

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

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

Date: Monday, 26 January 2015

Venue: Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

PRESENT:

Councillor P J Davies (Chairman)

Councillor Mrs K Mandry (Vice-Chairman)

Councillors: T J Howard, Mrs K K Trott and C J Wood

Co-opted members: Mrs P Weaver, Mr G Wood and Mr S Lovelock

Also Present:



1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology of absence was received from Mr Brian Lee.

2. MINUTES

It was AGREED that the minutes of the Housing Tenancy Board meeting held on 20 October 2015, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no Chairman's announcements.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS

There were no declarations of interest made at this meeting.

5. DEPUTATIONS

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

6. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT INCLUDING HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME FOR 2015/16

The Board considered a report by the Director of Finance and Resources on the Housing Revenue Account including the housing capital programme for 2015/16.

The report was presented by the Corporate Accountant, who presented each section and took questions from the Board.

Councillor Wood enquired as to why the cost of the proposed 'Passivhaus' scheme in Allotment Road is so high for only 6 properties. The Director of Community explained that the 'Passivhaus' is a specific type of construction to provide energy efficient houses. These houses are being trialled as a pilot scheme for Welborne as 10% of the housing stock will need to be built to his standard. He explained that the estimated cost of the build was a standard cost and is not considered to be excessive. Graham Wood asked if these properties would be subject to 'right to buy'. The Director of Community confirmed that they would be subject to right to buy, however the tenant would still have to pay for the construction cost of the property.

Members discussed the proposed rent increases, and asked how this will affect those who are in receipt of housing benefit. The Director of Community explained that currently 60% of tenants are in receipt of housing benefit and for those tenants the rent increase will be covered by their housing benefit.

Graham Wood addressed the Board and expressed concern over the rent increases for the sheltered tenants who are already on a limited income with their pensions. The Chairman informed the Board that pensions will be increasing by 2.75% in April which is more than the increase in the rent for the

Council properties. Members agreed that whilst some sheltered tenants may find the increase difficult, it is not just limited to them. There are many general purpose tenants who will have a limited income and will find the increase in rent difficult. Members were reminded that whilst the rents are increasing, it is a much lower increase than last year, and still makes the rent a lot cheaper than that which tenants would be expected to pay in the private sector.

The Corporate Accountant drew member's attention to Appendix C of the report and explained that under rechargeable repairs to Council houses, point a) Abortive visit by Officer, Surveyor or Tradesman – Standard charge per visit, should be removed as this has been removed by the Vanguard intervention in Building Services.

It was AGREED that the Board recommends to Executive that:-

- (a) individual rent increases be approved for Council Dwellings with effect from 6 April 2015;
- (b) rents for Council garages be increased by 5% with effect from 6 April 2015;
- (c) discretionary fees & charges be increased to provide an increase of 5% where possible, with effect from 6 April 2015;
- (d) the revised budget for 2014/15 be approved;
- (e) the base budget for 2015/16 be approved;
- (f) the capital programme and financing for 2014/15 to 2018/19 be approved; and
- (g) annual budgets and assumptions are set with aim of ensuring sufficient surpluses are held to repay debt on the maturity of each loan.

7. UPDATE ON THE IMPACT OF THE REMOVAL OF THE SPARE ROOM SUBSIDY (RSRS)

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community on the impact of the removal of the spare room subsidy (RSRS) has made to Council Housing tenants.

Paula Weaver asked if the housing benefit of those who are under occupying a property is affected whilst they are waiting to move. The Tenancy Services Manager informed the Board that this would be affected but tenants may be eligible for a discretionary housing payment (DHP) whilst they sort alternative accommodation.

Steve Lovelock asked what happens when the DHP runs out of funds. The Tenancy Services Manager confirmed that the DHP was a fund received from Central Government and once it runs out there will be no more funding for these payments and the tenants who are in receipt of them would need to make up the shortfall in rent.

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

8. 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 report was presented by the Senior Housing Management Officer who presented the report in sections and took questions from members in each section.

Rent Arrears:

It was reported to the Board that the rent arrears figure is down on the last quarter, which was very promising as that particular quarter is normally exceptionally bad for rent arrears as it falls over the Christmas period.

Councillor Wood enquired as to why the rent arrears figure wasn't broke down in each separate ward as then Ward Councillor's would be able to have a clearer idea of the rent arrears in there ward. The Senior Housing Management Officer explained that the figures are shown in the areas of which the Area Housing Estates Officers are responsible for.

Paula Weaver enquired as to whether the new way of working where the housing officers are trying to engage more with tenants to discuss their rent arrears and find a way of moving forward. The Senior Housing Officer confirmed that the decrease in rent arrears and court appearance are good examples of how well it is working.

Graham Wood asked if there was a contingency plan in place for when Universal Credit is rolled out. The Senior Housing Management Officer explained that it is too difficult to have a plan in place as it is unknown how this is going to impact tenants. She explained that their focus is on working and educating people on how to manage their money and how to budget for things effectively.

