

## **BOROUGH OF KETTERING**

### **TENANTS' FORUM**

#### **Meeting held – 14<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

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

**Tenant Representatives:**

Brent Woodford	(Ashley)
Peter Matsa	(Burton Latimer)
Anne Swoboda	(Rothwell)
Hamid Saleri	(Geddington)
Simon Sheldrick	(Weston by Welland)
Martyn Lund	(Highfield Road)
Steven Soper	(Sackville Street)
Lindsay Wooldridge	(Sackville Street)
Selina Radford	(Sackville Street)
Nicki Robinson	(Sackville Street)
Stephen Panther	(Sackville Street)
Josephine Copson	(Alfred Street)
Reg Carvell	(Highfield Cres.) - Leaseholder

**Also Present:**

John Conway	(Housing)
Simon Haile	(Housing)
Tracey Copeland	(Housing)
Leona Mantle	(Housing)
David Pope	(Democratic Services)

#### **18.TF.106 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Derbyshire, Howes and Tebbutt. Apologies were also received from Brian Kimpton and Darren Ibell

#### **18.TF.107 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

## **18.TF.108 MINUTES**

### **RESOLVED**

that the minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## **18.TF.109 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

### **18.TF.71 Homelessness Solutions**

It was reported that there were currently 192 households in temporary accommodation tonight, down from peak of 202 the previous weekend. It was reported that there were now more households in KBC properties and acquired properties, with fewer in nightly paid accommodation.

The meeting heard that Wellington House would close at end of March. Home Housing group served notice at the beginning of January on due to a changing business model. Work was ongoing to relocate residents by the end of March. Meetings had been held with all residents who had been provided with housing plans and access to a Housing Options advisor. Discussions were ongoing with Home Housing regarding the future use of building but it was an issue that was unlikely to be resolved in the short term.

### **18.TF.86 – Private Rented Sector Access Bid**

It was reported that the bid for funding had been rejected and feedback had been requested. A rough sleeper funding bid for £62,000 had been submitted and this was currently being considered. An allocation of £16,000 from the Cold Weather Fund had been provided that would be used to keep the night shelter open until the end of March and provide accommodation for users barred from the night shelter.

### **18.TF.90 – Void Properties**

There were currently 77 void properties including two new acquisitions. The pace of work on returning voids to the housing stock was positive. The meeting noted an increase in the number of tenancies terminating with nine in the last week increasing the number of voids. It was heard that the number of properties requiring major works or being empty for longer than two months was declining. An update would be provided on the Reinventing Repairs scheme at the May meeting of the forum. There were currently 82 council properties being used for temporary accommodation which was impacted on Keyways waiting times.

## **18.TF.110 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES**

None

## **18.TF.111 HOUSING ALLOCATIONS POLICY REVIEW**

The meeting received a presentation that provided an update on the Housing Allocations Policy Review

It was heard that the scheme was reviewed annually to ensure it was fit for purpose. The consultation process on the revised policy would commence on 25<sup>th</sup> March and run for a period of four weeks. Members of the forum were encouraged to partake in the consultation process.

It was reported that the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 and the duties arising from that had impacted the scheme based on new duties responsible for discharging. Previously households had been awarded a Band B priority, however with 53% of all applicants on Keyways meeting that priority level, it was planned to award the band dependent on the level of duty as follows:

- **Band A** - Priority had not altered.
- **Band B** - Applicants where the council had a Homelessness Prevention Duty or Homelessness Relief Duty, in priority need and had not made their circumstances worse and who had established a local connection.
- **Band C** - Applicants not in priority need, who had not made their circumstances worse and who had established a local connection.
- **Band D** – Applicants deemed to have made their circumstances worse and/or failed to establish a local connection.

Given the increased use of temporary accommodation there was a need to ensure all applicants owed a Homeless Duty received a timely offer of accommodation. The removal of choice would see all such households entitled to one reasonable offer of accommodation before the application was closed.

The meeting noted a high demand for family accommodation. There were currently 43 households on Keyways and 26 in temporary accommodation with four or more children, with only four properties of sufficient size becoming available on Keyways in the past 12 months. In an attempt to reduce the issue a new Band A criteria would be introduced for existing tenants wishing to release a property with four or more bedrooms. It was anticipated that this would allow for a more speedy moving process. In addition households releasing specialist adapted accommodation could be provided with a direct let, a number of larger properties were being built as part of the Council's new build

strategy and there was the option to possibly extend suitable properties in future.

The existing scheme had a number of anomalies such as Band C positive residence history. The current housing climate was very different to that at the introduction of this criteria and it was proposed this be removed from the policy. Changes were also proposed regarding allocation of ground floor accommodation to ensure that households requiring ground floor accommodation without a need for adaptations were not disadvantaged. This would have positive implications for the adaptations budget.

Details were provided of amendments to the policy regarding applicants who did not qualify for Keyways. Currently applicants with rent arrears were excluded, however it was proposed that should rent arrears not relate to the current reason for homelessness, access to Keyways could be made available. Clarification had also been sought in regard to applicants entering into debt relief orders, bankruptcy or IVAs. These would be reviewed as part of any application received.

A newly introduced section of the policy encompassed unacceptable behaviour in terms of other breaches of tenancy conditions, including garden and property condition, not providing reasonable access for gas safety checks and other non-engagement in essential activities.

