

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

**Date:** Monday, 27 January 2014

**Venue:** Vannes/Pulheim Room - Civic Offices

**PRESENT:**

Councillor P J Davies (Chairman)

Mrs K Mandry (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:** T J Howard, Mrs K K Trott and D M Whittingham

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

**Also Present:**



**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology of absence was received from Mr B Lee.

**2. MINUTES**

It was AGREED that the minutes of the Housing Tenancy Board held on 28 October 2013 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chairman welcomed the Director of Streetscene to the meeting, and explained to the Board that he had recently become the Director responsible for council house maintenance.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS**

In accordance with the Standing Orders and the Council's Code of Conduct the following declarations of interest were made:-

Councillor P J Davies declared a non-pecuniary interest for minute item 6 – Arras House Petition as he is the Ward Councillor for Arras House and Mr Ben Foster is known to him.

Councillor Mrs K K Trott declared a non-pecuniary interest for minute item 6 – Arras House Petition as Mr Ben Foster is known to her.

**5. DEPUTATIONS**

The Board received deputations from Mr Ben Foster and Mrs Irene Hunt regarding the petition submitted by residents of Arras House requesting cavity wall insulation due to damp and cold problems in the properties. (see item 6 below).

Mr Foster and Mrs Hunt were thanked accordingly for their deputations.

**6. ARRAS HOUSE PETITION**

The Board considered a petition from the residents of Arras House, which requested cavity wall insulation.

Councillor P J Davies declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item as he is the ward Councillor for Arras House and Mr Ben Foster is known to him.

Councillor Mrs K K Trott declared a non-pecuniary interest on this item as Mr Ben Foster is known to her.

At the invitation of the Chairman, the Head of Building Services addressed the Board on this item and explained that that a survey of the properties in Arras House has already been undertaken, and it was found that the cavity wall insulation had started to wear and had become patchy in places, as a result of

this an order had been raised for the following month for the cavity wall insulation to be replaced.

The Board discussed this item, taking into account the comments made by Mr Foster and Mrs Hunt (at item 5 above).

Concerns were raised by the Board regarding the effectiveness and efficiency of the storage heaters used in many of the Council's properties. The Director of Community agreed that heating in all Council properties needs to be effective and affordable, but that this would take some time to address the issue of these heaters as a planned programme would need to be put together outlining how this could be achieved.

It was AGREED that the Head of Building Services be thanked for his response regarding the petition.

## **7. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR TENANCY SERVICES**

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community on the Quarterly Performance Monitoring data for Tenancy Services, which covered; rent arrears, repossessions, void property management, estate inspections, anti-social behaviour and tenant involvement.

The report was presented by the Tenancy Services Manager, who took questions from members after each section of the report.

### Rent Arrears:

The Board were informed that rent arrears have increased by £24,029 since the last quarterly report. The Board noted that there was a significant increase in rent arrears during the Christmas period. The Director of Community addressed the Board to inform them that rent arrears are being closely monitored and that he has monthly meetings to discuss these cases.

### Empty Homes:

The Board noted that the re-let time for general purpose properties had increased slightly since the last quarterly report. However despite this the annual rent loss percentage is similar to the previous report.

### Anti-Social Behaviour:

The Board noted the number of reported incidents had decreased since the last quarterly report, and that the majority of complaints were regarding the playing of loud music.

### Estate Management:

The Board noted the results of the 2 Estate Inspections that have taken place since the last meeting. Paula Weaver addressed the Board regarding estate inspections. She stated that actions are not always followed up following the inspections and that feedback following the visits was at times slow in being received. She has requested that Housing Officers provide quick feedback to tenants following an inspection.

Tenant Involvement:

The Board noted the number of meetings that have taken place since the last report.

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

**8. HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT INCLUDING HOUSING CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2014/15**

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community on the Housing Revenue Account and the Housing Capital Programme for 2014/15.

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

Under Appendix A relating to the capital programme and funding, questions were asked regarding the allocation of money for mobility scooter storage. Councillor Trott proposed that a rolling programme be set up in order to provide funding for the storage of mobility scooters on a yearly basis. The Board discussed this issue at length and it was agreed that a report would be brought to the next meeting to update the board on the progress of the current mobility scooter storage programme and review the need for funding for future years. The Board was reminded that it needed to prioritise investment on ensuring Council properties are in good repair and are safe and warm to live in.

