

**BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

**TENANTS' FORUM**

**Meeting held – 12<sup>th</sup> November 2015**

**Present:** Councillors James Burton (Chair), Maggie Don, Mike Tebbutt, Clark Mitchell, David Howes, Steve Bellamy

**Tenant Representatives:**

Brian Kimpton	(Counties)
Jim French	(Desborough)
Sue Shipham	(Highfield Road)
Roland Shipham	(Highfield Road)
Martyn Lund	(Highfield Road)
Moira Brown	(Highfield Road)
Peter Harvey	(Dahlia Road)
Victor Woodcock	(Burton Latimer)
Josephine Copson	(Alfred Street)
Ken Burnage	(Thorpe Malsor)
Peter Matsa	(Geddington)
Evelyn Odame	(Athelstan Road)
Hayley Fountain	(Broughton)
Gloria Moore	(Grange)
Reg Carvell	(Leaseholder – Highfield Road)

**Also Present:**

John Conway	(Housing)
Leona Mantle	(Housing)
Shelley Hallen	(Housing)
Darren Ibell	(Housing)
Mark Dickenson	(Finance)
Pearl Nathaniel	(Finance)

**15.TF.41 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Linda Nash, Brent Woodford, Sandra Nash and Trevor Nash

**15.TF.42 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**15.TF.43 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the meeting held on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**15.TF.44 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**15.TF.34 – Annual Report to Tenants**

It was agreed that the text format of the report would revert back to Connect-style black text on a white background for ease of reading.

**15.TF.38 – Any Other Business**

It was noted that Neighbourhood Managers had inspected bushes that required pruning in communal areas of Alfred Street and work had since been completed. In relation to abandoned shopping trolleys, Neighbourhood Managers regularly conversed with supermarkets to have trolleys removed promptly. It was reported that there had been a notable increase in abandoned trolleys since the introduction of the 5 pence carrier bag charge.

**15.TF.45 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES**

None

**15.TF.46 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – REPAIR REPORTING REVIEW**

Martyn Lund provided the forum with a presentation detailing the findings of the Repair Reporting Review that had been undertaken by the Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel (TOSP).

The meeting was provided with the background to the review, noting that monitoring of Performance Indicators had raised concerns regarding the number of repairs being reported, with approximately 25,000 logged in the previous financial year.

Following the commencement of the review, TOSP had undertaken a

wide-ranging information gathering task in order to better understand the process for repairs reporting. Senior officers involved in the repairs process provided information as requested by the panel and interviews were undertaken with key members of staff who had experience of repairs reporting. The Callsys repair logging system was also examined by the panel to see if there were any areas for improvement. "Mystery shopping" exercises were carried out by members of the panel to better understand the end-to-end process of repairs reporting.

The meeting was advised that once all the requested information had been provided, a desktop review had been undertaken to collate and understand the data that the panel had obtained. Following this review, the panel produced a number of key findings as listed below:

- Multiple logging of the same repair
- Repair reporting system (Callsys) not working to its full potential
- Lack of communication between tenants and KBC staff
- Tenant repair responsibility not adhered to
- Call waiting times too long (average 10-15 minutes)
- No repair surveyor appointment timescales
- Difficulty in assessing value for money of repairs work

Based on the key findings listed above, the panel had produced a number of recommendations to be taken forward that aimed to improve the current procedure for repairs reporting:

- Undertake a review of Callsys to ensure it was working to its full potential
- Introduce timescales for surveyor visits
- Update Tenants' Handbook in regard to repair responsibilities
- Update Callsys to highlight tenant repair responsibilities

In addition to the recommendations above, a number of suggestions and considerations arose from the review that TOSP wished to put forward for further examination:

- Make better use of text message facilities regarding appointments
- Consider a dedicated repairs reporting telephone line
- Actively pursue recharges where appropriate and publicise the recharge policy to tenants
- Promote "Care & Repair" low cost repair service for tenants
- Provide a staff update on Callsys potential and repair responsibilities
- Undertake analysis of the top reported repairs and excessive repairs at specific properties

The forum was asked to agree the recommendations made by the panel in order to allow the development of an action plan to ensure that the recommendations were effected. Once the action plan had been

produced and reviewed, feedback would be supplied to the forum.

The meeting congratulated the Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel on a detailed and informative piece of work that raised a number of questions regarding efficiencies. The Housing Management team also noted their gratitude for the work undertaken by the panel.

The forum heard that the issue regarding Callsys was not whether it was fit for purpose, but whether it was being utilised in the manner that it was designed for. It was noted that the system had the capability to produce performance management information that might prove useful. The Housing Management team had started to address some of the issues raised and would be undertaking a root and branch review of the Revenue Repairs service and Capital Programme to ensure any service provided was professional, customer focussed and cost effective. In addition, an Asset Management Strategy was being prepared and would be brought before the forum and the Research and Development Committee in early 2016.

**RESOLVED** that the forum approved the recommendations made by the Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel as part of the Repair Reporting Review

#### **15.TF.47 HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT UPDATE**

Mark Dickenson attended the meeting to provide a presentation on the subject of the Housing Revenue Account.

Details were provided to the forum outlining the rent setting process, the impacts on rent levels for the forthcoming year based on the summer budget announcements and the effect that these would have on the Council.

The forum was provided with historic rent increase figures calculated under the Pre Self Financing Rent Convergence system (*April 2002-March 2012*), Rent Convergence system (*April 2012 – March 2015*) and the CPI+1% system that had calculated the increase for 2015/16. This system, scheduled to run until March 2025, had been superseded following an announcement as part of the Summer Budget which would see an annual rent reduction of 1% until 2020. It was noted however that households with incomes above £30k per annum would have to pay the market rental rate for their properties.

