

**Meeting of the Tenant Forum
On Monday 14 September 2009
At 7.30pm
In the Committee Room, Council Offices,
Saffron Walden**

Present: Joan Hoadley, George Chesham, Daphne Cornell, Sam Sproul, Paul Simpson, Effie Rogers, David Rhodes, Colin Gilbey (Leasehold Representative) John Cole, David Parish and Lorna Plant

Officers: Liz Petrie (Housing Management Manager), Roz Millership (Head of Division, Housing Services), and Nicole Shephard-Lewis (Tenant Participation Officer)

Apologies: John Maddams

Minutes from the last meeting

Minutes of previous meeting were confirmed as an accurate reflection and adopted by the assembled committee.

Matters arising

Mobility scooters issues are going to be raised as part of the Sheltered Housing Review.

David Parish felt that it was important that now the void letting standard had been established that the agreed standards were rigorously adhered to. The matter will be raised with Russell Goodey at the next meeting.

Role of the Tenant Forum representative and the upcoming elections

Daphne Cornell asked the representatives their view of what they felt the role entailed. A discussion took place and the contributions were wide and varied. It was concluded that the role had evolved since its inception. It was agreed that a small group of the tenant representatives would meet for further discussions. Roz Millership stated she would like to see the role of the tenant representative evolving further with more influence over housing policy and the significant issues facing UDC's housing and tenants.

Tenant participation update

The National Conversation took place in both Saffron Walden and in Great Dunmow. Information from the meetings was recorded on flip charts and then fed back to the TSA. Liz Petrie reported that shortly after the meeting she received a phone call from the TSA asking if we had heard of the National Conversation and they were impressed when they were told that we had already held our two local conversations and added us to their online map showing events that had taken place in the UK.

Russell Goodey had sent a message requesting volunteers to see the Dulux presentation and add their valuable input to the partnership charter.

Sheltered housing review

John Maddams would have normally provided feed back from the Sheltered Housing Review task group. As he was absent Liz Petrie reiterated the purpose of the review that UDC was carrying out alongside Supporting People. The task group has agreed that we progress the “hub and spoke” model, which will target housing support to sheltered tenants and those in the wider community. The consultation with sheltered tenants will continue over the coming months with their families/friends and carers, which will help shape the service for the future. It is anticipated that we will be able to implement this from April 2010.

HomeSwapper

HomeSwapper is the new way in which UDC tenants can mutually exchange their property. The new computer-based website provides tenants with fast easy access to properties for those wishing to move into Uttlesford and those wishing to move out. It will replace the existing scheme. It is also available for those who do not have computer access.

Performance indicators

Performance indicators: Russell Goodey will supply figures at the next meeting. Judith Snares sent in the homeless figures:

Figures up to the end of August as follows

Presented = 11, accepted = 5, rejected = 4, pending = 2.

In B&B = nil, under-18 = nil

Housing revenue update

Roz Millership explained the proposals to change how council housing finances work.

She explained that under the current arrangements, almost half of the rent paid by Uttlesford tenants has to be paid over to the Government as well as a

proportion of the capital receipts from RTB sales. The forum and the council have complained to the Government that this is unfair. Under the new proposals the Government would allow the council to keep the receipts from the sales of properties as well as all the rent collected. Uttlesford in return will have to contribute towards paying the interest on £17 billion of historic local authority debt. None of this debt is Uttlesford's, so depending on the amount Uttlesford would be required to contribute, the proposed system may be as unfair as the current system, and it could take some years before any effects are seen by tenants.

Details of exactly how the Government's proposals will affect Uttlesford will not be available until next year. Meanwhile, the Government has asked for comments on its proposals, which UDC will respond to in October.

Roz Millership asked for feedback on the Council's draft response. It was noted that whilst all were in principle in favour of leaving the subsidy system no decisions could be made until the financial details are received from the Government.

Tenant handbook

A draft copy of the new tenant handbook was given to each forum member for their input and any comments should be fed back in the next two weeks.

Any other business

Andy Chapman will provide a presentation of the Stock Conditions Appraisal on 23 October. Our stock is in good condition and the decent home figure is at the level estimated by officers.

Unfortunately the tenants have not yet received their rent rebate as there are still software issues which should be sorted shortly. All tenants will be written to explaining that rents will be reduced with effect from April 2009.

David Parish thanked Nicole Shephard-Lewis on behalf of the committee for organising the National Conversation meetings.

Local press reports cited Essex County Council now outsources some of its back office functions. The committee showed concern that they did not wish to see UDC follow in the footsteps of ECC.

Next meeting

Monday 9 November 2pm, to be held in the Saffron Walden Committee Room.

Meeting closed at 9.45pm.