

You are requested to attend a meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board to be held in Ground Floor Conference Room - The Deane House on 29 October 2018 at 6.00 pm.

Agenda

- 1 Apologies.
- 2 Minutes of the previous meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board (attached). (Pages 5 - 10)
- 3 Public Question Time.
- 4 Declaration of Interests.

To receive declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or personal or prejudicial interests, in accordance with the Code of Conduct, in relation to items on the agenda. Such interests need to be declared even if they have already been recorded in the Register of Interests. The personal interests of Councillors who are County Councillors or Town or Parish Councillors will automatically be recorded in the minutes.
- 5 Introduction to Head of Communications. Report of the Head of Communications and Engagement (verbal update).
- 6 Fees and Charges. Report of the Business Support Lead (attached). (Pages 11 - 16)
- 7 Communal Fire Doors. Report of the Property Investment Manager (verbal update).
- 8 Woolaways Project and Weavers Arms Update. Report of the Development and Enabling Manager and the Development Manager (verbal update).
- 9 General Data Protection Regulation. Report of the Corporate Performance and Strategy Officer (verbal update).
- 10 Adaptations Policy. Report of the Project Manager for Housing and Communities (verbal update).

19 October 2018

Members of the public are welcome to attend the meeting and listen to the discussions.

There is time set aside at the beginning of most meetings to allow the public to ask questions.

Speaking under "Public Question Time" is limited to 4 minutes per person in an overall period of 15 minutes. The Committee Administrator will keep a close watch on the time and the Chairman will be responsible for ensuring the time permitted does not overrun. The speaker will be allowed to address the Committee once only and will not be allowed to participate further in any debate.

Except at meetings of Full Council, where public participation will be restricted to Public Question Time only, if a member of the public wishes to address the Committee on any matter appearing on the agenda, the Chairman will normally permit this to occur when that item is reached and before the Councillors begin to debate the item.

This is more usual at meetings of the Council's Planning Committee and details of the "rules" which apply at these meetings can be found in the leaflet "Having Your Say on Planning Applications". A copy can be obtained free of charge from the Planning Reception Desk at The Deane House or by contacting the telephone number or e-mail address below.

If an item on the agenda is contentious, with a large number of people attending the meeting, a representative should be nominated to present the views of a group.

These arrangements do not apply to exempt (confidential) items on the agenda where any members of the press or public present will be asked to leave the Committee Room.

Full Council, Executive, Committees and Task and Finish Review agendas, reports and minutes are available on our website: www.tauntondeane.gov.uk



Lift access to the Committee Rooms on the first floor of The Deane House, is available from the main ground floor entrance. Toilet facilities, with wheelchair access, are also available off the landing directly outside the Committee Rooms.



An induction loop operates to enhance sound for anyone wearing a hearing aid or using a transmitter.

For further information about the meeting, please contact the Democratic Services on 01823 219736 or email democraticservices@tauntondeane.gov.uk

If you would like an agenda, a report or the minutes of a meeting translated into another language or into Braille, large print, audio tape or CD, please telephone us on 01823 356356 or email: enquiries@tauntondeane.gov.uk

Tenant Services Management Board Members:

Mr A Akhigbemen (Chairman)

D Galpin (Vice-Chair)

Mrs J Bunn

J Hegarty

K Hellier

I Hussey

Councillor R Bowrah

Councillor H Prior-Sankey

Agenda Item 2

Minutes of the Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 20 August 2018 at 6.00pm in the Ground Floor Conference Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr A Akhigbemen, Mrs J Bunn, Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr I Hussey, Councillor B Bowrah and Councillor H Prior-Sankey.

Officers: Simon Lewis (Assistant Director for Homes and Community Development), Jan Errington (Project Manager – Housing and Communities), Steven Clarke (Tenants Services Development Officer) and Tracey Meadows (Democratic Services Officer).

Other: Councillor J Warmington.

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

An apology was received from Mr K Hellier.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 25 June 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 I Hussey declared personal interests as Taunton Deane Borough Council Housing Tenants. Councillor Bowrah declared a personal interest as a Member of Wellington Town Council. Councillor H Prior-Sankey declared a personal interest as a Member of Somerset County Council.

