

## **Minutes of the Meeting of the Tenant Operational Group held on 21 August 2019 at 12 noon in the Conference Room, Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton.**

**Present:** Mr W Hobson, Mr J Beaman, Mr R Fenge, Ms L Mongare, Ms S Betts, Ms M Bird, Mr M Halliday, Ms G Grehan, Ms A Heath,

**Officers:** Christine Fraser (Head of Performance and Governance), Stephen Boland (Housing Specialist), Tracey Meadows (Governance and Democracy Case Manager).

(The meeting commenced at 12 noon)

### **1. Welcome and introduction**

The Head of Performance and Governance updated the group on the background of the previous Tenants groups which had ceased to exist due to the formation of the new Council on the 31 March 2019. Work to develop a new tenant's empowerment structure which would meet the needs of our tenants as well as fit with the new staffing structures set up in the Council was being worked on.

The Tenants Forum and the Supported Housing Development Group had already started working together as they were dealing with many of the same issues, and there was overlap with the work of the Tenant Services Management Board. The new Executive Councillor responsible for Housing, Councillor Francesca Smith, has agreed to the formation of two new groups and we have been asking members of the existing groups to work with us to help develop their terms of reference and ways of working, so that we can establish full membership by April 2020.

The role of the Operational Group would be to scrutinise our service and make sure that tenants had what they needed. Tenant engagement sessions would be set up and the group would help to develop the agenda's for these sessions and also to encourage different local groups to come together to share information to air any issues that we were not aware of.

As the district has now been divided up into 9 sections, each ward has a new Localities team, these teams go out into their local areas working with Parish's and local groups to bring them together and to discuss any local issues that may arise.

It is essential that tenants are involved in developing these groups and we are very grateful that many members from the previous groups have agreed to help with this, as well as carrying out the functions of the new groups during 2019/20. We are looking for more tenants to take part.

During the discussion, the Board Members asked questions and made the following points:-

- Communication issues, tenants had concerns with regards to the localities teams, there were no numbers or names to contact; *tenants need to phone customer services and ask to be put through to the service that they require. Estate Officers were no longer in place, but our staff should know to put you through to the appropriate service.*
- Parishes did not work with Council tenants;

- Concerns that the Localities teams were not visiting the Sheltered Housing schemes as often as they should do despite paying for this service; *the structure and how we work is different, we are the ones that need to communicate that to you, you should not have to figure that out;*
- Concerns that the 0300 number did not work, a wall that had fallen down has been reported numerous times and it has still not been cleared up;
- Lead person for the group;
- Concerns with grounds maintenance ;
- More rubbish and dog bins;
- Estate walk about were needed to be implemented again;
- The new Council has been established for 6 months with and has not improved, we are not listened to; *the new online self-serve needs to be communicated to the tenants by yourselves;*
- Older tenants are not computer literate; *those that can will help those that can't;*
- Concerns with the lack of maintenance schedules; *this is what will be in the Terms of Reference;*
- Calls to Customer Services are frustrating as they never know what we are talking about; *you need to be reassured that you call is being dealt with;*

The question was put to the group, what do you want to get from us?

- Someone to go around and check on the elderly once a fortnight;
- Tenants required honest communication and honest answers to enable the group to report back to the tenants;
- Tenants need a named person and contact numbers;
- More computer training for tenants in the meeting halls;
- Information needs to go out to the sheltered housing groups to advise them of the changes;
- Concerns that an extra charge of £11 per week is being paid by the Sheltered Housing tenants for a service that they were not getting at present;

Action points;

- Head of Performance and Governance to talk to the Localities Manager to ensure that tenants had a named person in the Localities team;
- Work with the Housing Specialist on how to communicate better with tenants;
- The group would be properly supported, notes that can be circulated within your areas, actions taken with names associated with those actions, and deadlines with when the actions should be carried out;

(The meeting ended at 1.10pm)