

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

TENANTS' FORUM

Meeting held – 10th November 2016

Present: Councillor James Burton (Chair)
Councillors June Derbyshire, Maggie Don, David Howes, Clark Mitchell and Mike Tebbutt

Tenant Representatives: Brian Kimpton (Counties)
Martyn Lund (Highfield Road)
Peter Harvey (Dahlia Road)
Josephine Copson (Alfred Street)
Victor Woodcock (Burton Latimer)
Brent Woodford (Ashley)
Roland Shipham (Highfield Road)
Peter Matsa (Geddington)
Reg Carvell (Leaseholder)

Also Present: John Conway (Housing)
Leona Mantle (Housing)
Darren Ibell (Housing)
Max Salsbury (Housing)
Anna Dernie (Housing)
Russell Clarke (Housing)
Lucy Clarke (Housing)
Simon Haile (Environmental Care)
Dean Mitchell (Finance)
Pearl Nathaniel (Finance)
David Pope (Democratic Services)

16.TF.46 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Sandra Nash, Trevor Nash, Ken Burnage, Sue Shipham, Moira Brown and Lorraine Morland.

16.TF.47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

16.TF.48 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th October 2016 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16.TF.49 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

16.TF.24 – Implementation of Sterile Environment Policy

It was reported that Phase One had commenced and to date no items had had to be removed from communal areas indicating a high level of policy compliance. Neighbourhood Managers would be making regular inspections to ensure the policy was being adhered to in all blocks.

16.TF.36 – Showers - Minimum Water Temperature

An issue raised at the previous meeting of the forum regarding showers that were unable to provide a water temperature lower than 37 degrees Celsius had been investigated and arrangements for future procurement of stock would be examined.

16.TF.50 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

None.

16.TF.51 HOMELESSNESS PRESENTATION

Russell Clarke and Lucy Clarke of the Housing Options Team attended the meeting and provided a presentation on the topic of homelessness.

The meeting heard that a lot of the work the council undertook in relation to homelessness was either at, or shortly prior to, the point of crisis. The forum noted that a slightly expanded version of the presentation had been recently been provided to students aged 11-16yrs at Buccleuch Academy to explain how easy it was to become homeless, the scale of the problem and the outcomes faced by homeless individuals. The presentation had been very well received and would be provided to older students in 2017.

The perspective of homelessness was discussed, with the forum noting that individuals could be classed as homeless even if they had a roof over their head, indeed the number of rough sleepers in the borough constituted only a very small percentage of homeless customers. A number of scenarios were presented to the forum, with

members asked to consider whether the individual in each case was officially classed as homeless.

The forum heard that the most prevalent reason for people presenting as homeless was the ending of an existing tenancy, which covered 34% of homeless applications. Other common reasons for homelessness included:-

- Evicted by parents, friends or relatives – 17%
- Relationship breakdown – 7%
- Violence – 16%
- Rent/mortgage arrears – 15%
- Leaving hospital/prison/care – 5%
- Other reasons (e.g. fire damage to property) – 5%

The forum was then provided with a number of true or false questions that aimed to see whether people had an accurate view of current legislation. It was heard that only four members of staff formed the Homelessness Team, with KBC currently assisting more than 100 homelessness cases, with over 70 people in temporary accommodation.

The presentation concluded with details of a variety of organisations that could provide assistance and advice in relation to homelessness.

It was requested that a copy of the presentation be sent out to all forum members.

16.TF.52 TENANCY POLICY REVIEW

The forum was provided with an update on the ongoing Tenancy Policy review, noting the summary of the existing policy, elements of the policy that would remain unchanged, elements awaiting further regulatory confirmation and new additions to the policy. Comments were sought from members prior to the policy being taken out for public consultation.

The meeting heard that further detail was awaited from government in relation to the length of fixed term tenancies and succession rights for tenants.

