

## **BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

### **TENANTS' FORUM**

#### **Meeting held – 11<sup>th</sup> October 2018**

- Present:** Councillor Mark Rowley (Chair)
- Councillors June Derbyshire, Maggie Don, Andrew Dutton, David Howes and Mike Tebbutt
- Tenant Representatives:**
- |                    |                              |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
| Brian Kimpton      | (Counties)                   |
| Martyn Lund        | (Highfield Road)             |
| Steven Soper       | (Sackville Street)           |
| Lindsay Wooldridge | (Sackville Street)           |
| Hamid Saleri       | (Geddington)                 |
| Peter Harvey       | (Dahlia Road)                |
| Ken Burnage        | (Thorpe Malsor)              |
| Moira Brown        | (Highfield Road)             |
| 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)             |
| Leona Mantle    | (Housing)             |
| Jo Perry        | (Housing)             |
| Tracey Copeland | (Housing)             |
| Dean Mitchell   | (Housing)             |
| Pearl Nathaniel | (Finance)             |
| David Pope      | (Democratic Services) |
- Hannah McIlvenny (Wood Green Animal Centre)

#### **18.TF.40 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Brent Woodford, Darren Ibell and Simon Haile.

#### **18.TF.41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**18.TF.42 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2018 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

**18.TF.43 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

**18.TF.28 – Reinventing Repairs**

An update was provided on the current position with void properties. There were currently 86 void properties with 66 of those being worked on with the remainder in the process of being let, compared to 96 voids the previous month.

**18.TF.30 – STAR Tenants Satisfaction Survey**

Survey results separating sheltered housing and general needs results for the above survey had not been sent, but would be appended to the minutes.

**18.TF.32 – Social Housing Green Paper**

Forum comments made at the previous meeting and those of Research and Development Committee formed part of a draft response to government that would be submitted to the Executive Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> October.

**18.TF.37 – Any Other Business – Homelessness**

The latest homelessness figures were supplied to the meeting, with 166 households in temporary accommodation, a rise of five households from the previous meeting. A report on the matter was being written and would be tabled at both Tenants' Forum and Monitoring and Audit Committee. A request was made to supply figures in relation to the number of people provided assistance under the new Homelessness Reduction Act.

**18.TF.44 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES**

An issue relating to school buses and parking on Highfield Road was raised. It was heard that this matter would be forwarded onto Northamptonshire County Council.

## 18.TF.45 PET POLICY

The forum heard that a revised Pets Policy was in the process of being developed and the meeting was asked to provide comments to inform the process. In addition, a presentation was provided by Hannah McIlvenny on the work of the Wood Green Animal Centre that had recently started to work in partnership with the council to provide support to pet owners that required it.

The meeting noted the RSPCA Footprint Award as being a guide for the future policy, recognising good practice as a landlord when considering animal welfare within council housing stock. It was heard that although pet ownership was a challenge for the council, working alongside Wood Green could help to ensure that well cared for and responsibly kept pets were positive for the community in general, health and wellbeing of tenants and could help to reduce social isolation.

The revised Pet Policy would outline the expected behaviour of tenants with regard to their legal obligations, KBC requirements and the potential consequences of not adhering to the policy, which would be linked to tenancy agreements and the council's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy.

The policy would provide a clear statement of tenant responsibility for the welfare and conduct of their pet. In addition, the policy would detail what pet types were allowed in specific property types as well as covering breeding, accidental ownership and abandonment of pets. Procedures on common pet related problems and how KBC would manage these would also be provided.

A consultation process would be undertaken to inform the establishment of various aspects of the pet policy such as the application process, pet agreement and a stringent process for the support of animals due to the overarching need for the welfare of pets.

Hannah McIlvenny provided the meeting with an overview of the work of Wood Green Animal Centre. The centre aimed to provide practical support for pets and owners in times of difficulty, to improve and maintain pet welfare and to promote appropriate pet choices.

The centre worked in partnership with local councils including KBC, Peterborough foodbank, RSPCA inspectors and dog wardens and provided a number of services including:-

- Home visits
- Preventative treatments
- Short-term food assistance
- Means tested neutering services

- Health and wellbeing checks
- Homeless shelter visits
- Local community events and workshops

The centre wished to undertake community events in the Borough as part of the new link with KBC and a suggestion was made for a roadshow to be held on Highfield Road. A further suggestion was made for the centre to be added to the Kettering Futures Partnership website which would increase the exposure of its work.

#### **18.TF.46 HOMEMOVE RELAUNCH**

The forum received a presentation detailing the relaunch of the HomeMove scheme, originally launched in 2009 to assist tenants with downsizing when under-occupying larger properties. It was heard that the scheme had later been extended to offer enhanced funding for those tenants prepared to move from adapted properties or moving to more suitably adapted properties.

