

**Committee:** COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** March 16 2006

**11**

**Title:** TENANT FORUM MINUTES

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Item for decision

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## Summary

This report provides the Committee with the Minutes of the last meeting of the Tenant Forum, which covers the district. There are no specific financial or risk assessments relating to this report.

## Recommendations

That the Committee notes the draft Minutes of the Tenant Forum of 6 February 2006.

## Background Papers

The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

- Tenant Forum Minutes file 2005/06

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	Tenant Forum promotes consultation relating to a wide variety of issues that affect tenants and the wider community.
Community Safety	N/A
Equalities	N/A
Finance	Tenant Forum is operated via existing Tenant Participation budget
Human Rights	N/A
Legal Implications	Fulfils the Council's statutory duty.
Ward-specific impacts	Covers the whole district.
Workforce/Workplace	Non specific

### **Situation**

1. This report has been presented to members following the request made by the former Health and Housing Committee in March 2005.
2. It needs to be considered now because the Tenant Forum met on the 23 January 2006 and 6 February 2006 and by the time the draft minutes are approved by the Tenant Forum they will be nearly two months old.

### **Targets**

3. What I am trying to achieve is to keep Members of the Committee informed of the concerns and views of the Tenant Forum representatives.

### **Options**

4. There are no specific options.

### **Pay-Offs/Penalties**

5. If the Committee do not note the business of the Forum it could give the impression that the Tenant Forum meetings and the work they do are not being taken seriously.

### **Risk Analysis**

There is no specific risk analysis regarding this report.

## **MINUTES OF A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TENANT FORUM HELD AT THE COUNCIL OFFICES SAFFRON WALDEN ON 23 JANUARY 2006**

In attendance: Mrs J Bolvig-Hanson (Chair), Mr Brown, George Chesham, Daphne Cornell, Annis Cove, John Maddams and Paul Simpson.

Officers: Rod Chamberlain, Jim Merriman, Roz Millership, Phil O'Dell, Robert-Patterson Smith, Liz Petrie.

### **1 RENT SETTING**

The Forum received a copy of the rent setting report that will be going before the Community Committee on 26 January 2006. Mr Merriman, the HRA consultant assisting the Council, explained the detailed figures for the current year and the proposals for the year 2006/07. Reference was made to government requirement that rents in the social housing sector must converge by 2010/11. The Forum debated the report in detail and asked a number of detailed questions. The Forum expressed thanks to Mr Merriman for his helpful presentation.

The Forum then agreed the recommendations within the report that rents should rise by an average of 5% being an average of £3.14 per week. In doing this the Forum wanted it noted that they were not happy with the way the Government required this type of increase and thought they needed to consider the problem of higher rents and council tax on many tenants who are a little over the benefit level.

### **2 RENT ARREARS POLICY**

Liz Petrie presented a report, which invited comment on a new arrears policy. The proposals provided for more advice on rent issues at the commencement of tenancies and where arrears occur that more visits would be carried out to try and resolve the problems. The Forum welcomed the policy document and felt it was a very carefully thought out set of proposals.

## **Minutes of a meeting of the Tenant Forum held on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 2006 at Saffron Walden Council Offices**

**Present:** Jill Bolvig Hansen, George Chesham, Daphne Cornell, Richard Livings, John Maddams, Paul Simpson, Annis Cove, Mr R Brown

**Officers in attendance:** Rod Chamberlain (Executive Manager – Housing Services), Liz Petrie (Housing Management Manager), Helen Joy, Rebecca Procter (Tenant Participation Officers)

### **1 APOLOGIES**

No apologies received.

### **2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

Agreed, subject to updates being requested on local issues (see point 7 below).

### **3 ELECTION OF POST- HOLDERS**

#### **Chair**

Mr Chamberlain explained that the term of office of the Chair is for two years. Nominations for the post were made as follows: Mrs Jill Bolvig-Hansen – nominated by John Maddams, seconded by Mr R Brown; Mrs Daphne Cornell – nominated by Annis Cove, seconded by George Chesham. Following a ballot, Mrs Bolvig-Hansen was duly elected Chair.

#### **Vice Chair**

Mrs Daphne Cornell was nominated by George Chesham, seconded by Annis Cove and duly elected Vice Chair.

