

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

TENANTS' FORUM

Meeting held – 14th September 2017

Present: Councillors Maggie Don, Andrew Dutton, David Howes, Mark Rowley and Margaret Talbot

Tenant Representatives:

Brian Kimpton	(Counties) (Chair)
Moira Brown	(Highfield Road)
Ken Burnage	(Thorpe Malsor)
Reg Carvell	(Leaseholder)
Josephine Copson	(Alfred Street)
Peter Harvey	(Dahlia Road)
Peter Matsa	(Geddington)
Evelyn Odame	(Athelstan Road)
Victor Woodcock	(Burton Latimer)
Brent Woodford	(Ashley)

Also Present:

John Conway	(Housing)
Leona Mantle	(Housing)
Anne-Marie Loughran	(Housing)
Anna Dernie	(Housing)
Tracey Copeland	(Housing)
Pearl Nathaniel	(Finance)
David Pope	(Democratic Services)

17.TF.17 ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was proposed by Councillor David Howes and seconded by Councillor Margaret Talbot that Councillor Mark Rowley be elected as Chair.

RESOLVED that Councillor Mark Rowley be elected Chair of the Tenants' Forum for the municipal year 2017/18.

17.TF.18 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Maggie Don and Mike Tebbutt. It was noted that Cllr Margaret Talbot was substituting for Cllr Tebbutt.

Apologies were also received from Martyn Lund, Sandra Nash, Trevor Nash, Jim French and Lorraine Morland.

17.TF.19 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

17.TF.20 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th July 2017 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

17.TF.21 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

16.TF.87 – Roughton Close

A survey had been sent to tenants and leaseholders regarding the new cleaning programme and results for this were requested. It was heard that an item on this subject would be submitted to the forum at its meeting in October.

16.TF.94 – Any Other Business

It was reported that the issue regarding standing water at 71 The Oval had been resolved.

17.TF.08 – Fire Safety in Council Properties

The meeting heard that the main article of the current edition of Connect examined fire safety within council properties. In addition the third phase of the Sterile Environment Policy had gone live and was progressing smoothly.

17.TF.10 – ASB Update

It was noted that there had now been four closure orders granted for properties suffering from ASB in the Borough and a report would be brought to a future meeting of the forum on the topic. A clean-up and environment improvement event had been held at the location of the latest closure order.

17.TF.22 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

None

17.TF.23 HOUSING REPAIRS

A report was submitted which sought to provide an update on all aspects of the Housing Repairs service.

The meeting heard that with effect from the 4th September, the Housing Property Team, formerly based at the council depot, had transferred to the Housing Team, with 8 managers and supervisors and 43 tradespeople now forming part of one team. It was noted that this change would enable the team to focus on service delivery and reducing costs rather than managing internal relationships. Over the next 18 months to 2 years, it was anticipated that a fully integrated landlord service for tenants could be developed to deliver a service that was professional, customer focussed and cost effective. To that end, a service improvement project would be undertaken, titled "Reinventing Repairs".

Immediate actions required to improve the service included the requirement to reduce both the number of void properties (currently 86) and the average time taken to re-let them (currently 69 days) as the performance figures for both were deemed to be poor. The Executive Committee had been requested to approve a virement of £130,000 to the voids budget, which it would consider at its meeting on 20th September. In addition, out of hours arrangements needed to be made more effective and more comprehensive use of the Callsys computer system was required to allow for accurate performance data and appropriate repairs appointments to be provided. The final area requiring immediate attention was a need to ensure the team was statutorily compliant in all areas.

It was heard that areas for action within the next 6 months would include:-

- Workforce management and supervision
- Appointments for responsive repairs
- Disability adaptations
- Asset Management Strategy

The Asset Management Strategy would be brought to the forum for approval to ensure the approach to investment going forward was both logical and based on sound data.

Longer term aims included:-

- Stock investment needs, customer requirements, financial and policy environment
- Focus and scope of operations
- Organisational structure
- Service improvement and innovation

The forum noted that tenants could be involved through the Tenants Overview and Scrutiny Panel, which would be consulted prior to any service improvement initiatives being implemented. Tenant focus groups and regular features in Connect would also ensure tenants were part of the process.

