

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

TENANTS' FORUM

Meeting held – 13th September 2018

Present: Councillor Mark Rowley (Chair)
Councillors Maggie Don and Margaret Talbot

Tenant Representatives: Brent Woodford (Ashley) (Chair)
Brian Kimpton (Counties)
Martyn Lund (Highfield Road)
Steven Soper (Sackville Street)
Lindsay Wooldridge (Sackville Street)
Hamid Saleri (Geddington)
Jim French (Desborough)
Ken Burnage (Thorpe Malsor)
Anne Swoboda (Rothwell)
Stephen Panther (Sackville Street)
Reg Carvell (Leaseholder – Highfield Cr)
Josephine Copson (Alfred Street)
Sandra Nash (Counties)
Trevor Nash (Counties)
Victor Woodcock (Burton Latimer)

Also Present: John Conway (Housing)
Darren Ibell (Housing)
Jo Perry (Housing)
Tracey Copeland (Housing)
Suzanne Jackson (Housing)
David Pope (Democratic Services)

18.TF.25 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs June Derbyshire, Andrew Dutton, David Howes and Mike Tebbutt. It was noted that Cllr Margaret Talbot was acting as substitute for Cllr Howes. Apologies were also received from Leona Mantle and Moira Brown.

18.TF.26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

18.TF.27 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 19th July 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18.TF.28 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

17.TF.132 – Reinventing Repairs

It was reported that the project team working on voids was making good progress, with 43 properties returned to council housing stock between 16th July and 10th September. It was anticipated to see a substantial decline in the number of void properties over the forthcoming four to six weeks. Only if a void property couldn't be ut

18.TF.21 – Public Sector Reform

Forum members were provided with two information documents in relation to public sector reform; a summary of the discussions held at the previous meeting and an extract from the submitted report. It was noted that the Tenants' Forum was the only one of its kind in the county to contribute towards the consultation.

18.TF.29 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

None

18.TF.30 STAR TENANT SATISFACTION SURVEY

A presentation was provided to the meeting which detailed the results of the latest Tenant Satisfaction Survey, undertaken by the independent organisation, BMG Research.

It was heard that the survey was an important tool to capture the views on tenants in regard to their perception of KBC's housing service delivery. The survey results would be utilised to inform possible future service improvements and provided benchmarking against other housing providers. The last such survey had been undertaken in 2016.

Details were provided of the survey methods, which had been sent to all sheltered housing residents and approximately two-thirds of general needs tenants. Paper surveys had been sent with covering letters and freepost return envelopes and an option to submit the survey online had been provided. Overall there had been a 25% return rate which

provided a robust set of results, with BMG confident in the accuracy of the data gathered.

Overall service satisfaction stood at 84%, with 11% of tenants dissatisfied with the housing service received. The figure for sheltered housing tenants was significantly higher at 94%, although this was considered to be a normal finding for such surveys.

The main two service priorities for tenants had been identified as repairs and maintenance (71%) followed by the overall quality of the home (44%). Sheltered tenants reported that the LifeLine emergency call system was a strong priority for them (55%). A number of service perception statements had been provided to tenants and results were very similar to those seen in the 2016 survey.

Results for the following aspects of the housing service were provided as follows:

Service	Satisfied (2016 +/-)	Dissatisfied (2016 +/-)
Repairs and Maintenance	78% (-4%)	17% (14%)
Quality of Homes	81% (-2%)	14% (12%)
Neighbourhood	82% (-5%)	10% (9%)
Value for Money - Rent	88% (4%)	6% (9%)
Value for Money – Service Charges	79% (4%)	11% (1%)
Listening to views & acting on them	70% (1%)	15% (-1%)
Being kept informed	76% (-2%)	12% (3%)

As with the overall service satisfaction, all categories showed slightly higher satisfaction levels among sheltered housing tenants.

It was reported that 66% of tenants responding to the survey had received some form of repair in the previous 12 months and the three main issues for tenants in their neighbourhood were car parking, litter and dog fouling. Again these were very similar to the results of the 2016 survey.

It was noted that although a large number of service and system improvements had been put in place since the 2016, it took a while for these to fully bed in and be noticed by all tenants. Therefore, the results of the current survey compared to the 2016 figures should not be considered too disheartening.

It was requested that a version of the survey results fully separating sheltered housing and general needs results be supplied to members of the forum as part of the minutes.

18.TF.31 HOMEMOVE RELAUNCH

In the absence of the Tenancy Services Manager, this item was deferred to the October meeting.

18.TF.32 SOCIAL HOUSING GREEN PAPER

A presentation was provided to the meeting that gave an overview of the recently published governmental Social Housing Green Paper.

