

**Committee:** HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

**Date:** September 08, 2005

**Title:** TENANT FORUM MINUTES

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Item for discussion

**12**

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### Summary

This report provides the Committee with the minutes of the last 2 meetings of the Tenant Forum, which covers the entire District. There are no specific financial or risk assessment implications relating to this report.

### Recommendations

None.

### Background papers

The following papers were referred to by the author in preparation of this report and are included in an appendix to this report.

1. Tenant Forum Minutes - 6<sup>th</sup> June 2005 and
2. Draft Tenant Forum Minutes - 1<sup>st</sup> August 2005

### Impact

Communication/Consultation	Issue is of considerable concern to Tenant Forum representatives.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	Tenant Forum is operated via existing tenant participation budget.
Human Rights	None
Legal Implications	None
Ward-specific impacts	Covers all of district.
Workforce/Workplace	None specific.

### **Situation**

1. This report has been presented to members following the request made by the Committee in March 2005.
2. It needs to be considered now because the Tenant Forum has met on two occasions and neither set of notes have been submitted to this Committee. It should however be noted that one set of notes are in draft and have not yet been approved by the Tenant Forum.

### **Targets**

3. What we are trying to achieve is to keep Members of the committee informed of the concerns and views of the Tenant Forum representatives.

### **Options**

4. There are no specific options; this is a matter of report only.

### **Pay-Offs/Penalties**

5. If Committee do not note the business of the Forums it could give the impression that the Tenant Forum meetings are not being taken seriously.

### **Risk Analysis**

6. There is no specific risk analysis regarding this report.

### **Background**

7. At its March meeting, the Committee requested that the minutes of future Tenant Forum meetings be reported to the Committee.

### **The Current Position**

8. Appended to this report are the minutes of the meeting held on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2005, which were approved at the Forum meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2005. The minutes of that meeting are also appended. However, it should be noted that these minutes are in draft and will be submitted to the next meeting of the Forum for approval. It was felt that to wait until the October meeting of this Committee would not be appropriate for Members being kept up to date of current Forum issues.
9. Should there be any amendments to these minutes they will be reported at the next meeting of this Committee.

## **MINUTES OF THE TENANT FORUM HELD ON MONDAY 6th JUNE 2005**

Present: - Mrs Jill Bolvig-Hansen, Mrs Daphne Cornell, Mr George Chesham, Mr Richard Livings, Mr Ian Blows, Mr John Maddams, Mr Jim Grimshaw.

Officers in attendance:- Mr John McCormack (Independent Tenant Adviser), Mrs Helen Joy (Tenant Participation Officer), Mrs Rebecca Procter (Tenant Participation Officer).

### **1 APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Trevor Offord.

### **2 MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The Minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a correct record. It was noted that these minutes are now put before Members of the Health and Housing Committee.

### **2 MATTERS ARISING**

Further to point 2 of the previous minutes, Mrs Joy reported that Housing Officers walk Council owned estates twice a year. Further to point 6, the Tenant Participation Officers had held a coffee morning for the residents of Hatherley Court to thank them for use of their common room.

### **3 STOCK OPTIONS UPDATE**

Mr McCormack confirmed that the draft report he had prepared for the Members' and Tenants' workshop on 1 June 2005 is substantially complete, aside from statistics to be included on the survey response rate, the population density, and the numbers of Black, Minority and Ethnic tenants. Tenants expressed firm agreement with the report's conclusion that there are certain action points that have emerged from the appraisal, which should be implemented.

The recent workshop was discussed. It was decided that the Chairman would raise at the next Health and Housing Committee meeting the Forum's concern at the small number of members attended. Mr McCormack suggested it would be useful for Tenants to receive training on the way in which the Council process operates and key areas of housing strategy, with a view to tenants gaining a useful input into strategy. Mrs Cornell requested a copy of the Best Value Performance review.

#### **4 Performance information**

Repairs - Mrs Joy reported that during April repairs satisfaction was 99%, and during May 100%.

Homelessness – 17 people presented as homeless last month; 4 were accepted, 3 rejected, 10 are pending; 8 have been placed in bed & breakfast, and 4 16 year olds are in bed & breakfast. Concern was expressed that the figures for 16 year olds are increasing.

#### **6 Tenant Participation Officer Update**

Tenant Compact - Mrs Joy reported that the Tenant Compact needs to be updated. Mrs Bolvig-Hansen, Mr Chesham and Mr Livings agreed to assist in providing comments on amending the Compact, which must be completed before the next Tenant Forum elections. It was agreed that two meetings would be held, on Wednesday 29 June and Thursday 30 June at 2 pm, in Mr Chamberlain's office. Mrs Bolvig-Hansen requested that Mr McCormack either attend or give his views on the Compact before the meetings.

Partnering workshop – Mrs Joy invited members of the Tenant Forum to attend a workshop at the Council Chamber on 14 July. This training is a Government requirement, and involves comparing partnering arrangements against more traditional forms of contracting. Other tenants would be welcome, and names of those invited by Tenant Forum members should be passed to the Tenant Participation Officers.

