

SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 22 March 2021 held via Zoom Video Conference

Present: Councillor Alex Akhigbemen (Chair)

Councillors Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Ivor Hussey, Corrine McMylor, Livi Mongare, Cllr, Mark Lithgow, Cllr Janet Lloyd and Cllr Francesca Smith

Officers: James Barrah, Chris Brown, Ian Candlish, Simon Lewis, Michelle Hall, Kerry Prisco, Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager), Sharon Yarde (Housing) and Tracey Meadows (Democracy and Governance)

Also Present: Councillor Weston

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

32. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Dennis Galpin and Kevin Hellier.

33. **Notes from previous meeting**

The notes of the meeting held on the 25 January 2021 were approved.
Proposed by Cllr Lloyd.

34. **Directorate Report**

The Group considered a comprehensive report presented by James Barrah (Director of Housing and Communities), Chris Brown (Assistant Director – Development and Regeneration), Ian Candlish (Assistant Director, Housing Property), Simon Lewis (Assistant Director, Housing and Community Development), Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager)

Comments / questions from group members included;

- For the lateral flow testing, would our staff be able to self-test for Covid instead of going over to the Blackbrook Leisure Centre? *We have put in an application for this on the Gov website and are just waiting to see what happens with our request for front facing roles;*
- With regards to Stronger Somerset and the One Somerset proposals are there any advantages/disadvantages with either of these proposals in terms of housing services? *There is a difference between the east and west side of the County. On the west side we have ourselves and Sedgemoor who have retained stock. On the east side the stock had been transferred many years ago. Whichever model is successful there will still be a concentration of social housing and social housing business on the west side that would need to address and continue to operate that with HRA Ring Fence and all those things that will still apply. Therefore the scale of that business would be more significant for an east-west split so for a West unitary with that entity would have more prominence and a very*

local presence for those communities by the staff that we have in the activities that we undertook in the community whereas for a one unitary model you could see that it's of less significant because it gets a little bit more diluted in a much larger entity. There were overlaps we want to make to support our customers so the more vulnerable customers in particular linking with the current County Council services, adult social care and children's services and those principles would still apply and would need to be strong so that we are able to join up effectively across the public sector and across both unitary models would allow us to do this;

- *HRA - Zero Carbon Pilot, why was the procurement process not successful? Last year we aimed to deliver 50 0 carbon home, there had been a lot of learning done from the pilots and the specification which was developed for that pilot had been used the Seaward Way tender which had just gone out to the market so it's already operating as a pilot in delivering some real useful thinking and useful documentation. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in a procurement process for volumetric modular supplier. There were a number of reasons why this failed, a key reason seemed to have been the ability of the volumetric modular industry to be able to deliver zero-carbon homes, air tightness and other issues were quite a challenge. Unfortunately we were unable to find another contractor but we did go out and see a number of contractors and visited their factories but we thought that the market was still not mature enough for us to use that process so we were now turning to using traditional construction of Panel I systems and other modern forms of construction;*

The Director of Housing and Communities gave his personal thanks to the group members on behalf of the whole team for all their hard work.

Recommended that the group note the content.

35. **Q3 HRA Finance Report**

The group considered a Financial Monitoring report as at Quarter 3 (31 December 2020)

Comments from the group included;

- *The savings of 421k in salaries. I am assuming this is what we are going to be using to fund the extra for void repairs and capital works? There has been an underspend on salaries, about 400k, the main reason for this is because we had a new structure put in place. This financial unit took a time to go through a recruitment process to fill these positions. In terms of how we are going to use that underspend or overspend in any other areas surplus funds would go into general reserves that could then be called upon to fund any one offs or ease pressures in any financial years;*

Recommended that the group note the content.

36. **Laxton Road update - Powerpoint presentation**

A Powerpoint presentation was presented to the group on the Laxton Road Housing Project, Kingston Black Court – Flats 1-8

Comments/questions from board members included;

- I am very impressed with these flats, they are social rentable and they are a bonus for us as a Council;
- Will there be lockable bicycle storage? *There are 6-8 lockable bike sheds for these properties to use;*

Recommended that the group note the content.

37. **Election Results**

The Terms of Reference for the Tenant's Strategic Group state that elections should be held every 3 years. Therefore, an election is due so that newly elected members can start on 1st April 2021.

The online application form was removed from the website on 9th February 2021 with 11 applications received. All applications were checked against the eligibility criteria, 1 of the applications did not fulfil the eligibility criteria and was declined. This left 10 applications for 10 available spaces and therefore an election was not required. All successful applicants have agreed to join and comply with the Terms of Reference of the group.

The new group will take effect from 1st April 2021. The members will be as follows:

Alex Akhigbemen
Paul Cram
Corrine McMylor
Jess Bunn
Kevin Hellier
Ivor Hussey
Samantha Rickward
Stephen Smith
Luke Manning
Colin England

The board stated that they would like to take this opportunity to thank former members, Livi Mongare and Dennis Galpin for all their hard work and for the support they have given the group over the years. They will be greatly missed and we wished them well.

38. **Scorecard**

2020/21 Housing Scorecard as at January 2012

Comments/questions from the group included;

- Concerns that there were 2 evictions during Covid; *unfortunately the tenancy process was not adhered to so in this rare circumstance we have had to evict tenants. It should be noted that before this process we look to Cllr Smith as Portfolio holder to ask if she has any concerns;*
- Concerns that the report (Rent Recovery 3.5 in the agenda pack) contained only Red and Green indicators, why was there no Amber in regards to the assessment?
Stated that the threshold for this would be revisited with regards to the indicators and would be reported back to the board;
- Was there any reason on why we are behind on the annual review which had to take place? *We are a few behind with this and come April we would have caught up;*
- What sort of areas does the complaints process cover? Regarding ASB, could we have a total of how many complaints were not resolved and it would be helpful to know how many long term cases we have ongoing?
This could be across the whole service. It could be about Homelessness to littering. We would be happy to look at a measure to look at outstanding ASB cases each month. We are also looking at implementing a satisfaction measure for ASB. This would be sent to the person who made the complaint to see how satisfied they were on us handling their complaint;
- Letting Standard, we only looking at 85%, why not 100%; *we are looking at targets for 21/22 in relation to other targets and will look for the group to see if this needs to be changed, it should be noted that 100% would set us up to fail. We will look at this and get back to you;*
- What is the time scale on an action plan coming out of the compliance indicator? *We are currently on blocks of 100% now so that is good news. As we do more assessments we find more actions;*

Recommended that the group note the content of the housing scorecard.

39. **STAR summary of final results**

Reported on the update of the STAR summary of final results. Determined that In February a webinar from Acuity was delivered to all Housing Managers within the Housing Directorate. This informed them of the results in an easy to understand format so that they could share the findings with their teams. 42 “flags” from Acuity which were individual matters that needed to be looked into as a result of the survey. All 42 flags have been dealt with.

At the end of February we received a “Tenant Friendly” version of the STAR survey. This version has been referred to in the Spring Edition of the Housing Newsletter and will be posted on our website for our tenants to view.

Recommended to the group to note that, the tenant friendly STAR survey report would be available on the website and that there would be an action plan of improvements that would be made as a result of the survey results and feedback.

(The Meeting ended at 7.51 pm)