

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

TENANTS' FORUM

Meeting held – 16th September 2020

Present: Councillors Mark Rowley (Chair), Maggie Don, Andrew Dutton, Jim French, David Howes Lesley Thurland

Tenant Representatives: Steven Soper (Sackville Street)
Hamid Saleri (Geddington)
Gloria Moore (Grange)
Simon Sheldrick (Weston by Welland)
Everyln Odame (Athelstan Road)

Also Present: John Conway (Housing)
Leona Mantle (Housing)
Dan Hannam (Housing)
Carly Hohn (Housing)
Pearl Nathaniel (Finance)

Callum Galluzzo (Democratic Services)
David Pope (Democratic Services)

20.TF.01 ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was proposed by Councillor Lesley Thurland and seconded by Councillor Jim French that Councillor Mark Rowley be elected as Chair.

RESOLVED that Councillor Mark Rowley be re-elected Chair of the Tenants' Forum for the municipal year 2020/21.

20.TF.02 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Mike Tebbutt. It was noted that Councillor Thurland was acting as a substitute for Councillor Tebbutt

Apologies for absence were also received from Martyn Lund and Karol Hall.

20.TF.03 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None

20.TF.04 MINUTES

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20.TF.05 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

None

20.TF.06 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

Concerns were raised by Tenant Forum representatives with regards to general fly-tipping across the borough.

(Councillor Howes and Councillor Thurland left the meeting at 6:11)

20.TF.07 FUTURE NORTHANTS UPDATE

Members of the forum were provided with a presentation from the Head of Housing to update them on work being undertaken by the Programme Board in relation to the Unitary Authority.

It was heard that the proposals had been processed and subsequently approved by parliament and the structural change order had now been passed.

Details of the new unitary authority including background information regarding each local authorities housing stock were provided. A summary of work currently being undertaken through the Future Northants Programme, including the Joint Committees, was given.

It was heard that amongst the immediate priorities for the shadow/unitary authority was:

- New Keyways housing allocation scheme for North Northamptonshire
- Development of a new approach to managing rough sleepers
- Conversion of KBC tenancies from fixed term to secure tenancies

- New tenancy agreement for North Northamptonshire tenants
- Harmonisation of rent policies
- Review and updating of key policies and procedures
- New working arrangements for tradespersons
- Harmonisation of IT systems
- Analysis of North Northamptonshire's local housing market

Details were also provided in relation to the design principles and blueprints for housing services in North Northamptonshire.

20.TF.08 TENANCY SERVICES UPDATE

Members of the forum were provided with a presentation from the Tenancy Services Manager which sought to update members with the ongoing work and challenges and key areas of services of delivery.

It was heard that there had been 155 new tenancies since the start of March 2020, 30 of which were temporary tenancies, and that a new process had been established for The Council to let properties.

Members of the forum heard that at the start of the lockdown period The Council had just under 500 tenants in receipt of universal credit, at the end of August 2020 this figure had rose to almost 800. Of the 800 tenants in receipt of universal credit, 300 had alternative payment arrangements due to the levels of arrears.

It was noted that arrears for almost 700 tenants was over £300,000, close work was being undertaken with the Department of Work & Pensions as well as with tenants to establish regular payments. 99 Tenants had specifically contacted The Council to notify that they were in financial difficulty due to the Covid-19 situation.

At the end of August 2020. Council tenants had arrears of £399,379 which was owed by a third of the total number of tenants which was £50,000 higher then the previous year.

Details were also provided to members of the forum regarding the support schemes available to tenants as well as how Kettering Borough Council is keeping Tenants involved within the process. Members were also provided with information on how staff were responding to tenants and managing properties.

20.TF.09 PROPERTY SERVICES UPDATE

Members of the forum were provided with a presentation from the Property Services Manager which sought to update members with working being undertaken by the Property Services team.

Members heard that as of the 1st September 2020 the current Landlord Gas Safety Record (LGSR) percentage rate was at 99.52% with just 18 properties without a certificate. In comparison at the start of the lockdown period the performance as of 8th April 2020 stood at 96.04%, with 141 properties without a certificate.