5. Sheltered Housing Pilot and Allocation Plan

The Project Manager for Housing and Communities presented an update on the Sheltered Pilot.

The Project Manager gave an update on their service and details of the Sheltered Housing Pilot.

The team had worked on a strategy which focused on 'business as usual' and also the services offered to vulnerable customers in the area and how they could be extended. This included:-

- Improved procedures which were more customer friendly;
- Tailor-made solutions that were more suited to people's needs;
- Focused work on what customer groups might need more help and services; and

- Investigations on whether there were any extra services that could be provided.

Some of the customer groups that were identified were as follows:-

- Older people;
- Disabled people;
- Rough sleepers;
- Homeless people with complex needs; and
- Customers with mental health needs.

Work had already been carried out on the under 35 age group and had been included in the project work and welfare reform.

The team had investigated different service models for vulnerable customers and had worked with different sections of Housing that included Development, Housing Options and Housing Services.

The Project Manager detailed work that was in the pipeline:-

- Work with Mental Health Services;
- Housing Projects for those with complex needs;
- Work with Sedgemoor District Council;
- Work with the Debt Officer in West Somerset;
- Rough sleeper initiatives including outreach projects;
- Re-commissioned Mental Health Service;
- Housing for complex needs;
- Further support for the Housing Options Team;
- Development of the support provided by the Tenancy Support Officers (for private sector);
- Work on adaptations, resources and assets (details were given on asset management with compassion); and
- Work on customer service and increased work on prevention measures.

Sheltered Housing Pilot

Currently sheltered housing was accessible through the Homefinder Somerset register for applicants over 60 years old. Those with disabilities who were younger could not access sheltered housing and competed with the overall register for general needs properties.

To help deliver the Council's priorities and help more vulnerable people the Project Manager proposed to run a 9 month pilot scheme for designated sheltered schemes with access to meeting hall facilities. The intention was to embed the Allocations Plan into business as usual with the lessons learned along the way to make the most of the sheltered housing provision.

The pilot would be managed tightly by an appointed project manager to ensure effective management of the scheme. Project management with continuous monitoring would enable rapid responses to issues and adjustments to be made which would enable the success of the scheme.

The proposed Allocations Plan set out how allocations would be managed in designated sheltered housing schemes to ensure fair access, due regard to the nature of the sheltered community and that lettings were in accordance with the Right to Buy exemptions.

Key features of the plan were:-

- All suitable sheltered properties were advertised as a sensitive let to assist people regardless of their age who had disabilities (physical, mental health, learning disabilities, sensory loss) who could not currently access this type of accommodation;
- Properties were to be allocated conscious of the need to maintain a balanced community, in order to ensure this, the lettings staff would check with the relevant Area Community Manager (ACM) or the Housing Manager;
- Tenants who were new to social housing would be allocated an introductory tenancy;
- Close liaison on the pilot for each letting between Housing Options and Lettings colleagues and ACMs; and
- The principles also applied to applications to exchange into the Council's stock.

Sheltered housing staff were used to working with a wide range of needs. Training would be offered to those who needed to be upskilled in relation to the pilot. In addition, from October 2018, Community Agents would provide support to all of the sheltered stock with a wide range of needs regardless of age.

During the discussion, the Board Members made the following points:-

- Board Members requested clarification on the age restriction placed on the application for sheltered accommodation, because they knew of couple of cases where properties had been allocated to someone under the age of 60 years. Was the age restriction a new rule introduced with Homefinder Somerset?
Some cases might have been historic, where the property might have been hard to let and others would have been discretionary cases.
- Board Members queried how would officers monitor drug and alcohol use by those customers within the pilot scheme.
Officers would depend upon partnership work with other agencies that would be aware of customer dependencies on drugs and alcohol.
- Concern was raised on the increased level of anti-social behaviour that could occur within the sheltered housing schemes with the introduction of younger customer groups.
- Board Members queried whether the properties in the pilot should be restricted to ground floor only.
After a discussion, Board Members agreed that all properties should be included in the pilot to offer the highest level of support, but the properties would be allocated with the manager's discretion.
- Board Members queried the length of an introductory tenancy.
The introductory tenancy was for a 12 month period.
- The Assistant Director for Homes and Community Development supported the pilot scheme.

