

Appendix I

Meeting of the Tenant Forum On Monday 1 February 2010 At 2pm In the Committee Room, Council Offices, Saffron Walden

Present: Joan Hoadley, John Cole, George Chesham, Daphne Cornell, Sam Sproul, Paul Simpson, David Parish, Effie Rogers, David Rhodes, John Maddams, Angela Hutton, Derek Green and Lorna Plant

Officers: Liz Petrie (Housing Management Manager) Helen Harvey (Senior Sheltered Housing Officer), Nicole Shephard-Lewis (Tenant Participation Officer), Judith Snares (Homeless and Home Options Manager), Russell Goodey (Building Services Manager) Lisa Higgon (Housing Officer) and Roz Millership (Head of Division, Housing Management).

Apologies: None

Daphne Cornell welcomed the new members of the tenant forum, David Green and Angela Hutton. She then explained that all members of the forum had to represent all tenants across the district as there were some large areas that did not have representation, i.e. Great Dunmow.

Minutes from the last two Meetings were signed as a true and a correct record.

Matters Arising:

Meeting 9 November 2010

Sam Sproul commented on the poor performance of the new Dulux water-based outdoor paint. The homes at Littlebury had to be repainted. Russell Goodey stated the matter was being looked into and a new specification paint was being used that would be more suitable to colder climates. The repainting had not resulted in any additional cost to UDC. Sam Sproul requested that a letter should be sent to Dulux stating that the paint was not up to the standard stated in the Dulux presentation. David Parish seconded the request. Russell

Goodey is to write to Dulux and will request a written response to the forum.

Angela Hutton asked if Nicole Shephard-Lewis had been addressing the situation with the tenants who had not had their boilers serviced. She stated that many tenants had been removed from the list and the remainder were being dealt with but the project was ongoing.

Meeting 13/01/10

The rent setting had gone through; however the forum recommendation to increase the garage rent had not been adopted.

Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

Sam Sproul was nominated by Joan Hoadley and seconded by John Maddams. Effie Rogers nominated David Parish, who was seconded by Daphne Cornell.

It was then agreed a secret ballot would take place. Sam Sproul was then duly elected as the new tenant forum Chairperson.

David Parish was nominated for the position of Vice Chairperson by Daphne Cornell and seconded by Paul Simpson. The new chair said he felt that a woman should hold the position of Vice Chairperson as a man and a woman previously held the post. He then nominated Effie Rogers who was seconded by Lorna Plant. A secret ballot was then held and David Parish was then duly elected as the new tenant forum Vice Chairperson.

Choice Based Lettings

Judith Snares then gave a short talk explaining the Choice Based Letting scheme. UDC is part of a consortium with five other councils. Applicants wishing to apply to any of the consortium's councils have to apply directly to that authority. When applicants apply to Uttlesford for housing they are assessed by either a member of the Housing Options Team for potential tenants or, in the case of tenants transferring, a housing officer. It is from this assessment that points are awarded and a HomeOption pack sent out. The user guide includes all the information on how to apply for properties within the district. Currently the allocations policy is under review: the first stage is the consultation. A draft policy will be circulated to stakeholders, Members and the tenant forum. It will also be put onto the council's website. Judith then briefly discussed the advantages and disadvantages between having an assessment

system based on points and bands. A banding system can be seen as easier to understand and more transparent it also takes into account the length of time an individual has been waiting. It may also discourage homelessness as under a banding system priority is not automatically given to a homeless person.

Void Properties

CURRENT VOIDS AS AT 1 FEBRUARY 2010

	General Needs	Sheltered	Elderly	Total
Temporary Accommodation	6	0	4	10
To Let	16	30	7	53
Total	22	30	11	63

	General Needs	Sheltered	Elderly	Total
To be advertised	2	0	0	2
On Offer	6	5	4	15
Accepted	8	3	2	13
No Interest	0	8	0	0
Major works	0	14	1	15
Total	16	30	7	53

The void properties fall into different categories: some are temporary accommodation, some fall within the airport footprint, six are currently under offer, some properties are turned down by tenants, two properties were not advertised and some are in the hard to let category (i.e. bedsits). Currently we are also talking to our consortium partners to advertise our hard to let properties to residents in other areas. Russell Goodey is also investigating ways to improve hard to let properties, e.g. putting a lift in the main block at The Close, Hatfield Heath. Another area of potential development could be for the council to work together with other agencies in partnership to development an extra care facility for the elderly which currently Uttlesford does not have. Angela Hutton asked if the council encourages tenants to give up larger family homes if they no longer needed the space. Liz Petrie explained that a scheme exists to encourage tenants to downsize with a financial reward for the release of bedrooms as well as a financial contribution to the cost of moving. However many tenant understandably are reluctant to leave a family home that they may have lived in for years. A project was carried out that target this group but the response was poor.