Planned Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) programme commenced in tenanted properties in July, utilising in house labour. This was focussed on the Highfield Road area, and delivered system upgrades, where identified, as part of the planned capital investment programme. In addition, smoke detector upgrades were being undertaken across the borough, where identified as being required. As of 15th September 2020 ,765 smoke detectors had been replaced.

At the start of the lockdown period The Council ceased all but emergency repairs to the inside of tenants' homes. Focus was put on external repairs, such as fencing works, There was approximately 1300 jobs awaiting dispatch at present, for a variety of trades.

It was reported that as of 1st September 2020 there was 12 properties with no heating or hot water, which compared with 43 on 22nd April 2020.

Members heard that at the start of lockdown Reponsive Repairs Operatives were redeployed onto void properties, to ensure they could work in isolation. As of 23rd March 2020 when lockdown commenced, there was 82 void properties that weren't ready to let. This reduced to 36 on 11th May 2020

On 7th September 2020 the number of non ready to let properties was 70. This had grown rapidly in the last month due to a significant rise in the number of new voids each week. As of 29/06/2020 The Property Services team had created a 4 Operative, Larger Voids team to focus on 16 properties that required more work than a typical void. As of 16th September 2020, 10 properties have been returned.

Details were also provided to members regarding the capital programme as well as an update with regards to stores and workshops.

20.TF.10 HOUSING STRATEGY AND SOLUTIONS UPDATE

Members of the forum were provided with a presentation from the Housing Solutions Manager which sought to update members on homelessness trends, rough sleeping, Keyways and Kettering Borough Council's new build scheme.

Details were provided to members regarding the number of homelessness approaches and temporary accommodation placements. There was a continued average of around 25 new approached for homelessness assistances every-week.

Over the past year it was reported that two households had been put into temporary accommodation per week, this was reduced to 1 household per week during the lockdown period.

Members were provided with the changing trends as to the main reasons for homelessness including the impact of Covid-19. There had been an increase in homelessness as a result from relationship breakdowns, domestic abuse and family/friend evictions and fewer homelessness approaches due to the ending of existing social or privately rented tenancies.

It was heard that as of 16th September 2020 there was a total of 87 households in temporary accommodation which represented a significant reduction compared to the peak figured reached in August 2019 where 234 households were in temporary accommodation. 44 households were being temporarily accommodated in council properties.

Members heard that a number of factors and initiatives had been undertaken to reduce the number of households in temporary accommodation by provided increased prevention and relief as well as tenancy support.

It was heard that 13 rough sleepers were in discretionary temporary accommodation, 34 rough sleepers had been assisted into settled accommodation, 4 rough sleepers had been found on the most recent count (10th September 2020) and 1 rough sleeper had been evicted from temporary accommodation.

Details were provided to members regarding a new Private Rented Sector (PRS) Access Scheme which sought to prevent and relieve homelessness into the private rented sector . The scheme provided financial and practical incentives to private landlords to accept homeless customers enabling KBC to discharge homeless duties. A dedicated Landlord Liaison Officer and Tenancy Support Worker (PRS) had been established within The Council as well as providing housing solutions to homeless households, the scheme also met strategic objectives of improving standards in the PRS and reducing the number of empty homes. It was heard that The Council had already received many enquiries and prevented / relieved homelessness for 13 households

It was heard that the Scott Road development was hoping to start construction on site in November 2020 at the same time as the Albert

Street development. Grange Road Methodist Church site was hoping to start on site by the end of March 2021.

20.TF.11 CONNECT

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

It was heard that the editorial panel was yet to meet regarding the forthcoming edition of the Connect Magazine and that suggestions were welcomed by members.

20.TF.12 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 the Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel were continuing to monitor performance indicators and would provide feedback to members at a future meeting of the Tenants Forum

20.TF.13 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None

20.TF.14 PRIZE DRAW

The winner of the prize draw was Simon Sheldrick

20.TF.15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the provisional date for the next meeting of the forum was set as Wednesday 21st October 2020.

(The meeting started at 6.00pm and ended at 8.00pm)

Signed

Chair

CJG