Resolved that the Board:-

- a) Noted the officer's update;
- b) Commented on the proposed pilot scheme; and
- c) Supported the draft Under 60's Sheltered Pilot Allocations Plan and recommended it for approval to the Portfolio Holder for Housing.

6. Transformation Update

The Assistant Director for Homes and Community Development presented an update on the Transformation Project.

From April 2019, both Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset Council would cease to exist and the new Somerset West and Taunton Council would replace the two.

The creation of a New Council was an opportunity to start with a fresh and improved process on how services were provided to all customers and stake holders. The previous Transformation Project updates had highlighted the introduction of improved customer services with case management and specialist work involved.

The new process included improved office accommodation, new computer software, mobile technology and the shared office space with other partner organisations. The Council's vision would be focused on People, Place and Prosperity. The staff were currently in the midst of the recruitment process for the new work force with the desired behaviours that would place the customer at the heart of the organisation.

The headship roles were introduced for the following functions:-

- Customer;
- Commercial, Investment and Change;
- Localities;
- Strategy;
- Performance and Governance; and
- Communications and Engagement.

Further detailed information was given on the functions of the different job roles within the new structure:-

- Specialist;
- Case Manager;
- Customer Champion; and
- Locality Champion.

The Assistant Director highlighted the key goals the New Council aimed to achieve:-
One point of contact to deal with queries on behalf of customers;
For majority of queries to be resolved at first point of contact; and
To promote self-serve, there were terminals available in reception for customers to use to resolve their own queries.

Another factor that assisted the transition into the new structure was the Accommodation Project. Works had been carried out on the new open plan office space, which included a break out area that staff used at lunch time and for impromptu meetings. The open plan office space also encouraged one of the key behaviours in the new structure, working together.

With the formation of New Council in April 2019, the Shadow Authority arrangements were explained to the Board. Currently there were 84 Councillors, however, the numbers would be reduced to reflect the new joined up area and the work being carried out by the Boundary Commission. The New Council area would cover 1190 square kilometres with a population of 152,000.

During the discussion, the Board Members made the following points:-

- Clarification was requested on the organisational structure and the headship roles.
Certain details were still to be decided for the top level of management and would be communicated to the Board once they were known.
- Board Members queried where certain departments sat within the new functional areas.
Explanation was given on where certain job roles would sit but that there would not be department silos in the future.
- Board Members queried how the new structure would be implemented.
The recruitment process would ensure that staff adopted the behaviours and skills that were desired and required for the way of working.

Resolved that the Board noted the officer's update.

7. TPAS Conference Update

Councillor Bowrah presented an update on the TPAS Conference.

Cllr Bowrah attended the conference with three other members of the Tenant Services Management Board. The sessions that they attended were:-

- New Approach o Resident Engagement;
- Social Housing Policy Today;
- Get The Culture Right, Get The Involvement Right;
- How can we Resolve Complaints Faster and Smarter;
- Housing and Disabled People; and
- Digital and Engaging with Residents.

The members were impressed with the venue and found majority of the sessions engaging and informative.

The conference was attended by 229 delegates that represented 63 organisations.

Cllr Bowrah believed that their attendance showed the commitment of the Council towards their tenants and accommodation.

A copy of the AGM notes were handed out to the Board.

During the discussion, the Board Members made the following points:-

- Board Members requested reassurance that the Board would exist in the new structure.
The Tenants Services Development Officer advised the Members that the Board would fall under the new Headship for Communications, who was not in post yet. However, he believed that the tenants would continue to be involved in the new structure but that it might be in a different format. Due to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, Central Government had issued Green Papers that highlighted the importance of tenant feedback and communication and the Officer identified that the Council had a statutory requirement to engage with tenants.

Resolved that the Board noted the Member's update.

8. **Star Survey Update**

The Tenants Services Development Officer presented an update on the Star Survey.

