

Tenant Services Management Board - 29 October 2018

Present: Mr A Akhigbemen (Chairman)

Mr D Galpin, Mrs J Bunn, Mrs J Hegarty, Mr K Hellier, Mr I Hussey, Councillor R Bowrah and Councillor H Prior-Sankey

Officers: Richard Doyle, Jan Errington, Jo Humble, Rachel Searle, Sophie Trowbridge, Steven Clarke and Clare Rendell

Also Present: Mrs D Flavell

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

1. Apologies.

Apologies were received from Officers Robert Hillier and Richard Wiseman.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board (attached).

The Minutes of the meeting of the Tenant Services Management Board held on 20 August 2018 were signed and taken as read.

3. Public Question Time.

No questions were received for Public Question Time.

4. Declaration of Interests.

Name	Minute No.	Description of Interest	Reason	Action Taken
Mr A Akhigbemen	All Items	TDBC Housing Tenant	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Mrs J Bunn	All Items	TDBC Housing Tenant	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Mr D Galpin	All Items	TDBC Housing Tenant	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Mrs J Hegarty	All Items	TDBC Housing Tenant	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Mr K Hellier	All Items	TDBC Housing Tenant	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Mr I Hussey	All Items	TDBC Housing Tenant	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Councillor B Bowrah	All Items	Wellington TC	Personal	Spoke and Voted
Councillor H Prior-Sankey	All Items	SCC	Personal	Spoke and Voted

5. Fees and Charges.

The Business Support Lead presented the report which detailed the Fees and Charges for 2019-20.

Housing Service Charges were charges made to housing tenants for the services that they used. Service Charges were set locally each year and were in addition to the Rent Charges which were set by Government Policy. The report covered changes to the Service Charges and Rent Charges for 2019-20.

The proposal was to increase Housing (non-rent) Fees and Service Charges by applying the Retail Price Index (RPI) inflation as at September 2018. This was in accordance with the 30 year Housing Business Plan.

The proposal was that in accordance with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 Social Rent Reduction, Council Housing Rent Charges would be decreased by 1% for 2019-20 and is the fourth and final 'relevant' year that registered providers of social housing must reduce the total rent payable by a tenant.

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

- Concern was raised on the proposed increase in the service charge for tenants. The charge had been increased in the previous year and the tenants did not believe the level of service reflected the increase in the charge implemented.
Work had been carried out to improve the Grounds Maintenance Service. The comment would be fed back to the Grounds Maintenance Manager.
- Members queried why RPI had been used to calculate figures instead of the Consumer Price Index.
RPI had been historically used for the calculations as it was used by Central Government. Officers had tried to be fair and used the September RPI figures which were less than the August figures.
- Members queried why TDBC tenants were charged less than private tenants for the use of a garage. Concern was raised that the TDBC garage stock was being used for storage rather than for parking cars.
Private tenants were charged more to be commercial and fair to TDBC tenants. Unfortunately modern cars were bigger than the older garages, so tenants used them for storage. Garages could be knocked down and used for housing, however, those sites were harder to develop because utilities were often located underneath the older garages.

Resolved that the Board commented on the proposed fees and noted the Officer's report.

6. **Woolaways Project and Weavers Arms Update.**

The Housing Development and Enabling Manager and the Development Manager presented a verbal update on the North Taunton Woolaway Project.

Officers presented some of the background details of the Project that had previously been reported to the Board.

Officers had held four public consultation events that had focused on the local community which included both Taunton Deane Borough Council (TDBC) tenants and private tenants. After each consultation event, officers had offered individual meetings for the tenants of the 212 households in the area, 121 of those households had attended an individual meeting. A Design Group had also been set up to discuss the options available for tenants, which were to either refurbish, redevelop or comprehensively redevelopment the properties. North Taunton residents could also visit the TDBC office that had been set up in one of the void properties in the area and officers had ensured that any information from the

consultation events was published on the TDBC website. All of the information that had been gathered in that phase had been used in the design process and had led to the option for comprehensive redevelopment being chosen for the scheme.

The next stage of the Project was to submit a planning application for the works that were required for the Project. Architects were currently working on the planning application and were still in the design phase. Officers were working on the financial details behind the scenes and would be taking a paper to Full Council in early 2019 and would present that information to the Board in January 2019.

The Weavers Arms Project had experienced delays and officers were in the process of sorting out the snagging, de-snagging and back-snagging of properties so that they would be ready for hand over. Work was being carried out on the Section 278 Agreement which related to the highways part of the Project and the snagging works were included in that.

