

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 24 April 2017 at 6.00pm in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.

Present: Mr R Balman (Chairman)
Mr A Akhigbemen, Mrs J Bunn, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey and Councillors C Booth and R Bowrah.

Officers: James Barraah (Director – Housing and Communities), Terry May (Assistant Director – Property and Development), Stephen Boland (Housing Services Lead), Rich Prewer (Property Services Manager), Martin Price (Tenant Empowerment Manager) and Clare Rendell (Democratic Services Officer)

(The meeting commenced at 6.00pm)

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Mr D Galpin.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 27 March 2017 were taken as read and were signed.

3. Public Question Time

No questions received for Public Question Time.

4. Declarations of Interests

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

5. Tenant Services Management Board 2016/17

The Chairman of the Tenant Services Management Board (TSMB) gave a verbal update welcoming those present to the seventh Annual General Meeting and reflected on some of the Board's work over the past year.

The following was a summary of the Chairman's reflection of the Board's activity over the past 12 months:-

- The Chairman thanked the Board Members for their attendance and participation.
- There had been a lot of home improvements carried out on the housing stock which included extra insulation, bathroom improvements, replacement heating and replacement external doors.
- In February 2017, Board Members were invited to inspect the new development Seabrook House in Creechbarrow Road. The properties were very spacious and well-constructed.
- In March 2017, the Chairman attended a Disabled Adaptations workshop at Somerset County Cricket Club and also visited the new Deane DLO Depot in Wellington.

- The new contract for Extra Care Housing commenced with the company Way Ahead.
- Welfare Reform and the new Universal Credit Scheme were rolled out within the Borough and the Chairman hoped that the tenants would soon see the benefits of the new scheme.
- The TSMB had sent three Board Members to the Tenant Participation Advisory Service conference to learn from other Councils and social housing providers, which they found were very informative.
- Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) Chief Executive had attended the last TSMB meeting and gave a verbal update on the Transformation Project. The talk was informative and interesting.
- It had been a productive year for the TSMB and the Chairman hoped they had helped to make the properties better places to live for the tenants.

Resolved that the Chairperson's report be noted.

6. The Year ahead for Housing and Communities

The Director for Housing and Communities gave a verbal update relating to the Housing Revenue Account and the Council projects for the forthcoming year and updated the Board on the wider Council issues as well as local issues which effected this Council and its Tenants.

Below was a summary of the main points from the update:-

Corporate Issues. The next twelve months were expected to be challenging. This included the Secretary of State's decision, the Transformation Project and both County and General Elections. This was going to be a significant year for the Council with impacts on staff expected.

Locality Working. This included improvements in the way staff within the One Team worked and would explore local involvement in both urban and rural areas to become integrated within those communities.

Housing Revenue Account (HRA). A review on the Business Plan was carried out. This looked at cost reductions mainly with repairs and maintenance.

New IT Projects. The Council had been involved in several new IT projects which included ITrent for HR and Payroll, E5 for Finance and the new website for TDBC.

Hinkley Point Development. Although this project did not fall within the boundary of TDBC, the Director wanted to give the TSMB an update as it would have an impact on the infrastructure with the TDBC area. The Council had new posts to appoint within the Housing team to help facilitate movement within the housing sector to free up accommodation for Hinkley Point workers.

Universal Credit. The new scheme had gone live in October 2016 within the Borough. At this time it was difficult to assess the full impact the scheme had on tenants. This would be carried out at the end of the financial year.

Introductory/Flexible Tenancies. The Council was due to introduce these in June 2017 and had the potential to last up to five years.

Adaptations. There was a recent workshop with partners who worked on adaptations and they had recognised the ability to work smarter and introduce best practice.

New Extra Care Provider. The contract with Way Ahead had commenced at Kilkenny Lodge.

Customer Project. A review on customer satisfaction level was carried out and staff training was provided.

Grounds Maintenance Review. The results should have a significant impact for tenants.

Business Plan Review. This was for a renewed Tenancy Strategy and ensured the Council was engaged with customers. It included tenancies, customer expectations and service delivery. This strategy was one of three service reviews of the HRA.

Apprenticeships. There were challenges but the Council had now recruited an apprentice within the Housing Management team.

