



# Somerset Council

**Tenants' Strategic Group – Date**

**Name of Report**

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Communities

Report Authors: :

**1. Purpose of the Report**

To inform TSG of TAG's activities during 2022-2023

**2. Recommendations**

The Tenants' Strategic Group is asked to note this report and are invited to ask questions.

**3. Background and Full details of the Report**



## **Tenants' Action Group – Annual Report 2022 -2023 to the Tenants' Strategic Group**

### **3.1. Introduction**

The Tenants' Action Group have been meeting bi-monthly face to face throughout the year.

The TAG (Tenants Action Group) meetings are structured and have continued to mirror TSG (Tenants Strategic Group), meeting at 1pm for a light lunch to look at the actions from the previous meeting, the previous minutes and discussing applications for grant funding. Then the Agenda is covered from 2pm until 4pm. This has allowed more time to discuss other items in more detail.

We had the Annual General Meeting in October, and the Chair was voted back in, Livi Mongare was elected as vice chair.

We have recruited a new member to the group this year and a member has returned after taking a break during COVID. This takes the total to 8 members, we are continuing to recruit additional members.

### **4. Work Undertaken**

**4.1 Damp and Mould.** The Chair of TAG is continuing his involvement with the Damp and Mould group, which has continued to support with the updated action plan following on from the Housing Ombudsman update. This group will continue to monitor until all the actions have been completed.

#### **4.2 Estate Walkabout's (Estate Officers)**

Members raised concerns over the letters that were being sent out for the block inspections. The letter was updated by members of the Tenants Action Group and agreed by the Estate Officer Management Team. This updated letter is now being used with forthcoming dates to give Tenants as much notice as possible of the walk-a-bouts.

Julie Sabey attended a TAG meeting to give the members an insight into how the role has changed and the issues that they are now dealing with, causing huge workloads for the team.

Fiona Davies also attended a meeting.

Chair of TAG is concerned there are not enough Estate Officers, and he will continue to check the workload of all Estate Officers.

#### **4.3 Leycroft Grove Estate Improvement Groundworks**

Chair raised concerns over the progress of the improvement project that had been planned at Leycroft Grove, with £100k previously reported to have been put aside for the project.

This project has now started, and the Chair is monitoring the progress with Stephen Boland meeting bi-monthly at Leycroft Grove.

Monitoring of the Leycroft Grove project will continue to be on the agenda for the TAG in the upcoming year.

#### **4.4 Funding through the Estate Improvement Fund**

A fund of £10k held by the group dedicated to improving neighbourhoods and community spaces, usually on recommendation from Officers. In February, the Group were asked to support the council and take a reduction in budget to £5000, which they agreed to following a vote.

In the last financial year, the group funded four projects and Sparkle at a total cost of £1336.92. Please see section 5 for more information.

#### **4.5 Funding for Local Community Projects through the Youth Initiative Fund**

A fund of £20k held by the group, available via grant applications of up to £3k to support organisations and projects which seek to improve the lives, health and wellbeing of people aged 0 - 25 years old whose families are tenants of Somerset West and Taunton Council (SWT) and to help such organisations and projects to become sustainable and more self-sufficient. The Group were asked to support the council and take a reduction in budget to £15k which they agreed to following a vote.

The group assessed 5 applications to the Youth Initiative Fund and subsequently distributed a £3k grant to 4 local organisations and a £600 grant to another.

- **North Taunton Partnership** – Funding for youth activities in Priorswood including PRIDE in Priorswood.
- **Crimestoppers** - The programme 'What Would You Do?' includes working with 9–10-year-olds through drama-based workshops and performance, the project is an early intervention to grooming for gang crime (including county lines), online safety, healthy relationships, mob mentality and Child (sexual and criminal) exploitation.
- **Neroche Woodlanders** – Wild Explorers is an outdoor Parent Toddler group based in a woodland setting in the Blackdown Hills. We provide transport for families from Taunton to our Forest School site near Staple Fitzpaine and participants then enjoy a two-hour session of woodland activities, games, refreshments, and lots of opportunities for free play.
- **Wellington Counsellors CIC** -. Providing counselling for young people.
- **Churches Together in Wellington** – Free event for families in wellington for the children including bouncy castle and BBQ.

#### **4.6 Grounds Maintenance**

Darren Hill attended two meetings for the group with updates and introduced Nick Watkins and Jack Mount. Moving forwards the group are looking to work more closely with Jack and Stephen Boland looking at specific areas.

#### 4.7 Development of the Group

The Chair and Vice Chair attended the recent TPAS conference with members of TSG. Members are committed to widening their awareness of key issues in the sector by attending upcoming training courses over the next year.

Various articles have been posted in Tenants' Newsletters to attempt to raise awareness of the group and their activities and to encourage new members to join. The Chair has done several articles, having visited some of the causes to see the work they are doing, to raise awareness of the CYIF (Child Youth Initiative Fund) fund and the magnificent work that is going on in our communities. Over the next year the Housing Performance team will continue to work with TAG to publicise their activities and help to recruit new members to bring the group back up to full membership of 10 members.

#### 4.8 VOIDS

This Group visiting VOID properties and are collating information on a form to ensure the properties are relet in a timely manner in line with the lettable standard. They are also looking at how the properties have been left by previous tenants as some are requiring far more work due to their condition. They will then produce a report for TSG.

### 5. Financial Summary

The total budget assigned for 2022-23 was £44,300. This was subsequently reduced to £24300.

<b>Name of Fund</b>	<b>Allocated Budget</b>	<b>Allocated Funds</b>	<b>Total Expenditure</b>
Youth Initiative Fund	£20,000/£15000	CYIF projects	£12600
Estate Improvement Fund	£10,000/£5000	Garden table and chairs Gazebo and seeds Plants Community Lunch Sparkle	£836.92    £500
Other	£14,300/£4300	Expenses – meeting travel and training	£2670.15
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>£44300//£24300</b>		<b>£16607.07</b>

### 6. Looking ahead

Over the upcoming year the group will:

- Continue to monitor the progress of the Leycroft Grove improvement works, receiving regular updates from the Capital Works Manager.
- Continue to work with the Council to monitor the Estates Officers and workload.
- Participate in more task groups such as the Damp and Mould start and finish group.
- Voids - The group will complete its work and meet to put together a report for TSG.

## **7. Ongoing areas of concern for scrutiny by TAG**

Leycroft Grove – Continue to monitor this.

Capital Works Programme – Ensuring it is delivered.

Estate Officers – workload and support.

Grounds maintenance - Standard in some areas is still not acceptable.

## **8. Conclusion**

The group have continued to stay connected through their face-to-face meetings and improve local communities and neighbourhoods through the distribution of funding. Over the next year, TAG is committed to increasing their membership and continuing with their active role, working with the council to improve their services, and continuing to support as many local projects as possible through funding opportunities. With the upcoming merger, The Chair can see that TAG will be even busier and good clear communication, between the authority and the tenants is vital to establishing trust.

## **9. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)**

A risk assessment is not required to accompany this report.

## **10. Are there any Finance / Resource, Legal implications directly to do with this report?**

There are no financial implications directly to do with the recommendations in this report.

## **11. Are there any Equality and Diversity Implications?**

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report.

## **12. Are there any Data Protection Implications?**

Page 6/

There are no equality implications directly to do with this report.

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