

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 FEBRUARY 2008 AT 7PM

Present:

Terry Anderson	David Payce
Pat Brosnan	Viv Phelps
Josephine Browning	Rod Simons
Stephen Collier	Tony Bodgin, (ECC)
George Hood	Steve Deakin (ECC)
Lin Kaczanow	Steve Warran (ECC)
Alison Moore	Jenny Berry (ECC)

- 1. Apologies** were received from Alison Baxter, Liz Belchamber, Gina Goodfellow, Bob Halpin, Gemma Lissaman, Joan Smith and Marion Watkins
- 2. Accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 16 January 2008**
Agreed.
- 3. Matters arising from the minutes**
No matters arising.
- 4. Chair's Address**

The Chair reminded representatives they should try to attend local functions within the areas they represent so that there is communication between tenants and leaseholders and the Council about local issues and about Council matters affecting them. Representatives were invited to contact either the Chair or Secretary if they want to discuss any issues arising in between meetings.

Action:

Tony Bodgin will notify area events and will provide maps of each area represented. Representatives to attend meetings when possible.

5. Proposal to amend Constitution

The Chair raised concern over objections to co-opting of new members to replace Committee members who had resigned. He proposed amending the Constitution to allow this with immediate effect. It was pointed out that paragraph 5.0 of the Constitution deals specifically with how the Constitution can be changed and it was agreed to follow this procedure.

Proposer: Terry Anderson proposed that the next meeting of the Committee should be a Special General Meeting for the purpose of amending the Constitution.

Seconder: George Hood seconded the proposal.

Agreed: That the Chair would finalise with ECC officers the wording of the proposal to change the Constitution (paragraph 3) for discussion at the next Meeting (Special General meeting).

6. Housing Service Improvement Plan

The draft Plan distributed at the last TALC meeting has now been updated to include time scales and officers responsible for action. Committee members will receive a copy of the final version when it has been printed.

The Plan deals with managing performance, setting of targets and methodology for reviewing services and provides a framework for tenant involvement. Policies and procedures will be clearly laid down and realistic objectives, targets and timescales will be identified along with the staff expected to carry out plans. Management within Exeter City Council (ECC) will be improved with increased one to one reporting to managers, regular team meetings and monitoring of progress. Reasons for setting targets at a certain level will be explained and in some cases, where it is justified, targets may be lowered. They should be difficult and challenging to reach, but it should be possible to achieve them. The fundamental 'high level' targets will be set for next year by (ECC) Managers using the new Target Setting policy and lower level indicator targets will be considered next year in consultation with the TALC.

Large service reviews will take place over the next three years to ensure consistency of approach between services and to compare and learn from good practice in other organisations. Reviews will be carried out by teams made up of members of the service being reviewed, members of other housing services and residents (TALC representatives and possibly others). Each review will have a team leader to direct the process. The Resident Auditor Team (RATs) may be asked to do independent work in connection with reviews. Following reviews, the final reports and recommendations will be forwarded to the Housing Management Team for approval. Major changes in policy may need to be considered by the Council's Scrutiny Committee and Executive. The TALC will have an overview of the reviews and at least one representative should sit on review groups and give feedback to the TALC as a whole.

Next year there will be an Older Persons/Sheltered Housing Review and five representatives from the Sheltered Housing Consultation Group have been nominated to represent tenants. Other Service Reviews for the coming year are:

Repairs:	Repairs Partnership Board. This group is already established and includes TALC members.
Tenancy Agreement:	Alison Moore, Lin Kaczanow, Viv Phelps and Rod Simons volunteered to represent the TALC
Flats - Communal Areas:	Josie Browning, Stephen Collier and George Hood volunteered to represent the TALC

Estate Management: Representation to be decided later

Asset Management: Pat Brosnan and Viv Phelps to represent the TALC. Suggested that Chris Symes also be invited to be included.

Response from the TALC:

It was suggested to involve the Audit Commission in the setting of targets as a way of preventing unnecessary scrutiny from them in the future. However, the Head of Housing replied that this is not possible as it falls outside of the AC's remit. The TALC will be involved in setting targets, this coming year through the Performance Management Committee.

Concern was expressed that the RATs could become over-burdened with work given the huge programme outlined in the Service Review Plan. However, the Head of Housing explained that the new Housing Operations Manager would help to prevent this and take responsibility for driving forward many of these reviews.

Action:

Final version of the Housing Service Improvement Plan to be distributed to TALC members and TALC involvement in the various review groups to continue in accordance with the Plan.

7. Tenant Training

ARCH Tenants Conference - Derby, 19 March 2008

Members were invited to attend the ARCH Conference. Alison Moore, Viv Phelps, Pat Brosnan and Terry Anderson expressed interest in attending.

Action:

Transport arrangements are still to be decided with those attending.

Eden Project, 31 March 2008

Steve Deakin is arranging attendance between 10am and 12.30pm at the Eden Project for training on green issues, followed by lunch and two hours to walk around the project. This is being funded by DEFRA and to minimise carbon footprint will involve return coach travel between Apple Lane, Exeter and the Eden Project, via Tavistock.

Action:

Steve Deakin will arrange for available places to be allocated for TALC members first, then offered to Tenant & Resident Associations and then to other tenants involved in participation.

Training with Jenny Vernon

It was suggested that further training with Jenny Vernon could be arranged as part of the next TALC meeting on Wednesday 26 March. However it was decided to re-schedule this meeting because numerous members are unable to attend.

Action:

Date of next meeting to be re-scheduled and Jenny Vernon to be invited to give a further training session.

8. Any other business

One of the committee members raised problems with another member. She felt that he was limiting the Committee by disagreeing with decisions agreed by the remaining members and by prolonging the meetings by constant questioning and interruptions. She felt that he was bringing the Committee into disrepute because other members were being driven away by his conduct and business was not being completed on time causing meetings to over-run and members having to leave before the end of the meeting. Another member had brought a written statement expressing her concerns about the same member. However, as other members generally supported the original views expressed the statement was not read out. A brief discussion took place about the options open to the Committee and members were invited to vote regarding the charge that the member was bringing the Committee into disrepute. This vote was carried with 6 votes in agreement and three abstentions. The Chair did not vote, but retained the right to use his casting vote. Further discussion took place as to what action should follow and it was agreed that the Chair would write a letter to the member warning him about his conduct and that in the opinion of the TALC he was in breach of the Code of Conduct and had brought the Committee into disrepute.

Action: Terry Anderson to write to the member as instructed by the Committee.

8.2 Following this item members discussed the need to give the Constitution more clarity with regards to dealing with members who breach the Constitution and/or the Code of Conduct. As a result it was agreed a further amendment would be submitted to the Special Meeting of the TALC.

Agreed: That the Chair would finalise with ECC officers the wording of the proposal to change the Constitution (paragraph 8) for discussion at the next Meeting (Special General meeting).

Signed

Chairperson

Next Meeting: Special General Meeting to be arranged and agenda papers to be sent out as per the constitution.