

EXETER CITY COUNCIL

TENANT & LEASEHOLDER COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD AT 7PM MONDAY 23 February

BUCKERELL LODGE HOTEL

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|------------------------|
| Present: | Viv Phelps | Jackie Laskey |
| | Stephan Bouloux | Lin Kaczanow |
| | David Payce | Tony Powell |
| | Stephen Collier | George Hood |
| | Alison Moore | Liz Belchamber |
| | Barbara Haizelden | Joan Smith |
| | Jackie Laskey | Chrys Symes (Observer) |
| | Councillor Rob Hannaford | Neil Shire (ECC) |
| | Steve Warran (ECC) | Lawrence Blake (ECC) |
| | Steve Deakin (ECC) | Phil Mills (ECC) |

1. **Apologies:** Marion Watkins; Tony Bodgin (ECC); Jenny Berry (ECC)
2. **Accuracy of the minutes of the meeting held on 12th January 09 was agreed.**
3. **Matters Arising from the Minutes** - None.
4. **Purpose of the Committee (Alison Moore)**

Alison Moore reminded everyone of the purpose of the Committee and pointed out that TALC meetings are not the correct format for airing personal issues and problems. A handout was circulated to the group outlining the remit of the committee.

5. **Service Improvement Plan**

A copy of the Service Improvement Plan and accompanying report had been circulated to the TALC prior to the meeting to allow them time to read and enter into meaningful discussion at the meeting. Lawrence Blake led the discussion.

The review of service provision was prompted by the HQN Inspection recommendations and individual departmental service plans have fed into the overall Service Improvement Plan.

Lawrence outlined that managers looked at individual service satisfaction surveys and picked out key themes which needed to be tackled. One major issue which emerged from this process was the cleanliness and management of communal areas around flats. One solution would be to arrange for these areas to be cleaned by the council and the work charged to the occupants via a service charge. But in order for this to be offered as a solution it would first be necessary to separate the current rent charge into both it's rent and service charge elements. Once separated

the service charge can be broken down to show how the charge is made up and what the different charges are for the services they receive. This has already been done for the councils' leaseholders and it is hoped to have the rented properties completed by 2010.

Another project that has been identified is to carry out all the internal and external painting work at the same time to bring the block up to an acceptable standard. At the same time we would discuss with tenants and leaseholders of the block the levels of service they wished to see in the future and the standards of management for communal areas. This new level of intensive management would be agreed through a Neighbourhood Agreement and then enforced to ensure standards are maintained.

Other major projects to be included were a review of the ASB and Neighbourhood Management policy. The condition of void properties at the time of letting has also been identified as a major issue. The Service Review Board is looking at the letting policy and the RAT's team have it included in their 2009/10 work programme.

It was agreed that services are improving and it is hoped that this will be reflected in the surveys we undertake.

The council currently has over 500 blocks of flats. These are being subject to an analysis of how the current rent is made up in order to separate the rent from the cost of communal services – as is already been carried out for leaseholders. Separating the rent from the service charge will not result in increased rents in itself, but will allow for extra services to be purchased by occupants (such as cleaning communal areas) in the future. There are three stages to this process: -

- Firstly the tenancy agreement needed to be changed in order to allow for service charges to be made. This has been completed.
- Disentangle each element of the service charge payment from the rent (this will not result in a rent increase).
- Implement the services (with a charge) for those who want it. The programme will start next year in Hamlin Gardens starting with the external improvements in the area when all the details have been finalised.

6. Boundary Committee Update

The Government has delayed the decision on any future local government reorganisation in Devon until September at the earliest following a judicial review of the Boundary Commissions consultation process. East Devon and Breckland Council's had brought the case and the Courts agreed that the Boundary Committee had not consulted adequately on all aspects of the proposed Unitary solution. The courts also decided that the Boundary Committee was allowed to put forward more than one unitary solution as viable options for Devon. The timescale has now been put back in order to allow for a more in depth consultation process to take place. Whatever solution is put to the Secretary of State for consideration it will not now be implemented until 2011 at the earliest.

7. TALC Elections

The TALC members present were reminded that they need to get their application forms in as soon as possible. Application forms were distributed to members who have not yet returned them.

Councillor Rob Hannaford pointed out that late applications in an area where an election was to be needed should not be entered into that election in the interests of fairness. All agreed with this viewpoint.

