

Minutes of a Meeting of the Tenants' Strategic Group held in the John Meikle Room, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton TA1 1HE, on Monday, 25 March 2024 at 6.00 pm

Present:

Luke Manning (Chair)
Colin England (Vice-Chair)

Alex Akhigbemen

Cllr Marcus Barr

Jessie Bunn

Ivor Hussey

Abbie Johnson

Cllr Federica Smith-Roberts

Cllr Fran Smith

Officers In attendance:

Chris Brown
Ian Candlish
Charlotte Collins
Sharon Yarde
Josh Barrett (Clerk)

48 Apologies for Absence - Agenda Item 1

Apologies were received from:

Group members: Kevin Hellier and Samantha Rickward.

Officers: Shari Hallet and Sharon Sloan.

49 Welcome from the Chair - Agenda Item 2

The Chair opened the meeting and went through housekeeping.

50 Minutes from the previous meeting - Agenda Item 3

The Chair resolved that the minutes from the previous meeting on 22nd January were noted as a true record.

51 Engagement Group Updates - Agenda Item 4

The Chair gave an overview of the updates from the engagement groups. A summarised version of discussion is below:

- The potential TAG member decided that due to personal circumstances she was unable to join, therefore the group remains with eight members.
- Applications for the Estate Improvement Fund to enhance our estates, are still coming to the group and they have agreed to fund a further project which will mean over 50% of the budget has been allocated. 3 further CYIF applications were assessed in February 2 were awarded and 1 was declined. £18,000 out of a budget of £20,000 has been allocated this financial year.
- Leycroft Grove continues to be on the agenda and the group have met with Chris Baxter (Tenancy Case Manager) Dan Mancini (Tree specialist) and some residents on two occasions to discuss planting in the area. The Chair is meeting with Stephen Boland to look at progress each month.
- Damp and Mould Group has been on hold until the Housing Structure was announced and the Repairs Manager returned. The Group met on 8th March and said a fond farewell to Mike Parsons who is leaving at the end of March 2024.
- Novus have now finished their contract. The 3 contractors are Bell Group, LCB Group, and Church farm maintenance. 100 kitchens have been completed and signed off since January 2024. Between 16 and 20 kitchens are being

completed every week.

- More than 400 roofs have been completed this financial year.
- A cross working group from Somerset Council Housing and Homes in Sedgemoor has met twice to review the Tenancy agreement and identify areas where this should be refined to allow us to issue a new joint tenancy agreement. This group has been temporarily put on hold.

52 Directorate Report - Agenda Item 5

Chris Brown, Service Director for housing introduced the directorate report and Ian Candlish, Head of Housing, was introduced to discuss aspects of the report in further detail and the following points were raised and discussed (summarised):

- The last couple of months have been remarkably busy finalising and presenting the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) business plan and rent setting proposals to full council. We are incredibly pleased that the full council supported the 30 recommendations in the report including the capital programme, a single development programme for the HRA, rent and service charges and the 30-year business plan.
- Seaward Way/Rainbow Way, Minehead is progressing well, and a second community drop in event was well supported.
- The main contract for building NTWP Phase B and Ci has been agreed by members and demolition will start imminently at North Taunton and Wordsworth Drive/Coleridge Crescent. Boarding has now been erected at Wordsworth Crescent.
- The Property team are currently short staffed, both for the trades area and office support. Arrangements are in place to help manage workloads, but this is likely to

affect future performance indicators and may lead to an increase in complaints for this service area.

