

**Meeting of the Tenant Forum  
On Monday 19 July 2010  
At 4pm  
In the Committee Room, Council Offices,  
Saffron Walden**

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

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

Apologies: Derek Green, Lorna Plant and Paul Simpson

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

Matters Arising:

Comments were made on the forum members training day. Angela Hutton felt the course was a good opportunity for the forum to get to know each other better and a good team bonding exercise. Effie Rogers also enjoyed the day but felt that she wanted the course to assist further with how the forum could be a "critical friend" a term used by Lorna Plant. Sam Sproul asked if the forum could give an indication as to what future training they would like. Fiona Gardiner is to be invited to give advice regarding tackling anti social behaviour.

Helen Harvey provided a copy of the Handy person job description as requested. Angela Hutton queried the need for a handy person, Helen Harvey said the need had been identified during the sheltered housing review.

Update from Other meetings

This was brought forward.

Housing Initiatives Task Group

Feedback from Housing Initiative Task Group meeting was given by Sam Sproul. The key points were then further discussed

including possible changes to the CBL freesheet to make savings. A reduction in the production of the freesheet was considered as a possible money saving exercise. A figure in the region of £15,000 could be saved if it was replaced with a black and white print out of just Uttlesford District properties. Effie Rogers was concerned that this would restrict choice and be detrimental to tenants. Roz Millership explained that the full freesheet would still be available on-line and home-seekers could continue to subscribe to a printed copy if required. It was noted that choice was already restricted because under the current set up a home seeker could only 'bid' for a property out of the district if they were registered with that specific council. Daphne Cornell proposed Uttlesford should make savings by adopting the reduced black and white freesheet. The vote was seconded by Joan Hoadley and a vote was taken: 7 for, 1 against and 1 abstained. The change to the freesheet would only go ahead with the consent of all members of the consortium which was yet to be sought.

The Housing Conference in Harrogate went well and Sam Sproul said it was well worth attending and that Members from Uttlesford should attend next year.

The final report from the recent audit commission inspection has still not been received however the draft report shows an improvement on the last inspection.

#### Sheltered Housing Task Group

Feedback from the Sheltered Housing Task Group was given by John Maddams. The key points were discussed. The role the handy person is to undertake had been looked at and overseen by the sheltered housing task group and would be developed in more detail with the member of staff whose role it would eventually be. It was suggested that a timetable of when the handyman would be at each scheme be put up on the scheme's notice board.

Helen Harvey said since the change to the new Sheltered Housing Service modifications had already been made: the seven week rota had been amended to a 2 week rota as it was what the tenants and sheltered housing officers felt worked better.

The new Disabled Adaptations policy had now been adopted.

An open day is set for 28 July 2010 at Reynolds Court to show the newly refurbished show flat.

The Mobility Scooter Policy consultation would be reviewed again at the next meeting on 27 September 2010.

The tenants of Four Acres took part in the "Big Lunch" and 20 residents had an enjoyable time on the newly finished communal patio area.

#### Tenants Service Authority

Nicole Shephard-Lewis gave a Power Point presentation of the Tenants Services Authority's requirements for Housing providers to produce an annual report and Local Offers on standards in consultation with tenants. The report is to be completed by 1 October 2010 and the Local offers in place by April 2011.

#### Local Offers

Nicole Shephard-Lewis stressed that it was important for the forum to consider the Local Offers that they wished to adopt and that an invitation to all tenants to attend a meeting to discuss their views of Local Offers needed to be arranged.

#### Participation Strategy – Tenant Forum Objectives

Angela Hutton talked about the ideas she had for the strategy. Nicole Shephard-Lewis suggested TSA's objectives were incorporated into the strategy. A discussion took place where some members felt the exercise of trying to involve more tenants could be futile as engagement is not easy to facilitate. However others felt with the right approach more tenants could be encouraged to voice their opinions. The participation strategy is designed to encourage participation of all tenants, Angela Hutton had put a lot of work into the strategy and Roz Millership thanked her for her hard work. Nicole Shephard-Lewis is to meet again with Angela Hutton and Sam Sproul to further develop the strategy.

#### Area Division

Sam Sproul's idea of splitting up the district into six areas with a Forum rep's assigned to particular areas would help develop the TSA's proposals. Angela Hutton felt the idea had merit, however not all members felt it would be beneficial. Members asked if they could put information for tenants in Uttlesford Life, Nicole Shephard-Lewis felt this would be unlikely as Housing News was a magazine specifically for tenants. David Parish felt the Forum should just be divided into a North and a South. George Chesham said that people only get involved when there was a

problem, Angela Hutton said this was crisis management and where possible should be avoided. North and South Community Forums do already exist and all members of the community can attend. It was suggested that members looked at the ways other council's engage with their tenants and find a cost effective method.

#### Proposal for Forming a Buying Group

Sam Sproul proposed that a special group was set up to assist tenants to buy goods at a good rate such as house insurance. Daphne Cornell proposed that the idea not go ahead, Angela Hutton seconded. The group rejected the initiative.

#### Joined up Working with Registered social landlords

The idea was to join together with local Housing association. Angela Hutton said she felt it would not be too difficult. Lisa Higgon felt as they worked under a different agenda and set up that working together would not be easy. David Parish proposed not to go ahead and Joan Hoadley seconded. The proposal was declined.

#### Mobility Scooter Policy Development

Russell Goodey said more research was needed to identify the issues and that Sue Locke and Rose Johnson, the Essex County Council Road Safety Officer, would be consulted. Effie Rogers enquired what could be provided for users regarding storage and charging facilities and how much this would cost. Effie Rogers visited some of the sites with Natalie Leatham and Helen Harvey, She suggested that as some of the batteries were small that they could perhaps be moved to indoors for charging. It was considered that moving of batteries may be difficult for some users and a possible health and safety issue. Russell Goodey said Charge Masters would cost £ 2500 plus the additional cost of caballing and access pathways would make the project very expensive. There was no additional money in the HRA for this type of work. Further investigations are taking place.

#### Performance Indicators

Judith Snares provided the homeless figures to the end of the financial year 2009/10

27 cases presented as homeless

17 cases rejected

10 cases accepted

Currently 1 case in B and B (not 1 16/17 year old)

Russell Goodey reported a 94% tenant satisfaction figure.

#### Any Other Business

David Parish asked that Colin Banks be thanked for his excellent work.

Nicole Shephard-Lewis read out two further compliments received by the repairs department. Angela Hutton was not happy that she had been sent out a satisfaction survey before work started on her property.

Liz Petrie told the forum she had set up a survey to test satisfaction levels of new tenants. The survey was to analyse the levels of satisfaction from first contact to taking up the property. David Parish expressed concern that void standards were not being met a request was made that the void officer attend a forum meeting. Russell Goodey said that sometimes to prevent delays in tenants taking up a tenancy works were carried out after the tenant had moved into the property. Effie Rogers felt that more snagging should be done on the property before tenants moved in.

Angela Hutton requested that time be allocated at each meeting to progress the participation strategy.

David Parish asked if the forum members can have car parking access, Nicole Shephard-Lewis will enquire.

David Parish asked if the change to cabinet style if adopted by the council would effect the forum, Nicole Shephard-Lewis confirmed it would not directly effect the forum. Effie Rogers requested further information.

#### Next meetings

Monday 20 September 2010 at 2pm, in the Council Chambers  
Saffron Walden Council Offices

The meeting closed at 6.45pm