The forum asked questions in relation to void targets and the budgetary position in relation to the repairs service.

17.TF.24 KEYWAYS HOUSING ALLOCATIONS SCHEME

The meeting was provided with an update on the review of the Housing Allocations Scheme and sought the views of the forum on the proposed changes.

It was noted that the scheme was reviewed annually and took into account changes to the local housing market to ensure the document remained relevant to the needs of the council and tenants.

A number of key trends had been identified since the last review and the meeting noted the significant increase in private rent rates which resulted in such housing becoming increasingly unaffordable, particularly as a result of Welfare Reform. Analysis of private rents locally indicated that they were typically 35% higher than current Local Housing Allowance (LHA) rates and for those under the age of 35, approximately 82% above the LHA rate which would remain capped until 2020.

It was heard that such a difficult housing climate had resulted in a significant increase in homeless numbers, with a four-fold increase from 2014/15 to date. The ending of a private tenancy was the single biggest reason for KBC accepting a household as homeless with an increasing number of statutory homeless acceptances coming from families with children.

There were currently 117 households in temporary accommodation with a number having housing debt that prevented them from obtaining housing in the private sector or being discharged through the Keyways system. This situation continued to present serious financial implications for KBC and resulted in an increase in the use of temporary accommodation.

Proposed changes to the Housing Allocations Scheme document included:-

- A full review of content and item order to reduce the length of the document and to make it user friendly
- Statutory homeless applications to be administered differently, increasing the likelihood of qualification to Keyways.
- Homeless households would have the ability to bid 5 times per bidding cycle to increase the chance of securing accommodation and leaving temporary accommodation.
- Housing Options would reserve the right to make bids on a statutory homeless families' behalf
- Clarification of the definition of dependent and non-dependent children to make it clearer who could be accepted on an application.
- A review of priority bands with a number of changes including the removal of certain criteria rarely awarded.

A four week public consultation had been undertaken in relation to the changes, with all those registered on Keyways plus voluntary and statutory partners including Housing Associations given the opportunity to provide

comment. Feedback received had informed revisions to the scheme which would be tabled at the Executive Committee to be held on 20th September. If approved at that meeting the scheme would come into effect 10 working days after the meeting.

17.TF.25 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The forum noted that works at Hampden Crescent had commenced three weeks previously and the council was actively assisting shopkeepers at the site to minimise disruption and allow them to continue to trade during the refurbishment. Signage at the site regarding timescales would be amended as the project was anticipated to run to July 2018.

The Homes for the Future project had stalled as a result of the main contractor entering liquidation and being wound up at the end of August. A solution was being worked upon for the two families who had decamped to allow for their properties to be refurbished. It was hoped that work on the project would recommence by the end of September. It was noted that this delay had caused minor knock-on effects to other projects across the Borough.

The meeting heard that the window-replacement scheme on Highfield Estate had temporarily ceased as negotiations were ongoing to remove the current contractor from the project. All tenants had been written to and advised accordingly, with work anticipated to recommence before the end of the financial year.

The meeting also noted that stock condition surveys continued to be undertaken in conjunction with the current work programme.

17.TF.26 CONNECT

The meeting heard that the latest edition of Connect would be distributed over the coming days. Articles included items in relation to the annual report, tenant involvement, environmental improvement works, bulk waste collections, fly-tipping, protecting vulnerable neighbours and a centre spread covering fire safety. The editorial panel would shortly convene to commence work on the next edition, with Reinventing Repairs featuring as an article.

17.TF.27 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Brian Kimpton reported that the ongoing review was progressing and was approaching the final report stage and it was anticipated that this would be submitted to the forum before the close of 2017.

17.TF.28 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The issue of rough sleepers in Rothwell was raised, with it being noted that the Housing Team liaised with police and other statutory agencies to provide assistance to those who required it.

It was reported that work was required on the garden of a void property on Dahlia Road. In response it was noted that a programme of works was scheduled for a number of properties including the one in question.

17.TF.29 PRIZE DRAW

The winner of the prize draw was Moira Brown.

17.TF.30 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 7.31pm)

Signed

Chair

DJP