

Committee: COMMUNITY COMMITTEE

Agenda Item

Date: June 17, 2008

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Title: TENANT FORUM MINUTES

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Item for information

Summary

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

Recommendations

2. That the Committee note the draft minutes of the Tenant Forum of 12 May 2008.

Background Papers

3. None

Impact

- 4.

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	Tenant Participation must be applied without discrimination of any kind.
Finance	The Tenant Forum is operated via existing Tenant Participation budget
Human Rights	NONE
Legal implications	Fulfil the Council's statutory duty.
Sustainability	N/A
Ward-specific impacts	Covers the whole Uttlesford District
Workforce/Workplace	Statutory part of the housing management function

Situation

5. This report has been presented to members following the request made by the former Health & Housing Committee in March 2005

Risk Analysis

6.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Tenant Forum does not have a sufficiently high profile in helping shape/plan future Improvements to the services provided to tenants	Low	High	Ensure Tenant Participation is promoted by the Housing service, to ensure full take up of all positions on the forum.

**MINUTES OF THE TENANT FORUM HELD ON MONDAY 12 MAY 2008 AT
SAFFRON WALDEN COUNCIL OFFICES**

Present:- Daphne Cornell, Sam Sproul, George Chesham,
John Maddams, Lorna Plant, Effie Rogers, Colin Gilbey,
David Parish, David Rhodes, Paul Simpson.

Officers in attendance: - Helen Joy (Tenant Participation Officers), Roz
Millership, Liz Petrie (Housing Management Manager)
Mary Rowe (Housing Officer)

Observers: - Ghinwa Chammas

1 APOLOGIES

Joan Hoadley and John Cole

2 MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

Signed

MATTERS ARISING

David Parish asked if we had spoken to the police about speed checks outside the school between 8am – 10am and 4pm – 6pm.

Helen Joy has spoken to Peter Caulfield the Crime Reduction Officer for Uttlesford and will chase him again.

Sam Sproul asked about the visit to Epping and Brentwood to discuss partnership working. Helen Joy reported it was very early days but felt that that the new forum needed to expand with Housing Associations, to gain a wider amount of knowledge, as there are so few authorities left with their own housing stock.

It was reported that the HRA (Housing Revenue Account) training workshop took place on the 25 March 2008. Members and tenants were invited to get a better understanding on how the HRA account works. All the tenant forum that attended agreed that it was a very usefully workshop and everyone now has a much better understanding on how the HRA account works.

3 EUROPEAN PROCUREMENT WORKSHOPS

Helen Joy has been asked by Russell Goodey (Building Services Manager) to arrange a Date for the Tenant Forum to attend the European Procurement Workshop.

Hand outs were given out to explain the process in more detail (notes attached).

Date set for the 10 June 2008

4 DEMOTED TENANCIES

Liz Petrie explained all new tenants (since November 2007) are now given introductory tenancies. The Council can use if required, demoted tenancies for tenants who have been involved in anti social behaviour or used the property for illegal activities.

If the Council take a tenant to court, the judge will only agree to demote a tenancy if he/she are satisfied that they have carried out the above act/s.

A demoted tenancy usually lasts for one year. If the tenant does not cause a nuisance they will automatically receive a secure tenancy after 12 months. The Council has to get a court order if it wants to downgrade a tenancy. Once a Court Order is obtained, during the 12 months of a demoted tenancy an eviction can be obtained very easily if the tenant continues to cause a nuisance.

It was explained that this is a tool that has not been used a great deal and would only be used as a last resort when all other avenues have been exhausted to try and resolve the problem.

Daphne Cornell asked who would police the new scheme and Liz Petrie reported it would be the Housing Officers. Daphne was concerned that this could be a lot of extra work for the already very busy officers.

David Parish asked for a report back in November with the results of the new scheme.

5 CHANGES TO HOUSING OFFICERS PATCHES

Liz Petrie explained the changes to the Housing Officers patches and gave out Handouts with each Housing Officers names and areas (notes attached). Liz introduced Mary Rowe (Housing Officer) to the forum and agreed that all the Housing Officers will attend the Tenant Forum Meeting, so that everyone is familiar with the Housing Officers.

Effie Rogers asked should they contact the Housing Officers directly. It was agreed that they should contact Helen Joy in the first instance and she will forward their queries onto the appropriate officer.

6 TENANT PARTICIPATION UPDATE

Helen Joy reported that the April newsletter had gone out with the negative housing subsidy petition. Helen Joy was disappointed with the response as only 145 replies received (approx 3000 sent). Helen Joy

asked the entire forum to chase all their neighbours and tenants to send back the petition.

Daphne Cornell explained that a lot of tenants do not pay rent so they think that it does not affect them. Roz Millership explained that it affects all tenants because it results in less money to be spent on improving Council homes.

7 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Repairs - unavailable

Homelessness – up to 31 March 2008

Presented 55

Accepted 34

Rejected 19

Pending 0

Bed and Breakfast 3

8 COMMUNITY ISSUES

Effie Rogers asked to be updated on the asbestos testing at Barkers Mead, Little Hallingbury. Helen Joy agreed to speak to Peter Jones (asbestos Surveyor) for a copy of the report.

Effie Rogers also asked why it had taken so long for her neighbour to have a visit from a repairs officer. Helen Joy said she would speak to Russell Goodey (Building services Manager). Helen Joy explained that all **Non Essential** repairs should be completed within 21 working days. (Monday to Friday)

David Rhodes reported concerns that there was a lot of graffiti in one of the alleyways in Loompits Way. Helen Joy agreed to speak to Neil Weeding (Housing Officer).

David Parish asked about parking problems in Broomfields, Hatfield Heath also John Maddams expressed his concern into parking problems at Four Acres, Saffron Walden. Colin Gilbey had concerns about speeding at Birdbush Ave, Saffron Walden. It was agreed that the Council speak with the Highways department to iron out some of these issues. John Maddams also reported he had spoken to the leader of the Council about the Four Acres parking issues.

Paul Simpson reported that rubbish was not being put in the wheelie bins at Wagons Mead Hatfield Heath. He was also concerned at survey forms for the repairs service. He said that there was too much

paperwork and that it arrived at the wrong time to complete. He was concerned that this was a waste of time and money. Helen Joy reported that wheelie bins has been an on going problem for a long time and tenants have been visited and written to on several occasions. Helen Joy agreed to look at the procedures for sending out surveys.

9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Roz Millership asked the forum to consider the mechanisms for addressing housing issues – this matter had been raised by the HITG. It was agreed that the HITG was a good forum for discussing housing issues. Sam Sproul said that the current arrangements were very good and he did not feel that an additional Housing Committee would achieve anything. Daphne Cornell said that when there used to be a separate Housing Committee this worked well. Tenants were aware that 'decision only' items were now taken to Committee and agreed that it was important that a forum for tenants/members and officers continued to ensure that all housing issues were thrashed out in an informal setting.

Also members of the forum asked it to be minuted that they are all fed up of reading all the letters from Members every week in the paper. They felt that Members were wasting time on public political arguments with each other and that it is time for Members to move on and concentrate on Council business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Monday 7 July 2008 at 2.00 pm in the Committee Room, Council Offices, Saffron Walden.