

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

TENANTS' FORUM

Meeting held – 8th December 2016

Present: Councillors June Derbyshire, Maggie Don, David Howes, Clark Mitchell and Mike Tebbutt

Tenant Representatives: Brian Kimpton (Counties) (**Chair**)
Jim French (Desborough)
Martyn Lund (Highfield Road)
Peter Harvey (Dahlia Road)
Trevor Nash (Counties)
Sandra Nash (Counties)
Josephine Copson (Alfred Street)
Victor Woodcock (Burton Latimer)
Brent Woodford (Ashley)
Lorraine Morland (Ashley)
Roland Shipham (Highfield Road)
Sue Shipham (Highfield Road)
Reg Carvell (Leaseholder)

Also Present: John Conway (Housing)
Darren Ibell (Housing)
Max Salisbury (Housing)
Simon Haile (Environmental Care)
Dean Mitchell (Finance)
David Pope (Democratic Services)

16.TF.59 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr James Burton, Leona Mantle and Ken Burnage

16.TF.60 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16.TF.61 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16.TF.62 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

16.TF.24 – Implementation of Sterile Environment Policy

It was reported that Phase One had been completed and that the project was half way through the second phase, the second phase was currently taking place in Rothwell.

16.TF.51 – Homelessness Presentation

A funding bid had been made to central government to allow for the expansion of the homelessness service. Working in association with Kettering Futures Partnership, there was an aim to raise awareness among a whole range of agencies as to the range of services provided by KBC in relation to housing. It was anticipated the news of the bid would be received by February 2017.

16.TF.52 – Tenancy Policy Review

Concerns were raised at the low number of responses received to the consultation. It was heard that correspondence had been sent to tenants and an article had feature in the last edition of Connect.

16.TF.53 – HRA Capital Programme

A meeting would be held with the depot regarding adaptations and setting out a process of getting through the workload to then end of financial year. This issue would be brought back to a future meeting of the forum.

16.TF.56 – Any Other Business – Rent Levels

It was heard that nothing had been mentioned in the government's Autumn Statement in relation to rent, other than the anticipated 1% reduction. Pay to Stay would not be implemented in its current form, and there were not likely to be any High Value Assets payments in 2017/18.

16.TF.63 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

None.

16.TF.64 POLICING OVERVIEW

Insp Julie Mead attended the meeting and provided a presentation in regard to her work in the area as Sector Commander for Kettering and Corby.

Insp Mead provided a background to her 25 years of service in the police force and outlined the four main service priorities for the force in the next 12 months as set out below:-

- Sexual Offences
- Repeat Victimisation
- Counter Terrorism
- Violent Crime

The meeting heard that violence was an issue across the borough and formed three main categories; domestic abuse, violence as part of the Night Time Economy and youth violence.

Domestic abuse was the fastest rising violent crime in the county and police worked hard to ensure victims were supported and children protected. In relation to the Night Time Economy, Kettering's was the second largest in the county and intensive work had been undertaken with licensees and in association with Operation Scorpion to reduce violence by 14%. Youth violence was an increasing issue, with 13% of all violence offences with a named suspect committed by under 18's. Work was being undertaken with schools and early intervention programmes to reduce youth violence.

The forum was asked to consider what police visibility meant. It was noted that officers dealing with crimes such as domestic abuse and counter terrorism would rarely be seen by the public. In addition Proactive Teams wore plain clothes and were therefore not visible to the public. Police remained aware and committed to tackling low-level crime including speeding, ASB and dog fouling even in the face of limited numbers of officers.

The meeting heard that there were plans to undertake joint working with KBC wardens who would be provided with PCSO powers. In addition, police cadets were undertaking useful crime prevention work which was also high-visibility and a positive tool in deterring offenders. Other schemes in operation to tackle crime across the district were outlined.

The meeting was provided with details of success stories including:

- No increase in ASB over the Halloween period
- The cross border team had achieved significant success in work with the travelling community
- A workshop in regard to road and internet safety among other topics had been attended by 300+ children
- Increased contact had been achieved with the largest and most successful Neighbourhood Watch scheme in the county
- Police Cadets had donated £500 to Street Pastors to look after vulnerable individuals in the NTE
- The Proactive Team had recently been active in Kettering and had

achieved a significant number of arrests as well as vehicle, weapon and drug seizures

The meeting was asked to consider what crime issues meant most to them, with Insp Mead anticipating having four events each year to ascertain locally identified policing priorities.

The forum was encouraged to follow Insp Mead and the police force on social media platforms, where relevant information and updates were regularly provided which could be beneficial to residents and businesses.

The forum asked questions in relation to PCSOs, parking enforcement around schools and crime resolution rates.

16.TF.65 ACHIEVEMENTS IN 2016 & CHALLENGES FOR 2017

John Conway provided a presentation to the meeting outlining the achievements made by the Housing Team during 2016, as well as the challenges faced in the coming year.

Hampden Crescent

Work had commenced on the delivery of 18 new apartments that had formerly been unpopular 3-bed flats affected by ASB. The project would be well-insulated and result in a more attractive building that would be easier to let.