“Wash Up” following Stock Options Appraisal – this is to be held on Thursday 15 September at 1pm in the Council Chamber. The session is intended to be informal, and will involve all tenants and staff who participated in the process, as well as the Independent Tenant Advisor.

#### **7. Local Issues**

Mr Chesham reported that he has recently experience two instances where departments within UDC appear to have acted without properly consulting tenants, and he queried whether these departments were aware of the existence of the Tenant Participation Officers. The occasions referred to involved first, the felling of three trees which had Preservation orders on them (the situation has now been resolved); and secondly, the recent change in the way plastic and tin recycling is carried out. It seems that an advertisement was placed in the local newspaper advising residents that items for recycling would no longer be accepted if in small carrier bags, and that everything now has to be loose in the box provided. Mr Chesham's complaint was that, aside from the box not being big enough, there has been a failure of communication. It was noted that these issues related to the community as a whole and not just tenants. It was agreed that the Tenant Participation Officers would send an e-mail to all staff reminding them to use their help in communicating with tenants. It was further agreed that this issue will be placed on the agenda for a future discussion, and that a representative from

Environmental Health, would be invited to come to a Meeting to answer questions. Mr Chesham further requested that Tenant Forum members receive an updated copy of who is who in the Council.

Mrs Cornell reported that the UDC owned allotments between Laws Close, Orchard Close and Rowntree Way are all surrounded by housing now, and queried whether this land could be used for something else.

Mr Livings noted that an area is becoming overgrown at Hunters Way. It was agreed that he would telephone Environmental Health to report this.

Mr Blows reported that he is still experiencing parking problems in Byrds Farm Lane, and wished to know when a letter was going to be sent out to all residents there requesting them to avoid causing any obstruction in the area. The TPOs would speak to Roz Millership to find out what is being done.

Mr Maddams reported that there is a problem with dogs belonging to some of the residents causing a nuisance by fouling gardens. Agreed he will report this directly to Environmental Health.

Mr Maddams also asked whether anything is being done about putting in a pedestrian crossing at South Road. Mrs Joy advised this was a Highways matter.

Mrs Bolvig-Hansen reported that there are now several children in her road, which appears to be covered by a 30 mph regulation. As a child was nearly run over recently it is important that a "Children at Play" notice is put up. The Tenant Participation Officers will make enquiries with Russell Goodey, to ascertain the provider.

It was noted that Tenant Forum members would like to be issued with ID tags, and the Tenant Participation Officers will look into this.

## **7. Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting is at **7 pm on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> August 2005** in the Committee Room. Please note the earlier start time, although as agreed, once the Stock Options process is over, we may revert to the original later start as requested by Mr Grimshaw.

**DRAFT MINUTES OF THE TENANT FORUM HELD  
ON MONDAY 1<sup>st</sup> AUGUST 2005**

Present: - Mr Jim Grimshaw, Mr Richard Livings, Mr George Chesham, Mr Ian Blows, Mr Trevor Offord, Mr John Maddams

Officers in attendance: - Mrs Helen Joy, Mrs Rebecca Procter  
(Tenant Participation Officers)

Visitor: - Miss Sarah Molloy

**1. APOLOGIES**

Mrs Jill Bolvig-Hansen, Mrs Daphne Cornell. In the absence of Mrs Bolvig-Hansen, Mr Grimshaw chaired the meeting.

**2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

Regarding item 3, Mr Offord considered that Housing Officers should “walk” the estates more than twice a year, and that a more appropriate schedule would be for this type of inspection to take place every two months. Mrs Joy replied that in practice most areas would be visited more than twice in a year, but that this was the minimum, intended to ensure that all areas are at least seen, whether or not they are the subject of a call out. Mr Offord asked that his comments be passed to Mr Chamberlain, as he took the view that there are many areas in the district, which seem to have visible problems.

The minutes were signed as a correct record.

**3. MATTERS ARISING**

Mr Grimshaw introduced and welcomed Miss Molloy, who has expressed an interest in joining the Tenant Forum, and wished to observe a meeting.

Mr Livings noted that no action seems to have yet been taken on the issue he has raised at the meeting of the Tenant Compact group. Mrs Procter will ask the Housing Officer, Neil Weeding, for a progress report.

In response to the request previously made by Tenant Forum members for further information on staff responsibilities, Mrs Procter distributed copies of the UDC booklet, “A to Z of Council Services”.

**4. STOCK OPTIONS UPDATE**

Mrs Joy advised that the stock options appraisal has now been “signed off” by GO-East, confirming that UDC is to retain its stock. Mr Chamberlain’s thanks were conveyed to members of the Tenant Forum for their significant contribution. Members of the Tenant Forum expressed their satisfaction at

this result, and Mr Grimshaw asked for the Forum's thanks to all staff involved to be recorded.

It was noted that the revised date for the stock options "wash up" lunch is **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> September.**

## **5. PERFORMANCE INFORMATION**

Repairs – the satisfaction survey shows 99% satisfaction for the last month.  
Homelessness – no figures are available as Mrs Snares is away.