8. Resident Auditor Team (RAT) - Report back

Having now completed the flats survey the Resident Auditor Team have now begun an inspection of Council's Resident Involvement function. This does not just include the service provided by the Tenant Participation Team but how residents are involved right across the housing service. They are currently completing a questionnaire which will be put to tenants to get their views. Recently a series of interviews with service managers was completed. The questions they were asked were based on what the housing inspectorate would ask in a real inspection.

The team are hoping to have the tenants' questionnaire completed at the next meeting.

Steve Warran added that information the RAT's supplied was used as part of the new Asset Management Strategy development and also the Service Improvement Plan. This demonstrates how effective they are proving. The Resident Involvement Review they are carrying out at present is based on the Audit Commissions KLOE 5 guidance which demonstrates what an authority should be doing as a 3 star authority to see how we compare. We need to look at things such as how to get hard to reach groups involved and hopefully we will get some recommendations from the RAT's report.

A brief overview of how the system works is that the RAT's make recommendations based on their inspection of the service. The Council then considers their recommendation and looks at the financial implications and practicalities of what they have suggested.

9. Tenant Services Authority National Conversation Regional Events

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) are the new regulatory body for social landlords. They already regulate Housing Associations and from 2010 they will take over the regulation of council housing. The TSA want to be sure they are acting in the best interest of tenants and have embarked on a nationwide consultation process in order to find out exactly what standard of service tenants want from their landlord.

The Council are holding four TSA 'National Conversation' events in Exeter on behalf of the TSA. The events will be held at the Buckerell Lodge Hotel on the 12 and 13 of March. The timings of the events have been arranged so as to be as accessible as possible to everyone. The times of the meetings are: -

Thursday 12 March - 5.30 to 7.30 and 7.30 to 9.30 and
Friday 13 March - 11.00 to 1.00 and 2.00 to 4.00.

215 invitations have been sent out for the events and people have the opportunity to elect what day and time of event they wish to attend.

10. Training Update

Gabi Recknagel, Take Part Exeter (Exeter CVS)

We have had a meeting with Gabi Recknagel to discuss the training needs of the group. Gabi has agreed to attend the next TALC meeting on 30 March to discuss your training needs and delivery with you.

DTPG Training Day

The next DTPG training day is on Wednesday 25 March at the ISCA Centre. There will be a workshop on Tenant Led Self Regulation by Nigel Long of TPAS and also an update on the National Tenants Voice by Nic Bliss. Invitations have already been sent out.

11. Around the Associations

Countess Wear

The association have redesigned their letterhead and they have now acquired a Bestwares Cash & Carry card. They still need a sink in the portacabin. The estate is now looking very clean and tidy due in part to the efforts of the local children but they are very disappointed to hear that they will not be getting the MUGA.

Councillor Hannaford commented that there had not been a definite 'no' to the MUGA but that it would be dependant on the council managing to retrieve the money which is trapped in the Icelandic banks.

LB stated that notwithstanding the lost money the children have complied with the request for a reduction in antisocial behaviour but with no reward.

WWB

Following the AGM, the WWB now has a new chair, vice-chair, secretary and treasurer. The proceeds from the annual draw will all go towards the local community. The new committee is committed to continuing with the work of the previous committee, working for the local community as a whole which has already achieved a youth shelter, climbing wall and children's play area.

12. Any Other Relevant Business

Anti-Social Behaviour in Whipton

Tony Powell gave feedback regarding anti-social behaviour at, and near, the Pinhoe Road Doctor's Surgery in Whipton.

Infill Site Committee

The committee have lost one of the tenant representatives from the committee. Allie Moore explained that the committee look at plans for future sites, planning issues, etc. and asked for a volunteer to fill the vacancy. Viv Phelps volunteered and was elected to represent the TALC unanimously.

Apologies for next meeting

Hazel and Viv gave their apologies for the next meeting.
Marion Watkins has telephoned and will also be absent due to illness.

Gate at property

Antony Powell raised the issue of a gate that has been promised on a property in his area where a hyperactive child lives and which poses a safety issue due to its absence. Phil Mills to attend.

Signed
Chair

Next Meeting: 1.00pm to 3.00 on Monday 30 March, 2009 in the Rennes meeting room