

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

TENANTS' FORUM

Meeting Held – 18th November 2020

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

Tenant Representatives: Martyn Lund
Gloria Moore
Hamid Saleri
Simon Sheldrick
Anne Swoboda
Steven Soper
Lindsay Wooldridge

Also Present: John Conway
Carly Hohn
Dan Hannam
Tracey Copeland
Pearl Nathaniel

20.TF.16 **Apologies**
Apologies were received from Leona Mantle.

20.TF.17 **Declarations of Interests**
None.

20.TF.18 **Minutes of the meeting of the Forum held on 16th September 2020 to be approved and signed by the Chair.**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16th September be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

20.TF.19 **Matters arising from the Minutes**
Cllr Don raised an issue with the current agenda, regarding the layout as well as the lack of time given to read reports, due to late postage. David Pope advised that these issues had already been raised with the relevant staff members but that all councillors had received electronic copies of the reports in good time.
Cllr Don also asked for an update regarding the progress on rough sleepers and homelessness. John Conway provided the forum with figures relevant to the questions, including that there were 63 families in

temporary accommodation and further plans of action. Carly Hohn added that the virus provided an opportunity to overhaul previous system and become more robust with their tactics in dealing with this issue. Cllr Dutton raised concerns regarding some figures written in the minutes, to which John clarified the figures for the benefit of Cllr Dutton and the Forum. Cllr Dutton then asked for rent arrears figures to be broken down in future, John agreed and will look into this going forward. John Conway announced the result of the ballot for the position of Deputy Chair, with Peter Matsa being nominated.

20.TF.20 Matters raised by tenants forum reps

Simon Sheldrick raised an issue surrounding rat sightings in a specific residential area and asked whether the Council can take any precautions or assist in the evacuation of the rats. Dan Hannam confirmed that it would be Kettering Borough Council's Environmental Care or Environmental Health teams that would deal with this issue. Anne Swoboda confirmed that she had witnessed similar issues and thanked the Council staff who attended to resolve the issue.

20.TF.21 Information Items

Draft Northants Housing Allocations Scheme Consultation

Carly Hohn presented a report regarding the Draft Northants Housing Allocations Scheme Consultation. Carly advised that the Forum there are currently 4 different systems used in the separate authorities within North Northamptonshire. The aim for Day 1 would be that there is one common housing allocation scheme. This is out for consultation now for 6 weeks. A web link was provided to the forum to complete online [] but it was confirmed there were other methods available to complete the consultation such as post, email and phone. Carly encouraged tenants to put their opinions forward. She confirmed that correspondence regarding the consultation had been sent to all applicants on all 4 current systems.

Carly then explained the 10 broad proposals that make up the survey:

- To include non-qualifying categories (restrict access)
- Local Connection criteria
- Free movement access North Northants (LLP/Rural exceptions)
- Banding criteria
- No housing need cases not qualifying (limited exceptions)
- Village property allocation
- Property eligibility – who can be considered for what property type
- Disable adapted property allocation
- Removal of choice for homeless and emergency need cases
- Sanctions for refusal

Within these proposals, there were 5 different responses that residents could choose based on their own opinions:

- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree

It was also confirmed that there will be a free text box option to provide bespoke reasons for a residents' chosen response.

Carly provided the Forum with the figures pertaining to the completion of the survey so far, which were correct as of Monday 16th Nov:

- 169 responses
- 99 complete
- 70 incomplete

The majority of respondents are recorded as being members of the public and not partner agencies. Within these responses, Carly advised that demographics of those responding are being monitored to allow a greater understanding of the residents of Kettering. The forum was then provided with the feedback so far, which showed a 63% agreeing, 14% disagreeing and 23% other.

Martyn Lund addressed the forum to say that a number of members had not received the above report. He also raised a question surrounding the proposed banding, and what that will mean for applicants on the lower bands. Carly confirmed that the banding used currently in Kettering are going to be largely the same when the new system is in place, however the new Band E will focus on no housing need exceptions.

Cllr Don raised concerns regarding the proposals about refusals for homeless tenants, and whether this would mean that a resident in Kettering would not be able to refuse a property in Rushden. Carly advised that the offers given to homeless residents must be classed as reasonable, and location will be part of that decision.

Simon Sheldrick advised the forum that he also did not receive the report. He also asked whether tenants were informed, currently, about reasonable refusals and that they were aware of what they were. Carly advised this already happens in Kettering and will continue going forward.