## **6. TENANT COMPACT**

Mrs Procter advised that the draft revised Tenant Compact has been prepared following a meeting of the Tenant Compact Working Group, which considered the existing wording carefully, and made a number of suggestions for amendment. These comments have been incorporated into a draft, which all members of the Tenant Forum members were sent in advance of the meeting for their consideration. It should be noted that the forthcoming Tenant Forum elections can only take place once both the Forum and the Council's Health and Housing Committee have ratified the document.

Mrs Procter confirmed that the revised Compact will be sent out to all tenants with the next newsletter, in A5 booklet form. Mrs Procter further noted that the election process, if more candidates than places are nominated, would be conducted strictly in accordance with the rules set out in the Compact, and the usual practice of Democratic Services within UDC. We would therefore have a secret ballot, with votes contained in sealed envelopes and placed in ballot boxes, to be opened only after the close of the voting period.

Following a discussion on the changes made to the document, the Tenant Forum accepted the draft document, and recommended that it should be submitted to the Committee. (nb see \* below)

## **7. HOUSING STRATEGY GROUP**

Mrs Joy advised that two tenant representatives are to be elected to join this group, which has met in the past, and which following the stock options appraisal process is to be reinstated. It was agreed that the representatives should be Mrs Bolvig-Hansen, and Mrs Cornell.

## **8. NEWSLETTER UPDATE**

Mrs Joy advised that the next newsletter will contain news of the stock options sign off, the revised Tenant Compact, and an article by Mrs Bolvig-Hansen about the Chartered Institute of Housing Conference. Tenants' views on further contents were sought. Mr Chesham stated that in his view it is vital that we recruit new tenant representatives, whether they come to meetings, or simply represent views from their area by another method such as by a

regular telephone call. Mr Offord added his support for this view, and suggested that the newsletter should emphasise the role of the forum, and should seek young parents as new representatives. Mr Chesham further stated that in his view, names of UDC officers should be published to enable tenants to see who is in charge of which areas or services. Mrs Procter referred him to the A to Z of Council Services, \* which Mr Grimshaw requested should be included in the Tenant Compact.

Mrs Procter advised on the proposed date for the newsletter, which is likely to be one to two weeks after the Health and Housing Committee meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> September in order for the Tenant Compact to be sent out with the newsletter. Mrs Procter detailed the proposed timing for the nomination and election process of tenant representatives.

## **9. LOCAL ISSUES**

Mr Livings requested that his previous complaint be followed up. Mrs Procter to obtain an update from the Housing Officer.

Mr Livings also described a recent situation where a tenant had contacted UDC's animal warden to assist where a cat had been injured in a fight with another cat. The warden apparently said there was nothing she could do, and the tenant had to pay the vet's fee herself. Mrs Procter will check what the animal warden's remit covers.

Mr Offord requested information on when the double-glazing for his area will take place, Mrs Procter will ask Roz Millership for an update.

Mr Offord raised the issue of hedges and gardens tidied, which seems to be done in a random way, and does not seem very fair. Mrs Joy advised that people requiring this assistance should ask their Housing Officer to place them on the list for the Garden Programme. Mrs Procter to check the guidelines.

Mr Blows reported that there is a disputed area of hedging on the road alongside his house, where the hedge is too long for him to cut it himself, but UDC and Highways will not agree to take responsibility for it. Mrs Procter to enquire with Andrew Hurrell; Mr Offord suggested that UDC write to the Highways Agency explaining that one of its tenants is having trouble with this issue.

Mr Chesham had no local issues to raise, but Mrs Procter noted that at the last meeting he had asked for recycling matters to be brought onto a future agenda, and that she had been in touch with Mrs Diane Burridge, head of Environment Services, to invite her along to a meeting.

Mr Blows has had difficulties recently with parking, and with anti-social behaviour. Following a lengthy discussion about an incident at the weekend involving criminal damage to his son's bike, Mr Blows requested that the TPOs establish whether the Housing Officer can take any further action. Mrs



Joy advised that the police should be informed, and that whilst the Housing Officer, Mr Weeding has already made a site visit, the TPOs will ask him to follow up this matter as necessary.

Regarding the parking, a particular neighbour has on three occasions prevented the recycling lorry from gaining access to the road by parking inconsiderately

Mr Maddams reported that at Four Acres, the recycling lorry has knocked over the lamppost, which has happened before and took 6 months to carry out the repairs. He requested that the light be moved nearer the flats, to the other side of the road. Mrs Procter to establish whether UDC or Highways own this lamppost.

Mr Maddams raised the question of failure by contractors to keep appointments. Tenants wished to know whether when tendering, contractors are required to agree not to subcontract their work. Mrs Procter to enquire.

Mr Grimshaw wished to report a garden, which is not being maintained following eviction of a tenant in Rickling Green. Mrs Procter to contact the Housing Officer.

#### **10. DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2005 in the Council Chamber, Saffron Walden, at 7.30 pm (please note later time)

Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2006 in the Council Chamber at 7.30 pm.