Empty Homes:

The Directory of Community explained to the Board that the Vanguard intervention has just begun across the whole of the Housing Service, and part of it will be looking at the allocations process to see if the re-letting process can be made quicker and more efficient therefore having less void properties. He also commented on the difficulty they are now having trying to fill some properties as people on the waiting list are having too many specific demands on the type of property that they want.

Estate Management:

It was reported to the Board that the satisfaction figures for cleaning and grounds maintenance are much improved upon the last quarter.

Graham Wood updated the Board on the Sheltered Housing Coffee Mornings that he and the Tenancy Services Manager have recently attended, which have been very successful.

Councillor Trott suggested that the information provided, in the presentation at the tenants forum, on pest control and dog nuisance be included in the tenant newsletter as it was extremely informative and useful. The Tenant Involvement Officer confirmed that this information was to be included into the next tenant newsletter.

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

9. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE REPORT - BUILDING SERVICES

The Board considered a report by the Director of Environmental Services on the quarterly performance report for Building Services.

The report was presented by the Head of Leisure and Community and The Planned Maintenance Manager.

The Head of Leisure and Community addressed the Board and explained that he has taken over as the Lead Officer for the Vanguard Intervention in Building Services. He explained to the Board that he had noted in the previous minutes that many members of the Board found the graphs showing the performance of the housing repairs intervention team confusing. He handed out to all members a table which he has produced (attached as Appendix B) which sets out the measures more clearly in order to make it easier for the Board to see clearly how they are performing.

He informed the Board that currently 62% of the Borough is currently receiving the new housing repairs service, and they are looking to roll in the new system out to the rest of the Borough by the Spring of this year.

Councillor Wood stated that he would like to see the table and graphs in the next report as he finds both extremely useful.

Paula Weaver raised an issue of contractors waiting around for supplies to be delivered. The Planned Maintenance Manager explained that not all supplies can be kept on the van or collected locally, so there will be occasions when contractors will have to wait for supplies to be delivered. He also stated that van stock would be monitored and if there are improvements that can be made to this then he will ensure that the stock is updated.

Graham Wood enquired as to how the information for the performance measures is collected, and whether the customer satisfaction cards were being reintroduced. The Planned Maintenance Manager informed the Board that customer satisfaction cards will not be reintroduced as they do not give accurate information.

The tenant reps expressed some concern over how the information for each of the performance measures is being collected and how accurate it is. The Head of Leisure and Community explained to the Board that one way of being able to access that the new measures are working is shown by the lack of complaints and repeat calls for the same job. In order to help tenants better understand how the new measures work he offered to give a presentation to a future meeting of the Tenants Forum.

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

10. GENERAL TENANTS FORUM - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

At the invitation of the Chairman, Steve Lovelock Chairman of the Tenant's Forum, addressed the Board to give an overview of the matters discussed at the last forum meeting.

Some of the items discussed at the Forum meeting were; Presentation on dog nuisance and pest control, update on rent arrears, TSG performance, cleaning contract, South Coast Training, Sheltered Housing Officer service and the dumping of items in communal bin areas.

It was AGREED that the Chairman of the Tenants Forum be thanked for his update.

11. PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15 AND PRELIMINARY DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2015/16

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community which reviewed the Panel's work programme for 2014/15 and draft work programme for 2015/16.

Councillor Davies asked if a report on the changes to supporting people/sheltered housing service could be considered for the 2015/16 work programme.

It was AGREED that the Board:-

- (a) Confirmed the Work Programme for the remainder of the year 2014/15 and endorse any revisions listed within the report;
- (b) Gave an early assessment of progress in 2014/15;
- (c) Gave initial consideration of the work programme for 2015/16; and
- (d) Inform the Executive.

Appendix A

HOUSING TENANCY BOARD –WORK PROGRAMME 2014/2015

Date	Subject
28 July 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Work Programme 2014/15 • Quarterly Performance Report – Tenancy Services • Quarterly Performance Report – Building Services • Appointment of Co-opted Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives and Deputies to the Housing Tenancy Board • Tenant and Leaseholder Satisfaction Survey
20 October 2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of Work Programme 2014/15 • Quarterly Performance Report - Tenancy Services • Quarterly Performance Report - Building Services • Update on Estate Improvement Programme 2014/2015 (including update on mobility scooter storage and parking)

26 January 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preliminary review of Work Programme for 2014/15 and preliminary draft Work Programme for 2015/16• Housing Revenue Account including Housing Capital Programme for 2015/16• Update on the impact of the removal of the spare room subsidy (RSRS)• Quarterly Performance Report - Tenancy Services• Quarterly Performance Report - Building Services
21 April 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of Annual Work Programme for 2014/15 and final consideration of draft Work Programme for 2015/16• Annual Performance Report for 2014/15 - Tenancy Services• Annual Performance Report for 2014/15 - Building Services• Estate Improvement Programme for 2015/16• Update on Regulatory Framework for Social Housing

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm
and ended at 7.56 pm).