

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

TENANTS' FORUM

Meeting held – 11th April 2019

Present: Councillors Mark Rowley (Chair), Andrew Dutton and Clark Mitchell

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)
Victor Woodcock	(Burton Latimer)
Peter Harvey	(Dahlia Road)
Ken Burnage	(Thorpe Malsor)
Sandra Nash	(Rothwell)
Trevor Nash	(Rothwell)
Gloria Moore	(Grange)
Moura Brown	(Highfield Road)
Brian Kimpton	(Counties)
Josephine Copson	(Alfred Street)
Reg Carvell	(Highfield Cres.) - Leaseholder

Also Present:

John Conway	(Housing)
Jo Perry	(Housing)
Tracey Copeland	(Housing)
Leona Mantle	(Housing)
Pearl Nathaniel	(Finance)
David Pope	(Democratic Services)

18.TF.120 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Don, Howes and Tebbutt. Apologies were also received from the Tenants at Holyoake Court, Stephen Panther and Darren Ibell

18.TF.121 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

18.TF.122 MINUTES

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the meeting held on 14th March 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

18.TF.123 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

18.TF.71 Homelessness Solutions

The figure of 192 households in temporary accommodation had stayed stable since the previous meeting of the forum but had fluctuated during that time to a low of 187. Further reports would be brought to the forum should there be signs of any sustained trend following a sustained period of increase in recent months.

The forum noted that Wellington House had now closed. The council had successfully found accommodation for all residents, with the majority being in permanent accommodation. Those in temporary accommodation had more permanent options identified.

18.TF.86 – Cold Weather Fund Bid

A rough sleeper funding bid for £62,000 reported at the previous meeting had been successful, with the money to be used to provide a street outreach worker. Two flats would be allocated for the project with a tenancy sustainment officer assisting. Further reports would be brought to a future meeting of the forum to provide updates on the project.

18.TF.124 MATTERS RAISED BY TENANTS' FORUM REPRESENTATIVES

None

18.TF.125 LETTABLE STANDARD

The forum was presented with the draft Lettable Standard document and were asked to consider and comment on the contents.

It was heard that there had been a high level of positive feedback received in relation to the draft document and members of the Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel had been involved in reviewing the document.

The aim of the document was to set down in writing the minimum standards expected for a property prior to a tenant moving in.

The document detailed minimum standards for the following elements of a property:

- Security
- Electrical
- Heating Systems
- General standards
- Decoration
- Kitchen
- Bathroom
- Stairs
- External areas, loft space and garden
- Energy Performance Certificate
- Cleaning

A list of works that may be carried out within 28 days of a tenant moving in were detailed in the document and consideration was given to informing the tenant of any planned or future works.

The forum asked questions and made comments in relation to the following elements of the document

- “Turn on and test” timescales for gas at newly tenanted properties
- Cleaning considerations in bathrooms

It was agreed that wording relating to gas turn on timescales be amended to read:-

“Send an operative at a time convenient for you, no later than 72 hours after the tenancy commences”

18.TF.126 REINVENTING REPAIRS & VOIDS UPDATE

Management and Supervision

It had been noted that when the responsibility for housing repairs passed to the Housing Department there had been relatively few managers in relation to number of tradespeople. A new structure had been created that would provide more oversight into the repairs process, especially regarding work plans including recruitment to the following positions:-

- Maintenance Manager (post recruited to)
- Business Support and Development Manager (post recruited to)

- Project and Planned Investment Manager (recruiting during the summer to manage the delivery of capital and planned maintenance programmes)
- Gas Supervisor, Electrical Supervisor and two Maintenance Surveyors (planning and managing works and workforce)
- Voids Manager (to co-ordinate the whole voids process)

It was heard that upon completion of recruitment an induction programme would be undertaken to provide the relevant soft skills for the roles.

Gas Central Heating

It was noted that winter 2017/18 had been especially cold and there had been serious problems arising from a high rate of boiler breakdowns. Consequently a decision had been taken to make the service more robust, with changes made to regimes for day to day repairs and servicing. A new criteria had been introduced to guide decisions on replacing old boilers and there was a focus on two brands of new boilers rather than the plethora of brands previously installed. In addition, installations of new boilers had accelerated from 159 in 2017/18 to 293 in 2018/19. Information leaflets for tenants and a compensation policy for boiler breakdowns were being devised.

Voids

Once the new Voids Manager was in post there would be greater accountability with new processes being easier to introduce alongside monitoring and coordination of works. A standardised process for undertaking works to void properties had been devised with work schedules now routinely issued by the dispatch team to tradespersons using digital devices, improving productivity and reducing paperwork.

Monitoring arrangements had been strengthened with management reports reviewed weekly. The existing contract for major voids works had been terminated and a new contract procured through the EEM framework. Regular team briefings had been introduced for tradespersons so that they were kept informed on the progress of works and had an opportunity to contribute to the improvement of the service.

As at 9th April there were 74 void properties under maintenance and repair work compared to a peak of 106 in December 2017.

Members asked questions in relation to online reporting of repairs, consistency of gas services and communication between tenants and contractors.

It was requested by the forum that the subject of voids be revisited at a future meeting of the forum to better understand the impact of service improvements and to receive “before and after” cost comparisons.

18.TF.127 HRA CAPITAL PROGRAMME

The forum was provided with the latest asset management report.

It was noted that the programmes coming to a close at the end of the financial year. As at the end of February there was a projected underspend of £3.5m, however this was due to planning delays to the new build projects and this money would roll over into the new financial year. It was heard that tender analysis was currently being undertaken in relation to these projects, with a report to Executive Committee in May and a start date onsite in June.

Overspends were noted in relation to boilers and roof replacement works. The meeting noted works on roof replacements had restarted and work would also begin shortly on the second block at Hampden Crescent.

18.TF.128 CONNECT

It was noted that the forthcoming edition of Connect was set for a May dispatch date with draft articles prepared for publication.

One of the main themes for the edition would be Maintaining Your Home and Maintaining Your Estate with the latter article covering enforcement action taken by KBC.

Other articles set for inclusion were Health and Wellbeing, tenant involvement with updates from Holyoak Court Tenants and Residents Association and details of how the Silver Service Forum had influenced grounds maintenance at sheltered accommodation.

18.TF.129 TENANT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL

It was reported that the TOSP had been involved in taking an in-depth examination of the Lettable Standard document. Work also continued on the action plan arising from the panel's previous review with an intention to bring the plan to the forum once complete.

In addition, work had commenced on the production of a training plan for members and positive work had been undertaken regarding tenant involvement, with three tiers of involvement outlined on a leaflet to be issued to tenants, a copy of which was supplied to the meeting. A number of tenant events had been arranged including coffee mornings where tenants would speak to other tenants regarding involvement at all levels.

18.TF.130 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

An issue was raised regarding damage to a concrete path at Creighton Crescent, Barton Seagrave.

A tenant representative report how useful and insightful he had found accompanying a Neighbourhood Manager on one of their recent walkabouts.

18.TF.131 PRIZE DRAW

The winner of the prize draw was Josephine Copson.

18.TF.132 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the provisional date for the next meeting of the forum was set as 13th June 2019.

(The meeting started at 6.30pm and ended at 7.54pm)

Signed

Chair

DJP