The Board Members had received a report that detailed the results of the survey. One of the results highlighted was the same day repairs.

Resolved that the Board noted the officer's update.

(The meeting ended at 7.50pm)

Taunton Deane Borough Council Fees and Charges 2019/20

Housing Service Charges and Rent Charges

Background

Housing Service Charges are charges made to housing tenants for the services that they use. Service Charges are set locally each year and are in addition to the Rent Charges which are set by government policy. This paper will cover changes to service charges and rent charges for 2019/20. We will deal with both in one paper as government policy on rent reduction is determined now for 2019/20 (usually rent is determined later in the year and papers are separately presented to committees).

Legal Authority

It is proposed to increase Housing (non-rent) Fees and Service Charges by applying Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation as at September 2018. This is in accordance with the 30 year Housing Business Plan. The September 2018 RPI figure is 3.3% as published by the Office for National Statistics on the 17th October 2018.

The following are exceptions to the rule that service charges are uplifted by September 2018 RPI:

- ❖ Charges for properties not on mains sewer will be increased in line with Wessex Water increases for 2019/20 once known. Wessex Water rates for sewer standing charge per annum and poundage charges are used in the system calculation. In 2018/19 these are £7 unmetered sewerage standing charge and £1.6089 poundage charge. Wessex Water will publish new charges in February 2019 (available from their website) for 2019/20.
- ❖ It is proposed that licence fee charges for Temporary Accommodation properties are kept at the same level during 2019/20.
- ❖ For clarity, separate to the licence fee, the temporary Accommodation Units do attract service charges. The service charges will be increased by RPI in line with other properties. Although the licence fee remains as 2018/19.
- ❖ Feedback during 2017/18 report was that tenants preferred charges to be rounded to whole numbers. Charges for guest rooms and meeting halls have therefore had RPI applied and been rounded. Guest rooms rounded to nearest 50p and meeting halls to nearest 10p.
- ❖ Due to the timing of the uplift and roll-out of the scheme, Shared Ownership or affordable rented properties will not be included for 2019/20. Any properties which are available to rent prior to April 2019 will remain on the same rent level during financial year 2019/20.

Social Housing Rent 2019-20

It is proposed that in accordance with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 Social Rent Reduction, council housing Rent Charges will be decreased by 1% for 2019/20, and is the fourth and final 'relevant' year registered providers of social housing must reduce the total rent payable by a tenant. For social rent properties, the reduction applies only to the rent element and not the Service Charges.

The following are exceptions to the rule for the 1% decrease Rent Charge:

- ❖ Shared ownership homes
- ❖ Temporary accommodation

Local Authorities have certain limited freedoms to charge for discretionary services under the Local Government Act 2003.

Contractually and through section 10 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended by Local Government & Housing Act 1989) Taunton Deane Borough Council are permitted to make the charges detailed below.

Charges

- Displayed below is the table of fees and charges, comparing 2018/19 to 2019/20 indicative prices (RPI of 3.3% has been applied).

Housing Service Charges	Actual 2018/19	% increase	Estimated 2019/20
Service Charges (VAT not applicable) – Per Week			
Communal areas	£0.63	RPI	£0.65
Grounds maintenance	£1.84	RPI	£1.90
Heating charge (Broomfield House only)	£5.06	RPI	£5.23
Laundry charge (Broomfield House only)	£1.54	RPI	£1.59
Combined Service Charges (VAT not applicable) – Per Week			
Sheltered Housing	£11.58	RPI	£11.96
Extra Care Housing Service Charge	£21.72	RPI	£22.44
Garage Rents - Per Week			
Council tenants (VAT not applicable)	£6.17	RPI	£6.37
Private tenants and Owner Occupiers (exc. VAT)	£8.33	RPI	£8.60
Private tenants and Owner Occupiers (inc. VAT)	£10.00	RPI	£10.32
Hire Charges for Sheltered Scheme Meeting Halls (ex VAT)			
First hour	£10.40	RPI	£10.80
Each half hour thereafter	£5.20	RPI	£5.40
6 hours plus	£62.30	RPI	£64.40
Total charge for residents in a scheme and community organisations	£14.30	RPI	£14.80
Hire Charges for Sheltered Scheme Guest Rooms (ex VAT) Taunfied, Middleway, Hope Corner Lane, Kilkenny and Lodge			
No. of nights per person -1 st night per person per night	£21.00	RPI	£22.00
No. of nights per person -2	£31.00	RPI	£32.00
No. of nights per person -3	£41.50	RPI	£43.00
No. of nights per person -4	£52.00	RPI	£54.00
No. of nights per person -5	£62.00	RPI	£64.00
No. of nights per person -6	£73.00	RPI	£75.50
No. of nights per person -7	£83.00	RPI	£86.00

