

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

TENANTS' FORUM

Meeting held – 8th February 2018

Present: Councillor Mark Rowley (Chair)
Councillors Maggie Don and Andrew Dutton

Tenant Representatives: Brian Kimpton (Counties)
Peter Harvey (Dahlia Road)
Josephine Copson (Alfred Street)
Brent Woodford (Ashley)
Reg Carvell (Leaseholder)
Victor Woodcock (Burton Latimer)
Martyn Lund (Highfield Road)
Anne Swoboda (Rothwell)
Lindsay Woodridge (Sackville Street)
Steven Soper (Sackville Street)
Hamid Salen (Geddington)
Maira Brown (Highfield Crescent)
Deborah Massey (Dahlia Road)

Also Present: John Conway (Housing)
Leona Mantle (Housing)
Tracey Copeland (Housing)
Darren Ibell (Housing)
Simon Haille (Housing)
Dean Mitchell (Finance)
Pearl Nathaniel (Finance)
Mark Dickenson (Finance)
Callum Galluzzo (Democratic Services)

17.TF.88 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr June Derbyshire and Cllr Mike Tebbutt.

Apologies were also received from Jim French, Sandra Nash, Trevor Nash, Aggie Koziura and Peter Matsa

17.TF.89 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

17.TF.90 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 11th January 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

17.TF.91 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

17.TF.76 – Homelessness Reduction Act

The meeting heard that the final version of the Code of Practise had not yet been issued to local authorities although this was expected by the end of February.

17.TF.85 – Any Other Business

An update was given on the number of households living in temporary accommodation. The meeting heard that there were 118 households at the end of December 2017 living in temporary accommodation with 116 households at the end of January 2018. It was also heard that 25 individuals had been accommodated under the Severe Weather Emergency Protocols.

17.TF.92 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

None

17.TF.93 RENT REVIEW

Dean Mitchell and Pearl Nathaniel attended the meeting and gave a presentation regarding the Council's draft budget and details regarding the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) income and expenditure.

It was noted that the Council's draft budget of £102.4m for 2018/19 was under review during the formal consultation period. The budget consisted of:-

- General Fund Account - £52.1m
- Housing Revenue Account - £15.4m
- Capital Programme - £34.9m

The forum noted that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) was ring-fenced and had no other council services with which to compete. It was further noted that the Council's proposed budget for 2018/19 was balanced.

A brief outline was provided to the meeting regarding HRA expenditure in relation to Repairs and Maintenance, General Management, Special Services and Capital Resources.

The forum was informed of the structure regarding the Council's loans. £72.9m was borrowed in 2012 made up of fixed rate maturity loans. A repayment of £3 Million will be made during 2018/19 which will mean that £20 Million or 27% will have been paid off since 2012.

The meeting was advised that the process used to calculate rent increases in previous years had altered in the financial year 2016/17. The formula used to calculate rent increases had moved from the Retail Price Index (RPI+ 0.5% + £2 p/w) to the Consumer Price Index (CPI+1%) for 2015/16. Then Central government subsequently amended this policy again, requesting housing authorities introduce a - 1.0% rent reduction for the next four years from 2016/17 to 2019/20.

The meeting heard that the Council had little option but to implement levels proposed by central government and that a freeze or an increase in rents would cause significant difficulties. Therefore, officers were proposing to go with government policy and accept a -1% rent reduction.

Officers then proposed the recommendation for the Rent Review 2018/19 as follows:-

- Average rent decrease - - **1.0%**
- Average weekly rent per property - **£79.43**
- Average weekly reduction - - **£0.81**

(The officers and councillors left the Chamber at 6.57pm to allow tenants time to discuss the decrease and vote. They were recalled to the Chamber at 7.03pm)

RESOLVED that the members of the Tenants' Forum agreed to the -1.0% decrease for 2018/19;

17.TF.94 REINVENTING REPAIRS

The meeting received a further update on the ongoing Reinventing Repairs project.

It was heard that the Council had changed the process in which Gas/Boiler repairs took place. Previously engineers operated on a “attend and make safe” policy where this had been changed to “attend and repair”. Along with this members heard that gas engineers now have the responsibility for any repair they visit and have to see the repair through including ordering materials directly from the supplier.

Members of the forum heard that these positive changes allow for a quicker and more efficient service.

Work would also continue on voids. It was noted that work on 29 “toxic” void properties had been completed and returned the council’s housing stock. It was anticipated that a further 11 would be completed by the middle of February, with management of the voids process being more efficient going forward.

Members received a brief outline on the policies and timescales regarding a void property. It was noted that a Voids Project Manager was currently being recruited, on a one year fixed term contract, who’s responsibility would be to overhaul and improve the current process.

The Head of Housing and Environmental Care Operations Manager would be reviewing the staffing structure of the depot team with a view to providing career paths and retaining quality staff.

The meeting heard that work would also be undertaken in relation to procurement and stores and the preparation of an Asset Management Strategy.

17.TF.95 OUT OF HOURS SERVICE

Leona Mantle attended the forum and provided a presentation to members outlining the current process and statistics involved with the Council’s out of hours service.

The Forum heard that Redditch & Bromsgrove Council who were Tele care/Housing specialists are the providers of the Council’s out of hours Service. This service deals with a variety of different circumstances including: -

- Emergencies
- Homelessness
- Emergencies within a Landlord Function (Flood/Fire)
- Emergency Repairs.

Three teams which consisted of the Support Worker Team, Repair Operatives and Duty Housing Officers respond to out of hours emergencies.

Statistics were provided to the forum which outlined how many times each team had been called out during the end of 2017.

	October	November	December
Support Worker Team	25	31	34
Repair Operatives	140	189	309
Duty Housing Officer	11	13	23

17.TF.96 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME

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

It was noted that current projects and programmes were drawing to a close and that next year's programme were currently being put together.

The forum heard that the council had agreed a 4 year contract with a local company to deal with ongoing roofing problems in the Northumberland road area.

It was also heard that the contract for replacement Windows in Highfield had been agreed and work would start in the coming weeks.

Members of the forum noted that works on the Hampden Crescent block A were due to be completed in the next financial year with members being invited to attend the show flat during the annual housing tour, with work due to start on block B following the completion of Block A.

17.TF.97 CONNECT

The forum heard that the first draft of the next edition of Connect was currently being finalised and that this was to include an item on ways tenants could improve their areas through funding opportunities.

The forum also heard that the next edition of Connect was due to be delivered in the middle of March.

17.TF.80 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Martyn Lund attended the meeting and provided members with an updated regarding the ongoing review. The finalised report had been drafted and submitted to officers for comments.

Members heard that once the report had been processed by officers, it would be published and brought back to the forum.

17.TF.98 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Cllr Don requested that information relating to Neighbourhood Managers be fed back to the forum, and that the managers be invited to a future Tenants Forum to provide feedback to members regarding recent bids and other funding opportunities for tenants. It was heard that the next edition of the Connect would feature an item on funding opportunities for tenants to improve their area.

Members of the forum heard that Martyn Lund had been invited as a regional representative of the Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel to attend a meeting at Parliament to challenge negative stereotypes with regards to social housing.

It was also heard that members of the tenants forum would be invited to a special event due to take place on the 1st March as a way for Kettering Borough Council to say thank you and to celebrate the work of its tenants.

17.TF.99 PRIZE DRAW

The winner of the prize draw was Josephine Copson.

17.TF.100 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date for the next meeting of the forum would be 9th March 2018.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.25pm)

Signed
Chair

CG