Tenants wishing to take part in the scheme had received one-to-one support from a HomeMove advisor, as well as assistance with packing, removals, utility supplies, clearance of the property being vacated and redirection of mail up to a specified level of budget.

Details were provided for the existing HomeMove grant structure that featured a number of categories of funding dependant on the age of tenants, the number of bedrooms that the tenant would be downsizing by and whether the property was adapted. Grants currently ranged from £250 for a working-age tenant downsizing by one bedroom, to £1,000 for the release of a fully adapted property.

The scheme had initial seen a positive take-up, but the number of tenants taking part had gradually slowed, although there were considered to be a high number of tenants who might be willing to downsize should additional advice and assistance be available.

A number of case studies were provided to the meeting, who noted that demand was outstripping supply of larger family homes, with 25% of Keyways applications requiring 3 or 4 bed homes, but with less than 12% of available stock falling into this category.

It was considered that there was a need to streamline the existing grant structure, widen eligibility to take part in the scheme and increase awareness of HomeMove among tenants.

Suggested grant structures for the scheme going forward were outlined as follows:-

- Downsizing by one-bed - £750
- Downsizing by two beds - £1000
- Downsizing from a fully adapted property - £1000
- Downsizing from a partially adapted property - £750

The proposal would also be extended to include tenants moving to any smaller 1 or 2 bedroom property.

The relaunch would see full details published in the winter edition of Connect magazine, via periodic tenancy visits, through Keyways, leaflets in on the plasma screens in Customer Services, thorough partner agencies (GP's, care providers etc.) and by a direct mail out to households known to be under-occupying.

The forum considered that the proposed revised grant system would be an insufficient incentive for a significant number of tenants considering the stressful and complicated nature of moving property. It was considered that the package on offer should make the move irresistible to tenants and the additional cost would be mitigated by the increase in the availability of larger family properties which in turn could have a positive impact on housing waiting lists and the use of temporary accommodation.

In addition, the scheme should provide more practical support with work undertaken alongside partnership agencies to help those attached to their properties. The forum requested that case studies were provided with any promotional literature to give tenants a clearer idea of what was involved.

#### **18.TF.47 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The forum was provided with the latest asset management report.

It was reported that tenants had moved into Montrose House, the first completed block of the Hampden Crescent development. It was anticipated that work would commence on Block B in early 2019.

The forum noted that a draft Capital Programme for 2019/2020 would be submitted to the December meeting.

A request was made to provide a percentage of works undertaken within the asset management report, specifically in relation to boiler replacements.

#### **18.TF.48 CONNECT**

The meeting welcomed Nick Wood, the new Housing Services Manager to the meeting.

He reported that the Winter edition of Connect would feature articles on Christmas opening times for the council offices and festive bin collection dates. In addition, there would be an update on Montrose House at Hampden Crescent and a preview of Phase 2 of the development.

An update on tenant engagement would be provided, with a spotlight on the work of forum member, Martyn Lund. Details would be provided of courses for tenants offered by KBC, an update on staff movements and details of the annual gardening competitions winners.

A main feature regarding Universal Credit and rent payments would also be included as this issue would shortly affect a great number of KBC tenants.

Finally, it was reported that a project to tackle loneliness, the Connecting Communities Initiative in association with the British Red Cross would also be detailed.

It was suggested that a precis of the "We're Here to Help" leaflet be included in a future edition of Connect.

#### **18.TF.49 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

The meeting heard that the panel was working through the action plan that had been agreed following the last TOSP review. There was no new review currently underway as there was a significant amount of work to be undertaken around the issue of void properties. The forum was invited to contribute any ideas for mini-projects that could be undertaken by TOSP in the interim.

The forum was asked to consider how the council, forum and tenants could assist in tackling existing stigma around social housing and to submit ideas to the next meeting of the forum.

**18.TF.50 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

It was reported that long-standing member of the forum, Jim French had tendered his resignation from the forum and TOSP. He had written to the forum to thank those involved for their support and friendship during his time involved with the forum.

The forum requested that their thanks to Jim for his work with all aspects of the forum be noted and that a special award for his efforts be considered.

Two new tenant representatives, Nicky and Andy were introduced and welcomed to the meeting.

An issue was raised regarding the potential for a grit bin on St Crispin's Close. It was noted that this was a county council responsibility, but details of the request were noted.

**18.TF.51 PRIZE DRAW**

The winner of the prize draw was Sandra Nash

**17.TF.52 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the date for the next meeting of the forum would be 8<sup>th</sup> November 2018.

*(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 8.04pm)*

Signed .....

Chair

DJP