Temporary Accommodation (rent per day, VAT not applicable)	Daily Licence Fee & Service Charge 2018/19	Gross Licence Fee Per Day 2018/19	Daily Service Charge 2019/20	Gross Charge Per Day 2019/20
40 Humphreys Road (2 bedroom)	£0.97	£17.28	£1.00	£17.31
1 Gay Street (2 bedroom)	£0.97	£17.28	£1.00	£17.31
10 Duke Street (3 bedroom)	£1.22	£20.50	£1.26	£20.54
Outer Circle				
96 Outer Circle (2 bedroom)	£0.97	£17.28	£1.00	£17.31
113 (studio)	£0.73	£13.78	£0.75	£13.80
113a (studio)	£0.73	£13.78	£0.75	£13.80
115 (3 bedroom)	£1.22	£20.50	£1.26	£20.54
115a (3 bedroom)	£1.22	£20.50	£1.26	£20.54
119 (studio)	£0.73	£13.78	£0.75	£13.80
119a (studio)	£0.73	£13.78	£0.75	£13.80
Snedden Grove				
Unit 1 (2 bedroom)	£0.97	£17.28	£1.00	£17.31
Unit 2 (2 bedroom)	£0.97	£17.28	£1.00	£17.31
Unit 3 (2 bedroom)	£0.97	£17.28	£1.00	£17.31
Unit 4 (3 bedroom)	£1.22	£20.50	£1.26	£20.54
Unit 5 (3 bedroom)	£1.22	£20.50	£1.26	£20.54
Unit 6 (2 bedroom)	£0.97	£17.28	£1.00	£17.31
Unit 7 (3 bedroom)	£1.22	£20.50	£1.26	£20.54
Unit 8 (2 bedroom)	£0.97	£17.28	£1.00	£17.31
Wheatley Crescent (4 studios)				
30 (1 bedroom)	£0.73	£13.78	£0.75	£13.80
32 (1 bedroom)	£0.73	£13.78	£0.75	£13.80
34 (1 bedroom)	£0.73	£13.78	£0.75	£13.80
36 (1 bedroom)	£0.73	£13.78	£0.75	£13.80
Howard Road (Magna)				
43a (1 bedroom)	N/a	£13.05	N/a	£13.05
43b (1 bedroom)	N/a	£13.05	N/a	£13.05
43c (1 bedroom)	N/a	£13.05	N/a	£13.05
43d (1 bedroom)	N/a	£13.05	N/a	£13.05

Discounts

Discounts do not apply to service charges.

Budget Impacts

In accordance with the 30 year Housing Business Plan, it is proposed to increase Housing (non rent) Fees and Charges by applying Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation as at September 2018 (3.3%) with the following exceptions:

- Water rates and non mains sewerage rates
- Temporary accommodation licence fee
- Guest rooms will be increased by RPI and rounded to the nearest 50p and meeting halls will be increased by RPI and rounded to the nearest 10p
- Shared ownership and affordable rents

The change in service charges will increase income by an estimated £41k to £1.300m. The 1% reduction in social rent (across all categories of provision) will reduce rental income by an estimated £241k (£24.141m to £23.9m).

Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment form has been completed and Housing Services will continue to provide a number of initiatives to enable service users to manage their finances and maximise their income.

Recommendation

Tenant Services Management Board are invited to comment on the proposed fees during their meeting 29th October 2018.

