

**Meeting of the Tenant Forum  
On Monday 15 March 2010  
At 4.30pm  
In the Committee Room, Council Offices,  
Saffron Walden**

Present: George Chesham, Daphne Cornell, Joan Hoadley, Angela Hutton, John Maddams, Lorna Plant, David Parish, David Rhodes, Effie Rogers and Sam Sproul.

Officers: Russell Goodey (Building Services Manager), Roz Millership (Head of Housing Services), Liz Petrie (Housing Management Manager), Mary Rowe (Housing Officer) Nicole Shephard-Lewis (Tenant Participation Officer) and Judith Snares (Homeless and Home Options Manager)

Apologies: Derek Green and Paul Simpson.

A Bouquet of flowers was presented by the tenant forum to Daphne Cornell for all her hard work in her capacity as chair person.

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

Matters Arising:

A letter dated 3 March 2010 from Paul Wright had been received regarding the issue of the water based exterior paint. Copy attached. A re-evaluation of timing of painting was the main consideration. Sam Sproul suggested that the council may wish to look into an alternative i.e. plastic boarding.

Boiler servicing is an on-going matter that is being dealt with by Russell Goodey in conjunction with RG Francis and officers.

Garage rents were not increased to level requested by tenant forum as it was feared this will create further increase in voids.

Neighbourhood watch representatives were not available for the meeting but will be booked for a future date.

Tenant Participation

It has been agreed that in-house training is most suited to the tenant forum as it will mean maximum attendance for the best value for money.

HRA training will be required by all if government make the proposed changes.

Nicole Shephard-Lewis gave a sample of the type of Participation Strategy the council needed to develop and has asked that the forum think how they wish to progress the strategy and to what items needed to be placed on the action plan chart.

#### Performance Indicators

Judith Snares will provide the homeless figures to the end of the financial year at the next meeting.

Russell Goodey reported a 94% satisfaction figure. Daphne Cornell asked what percentage of repairs were surveyed. It was 100% of qualifying repairs as defined by the Secure Tenants Right to Repair Regs.1994. A random sample of all other repairs are surveyed.

#### Housing Initiatives Task Group

Feedback from Housing Initiative Task Group meeting of the 10 May 2010 see agenda item 15 of the Community and Housing Committee meeting 17 March 2010 was given by Effie Rogers.

Cllr Menell's comments regarding using an area of a tenant's garden for allotments would encounter too many obstacles, both legally and practically.

#### Sheltered Housing Review Update

Feedback from the Sheltered Housing Task Group was given by Liz Petrie.

The comments given by the Tenant Forum have been taken into account in the formulation of the Sheltered Housing Care standards which will be reported to Community and Housing Committee. All tenants will receive a letter confirming the service they will be receiving. The majority of tenants are continuing with a daily visit.

The cost of a new handy person role was being met through rent and not the support charge. Angela Hutton suggested that a job specification is drawn up for the handyman role.

The cost of providing certain services like the handyman is currently being met through the rents paid by all tenants. As formula rents do not include service charges, in future all of these charges will need to be un-pooled from the rent account and charged to the individuals benefitting from these services. Sam Sproul said that tenants could not expect to receive services without paying for them. The costs for all services provided will be examined in detail by a working group with the objective of un-pooling these costs by March 2011.

David Parish volunteered to assist with this piece of work as did David Rhodes, Effie Rogers and Angela Hutton.

Lorna Plant took the opportunity to pass on the thanks from Sabira Ladha and Karen Patient from Essex Social Services for the great work of the sheltered housing officers.

David Parish said that he wanted to make it clear that his only issue he had with the new Sheltered housing service was the cost of the Bronze level of service at £ 10 but felt this may not have come across to the Community and Housing committee.

Liz Petrie explained that there had been no increase in cost of the service to tenants. No one under the new arrangement would be paying more and some would be paying less. She added that from the beginning of the review it was made clear no person living in sheltered accommodation can completely opt out of sheltered housing service, and that the service provided was much more than a warden visit, it including all equipment and a full 24 hour response service.

Angela Hutton asked what percentage of tenants pulled the cord. Liz Petrie will bring this information to the next meeting. However it was commented it was like paying for an insurance you may never need it but at least it is there if you ever do.

The service will not go out into the community unless that service can cope and regardless not during the initial start period of the service. An additional member of staff is being recruited.

Under the present allocations scheme owner occupiers over 60 years are restricted to applying for sheltered properties. The allocations scheme is currently under review.

The tenant forum concluded that the proposed changes to the sheltered service should go ahead and be reviewed in a years time. In the meantime all service charges should be reviewed with the aim of un-pooling them by March 2011.

### Choice Based Letting

Judith Snares asked for comments on the allocations scheme before the final allocations policy goes to Committee in June 2010.

### Void Properties

The voids properties figures to the end of the year will be presented at the next meeting.

The Business Improvement team looked into void properties and came up with a slight time saving, by changing the processes. However they have identified some changes to the way things were done which over the long term will improve performance.

Russell Goodey reported that The Close Hatfield Heath could have potential to have a lift fitted and was awaiting quotes. The cost was likely to be in the region of 50K which could be recouped in rent within a reasonable period (Approx. 2 years). Reynolds Court with minor works could be improved to become more desirable for letting.

At Mead Court a bid for Primary care trust funding is being put forward, to enable an extra care facility to be developed which there is a need for within the Uttlesford area.

### Any Other Business

Effie Rogers asked to visit the Sheltered blocks, Helen Harvey is to take her to visit them.

David Parish will not be attending the Environment nor the Finance committee meetings in future.

Angela Hutton queried why race equality did not just in come as one corporate policy. Roz Millership responded that the policy in housing had been written response to the government's specific guidance regarding racial equality in rented housing. However these documents were being reviewed with the objective of incorporating them in one document.

Angela Hutton said that she experience in this field from her previous employment and has kindly agreed to give valuable input.

Minutes of Tenant Forum

Community and Housing Committee 10 June 2010, item 14 appendix 1

Roz Millership told the forum that the Audit Commission will be returning in May for a strategic housing inspection and may ask to speak to the tenant forum.

Russell Goodey also invited the forum to attend a presentation for a variety of new contracts presentation days starting with the boiler servicing contract on 30 March 2010.

Next meetings

Tuesday 1 June 2010 at 7pm in the staff room, Saffron Walden Council Offices

The meeting closed at 6.30pm