

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Housing Tenancy Board (to be confirmed at the next meeting)

Date: Monday, 28 July 2014

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor P J Davies (Chairman)

(Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: T J Howard, Mrs K K Trott, C J Wood and Mrs M E Ellerton
(deputising for Mrs K Mandry)

Co-opted members: Mrs P Weaver, Mr G Wood and Miss E Bartlett (deputising for Mr B Lee)

Also Present: Councillor B Bayford, Executive Member for Health and Housing
(Item 11)



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies of absence were received from Councillor Mrs K Mandry and Mr Brian Lee.

2. MINUTES

It was AGREED that the minutes of the Housing Tenancy Board held on 22 April 2014 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor C J Wood to the meeting.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS

There were no declarations of interest or disclosures of advice or direction made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - TENANCY SERVICES

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community on the Quarterly Performance Monitoring data for Tenancy Services. The Senior Housing Management Officer presented the report and took questions from members after each section of the report.

Rent Arrears:

The Board noted the increase in rent arrears since the last quarter. However it was reported to the Board that in the past week there has been a decrease in arrears by £20,000. Councillor Wood asked if there was a target to have rent arrears at by the end of the financial year. The Senior Housing Management Officer stated that the target is around 2%. The Senior Housing Officer also advised that high level arrears cases (over £500) were monitored by senior officers on a monthly basis to ensure appropriate recovery action was being taken.

The Senior Housing Management Officer was also asked if the recent welfare reform changes had impacted on rent arrears. The Board were informed that at present Universal Credit has not been introduced in Fareham so tenants are remain unaffected by this. However the introduction of the reduction in the spare room subsidy has affected a small number of tenants and will therefore have had a slight impact on rent arrears.

Empty Homes:

The Board noted that there was an increase in time taken to relet properties. It was explained to the Board that there has been a high number of properties that have required extensive works in order for them to be relet, and there

has been a number of refusals on properties, which has resulted in those people being removed from the waiting list.

The Chairman enquired as to whether there is a trend as to why some properties are hard to let, i.e. types of properties or particular locations. The Director of Community addressed the Board to explain that the Housing Service will shortly be undertaking a Vanguard Review of all of its services and will highlight and address any areas for concern such as the issue of re-letting homes.

Estate Management:

The Board noted the two estate inspections that had taken place in the last quarter. Paula Weaver raised the issue of feedback from Officers regarding complaints or issues raised during estate inspections and satisfaction cards. She requested that the complainant be informed when the work has been completed, as it is not always known if issues have been addressed.

Councillor Mrs Trott enquired as to whether it would be possible to have a verbal update on the outcomes of the estate inspections at each meeting. The Senior Housing Management Officer confirmed that prior to each meeting checks will be made to see if there has been any progress to the outcomes of each estate inspection and a verbal update will be provided at the meeting.

It was AGREED that the content of the report be noted.

7. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - BUILDING SERVICES

The Board considered a report by the Director of Environmental Services on the Quarterly Performance Monitoring data for Building Services.

The Head of Building Services presented the report to the Board and explained that the report has changed significantly since the last quarter due to the recent Vanguard intervention which resulted in a fundamental rethink of the way in which the service is delivered, focusing on the service from the customer's point of view. As a result of this review there has been a change of focus away from customer satisfaction to new performance measures, which if delivered correctly and are maintained will naturally produce positive satisfaction from customers. The Board were also informed of potential financial savings due to this new way of working and the proposed reinvestment projects for these savings.

Graham Wood informed the Board that he is a tenant in one of the trial areas for the new approach and he is extremely pleased with the service received.

It was AGREED that the Board:-

- (a) note the content of the report;
- (b) endorse the new approach to service delivery; and
- (c) endorse the re-investment of potential savings and performance monitoring.

8. TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER SATISFACTION SURVEY

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community on the Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey.

The Board were informed that the survey had been discussed at the Tenants Forum meeting on 19 June 2014, and that a number of tenants at the meeting agreed that all of the questions should be included in the survey.

Graham Wood expressed concern over the number of proposed questions in the survey and felt that the majority of sheltered tenants would be too daunted by the survey and would therefore not complete it.

Elizabeth Bartlett informed the Board that a number of tenants at the forum meeting did not agree with the length of the survey and felt that the questions were too repetitive.

Councillor Wood felt that the questionnaire was too long and that the questions should only relate to what improvements tenants would like to their homes. The Tenant Involvement Officer explained to the Board that the first set of questions are for benchmarking statistics and used for comparison with other social landlord providers.

The Tenancy Services Manager suggested that the survey is discussed with the Corporate Services team to get some advice on simplifying the questions and the format the questionnaire should take. He also suggested setting up coffee mornings/surgeries for tenants who would like help completing the survey.

It was AGREED that the Board:-

- (a) notes the content of the report; and
- (b) the survey is further reviewed taking into account the Boards comments and with consultations with both Corporate Services and the Tenants Forum.

9. APPOINTMENT OF TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER CO-OPTED MEMBERS

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community on the Appointment of Tenant and Leaseholder Co-opted Members.

It was AGREED that the Elected Members of the Board:-

- (a) notes the content of the report;
- (b) endorse the amalgamation of existing tenant and leaseholder forums; and
- (c) permit deputy co-opted tenant members to stand in at Board meetings when the co-opted leaseholder representative(s) are unable to attend.

10. GENERAL TENANTS FORUM - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

In the absence of the Chairman of the Tenants Forum, the Board received a verbal update from the Tenant Involvement Officer regarding the issues and matters arising from the last meeting of the Forum. These were; the merger of the 3 forum (sheltered, general and leaseholder) into one forum, the newsletter which is due to go out in the autumn and the survey of tenants and leaseholders.

It was AGREED that the Tenant Involvement Officer be thanked for her update.

11. HOUSING TENANCY BOARD WORK PROGRAMME 2014/15

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community which reviewed the Boards Work Programme for 2014/15.

The Chairman suggested that the Board receive reports at the October meeting on the spending for the mobility scooter storage and off road parking programmes. The Tenancy Services Manager addressed the Board to suggest that this information be included into the Estates Improvement Programme report which is scheduled to go the Board meeting on 20 October 2014, all members agreed.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Bayford, Executive Member for Health and Housing, addressed the Board on this item.

It was AGREED that the content of the report be noted.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 7.20 pm).