

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

TENANTS' FORUM

Meeting held – 6th February 2020

Present: Councillors Mark Rowley (Chair), Maggie Don, Andrew Dutton, Jim French, David Howes and Mike Tebbutt

Tenant Representatives:

Lynne Lund	(Northumberland Road)
Steven Soper	(Sackville Street)
Peter Harvey	(Dahlia Road)
Brian Kimpton	(Counties)
Lindsay Wooldridge	(Sackville Street)
Steven Panther	(Sackville Street)
Simon Sheldrick	(Weston by Welland)
Victor Woodcock	(Burton Latimer)
Hamid Saleri	(Geddington)
Josephine Copson	(Alfred Street)
Karol Hall	(Burton Latimer)
Peter Matsa	(Burton Latimer)
Reg Carvell	(Leaseholder)

Also Present:

John Conway	(Housing)
Leona Mantle	(Housing)
Tracey Copeland	(Housing)
Dan Hannam	(Housing)
Pearl Nathaniel	(Finance)
Dean Mitchell	(Finance)
Callum Galluzzo	(Democratic Services)

19.TF.43 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Trevor Nash, Sandra Nash, Martyn Lund and Anne Swoboda.

19.TF.44 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

19.TF.45 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

19.TF.46 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

19.TF.21 Homelessness Update

An update was provided to members in relation to the number of households currently living in temporary accommodation. It was reported that there was currently 147 households living in temporary accommodation compared to 161 households previously stated at the last meeting of the Tenants Forum.

A small update was also provided regarding the councils acquisition of Wellington House. Communication and negotiations with Home Group regarding the acquisition were ongoing. Dialogue had also taken place between partnerships organisations regarding the creation and running of services.

19.TF.48 Voids Update

An update was provided to members in relation to the number of void properties under maintenance and repair work. It was reported that there was currently 60 void properties. Members heard that there had been a recent surge in the number of properties being returned to the Council.

19.TF.47 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

An update was provided to members in relation to a concern raised by a tenant regarding felled trees at Grafton Street Park. It was heard that as part of planned works, some larger trees had been removed due to damage and were due to be replaced by smaller native trees.

Members also received an update to concerns raised regarding street cleansing in Weston By Welland, it was heard that there had been communication with the street cleansing team with regards to the clearing of drains to prevent flooding.

19.TF.48 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 £115.3m for 2020/21 was under review during the formal consultation period. The budget consisted of:-

- General Fund Account - £60.7m
- Housing Revenue Account - £15.4m
- Capital Programme - £39.2m

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 2020/21 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 £3.5 Million will be made during 2020/21 which will mean that £27 Million 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. New rules that are to be brought in from 2020/21 allow local authorities to increase rent levels based on the Consumer Price Index (CPI+1%)

Members of the forum asked the following questions in relation to the draft budget proposals for 2020/21:

Item / Issue	Summary of Response Given
<p>Will rents be looked at across the North and West for Harmonisation?</p> <p>(Tenant Question)</p>	<p><i>The harmonisation of Rents and Council Tax will be considered as part of one of the Unitary Working Groups. Ultimately this will be a decision for the Shadow Authorities.</i></p> <p>(Officer Response)</p>
<p>It would have been helpful to have seen a comparison with the 2019/20 budget.</p> <p>(Cllr Maggie Don)</p>	<p><i>We have shown the changes from the 2019/20 to the 2020/21 budget on the slides presented. The detail of the 2019/20 budget is contained within the detailed budget papers in the January Executive Report.</i></p> <p>(Officer Response)</p>

Officers then proposed the recommendation for the Rent Review 2020/21 as follows:-

- Average rent Increase - **+2.7%**
- Average weekly rent per property - **£80.96**
- Average weekly increase - **+£2.11**

(The officers and councillors left the Chamber at 7.10pm to allow tenants time to discuss the decrease and vote. They were recalled to the Chamber at 7.25pm)

RESOLVED that the members of the Tenants' Forum agreed to the 2.7% increase for 2020/21

19.TF.49 HOUSEHOLD INSURANCE

Members of the forum were provided with a presentation from the Tenancy Services Manager with regards to the household insurance that is advertised and offered to all Kettering Borough Council tenants.

Members heard that The Council partnered with Crystal Insurance Scheme which as part of the insurance included:

- Furniture
- Carpets
- Clothing
- Bedding
- Electrical Items
- Jewellery
- Ornaments

It was also heard that fire damage, theft, storm/flood damage and damage caused by water leaks was also covered by the insurance scheme. Lost or stolen keys, freezer contents, water damage and tenant responsibility damage such as glazing were also all covered by the insurance policy

Details were also provided to members of the forum in relation to the benefits of tenants taking out the insurance policy. It was also noted that the price of the scheme was £3.51 per month for tenants aged 60 or over and £5.27 per month for tenants under the age of 60.

Members also heard that only 149 tenants in Kettering Borough Council properties had taken out the insurance policy. Kettering Borough Council had a responsibility to ensure that all tenants had been advised of the importance of home contents insurance and to regularly promote the insurance scheme.

19.TF.50 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The forum was provided with the latest asset management report.

Members were presented with an updated format which included a new build update for the forthcoming year. It was heard that the Scott Road development would commence in May 2020 which was the same as Albert Street. Developments on Stamford Road were due to commence in August 2020 Lawrence's Site, Desborough were due to commence November 2020.

19.TF.51 CONNECT

An update was provided regarding the forthcoming edition of the Connect magazine.

It was heard that the first editorial panel meeting had taken place ahead of the next issue. It was noted that the contents of the next issue would focus on home improvement with features one homes for the future, Montrose House and an update regarding the Capital Programme. News items on environmental improvements and the rent review were also to be included.

19.TF.52 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

An update was provided to members of the Tenants Forum regarding the ongoing work being undertaken by the Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

It was heard that following a review into tenant involvement and communication there had been 4 main areas of recommendation that included:

- Raising Knowledge and awareness of all frontline staff regarding Tenant involvement at Kettering Borough Council
- Improving communication materials relating to tenant involvement
- Improving communication methods between tenants and leaseholders
- Investigating ways to make tenant involvement more attractive.

19.TF.53 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members of the forum enquired regrading the involvement of the Tenants forum in the unitary shadow authority. It was heard meetings were ongoing and that tenant participation was being reviewed as part of the work streams leading to the shadow authority.

19.TF.54 PRIZE DRAW

The winner of the prize draw was Steven Panther

19.TF.55 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the provisional date for the next meeting of the forum was set as Thursday 12th March 2020.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 7.47pm)

Signed

Chair

CJG