Garage voids are to be advertised in the next issue of Housing News. The popularity of garages has declined – tenants are not allowed to use garages as storage as this requires particular insurance and the age and size of the garages make them unsuitable for many of the larger modern vehicles. Roz Millership is to speak to the legal department again over the possibility to allow garages to be used as storage.

Tenant Participation

Feedback was given on the Not In My Neighbourhood Week. Overall most people felt Uttlesford was a safe place in which to live.

Community Safety - Not in my Neighbourhood Survey November 2009
Summary
* 148 people were surveyed.
* 135 live in SW. 53% in Urban and 39% in Rural Uttlesford
* 90% of people asked have lived in Uttlesford for 2 years and more. 100% feel safe during the day and 80% feel safe at night
* 67% of those who have lived in Uttlesford for less than 2 years feel safer living here than where they lived previously, 25% do not.

A request was made that training is given to all forum members Nicole Shephard-Lewis will share information on training available at the next meeting.

James Burton said that if any forum member is having difficulty accessing information on the council website he would be happy to assist.

Performance Indicators:

Judith Snares sent in the homeless figures.

Figures up to the end of January 2010 are as follows:

Presented = 23, accepted = 7, rejected = 1, pending = 2

In B&B = 0, under 18 = 0, withdrawn 3

Other Committees

Feedback from Housing Initiative Task Working Group held on 20 January 2010 was given by Effie Rogers.

Development Plan Update: the figures showed a downturn due to the current economic climate.

Place Scheme Update: this is a scheme operated through a consortium that receives funds from the government to bring long-term empty properties in the private sector back into use. Uttlesford has about 12 hardcore empty properties.

Holloway Crescent Update: as already reported to the tenant forum the council, with the technical assistance of East Thames Housing Association, has acquired the necessary funding to build five sheltered bungalows on the garage site of the existing (soon to be demolished) block of flats. A decision on the future of the rest of the site is still under consideration.

Housing strategy action plan: report to be brought to the group every six months for consideration.

Review of council's Allocations Scheme.

The current use of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme as opposed to Uttlesford D.C. reverting to a points based scheme was discussed at length – the officers explained the potential cost implications of a reversion decision i.e. the repayment of grants received from various sources to set up the Choice Based Lettings Scheme etc would be untenable. It was accepted by the group that the CBL scheme would continue in its present form but kept under review at all times.

It was agreed that the officers could begin the consultation with the public on the allocation scheme (banding). The first phase of the process via the website, housing associations and village newsletters, etc. The first phase is set to close by the beginning of March 2010.

The second phase is the draft report to be presented to the group with outline of the number of bands, criteria applicable to each band, the method of assessment and movement within band/s – up/down placement through the bands etc.

Sheltered Housing Review Update

John Maddams reported that following the last meeting of the Sheltered Task Group although he had agreed the fees for the three levels of service, he since felt on reflection that the basic bronze service was too expensive. However officers pointed out that the full use of all the sheltered accommodation services will still be available to everyone, coupled with the new handyperson service. All residents in sheltered accommodation would not

have to pay any increase in cost. Those opting for no daily visit service were paying considerably less than currently. Roz Millership pointed out the tenant forum had two representatives on the task group, who were there to represent the forum and report back updates to the forum meetings. However, she agreed that the timing was unfortunate in that the forum had not had opportunity to discuss the fees before they had been agreed. The service did not make profit for the council. Helen Harvey added the one to one consultations would be carried out over the next two and a half weeks. Liz Petrie said that many organisations had been included in the review to ensure the most balanced and focused of outcomes. Formula rents did not include use of communal facilities such as washing areas. Sam Sproul the new chair suggested that the service was reviewed again after the first year.

Helen Harvey gave all members a copy of the Sheltered service standards and asked for any comments to be returned to her within the next two weeks.

Any Other Business

Paul Simpson raised the issue of his front door and that of his other two neighbours who were asked to have additional hardware removed from their doors as this had been added in error as it is incompatible with suited locks. The matter had been raised by Helen Harvey at the last JAG meeting and Peter Caulfield had confirmed that indeed he believed in this circumstance this would be the correct action. Lindsey Bailey and Peter Caulfield have been invited to the next meeting to speak on this matter and neighbourhood watch in general.

David Parish on behalf of everybody thanked Daphne Cornell for all her hard work. The forum have been given draft copies of the disabled adaptation policy, the mobility scooter policy and the race equality policy for rented housing to give feedback on.

Next meetings:

Monday 15 March 2010 Staff Room, Saffron Walden Council Offices

Meeting Closed at 4.35pm