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

- (a) individual rent increases in line with the rent restructuring model, be approved for Council Dwellings with effect from 7 April 2014;
- (b) rents for Council garages to be increased by 5% with effect from 7 April 2014;
- (c) discretionary fees and charges to be increased to provide an increase of 5% where possible, with effect from 7 April 2014;
- (d) the revised budget for 2013/14 be approved;
- (e) the base budget for 2014/15 be approved;
- (f) the capital programme and financing for 2013/14 to 2017/18 be approved; and
- (g) annual budgets and assumptions are set with the aim of ensuring sufficient surpluses are held to repay on the maturity of each loan.

**9. QUARTERLY PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT FOR BUILDING SERVICES**

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

Elizabeth Bartlett requested more detail regarding the nature of the complaints received. The head of Building services confirmed that this detail would be provided in the report at the next meeting.

The Head of Building Services addressed the Board to give a brief overview of a systems thinking trial that Building Services are currently undertaking which is looking at remodelling the way that services are delivered.

A question was asked regarding satisfaction cards. The Head of Building Services informed the Board that satisfaction cards are only left for responsive repair works and not planned maintenance works and that under the new trial satisfaction cards have been removed completely, this has resulted in more feedback being received from customers who are ringing in providing feedback regarding work they have had completed on their property.

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

#### **10. FEEDBACK FROM SHELTERED HOUSING ACCOMMODATION REVIEW**

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community which provided feedback regarding consultations with a number of sheltered housing tenants regarding possible changes to the future allocation of accommodation at a number of schemes across the Borough.

Concerns were raised regarding the mix of elderly and young people and the possible lifestyle conflict this may cause. The Director of Community explained to the Board that this had been a consideration when putting the proposals together but also explained that there is a need through the Council's waiting list to make best use of the Council's housing stock.

The issues regarding the increase pressure on parking was also raised, as parking is already limited and is likely to increase if younger working age people were to move into sheltered properties.

The Board agreed that whilst they recognised the need/demand for a change to the allocations policy for these particular sheltered accommodation sites they have reservations regarding the issues with parking that will be brought about as a result of this.

It was AGREED that:-

- (a) the Board notes the content of the report;
- (b) the Board supports the proposed changes to future allocations of accommodation to a number of schemes, as set out in the report; and
- (c) the Board's concerns and reservations regarding parking issues are noted.

#### **11. IMPACT OF REDUCTION IN SPARE ROOM SUBSIDY**

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community which reviewed the impact that the reduction in the spare room subsidy has had on Council Tenants, and outlined a proposed event at Ferneham Hall.

The event will be for all tenants affected by the RSRS, tenants on the waiting list who are looking to move to smaller accommodation and tenants registered on homeswapper who are looking for larger accommodation. The purpose of the event is to provide tenants with advice on housing options, housing benefits including discretionary housing payments and Homeswapper. In addition to this it is hoped that the event will be able to put tenants in contact with others who they may be able to swap properties with.

The Board were informed that that the event at Ferneham Hall has been arranged for Tuesday 4 February, invitations to the event have already gone out and there has been a positive response.

It was AGREED that:-

- (a) the Board endorses the proposal to organise an event for those tenants affected by the RSRS who may be interested in moving to smaller accommodation; and
- (b) the content of the report be noted.

## **12. GENERAL TENANTS FORUM - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Steve Lovelock Chairman of the Tenants 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 included; cleaning and caretaking, grounds maintenance, anti-social behaviour, parking and South Coast training.

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

## **13. PRELIMINARY REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2013/14 AND PRELIMINARY DRAFT WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15**

The Board considered a report by the Director of Community which reviewed the Work Programme for 2013/14 and the Draft Work Programme for 2014/15.

It was AGREED that the Board:-

- (a) confirmed the Work Programme for the remainder of the year 2013/14 and endorsed any revisions listed within the report;
- (b) gave an early assessment of progress in 2013/14;
- (c) gave initial consideration of the Work Programme for 2014/15; and
- (d) inform the Executive

(The meeting started at 6.01 pm  
and ended at 8.00 pm).