The forum was presented with figures indicating the difference between the CPI+1% rental income and the 1% reduction that would now occur as set out in the table below.

**Impact on Rental Income**  
**CPI + 1% v (1% Reduction for 4 years then CPI + 1%)**

	Years				
	1	4	10	20	30
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
<b>CPI + 1%</b>	16,098	66,076	174,039	379,970	622,711
<b>-1.00%</b>	15,624	61,318	157,131	339,901	555,375
<b>Difference</b>	<b>474</b>	<b>4,758</b>	<b>16,909</b>	<b>40,069</b>	<b>67,337</b>

The forum heard that by 2019/20, tenants would see a weekly rental saving of £9.94, however there would be a cumulative reduction in rental income for the Council of approximately £4.5m for the same period. Over 30 years, there would be a significant impact on the HRA business plan, with a difference of approximately £67m. The forum noted that should the government revert back to CPI+1% in 2020/21, then in cash terms it would take around seven years to achieve similar Rent Levels to that of 2015/16.

Other issues faced by the Council included forced sales of high value void properties and the return to central government of the difference between social rent and market rents for households with an income greater than £30k. The meeting heard that there may be further announcements made as part of the Autumn Statement on 25<sup>th</sup> November which could also impact the situation outlined above.

The meeting heard that a draft Capital Programme would be formulated by December, with an aim to get a broadly balanced programme. However, it was noted that certain discretionary spend areas could be cut in favour of statutory works. A rephasing of capital works, collection of service charges owed and monitoring of spending and performance would all be undertaken to try and minimise the impact of rent reductions. The forum would be kept fully informed of any developments and the rent setting consultation would be undertaken after the Christmas period which would provide opportunity for the forum to make their views known to be conveyed back to central government. It was heard that members of the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) had already submitted a response to central government on behalf of the 66 councils involved raising their opposition to the forthcoming changes.

## **15.TF.48 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

Darren Ibell provided the forum with a verbal update on the HRA capital programme.

The forum was provided with information relating to Decent Homes Standards as requested at the previous meeting of the forum. The meeting was asked to consider any relevant questions on the subject that could be addressed at the December meeting.

The meeting heard that the capital programme was generally on forecast in terms of expenditure and delivery, with slight concerns around major void properties and the electrical upgrades programme, although mitigation work was being undertaken in relation to those concerns.

It was noted that more replacement gas boilers would be delivered than ever before during the financial year as the team had examined the procurement process and were looking at further initiatives including consortium procurement to obtain better deals on boilers than had previously been the case. It was also noted that access rates for both repairs and replacements were good.

The roof renewal programme was ongoing at Weekley Glebe Road and Northumberland Road, although the programme had not commenced as swiftly as had been anticipated. The external wall insulation programme had commenced, although this too had been delayed due to issues with the procurement of the contractor.

Members noted that a number of funding arrangements that had previously been utilised had fallen away, with KBC needing to be more commercially minded to seize any opportunities that came forward in future. On a more positive note, increased stock data knowledge meant that there was an improved understanding of the work required across a large sector of KBC's housing.

Updates were provided in relation to the Hampden Crescent scheme and the Homes for the Future programme with the meeting noting that the final stage works had been procured for the latter with work expected to continue through to 2017/18. Highfield Road damp issues had now been resolved with cavity walls of properties emptied of rubble to prevent moisture from crossing to the flats.

Further information was provided regarding major voids, with the annual budget approaching its limit. Work was being undertaken in conjunction with Environmental Care to apply controls to the process and to take a view on how major voids were delivered in future. A report regarding this topic would be brought to the next meeting of the forum.

#### **15.TF.49 CONNECT**

John Conway advised the Forum that the December edition of Connect would feature three main themes, Wellbeing of Finance (basic bank accounts, budgeting), Wellbeing of Property (security, home insurance, condensation) and Neighbourhoods which would include photographs from the annual gardening competition.

#### **15.TF.50 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Martyn Lund provided the forum with details of the monitoring of Key Performance Indicators undertaken by TOSP.

The forum noted that in relation to rent collection the current position was similar to the previous year, which given the impact of Welfare Reform was a positive testament to the hard work of the rents team.

Introductory Tenancy Sustainability figures were provided to the meeting who noted that 28 introductory tenancies had failed during 2012/13, with 15 failed tenancies last year and 8 in the current year to date. This was also seen as a positive improvement.

Void property turnaround times were examined, the meeting hearing that no significant increase had been identified in re-let times on standard void properties. Although a lot of work had been undertaken around voids, re-let times remained at approximately 45 days.

#### **15.TF.51 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The following items were reported:

- The next Tenant Meet and Greet Session would be held in Rothwell on 19<sup>th</sup> November between 2pm and 3pm
- At the meeting of the Executive Committee held on 11<sup>th</sup> November, a decision had been taken to develop five new council-owned properties on Laburnum Crescent, catering for tenants with special needs with wheelchair accessible ground floors. These would be the first new council-built properties since the mid-1990's.
- The County Council were still in the early stages of discussions regarding refugees

- The development at Northampton Road was now operational with 16 single rooms and four flats all fully occupied.
- A street-lighting issue in Thorpe Malsor was noted

**15.TF.52 PRIZE DRAW**

The winner of the prize draw was Victor Woodcock

**15.TF.53 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the date for the next meeting of the forum was Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

*(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.32pm)*

Signed .....

Chair

*DJP*