Once the consultation had concluded on 19<sup>th</sup> April a report would be submitted to the May meeting the Executive Committee with a provisional implementation date for the revised policy of 30<sup>th</sup> May.

#### **18.TF.112 MONTROSE HOUSE**

The forum was supplied with background to the major refurbishment project at Hampden Crescent project, noting the outdated nature of the building with each of its two blocks of 11 3-bed flats having been hard to let, heating inefficient and generally no longer fit for purpose. A number of additional specific issues were detailed including poor sound insulation, health and safety concerns and anti-social behaviour (ASB) problems.

The four primary objectives of the project were outlined as follows:

- To redevelop the existing three-bedroom flats to provide new one and two-bedroom apartments and wheelchair accessible accommodation, in line with the priorities of the Housing Strategy 2015-20.
- To refurbish the living accommodation to create homes which met the 'Homes for the Future' standard

- To provide a warm and energy efficient home environment for residents with low fuel costs.
- To create a safer, more attractive neighbourhood with lower levels of ASB.

A works package had been tendered for that would see Montrose House converted 18 new one and two-bed flats, including four wheelchair access flats, with a number of elements including new central heating and hot water system, fitted kitchens, sound-proofing and external wall insulation.

A project review had been undertaken upon completion of the works to Montrose House that examined financial aspects, whether the scheme met project objectives and customer satisfaction.

In terms of the financial aspect, costs had overrun by £480,000. Works identified after demolition and “opening up” works had been carried out were largely the cause of the overspend, along with additional works carried out to reduce future maintenance liabilities and works omitted in error by the technical consultant or incorrectly designed.

Rental income for the block would rise from £3,290 annually in 2016/17 to approximately £68,000 per annum in future. Although the scale of the overspend was regrettable, there would be a number of positives from the project including a significant saving in terms of temporary accommodation.

All four project objectives had been successfully achieved and customer feedback had been very positive.

Key learning points from the project would be put to use in the tendering process and development of technical specifications for the second block at Hampden Crescent and project monitoring procedures were being improved alongside a revised capital programme report that would be submitted to both the Tenants’ Forum and the Monitoring and Audit Committee.

It was heard that the Council had accepted a tender for the works at Block B with an anticipated start date in April to conclude in December.

### **18.TF.113 CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2019/2020**

The forum was presented with an update on the Capital Programme for 2019/20.

The meeting heard that there were a number of key challenges facing the programme, the main issue being finances. The cumulative impact of four years of 1% rent reductions was a loss to the HRA budget of £5

million. In addition the Council had to deal with a number of new and emerging housing needs, meeting the requirements of older and disabled customers alongside soaring homelessness.

In addition, there were competing priorities of new build council houses versus refurbishment of existing stock and ensuring statutory compliance against meeting customer expectations.

Priority areas for investment were provided to the meeting as follows:

- Hamilton House
- Gas boiler replacement
- Major void properties
- Disabled adaptations

In regard to project management there would be a systematic approach for identifying capital projects and new arrangements put in place for monitoring scheme progress, costs and slippage against the planned programme.

The budget for 2019/20 would be £3.8 million, however this would increase once the Albert Street and Scott Road developments commenced.

A list of planned activities that formed part of the programme were detailed as follows:

- Refurbishment of Hamilton House, Block B
- Kitchens and bathrooms – Replacements identified from stock condition surveys. Where applicable kitchen and bathroom replacements would take place at the same time to minimise disruption to tenants
- Roofing project at Essex Place and Suffolk Place
- GRP door replacement – a rolling programme with a street by street assessment based on the stock condition database.
- New build council housing at Scott Road and Albert Street - the delivery of 28 new homes with an aim to complete by June 2020, funded from borrowing and Right to Buy receipts.
- Aids and adaptations – A demand led approach from the existing waiting list in line with County Council policy
- Door entry systems – This was the 4<sup>th</sup> year of a six year contract with 10 communal blocks to be completed
- Fire risk assessments – Renewal in general needs communal blocks on a rolling programme
- Sparkle Project– Extension of the project to include Hazeland House and Saxon Close

The forum asked questions in relation to doors and heating issues.

**18.TF.114 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The forum was provided with the latest asset management report.

The project focus for the report was in relation to aids and adaptations, a service areas managed by officers Bill Baker and Anna Dernie. With the exception of stair-lifts all aids and adaptations were provided by KBC operatives. This took a significant level of resource and time and with a tight budget was a live topic, with consideration being given to the way the services was delivered.

The forum heard that the service would be reviewed with a further update provided to the meeting in approximately 3-6 months to detail any changes or improvements made to the delivery of aids and adaptations.

**18.TF.115 CONNECT**

It was noted that there would be an editorial panel meeting the following week to commence production of the next issue of Connect.

**18.TF.116 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

The meeting heard that Simon Sheldrick was now a member of the panel following his successful application. Further scrutiny reports would be supplied to forthcoming meetings of the forum.

**18.TF.117 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

None

**18.TF.118 PRIZE DRAW**

The winner of the prize draw was Hamid Saleri.

**17.TF.119 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the date for the next meeting of the forum would be 11<sup>th</sup> April 2019

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

Signed .....

Chair

DJP