The majority of the Town and Parish Councils were in support of the project, however, there had been mixed reviews from the general public. All of the responses had been submitted to the Secretary of State for consideration. The Secretary of State had now given a 'minded to' decision and the project was in a consultation period until 19 January 2018.
- The Senior Transformation Project Lead would return to update the Board Members in six months' time.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's presentation.

6. Development Update

The Development and Regeneration Manager presented their report which provided an update on the Moorland Close, Weavers Arms and North Taunton Woolaway projects.

Moorland Close, Taunton

The following key accomplishments were highlighted:-

- Internal layout alterations;
- The first fix for mechanical and electrical works; and
- The re-roofing works, which included ancillary works.

The project was now ready for the next scheduled set of activities. Those were:-

- Completion of second fix for plumbing and electrical works;
- Internal decoration and finishes;
- External landscaping; and
- Taunton East Development Trust were due to visit the new premises to sign the lease.

Weavers Arms, Rockwell Green

The following key accomplishments were highlighted:-

- The erection of the timber frame for the block of flats;
- Completion of roofing work and installation of windows for all of the properties;
- Installation of the new drainage;

- Draft Section 104 drainage agreement had been approved and the final copy was due to be signed shortly;
- Approval had been obtained from private property owners for boundary treatment works;
- The returning households had chosen the colour schemes for their prospective properties; and
- The scheme had obtained a good score of 35 from the Considerate Constructors in November 2017.

The project was now ready for the next scheduled set of activities. Those were:-

- Completion of the first and second fix for plumbing and electrical works;
- Completion of the statutory approvals for the car parking areas;
- Internal decoration and finishes;
- External landscaping works; and
- The sale of two shared ownership properties would be advertised by local estate agents, Wilkie, May and Tuckwood.

There had been two delays which had effected site activity, one was on the external brick work and the other was on the highways alterations.

North Taunton Woolaway Project

The Development and Regeneration Manager gave a detailed presentation on the progress that had been made on the project and the residents' engagement in the Design Group Meeting that was held on 15 November 2017.

At the recent meeting the members agreed on the roles, nominations, conduct and meeting protocols of the Design Group.

It was highlighted that 68% of the tenant households had had 1-to-1 meetings with the project team.

The Residents Charter had been set out and included the following:-

- How Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) would work with the residents;
- A code of conduct for working together; and
- Provided a clear statement of commitments to residents and home owners'.

The Options available to all residents were detailed. The options available were refurbish all, refurbish some and replace some or replace all.

When residents were given the options to either refurbish or replace, they were advised on the space standards for new builds and a comparison on the footprints of their existing properties compared with a new build. In all of the properties except for the flats, the footprints were bigger in the new build properties.

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

- Board Members queried what the breakdown of properties was at the Weavers Arms Development.
3 properties would be for existing tenants who had decanted whilst the rebuild took place, 2 would be for shared ownership and the remaining 21 would be for affordable rent schemes. It was confirmed that 10 properties had been knocked down to create 26 on the new development.

- Board Members queried what had caused the delay in the Weavers Arms Development.
The delays had been caused by the Statutory Authorities.
- Board Members suggested that new build properties should be positioned so they were staggered instead of in a straight line to decrease the chances of noise transference.
- The Chairman thanked the Development and Regeneration Manager for her presentations and the positive feedback on all the projects.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

7. Weavers Arms Local Lettings Plan

The Housing, Lettings, and Anti-Social Behaviour Manager presented his report which provided the Board Members with an update on the lettings plan for the Weavers Arms development scheme.

The objectives of the lettings plan were:-

- TDBC to achieve the greatest choice and flexibility in meeting the needs of housing applicants; and
- To create a safe and secure environment in which tenants could live peacefully and in harmony with their neighbours and in which families could grow.

Weavers Arms was a scheme of 24 TDBC owned and two shared ownership properties. The properties would be constructed to current building regulations and would be considerably cheaper to run than older properties.

The stock break-down for the properties was as follows:-

- 10 one bed flats;
- 2 one bed flats suitable for wheelchair users;
- 3 two bed bungalows suitable for wheelchair users;
- 4 two bed semi-detached houses;
- 4 three bed semi-detached houses;
- 1 four bed house; and
- 2 two bed semi-detached houses for shared ownership of 2.75% open market value.

TDBC was committed to advertise as many of the vacant properties they could through the Choice Based Letting system. Adverts on vacant properties would give information on who would be eligible to apply for the properties. For households that had a history of persistent tenancy breaches for anti-social behaviour or other types of tenancy breach within the last two years, would have exclusions applied.

Furthermore, applications would be assessed using the following criteria:-

- That the household would be safe and secure;
- That the household's quality of life would not be adversely affected;
- The quality of life for people already living in the area would not be adversely affected; and
- The household would continue to positively engage with support agencies, where appropriate.

Priority would be given to applicants who had a local connection to the following areas:-

- 1) Rockwell Green
- 2) Wellington (without)
- 3) Langford Budville
- 4) Wellington
- 5) Nynehead
- 6) West Buckland
- 7) Remainder of Homefinder Somerset

Three of the properties would be let back to existing TDBC households who were returning decants from properties that were demolished to allow construction of the scheme.

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

- Board Members queried who decided who could apply for the properties or who would not be suitable.
The landlord decided who would be eligible and the exclusions would be stated in the adverts.
- Board Members queried was the whole area due to be redeveloped.
That type of project was not on the forward plan yet due to other large development projects being carried out within the TDBC area, but it could be a possibility in future.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

8. Feedback from the Visit of the Housing Minister

The Tenant Empowerment Manager presented an update which gave details on the recent visit to the South West by the Housing Minister, Alok Sharma.

On 30 November 2017, an event was held in Bridgwater to gain feedback from tenants about their landlords. Twelve similar events were due to be held across the country.

The Minister had arranged the events due to the lessons learned after the devastation of the fire at Grenfell Tower.

Over 100 tenants had attended the event and were allocated tables which enabled a good mixture of people to give varied feedback. They also had a facilitator on each table to aid in the discussions. After the Minister gave an introduction, he joined each table throughout the day, along with other senior civil servants, to gain feedback. The tenants found him to be very approachable.

The tenants had identified during their discussions that each area had similar concerns about housing and tenant needs. The following points were highlighted:-

- Concern that tenants had to bid for properties;
- Local preferences should be given priority;
- Bedroom Tax;
- One for One Policy, that when a rented property was sold, another rented property was built;
- Universal Credit;

- Affordable rent, what was deemed as affordable;
- Rural issues, which included isolation, fuel poverty and lack of transport;
- 1% rent reduction, which caused disruption to landlord's business plans; and
- The importance of tenant involvement.

The tenants and officers thought it had been an excellent consultation day.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's update.

9. Tenant Services Management Board Meeting Dates 2018

The Tenant Empowerment Manager presented the revised meeting dates scheduled for the 2018.

Resolved that the Board noted the revised meeting dates.

(The meeting ended at 6.55pm)