Additions to be consulted upon for inclusion in the Tenancy Policy included:

- The recently implemented Sterile Block Policy
- A policy regarding the responsible ownership of pets that would require new tenants and new pet owners to apply for permission to keep pets as well as signing an agreement to

look after their pet responsibly

- Refusals of requests to add additional tenants to existing sole tenancies.
- Compulsory welcome meeting attendance prior to tenants signing up for a tenancy
- Tenancy sustainment and enforcement
- Policy statement on mutual exchanges
- Property abandonment

A policy in relation to mobility scooters would also be introduced requiring permission to be obtained for storage and charging of scooters within council owned accommodation. Permission would be provided where accommodation offered a suitable and safe location for scooters to be stored. Requests for alterations to properties to facilitate mobility scooters would be considered in line with KBC's Aids and Adaptions Policy. It was also noted as being important to be more up front in drawing the distinction between scooters used for convenience and those which were being used on medical grounds

The full draft policy would be taken out for public consultation from mid-December, running until mid-January 2017, with a final policy statement produced and taken for final approval to the Executive Committee in early 2017. The meeting heard that tenants would be invited to take part in the consultation through articles in Connect and partner agencies and staff would also be briefed.

It was requested that any correspondence sent out to tenants in the near future bear reference to the consultation to enable the widest possible response from interested parties.

16.TF.53 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME

Simon Haile attended the meeting and presented the monthly HRA Capital Programme report.

It was reported that aids and adaptions works had seen a slight budgetary overspend, with approximately half the registered demands completed to date. Environmental Care and the Housing and Finance teams would examine a method of delivering this service going forward, either by introducing a waiting list for works or by reallocation of existing budgets. Feedback on the chosen approach would be provided to the next meeting of the forum.

In regard to responsive repairs, a slight improvement was noted in response times for Priority 1 repairs, but there had been a dip for Priority 3 and 4 repairs due to staffing departures. It was anticipated that new appointments would improve the situation early in the New Year.

It was noted that major voids had a predicted budgetary overspend of approximately £51k, with an average turnaround time of four months and a report would be provided to the Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel detailing all voids and their associated costs since April 2016. A draft voids policy would be introduced to allow for consistency in the delivery of voids across the Borough, with a need to agree the final condition of properties prior to being re-let.

Discussion was had regarding the Disabled Facilities Grant, which was an ongoing issue between district councils and the county council. Guidance had been sought from the Department of Health and correspondence continued in an effort to resolve the issue.

16.TF.54 CONNECT

The forum heard that the Christmas edition of Connect was in production with a delivery date anticipated in mid-December.

Key items would include the results of the annual gardening competition and an item on allotments alongside a feature on the Sterile Block Policy. The centre-spread would be an article on fly-tipping, providing details of bulk item collections, household waste centres and infographs detailing the costs of fly-tipping and how such money could be better spent.

Additional items would include details of Christmas tree recycling, promotion of the new Desborough “meet and greet” session and a small item on rents.

16.TF.55 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

Martyn Lund reported that the new communication review had commenced, with further details to be supplied to a future meeting of the forum.

A group task had been undertaken in relation to fly-tipping, where a number of suggestions had been made that could improve issues faced by the council. Details of this work would be brought to a future meeting.

The panel had also examined major voids and had been shocked at the high level of work that went into such properties. Concerns had also been raised in relation to budget overspends on voids and works overrunning their planned timeframes. It was considered by the panel

that major voids should be made habitable and brought to a standard where they could easily be let but no more.

The meeting heard that there was an intention to reduce major voids and to increase levels of planned maintenance. The issues raised by the panel were something that the Housing and Environmental Care Teams was alive to and it was hoped that periodic tenancy visits would help reduce the number of major void properties in future.

16.TF.56 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Alfred Street – Abandoned vehicle

It was reported that a van had been abandoned at Alfred Street. Details were provided for investigation

Rent Levels – 2017/18

Dean Mitchell reported that Finance was working through the rent setting process in line with the governmental 1% rent reduction. The Autumn Statement was also awaited to ascertain whether it would impact rent levels. Details regarding rent setting would be brought to a future meeting of the forum.

Policing Priorities – Presentation

It was noted that Insp Julie Mead would attend the next forum to provide a presentation regarding policing priorities and to hear the views of the forum

Tenants' Forum Chair

Cllr James Burton reported that he may have to provide apologies ahead of the next forum due to a meeting in London with the Housing Minister. It was noted that Brian Kimpton would take the chair in this instance.

16.TF.57 PRIZE DRAW

The winner of the prize draw was Jim French.

16.TF.58 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the date for the next meeting of the forum would be 8th December 2016.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 7.45pm)

Signed

Chair

DJP