It was heard that in the light of the Grenfell Tower tragedy, the Secretary of State for Housing had announced that the green paper would be the most significant for a generation and would provide the government's vision for social housing nationally.

The document stated that social housing tenants should feel valued and respected, with landlords treating them with decency and respect. Social housing should provide a positive step to help people get on in life as well providing a good quality, well run safety net for those in society who needed it most.

The meeting noted that currently in Kettering, 66% of residents were owner-occupiers, 20% were in private rented accommodation, 9% were KBC tenants and 5% rented from Housing Associations. The council therefore played a significant role as a landlord across the borough. It was further noted that there had been a tremendous increase in the number of tenants in the private rented sector over the previous 20 years.

The demographics of social housing tenants were provided, with the forum noting the numbers of single-person households and households with a single parent with dependent children. Statistics were also supplied for the employment status of social housing residents. Nationally 91% of social housing was let to UK nationals, a figure that was yet higher in Kettering.

The green paper had promised a fairer deal for social housing residents and aimed to achieve that in the following ways:-

Safe and Decent Homes

The government wished to help residents engage with their landlord regarding the safety of their home. A pilot project exploring ways to communicate and engage with landlords was proposed alongside a review of the Decent Home Standard to see whether it could be improved. In addition consideration was being given as to whether recent changes to regulations governing the private rented sector should be applied to social housing. It was considered that these were

laudable ambitions but the measures proposed did not go far enough.

Resolving Complaints

Residents should be able to influence decision and challenge landlords to improve performance as well as having access to an effective complaints procedure with a strengthened housing regulator. Residents needed access to useful information regarding performance to be able to hold landlords to account. Incentives should be utilised alongside sanctions to encourage and reward good practice.

Tackling Stigma

There was a need to challenge prejudice and negative stereotypes for residents. The government planned to introduce awards to celebrate the role of residents and providing funding for community events.

Expanding Housing Supply

The government would no longer be implementing the Higher Value Assets provisions of the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and would be reviewing how councils could use income from Right to Buy sales to build new council homes. The government would also be scrapping plans to require councils to offer fixed term tenancies to new tenants. KBC had introduced fixed term tenancies for new tenants and feedback on the progress of these would be presented to a future meeting of the forum. A review would be undertaken regarding housing allocation schemes nationally and there was an aim to make it easier for those with shared ownership to build additional equity.

Overall, the Social Housing Green Paper indicated a significant change in rhetoric from the government and recognised the value of social housing and the contribution of tenants to society. There was a strong commitment to improve standards and a roll back on the more controversial aspects of Housing Act 2016, with a view to reintroducing a more interventionist regulatory system.

However, it was considered that although the overall priorities and objectives were a step in the right direction, the paper could have been more ambitious. There remained signs that the government considered social housing as a short term tenure and Welfare Reform was barely referenced in the document despite being a very pressing issue for tenants. In addition, there was little information regarding investment in building new and maintaining existing housing.

18.TF.33 DRAFT LETTABLE STANDARDS AND VOIDS UPDATE

The forum was provided with a copy of the KBC Standard for Letting Empty Homes (The Lettable Standard) document.

Forum members were asked to consider the contents of the document and provide any feedback by 26th September. A final version of the document would be submitted to the next meeting of the forum once these comments had been collated.

18.TF.34 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The forum was provided with the latest asset management report.

Updates were provided in relation to communal door entry system replacements, boiler repairs and Hampden Crescent redevelopment. It was heard that the first tenants were anticipated to move into the refurbished Block A by the start of October, with procurement works underway for Block B. It was hoped to be on site by March 2019.

The meeting noted that the Homes for the Future project had reached its final phase, but due to financial constraints, this would be put on hiatus until 2020/21. A full review would be undertaken, seeking the views of those tenants whose properties had formed part of the scheme. In addition, energy usage would be reviewed given the works to make the properties more energy efficient.

It was reported that a specific brand of fire-door in place across a small number of council properties had failed national safety tests following the Grenfell Tower tragedy. Further guidance and test results were awaited before any appropriate action was taken.

18.TF.35 CONNECT

It was reported that the current edition of Connect had been delivered to tenants during the week.

18.TF.36 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

The meeting heard that the panel would be working alongside the housing team to implement changes proposed as part of the last TOSP review. Consideration of a topic for

18.TF.37 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Figures were provided for the number of households currently in temporary accommodation. It was requested that these figures

become a regular item on the forum agenda.

18.TF.38 PRIZE DRAW

The winner of the prize draw was Ken Burnage.

17.TF.39 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date for the next meeting of the forum would be 11th October 2018.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.06pm)

Signed

Chair

DJP