#### **Community Committee Representatives (2)**

Mr Chamberlain advised that the Forum should always send **two** representatives, and that if one could not attend on a particular occasion, that it would be important for that person to ensure another Tenant representative attends on their behalf. It was agreed to have a list of “reserves” whom the Community Committee Representatives could call upon in this instance. It was unanimously agreed that the two Representatives should be Mrs Bolvig-Hansen and Mrs Daphne Cornell, and that if they cannot attend they may contact Mr John Maddams or Mrs Annis Cove.

#### **Homeless Task Group Representative**

It was agreed that Mrs Bolvig-Hansen should be the Representative.

### **Housing Strategy Working Group Representative**

Mr Chamberlain explained that this group meet on an occasional basis to discuss any significant issues relating to Housing and to report to the Community Committee. Interest in representing the Forum on this Group was expressed by George Chesham, Daphne Cornell and Richard Livings. Following election Richard Livings and Daphne Cornell were elected.

### **Housing Conference**

It was agreed that the Chair should attend.

### **Area Panel Representatives (3)**

Mr Chamberlain advised that the Tenant Forum send a representative to each of the three Area Panels in an unofficial capacity. It was agreed that the following would attend:

East Area – Mrs Bolvig-Hansen and/or Mr Paul Simpson  
North Area – Mrs Daphne Cornell and/or Mrs Annis Cove  
South West Area – Mr Brown

## **4 RENT SETTING**

Reference was made to the meeting of the Community Committee held on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2006. It was reported that the proposed rent increase was approved by the Committee as was the proposed new rent arrears policy. The Chair gave a brief summary of the debate and outlined that the Committee agreed that a letter of representatives be sent to the ODPM when possible. The Forum also agreed that the letter to the MP be sent.

## **5 CO-OPTION**

Mr Chamberlain invited suggestions for tenants who could be co-opted onto the Forum. It was agreed that Mrs Cornell would approach Mr Gilbey to be the leaseholder representative, and that Mr Molinaro, who had been approached by the TP officers, should be invited to the next meeting as an observer. It was suggested that the next newsletter advertise vacancies for the Tenant Forum.

## **6 TENANT PARTICIPATION UPDATE**

The Green, Stoneyfield Drive, Stansted – Mrs Procter reported that the repairs to the grass looked good, and that a traffic survey was due to take place.

Wagon Mead – rubbish and bikes were again accumulating in the common areas. Mr Simpson agreed to report to TPOs if necessary. A further consultation with Police was planned for April.

Broomfield – lighting plan now agreed and work due to commence by the end of February.

Sheltered Housing – TPOs had engaged in a programmed of visits to UDC's schemes.

Newsletter – the next one is to be produced over the next month.

## **7 LOCAL ISSUES**

Mr Livings reported that rubbish was still left on the path beside and behind 55 Hunters Way, and that rats had been seen there. Despite earlier visits by Environmental Services, moss was still making the path hazardous. TPOs to follow up.

Mrs Cove reported that rubbish was being left around the bins at Newcroft, although in general the scheme was looking much tidier. The TPOs will monitor the situation.

Mr Maddams requested that the TPOs write to the Town Council in advance of their next meeting regarding the parking and traffic problems around Four Acres.

Mr Brown reported that someone is living in a caravan in the car park next to no 42 Birchwood, Birchanger. The TPOs will ask the Housing Officer to enquire about this.

Mr Brown further noted that numbers 52 and 54 have had double glazing put in the windows, but not around the doors, which are very draughty and required sealant putting around them. Requested that the elderly have doors and windows upgraded before general tenants. Mrs Joy explained that all windows would be replaced under the Decent Homes provisions. Elderly persons' bungalows would also have doors replaced under the programme of works.

Mr Brown reported excessive car parking outside no 50. Mrs Joy advised that if the situation worsens he should contact Highways.

Mr Simpson made the suggestion that new tenants should receive a card giving instructions on how to operate their boiler, as he is often asked to help people do this. The TPOs would refer this point to Mr Goodey.

## **8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be at 2.30 pm on Monday 13 March 2006 in the Committee Room, Saffron Walden Council Offices, but will be preceded by a tour of the Housing Offices, starting at 2.00 pm.

Dates of future meetings: Monday 15<sup>th</sup> May at 2.00 pm  
Monday 24<sup>th</sup> July at 7.00 pm  
Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September at 2.00 pm  
Monday 13<sup>th</sup> November at 2.00 pm