Introductory Tenancies (IT)

The number of ITs ending within the first 12 months had reduced significantly from 16 to just eight over the last year following the introduction of increased tenant support.

Mutual Exchanges

This area was being promoted to help tenants reside in the most appropriately sized properties. Increased exchanges would also result in fewer void properties. To date 34 exchanges had been made during the year, compared to 24 the previous year.

Welcome Meetings

A total of 25 Welcome Meetings had been held during the year with 132 tenants attending. These were a successful method of engaging with tenants at the beginning of their tenancies and assisted in the identification of vulnerable tenants who could be offered additional support.

Sterile Communal Areas Policy

The meeting heard that Phase 1 had already completed, with Phase 2 of the project due to start shortly.

Anti-social Behaviour (ASB)

A total of 35 community protection warning letters and 14 community protection notices had been issued so far in the financial year.

Houses for the Future

Phase 3 at Desborough was nearing completion, with an aim to extend the scheme to Rothwell and then Kettering within 18 months. Nearly 40 properties had been completed as part of the scheme.

Buckleuch Academy

The Homelessness Team had attended Buckleuch Academy and provided a presentation to Years 7-10, with very positive feedback received.

Stock Condition Survey

60% of the KBC housing stock had now been surveyed, with an aim to complete all properties before continuing surveys on an annual rolling basis.

Sparkle Project

The second scheme of the Sheltered Housing upgrades at The Lawns had completed.

Scooter Stores

The installation of scooter stores had completed.

Tenancy Support

A total of 141 tenants had been assisted by Tenancy Support Services; with a total of £1499 secured in backdate Housing Benefit.

LifePlan

A total of 71 tenants had been supported through LifePlan, with pre-tenancy training provided to four customers at Wellington House.

Laburnum Crescent

The first new council housing in a generation was under construction with completion anticipated for 2017. A tour of the properties would be undertaken by members of the forum before the properties were occupied.

Challenges for 2017

The meeting heard that Kettering was one of the top ten local authorities for household growth and that insufficient new homes were being constructed to keep up with demand. Home ownership was out of reach for many and private sector rents were increasing rapidly, up 14% in the Borough for a 3-bed dwelling in the last year alone. In turn, people were being priced out of the market, with significant rises in evictions, homelessness and temporary accommodation use.

Welfare Reform was ongoing, with the introduction of Universal Credit and a reduced benefit cap of £20,000. Against this, social housing providers were in the second of a four year 1% rent reduction period.

Opportunities

It was noted that the national housing agenda was now focussed on increasing the supply of dwellings, with a housing white paper due to be published in January 2017. Some of the more controversial aspects of the Housing and Planning Act 2016, Pay to Stay and high value void sales, would see no progress during 2017.

KBC had been operating under the HRA self-financing regime since 2012, when £72m had been borrowed to extricate KBC from the housing subsidy system. Sufficient payments had now been made that could allow for further borrowing to develop new housing.

There had been fewer void properties during this financial year as well as fewer evictions and failed tenancies. However, additional 3 and 4-bed properties were required, so a Home Move campaign would commence in early 2017 to target tenants under-occupying properties with the aim of smoothing a transition to a smaller property. These newly available properties could then be used to ease the burden on temporary accommodation.

Priorities for 2017 were to increase housing supply, more efficient use of existing properties, tackling homelessness and examining government policies to see where positive results could be obtained.

Members asked questions in relation to Homes for the Future and the Right to Buy scheme. The meeting was advised that this issue would be brought to a future meeting as a presentation.

16.TF.66 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Darren Ibell attended the meeting and presented the monthly HRA Capital Programme report.

It was reported that in relation to aids and adaptations, there was a need to identify which tenants were most in need and to plan a delivery timetable to undertake works going forward.

In relation to door entry systems at communal blocks, rough sleeping and ASB was an issue in regard to doors being forced open. All doors requiring replacement had now been identified and a four-year contract had been signed agreeing a replacement programme that would guarantee positive economies of scale.

An update was provided in relation to the scheme at Hampden Crescent with the meeting noting the interest being received in the

project from larger local authorities.

It was heard that tenant feedback received in relation to works carried out as part of the capital programme had historically been quite low. Work had been undertaken to improve this, with a 25% response rate the minimum requirement. The current response rate for customer feedback stood at 33% to date.

Going forward there was an intention to:-

- Increase overall stock surveys - currently at 60%; and
- Automate void reports to produce more valuable data

The forum asked questions in regards to communal doors, responsive repairs and window replacements on the Highfield Estate.

16.TF.67 CONNECT

The forum heard that the Christmas edition of Connect would be delivered in the coming week and production of the January edition had commenced. Any suggestions for articles could be communicated directly to members of the editorial panel.

16.TF.68 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Martyn Lund reported that the new communication review was still in progress, with further details to be supplied to a future meeting of the forum. The panel was also working closely with Simon Haile, the Operations Manager for Environmental Care.

16.TF.69 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

16.TF.70 PRIZE DRAW

The winner of the prize draw was Brent Woodford

16.TF.71 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date for the next meeting of the forum would be 12th January 2017.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.16pm)

Signed

Chair

DJP