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

- Concern was raised that the properties in the Weavers Arms Project were ready but not occupied.
Officers advised that the properties might appear to be ready from the outside but that work was still being carried out on the inside that needed to be signed off by Building Control, hence why they had not been occupied.
- Members queried what MHCLG meant.
The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, formerly known as the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG).
- Members queried how many properties were included in the North Taunton Project.
There were 212 properties in total, TDBC owned 167 of those properties. The proposal would include 227 new builds and then refurbish a further 27 properties.
- Members queried whether the private owners had been asked to pay for the works.
Officers were in negotiations with the private owners to see what options were available to help them pay for the works.
- Members queried how the decant process of the project would be carried out.
Officers has kept void properties in the area to help with the decant process, but advised that it would happen in stages to help alleviate the demand for housing in the area.
- Members hoped that the planning application would be of the same standard as the Creechbarrow Road application.
Previous work carried out by the Development Team on the Creechbarrow Road Project had fed into the North Taunton Project.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

7. General Data Protection Regulation.

The Corporate Performance and Strategy Officer presented a verbal update on the General Data Protection Regulations.

The Officer provided the Members with some background information on the new General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) that had been introduced back in May 2018 which gave Local Authorities more responsibility for the personal data they held on customers.

TDBC had agreed an action plan to ensure that it was GDPR compliant and officers had been carrying out work to ensure that customer's personal data was kept safe and secure and that the data was only used for the purpose it was required for. TDBC were nearly GDPR compliant and the auditors had issued a reasonable reassurance that customers details were being stored correctly.

New Privacy Notices had been added to the website and correspondence that was sent out to customers. The new details had also been added to the recorded message that customers listen to when they phone the Council.

Customers had new rights under GDPR, one of the new rights was the right to be forgotten. Other rights were also mentioned, the right to have inaccurate information amended and customers had the right to request all the details the Council held on them, this was known as a Subject Access Request.

The new regulations were based heavily around consent, however, the majority of the work provided by the Council did not require consent to be granted due to data being required to provide a service.

Examples of the two types of data were given to the Board:-

- Personal Data included name, address and contact details; and
- Sensitive Personal Data included health details, religious belief, sexuality and criminal records.

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

- Concern was raised that when customers phone the Council, they had to listen to the recording with all the information and then when they were transferred to a different department they had to listen to it again. Members queried whether that could be amended.
Officers would look to improve the recordings used.
- Members queried whether every member of staff had access to customer's personal data.
Staff only had access to personal data if they required it for their job role. Further information was given on the new structure and which members of staff were likely to have access.
- Members queried what was included in a Subject Access Request.
The request could include texts, emails, voicemails and any form of contact.
- Members queried whether there was a cost for the request.
No, there was no cost.

- Members queried which organisations would the Council be able to share data with.
Officers could only share data with an organisation that was providing a service and there would be a data sharing agreement which would dictate what information could be shared. In majority of cases, only data required to provide the service would be shared.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

8. **Adaptations Policy.**

The Project Manager for Housing and Communities gave a verbal update on the Adaptations Policy.

Work had been carried out on an improved Adaptations Policy which had a more holistic approach that would be better and safer for tenants. Somerset was challenged with an aging population and the improved Policy would enable tenants to be more independent and stay in their properties for longer.

The Board had previously been advised that the Project Manager had reviewed the unmet need, along with the timescales and demographics. Work had also been carried out to make better use of funds and to be more cost effective with the use of fixed price quotes for works that were required.

The Project Manager advised that the Policy would also ensure that resources were not wasted, so if a tenant required adaptations and there was a more suitable property available for a tenant to move to, they would be offered that property rather than adapting a property that could fit the needs of another tenant.

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

- Members had previously queried whether there was an age restriction in the Adaptation Policy.
The Policy applied to anyone, there were no age restrictions. It was based on need and eligibility through the Homefinder system and occupational therapists would work through Homefinder with tenants.
- Members queried whether access details were provided on the property adverts on the Homefinder system.
Photos and information on adaptations were included on the adverts, but there was still a lot of work to be carried out to gather information on the housing stock so that the adverts were as detailed as possible. The Assets Team were currently carrying out a stock survey which should gather the information needed.
- Concern was raised on whether mental health issues were taken into consideration with the Adaptations Policy as not all disabilities were physical.
Officers had received mental health training and should be aware of what services were available for tenants. They were also kept up to date with training and were able to signpost customers to the relevant schemes which would offer the assistance required. For example, there was a scheme commissioned through Mind which helped customers navigate

through Homefinder. The Council also had the right to make discretionary lets to match the right person to the right property.

Resolved that the Board noted the Officer's report.

(The Meeting ended at 7.20 pm)