Lindsay Woolridge asked about whether the forms are available in other formats to help residents with issues such as dyslexia. Carly advised this was the case currently and will continue going forward. Gloria Moore advised Lindsay she is available to help anyone who struggles with forms and was thanked by the Forum for offering this help.

20.TF.22 Future Northants update

John Conway presented an update on the Future Northants setup. He advised the forum of the new Chief Executive, Rob Bridge. John then presented the leadership structure for the new authority, detailing each individual Director's position. He also advised on the structure regarding the adults, communities and wellbeing's departments. The forum was provided with his ambitions for the future, focusing on:

- Making sure our tenants and leaseholders so that they are fully involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods
- Providing help for homeless people by taking a person-centred approach and providing long term solutions
- Supporting vulnerable people to live independently by providing specialist housing and support.

John then explained what the next steps to be taken were to the forum, namely:

- Introducing a new keyways housing allocation scheme
- Converting fixed term tenancies to secure tenancies
- Drafting a new tenancy policy
- Developing a new tenancy agreement
- Harmonising tenancy policies
 - Tenancy Policy
 - Aids and adaptations
 - Resident engagements

The Forum was then advised that a further paper will be provided at the next meeting detailing the proposed management of housing in the new authority.

Cllr Don advised that the government white paper mentions the need for residents opinions being heard and whilst this is something that KBC has done for a long time, she raises concerns that the number of tenants involved in meetings has reduced due to meeting moving to Zoom. The Chair acknowledged that this was regrettable but advised that Zoom is the only way to meet in the current circumstances. The Chair thanked Tracey Copeland for the production of the E-bulletins, and John added his thanks to Carly and her team for the production of the Connect magazines. Tracey Copeland advised that she has been in contact with tenants, but the feedback is that they struggle with the online aspect of the meetings.

Martyn Lund advised the Forum that there needs to be further training to help tenants attend these meetings. He also spoke regarding his involvement in the Government white paper and that meetings and consultations are still being undertaken. The Chair thanked Martyn for all his hard work.

Lindsay Wooldridge asked whether a Facebook page could be set up to allow residents to ask questions at these meetings if they are unable attend. John Conway advised that often these tactics lend themselves

to hostile abuse towards the council and officers, so is reluctant to set this up.

Cllr Dutton provided the Forum with his thoughts that the breakout rooms function could be used on Zoom to allow more informal discussion.

Simon Sheldrick asked whether there was something that the council could provide that gives residents every option to try and help them engage. Cllr Tebbutt responded and suggested whether a WhatsApp could be used as a better medium than Facebook.

20.TF.23 Capital Programme Update

Dan Hannam presented an update regarding the Capital Programme update and Asset Management. This presentation provided figures for different programmes relating to previous months and how they relate to the targets set for 2020/21, as well as a summary of what was happening and where. The list of programmes included:

- Aids and adaptations
- Kitchens and bathrooms
- Door entry system
- Boilers
- Roofing
- Doors
- Voids repairs and improvements
- External Wall insulation
- Decent homes – fire precautions
- Homes for the future
- Sparkle
- Homes for the future – electrical EICR's

The forum was then presented with a financial update and project focus for 2020/21 for all the above categories plus some additional categories. Examples were provided of the roof replacement programme. This confirmed that the focus for this programme has been on approximately 40 properties on the Pytchley Road estate. The Forum was also advised that approval for an extension to the project has been secured, which will allow work to continue on approximately 25 properties in Queensway, Burton Latimer. Dan also advised the forum that the Annual gas safety certificate backlog has now been reduced to just 1 property outstanding from 14.

John Conway then provided an update on the new builds at Scott Road, Stamford Road and Albert Street, detailing the site details and indicative programme for each site.

Dan provided the news that Hamilton house is seeing its first tenants move in imminently and so this is now completed.

Martyn Lund asked whether the targets could include on numbers still outstanding. Dan Hannam agreed this is something that could be included in future.

Simon Sheldrick asked to be provided with further information regarding contractors as they come up. It was agreed that this will be available.

20.TF.24 **Feedback**

Connect

Tracey Copeland advised the Forum that the winter edition of connect should be sent out in the first 2 weeks of December and includes information on the Unitary Authority, the boiler programme and life plan.

Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Martyn Lund advised they are continuing to meet online and cannot wait until they can meet in person.

20.TF.25 **AOB**

None.

20.TF.26 **Prize Draw**

Martyn Lund won the prize draw.

20.TF.27 **Date of next meeting**

It was noted that the date of the next meeting shall be 20th January 2021.

The meeting concluded at 19:26