



Tenants' Action Group – Annual Report 2021-22 to the Tenants' Strategic Group

1. Introduction

The Tenants' Action Group having been meeting bimonthly face to face throughout the year. We have met in Monkton Heathfield, Creedwell Orchard, Taunfield Close, Moorland house as well as Deane House.

We have altered the way TAG meetings are structured, to mirror TSG, so the group are meeting at 1pm for a light lunch to look at the actions from the previous meeting and any other documents on the agenda and then start the meeting at 2pm until 4pm. This has allowed more time to discuss other agenda items in more detail.

Two members, who attended meetings together, have resigned from the group due to other commitments, this has now left 6 members in the group. They worked hard with the Council to develop services and distribute funding to help local communities.

2. Work Undertaken

2.1 Damp and Mould. The Chair of TAG is involved in this group, and they have established a review of current procedures for dealing with damp and mould and produced an updated procedure which ensures damp and mould issues are dealt with efficiently and effectively for our tenants. This group has achieved some improvements in training staff and have a new web page on the website for the tenants to use for help and advice with the added benefit of links to boiler instructions and a flow chart to follow for support, in fact this group have achieved a lot in the year it has been running. There will be a full report on achievements in January's meeting.

2.2 Estate Walkabout's (Estate Officers)

Members raised concerns over the prior notice for Estate Walkabouts and whether the information included in letters prior to walkabouts was clear and received in a timely manner to enable communities to be informed about who would be carrying them out, when and where. The subsequent action plan involved:

- Adding a photo of the staff member carrying out the walkabout to the letter
- Staff members carrying out Estate Walkabouts would be given a tabard to wear ensure they are clear and visible to community members
- TAG members would sign up to attend different walkabouts to ensure there was a representative present at each walkabout.

Due to Covid restrictions, some of these actions have been delayed. Recent patch changes have also meant that we were awaiting an updated Estate Walkabout schedule from the Tenancy team. Now this has been received TAG members will sign up to join walkabout. Photos have been added to prior notice letters however, there have been some inconsistencies with this therefore the group will continue to work with the council to improve this process over the coming year.

2.3 Leycroft Grove Estate Improvement Groundworks

Chair raised concerns over the progress of the improvement project that had been planned at Leycroft Grove, with £100k previously reported to have been put aside for the project. Chair and the group have continued to question the project start date and worked hard to ensure that these improvement plans are followed up on, emailing the Director of Housing and holding the Council to account to follow through on its promise for improvement works for this area.

- The project is currently on pause until approval is given from Highways at County Council – the Capital Programme Manager is chasing this as work cannot start until approval is received.

Monitoring of the Leycroft Grove project will continue to be on the agenda for the TAG in the upcoming year.

2.4 Funding through the Estate Improvement Fund

A fund of £10k held by the group dedicated to improving neighbourhoods via the purchasing of benches or other small items which improve community spaces, usually on recommendation from Officers.

In the last financial year, the group funded the kiosk in Priorswood at a cost of 2670 this was mainly due to COVID restrictions.

2.5 Funding for Local Community Projects through the Youth Initiative Fund

A fund of £20k held by the group, available via grant applications of up to £3k to support organisations and projects which seek to improve the lives, health and wellbeing of people aged 0 - 25 years old whose families are tenants of Somerset West and Taunton Council (SW&T) and to help such organisations and projects to become sustainable and more self-sufficient.

Despite the challenges presented by Covid, the group assessed 6 applications to the Youth Initiative Fund and subsequently distributed a £3k grant to 5 local organisations and a £1k grant to another.

- **North Taunton Partnership** – Funding for youth activities in Priorswood including PRIDE in Priorswood.
- **Somerset Art Works** - Funding to help run a programme of Family, School and Community Activities including creative activities for children and their families in Priorswood and Lyngford.
- **Escape Support Group** – Provides subsidised activities and outings for families with children with disabilities.
- **Escapeline** - Prevention of criminal and sexual exploitation of children by providing youth mentors

- **State Of Trust** – Provides access to arts and crafts including the materials for children.
- **Churches Together in Wellington** – Free event for families in Wellington for the children including bouncy castle and BBQ.

Development of the Youth Initiative Fund

It was agreed at a meeting that the name will be changed to Child Youth Initiative Fund (CYIF) as the funding is for any age up to 18. The online application form has worked well, and a meeting was held to look at improving it slightly in the next financial year.

2.6 Grounds Maintenance

We have just started to look for regular feedback from Darren Hill to the Chair and the Chair is going to join meetings to enable him to update TAG.

2.7 Development of the Group

Group members have attended training provided by TPAS on courses such as 'Damp and Mould webinar' and both The Chair and Vice Chair attended the recent conference in Solihull with members of TSG. Members are committed to widening their awareness of key issues in the sector by attending upcoming training courses over the next year.

Various articles have been posted in Tenants' Newsletters to attempt to raise awareness of the group and their activities and to encourage new members to join. Over the next year the Housing Performance team will continue to work with TAG to publicise their activities and help to recruit new members to bring the group back up to full membership of 10 members.

2.8 VOIDS

This Group have now started to visit VOID properties and are collating information on a form to ensure the properties are relet in a timely manner in line with the lettable standard. They are also looking at how the properties have been left by previous tenants as some are requiring far more work due to their condition. They will then produce a report for TSG.

3. Financial Summary

The total budget assigned for 2021-22 was £44,300.

Name of Fund	Allocated Budget	Allocated Funds	Total Expenditure
Youth Initiative Fund	£20,000	CYIF project	£16000
Sparkle		Presents for children at Christmas	£250
Estate Improvement Fund	£10,000	KIOSK in Priorswood	£2670
Other	£14,300	TPAS Subscription Expenses – meeting travel and	£4000

		training	
Total Expenditure			£22920

4. Looking ahead

Over the upcoming year the group will:

- Continue to monitor the progress of the Leycroft Grove improvement works, receiving regular updates from the Capital Works Manager.
- Continue to work with the Council to improve the Estate Walkabout process.
- Participate in more task groups such as the Damp and Mould start and finish group.
- Voids - The group have previously had some involvement in monitoring the Voids process and they reinstated it to pursue for a six-month period initially to ensure we are adhering to the lettable standard.

5. Ongoing areas of concern for scrutiny by TAG/TSG

Leycroft Grove – Continue to monitor this.

Capital Works Programme – Ensuring it is delivered.

Estate Officers – workload and support.

Grounds maintenance - Standard in some areas are still not acceptable.

5. Conclusion

The group have continued to stay connected through their face-to-face meetings and improve local communities and neighbourhoods through the distribution of funding. Over the next year, TAG is committed to increasing their membership and continuing with their active role, working with the council to improve their services, and continuing to support as many local projects as possible through funding opportunities. With the upcoming merger, The Chair can see that TAG will be even busier and good clear communication, between the authority and the tenants is vital to establishing trust.