- All property safety compliance checks and works continue to be undertaken. These include gas safety checks (LGSR's), water risk assessments and remedial works, electrical inspections (EICR's), asbestos surveys and re-inspections, fire risk assessment and remedial works, fire safety checks, lift and stair-lift checks and remedial works, and radon monitoring.
- The Fire Safety Audit by SWAP (Southwest Audit Partnership) is now complete and we are implementing the agreed management actions contained within their final report.
- Our Capital Programme team continues to deliver our electrical inspection testing programme with both the main contractor delivering the programme and support from our in-house electrical team. A consumer unit replacement programme has commenced, including National Grid installing contractor switches.
- The Asset Management service continues to carry out energy surveys which are required to understand pathways to Zero Carbon and which low energy funding regime properties are best placed in. These surveys are influencing the capital investment programme.
- There are vacancies across the Income and Tenancy Management Team. There are also challenges in recruitment. Around 36 vacancies in total.
- The housing service is leading the acquisition of 31 homes in the County which will be held in the Housing Revenue Account. These properties will be let to Refugees for the first tenancy with flexibility for future years to let as General Need Homes. The homes are 100% funded by the Local Authority Housing Fund.
- The council is considering a second phase which could see an additional 30 units acquired plus some new build homes over 2 years.

After being presented with the report the group discussed the following (summarised):

- The use of hydrogen heating in Fyfe and using that in Somerset. The use of hydrogen fuels is still on the agenda for the local authority.
- Radon surveys in the local area and the amount of Radon that was found. A small percentage of Radon was found which is a very small risk.

- Radon checks will continue in areas where a percentage was found.
- Social Value Offer and the meaning of this term and what suppliers do. Such as projects and community work.
- The agreed management actions of the fire report. These actions will be brought to the next meeting.
- The checking of properties and the workmanship after work has been completed.
- Contractors' code of conduct.
- The repairs of work that was surveyed as being under standard.
- Positive response on the newsletters from the group. Although there is not a lot of direct feedback from other tenants.
- Engagement and responses improved from the tenants.
- Workings of the voicescape system.
- The complaint that went to the Ombudsman.

53 Q3 (Oct-Dec) Performance and Finance Report - Agenda Item 6

Chirs Brown introduced the report, and the following was raised and discussed (summarised):

- An overview of Complaints data. The reduction to 29% of complaints that met stage 1 criteria. (closed within 10 days)
- An overview of Customer satisfaction data. Comparatively to other local authorities the satisfaction data is quite high.
- An overview of waiting times for repair calls. The waiting times for calls to be answered is relatively high. This is part of the HRA which includes recruitment of staff to reduce this.
- An overview of rent recovery. Performance is good and continues to improve.
- An overview of lettings and voids. This data is an area for concern and numbers have slowly increased, however this remains a focus for the voids and lettings teams.
- An overview of compliance. 100% compliance for the indicators above, except for electrical safety and through floor lifts.

After being presented with the report the group discussed the following points (summarised):

- The plan for homes that are not to standard.
- Work completion certificates.
- Various schemes for home repairs and improvements.
- Sign off process for completed works.
- The different heating systems installed in homes and the satisfaction of those

different systems.

54 November and annual TSM summary presentation - Agenda Item 7

Sharon Yarde introduced the presentation. Highlights can be found below:

- 74% feel their home is well maintained.
- 83% feel their home is safe.
- 82% feel their neighbourhood is a good place to live.
- 81% feel they are kept well informed.
- The TSM is completed once every 6 months.
- There are 23 questions in total, including 12 from the regulator.
- There were around 13 areas of increased satisfaction including ASB and Complaints handling.
- There were only 3 areas of decreased satisfaction with is highlighting a huge achievement.

After the report was introduced, the group raised the following that discussed (summarised):

- Where Somerset sit in national context.
- The level of tenant engagement.
- Benchmarks for data.

55 Flooding action plan and conclusion Report - Agenda Item 8

Simon Lewis, Head of Hosing, Income and Tenancy Management was not present it will be brought back to the next meeting.

56 TSG Terms of Reference discussion and vote - Agenda Item 9

The group had the draft terms of reference previously sent to them and Sharon Yarde discussed the potential changes:

The group voted unanimously to amend the terms of reference document that was shared with the group.

57 Any other Business - Agenda Item 10

The Chair asked for Any other business which included:

- Roofing in Hamilton Road
- Street Cleaning

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and the meeting was formally closed at 7:35pm.

(The meeting ended at 7:35)

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CHAIR