Property Area. The Deane DLO were making progress with their new depot. However, they were still experiencing problems with their IT reporting. A new manager had started and had a very positive outlook and significant improvements had been made on the capital spend.

Quick Time. The gas maintenance contract was now back in house and they hoped to be able to sell this service to external customers in the future.

Asset Management. The department was operating at low capacity which had proved challenging.

Accommodation Projects. Staff were involved in accommodation projects at TDBC, West Somerset Council and Moorland House and were looking into a base in the North Taunton area and had two options. A review of the meeting halls was also carried out (this included guest rooms which were vacant).

Regeneration. The department continued with work on new schemes and had made good progress on the new developments. White Papers on Housing had been produced.

The Director for Housing and Communities thanked the Board Members for their attendance and participation throughout the year.

During the discussion of this item the following points were made:-

- Board Members queried if the high value sales mentioned in the update would be domestic or commercial?
The Government decided which void properties this would be and was due to a change in the Government policy on levies.
- Concern was raised on recruiting apprenticeships.
The Housing Managers had worked with the local colleges in Taunton and Bridgwater to advertise the apprenticeships available at the Council. They had offered packages but the salary on offer seemed to be a deterrent to the students. The Housing Managers were still eager to encourage young people in to the trade and were willing to discuss this with individual Board Members to alleviate any concerns.

Resolved that the Officer's report be noted.

7. DLO Operational Challenges and Opportunities for Improvement

The Property Services Manager presented the report which updated the TSMB on the current situation within Property Services.

The development of a repairs and maintenance Operational Delivery Plan and Key Performance Indicators (KPI) Scorecard was designed to ensure we delivered an excellent repairs and maintenance service for tenants and leaseholders that saw performance in the top quartile as a benchmark norm and enabled residents to live in well maintained, warm and safe homes that contributed to sustainable communities.

The KPI and Plan concentrated on the delivery and the development of the repairs service. It was noted that the data currently contained in the KPI Scorecard was for illustrative purposes only, it was too early in the current financial year to have accurate information available. The Scorecard would be populated with precise information as the year progressed.

The Property Services Manager recognised the importance of a high performing value for money appointable repairs service. He would continue to improve levels of service delivery and reduce the reliance on responsive maintenance and adopt national best practice.

Property Services would focus on three main priorities this year. These were financial performance, cultural change and customer satisfaction.

The desired cultural change had started to take shape and put the customer at the heart of Property Services. Contractors had also been trained to deliver services which mirrored the Council's approach.

To compliment this, Property Services had joined two organisations that would offer assurances on how the change was measured. The Association of Gas Safety Managers would offer advice and guidance on best practice for the new in house gas team. The Considerate Constructors Scheme would carry out visits on a six monthly basis to both the depot and tenants homes to ensure that exceptional service was delivered.

During the discussion of this item the following comments were made:-

- Board Members were impressed with the work carried out at the new Deane DLO Depot. They queried how big a problem was the IT issue?
The staff were working hard with IT to solve the issues but it was causing problems with reporting work that had been carried out made it labour intensive. The Property Services Manager advised the Board that he would keep them up to date with progress made.
- How would the work carried out by the contractors be policed?
The contractors have been trained the same as TDBC staff. The Property Services Manager wanted to facilitate the potential within all staff. He would hope that tenants would report any issues with staff and contractors alike.

Resolved that the content of the report be noted and the recommendations be endorsed.

8. Review of Tenant Services Management Board Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct

The Tenant Empowerment Manager presented the report which reviewed the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct of the TSMB and requested that the Board Members considered a proposed amendment.

The TSMB had first met in April 2010 and one of the first agenda items it had considered was for the Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct. These documents detailed the role, aims, objectives and expected conduct of the board and were agreed at the start of the board's existence. They were subsequently reviewed and updated at the TSMB Annual General Meeting of 2012, 2014 and 2016.

An amendment had been proposed to change when elections were held for the TSMB. Currently the Terms of Reference stated that elections should be held every two years. It was proposed that elections should be held every three years. This would allow board members to become more experienced in their role.

Resolved that:-

- 1) The content of the report be noted.
- 2) The current version of the TSMB Terms of Reference and Code of Conduct (contained in appendix A and B in the report) be approved and required changes agreed.

(The meeting ended at 7.10pm)