

Tenants Talkback
Minutes of Meeting Tuesday 11th December 2012

Attendance

Councillor Mrs Jan Pound	Chair Environment, Health & Housing Board
Councillor Vicky Davies	Opposition Spokesperson
Malcolm Knights	Head of Housing BBC
Robin Hill	Principal Officer (Estates Management) BBC
Andy Long	Tenant Participation Co-ordinator BBC
Lee Abbott	Principal Surveyor (Planned Maintenance) BBC
Carolann Pozzi	Harewood Road Scheme Manager BBC
Maureen Montgomery	Ingatestone Village Voice
Chris Price	Tenant Representative - West Horndon
Mick Greenslade	Tenant Representative - Tillingham Bold
Linda Skinner	Tenant Representative - Pilgrims Hatch
Cindy Russell	Tenant Representative - Whittington Road
Wendy Dennis	Tenant Representative - Whittington Road
Jackie Elliott	Tenant Representative – Tollesbury Court
Margaret Coxhead	Tenant Representative - Burns Way
Thelma Childs	Tenant Representative - Burns Way
Val Horscroft	Tenant Representative – Iver Road
Michel Tinkler	Tenant Representative – Iver Road
Gary Embery	Tenant Representative – Iver Road

1 Apologies

Councillor Linda Golding	Vice Chair Environment, Health & Housing Board
Norman Miles	Tenant Representative - Whittington Road
Stella Miles	Tenant Representative - Whittington Road
Bob Goodwin	Tenant Representative - Sir Francis Way
John Blackwell	Tenant Representative – Greenshaw
Pat Smith	Tenant Representative - Wainwright Avenue

2 Signing of Tenants Talkback Constitution

Copies of the signed Constitution will be distributed to Talkback Group members
MM stated that agreeing the Constitution was a big step forward.
Talkback Group members were asked to read through, raising any queries at the next meeting. MM and CP will stand for one year then pass on.

3 Minutes of Previous Meeting

MM to be added to the Attendance List
Minutes of previous meeting agreed

4 Matters Arising

MM asked that Welfare Reform updates are given at future meetings before April. MK indicated that Brentwood Borough Council (BBC) will be writing to all tenants who will be affected. There will be a focussed target, taking into account the benefit cap. BBC does not wish to raise unnecessary concerns with blanket information.

5 Responsive Repairs and Planned Maintenance Review

MK stated that BBC is looking at the whole way repairs and maintenance operates. The aim is to make the service more efficient. It is vital that BBC delivers the service tenants want.

MK asked what the Talkback Group were looking for out of a repairs service, taking into account you get what you pay for. What is important to tenants? Currently BBC is looking at offering alternative ways of reporting repairs, ie text or via the internet.

MK believed that improvements to the Appointments System are a win/win situation, it suits tenants and assists BBC's work planning

MM asked whether tenants would have to pay more for an improved service? MK said that this depended on what the improvements were, for example moving to a more appointment based service would be more efficient and shouldn't increase costs whereas provision of an expanded out of hours service would.

MK referred to the Business plan. If you up the standard of repairs the cost to the Council will go up,

MM emphasised the Importance of workman keeping to appointments The whole service needs to be tidied up.

RH hoped that increased tenant scrutiny and involvement in the proposed mystery shopping initiative would assist in resolving problems.

CP gave an example of the inconvenience caused by broken appointments from the Responsive Repairs and Planned Maintenance service.

MC complained about outside lighting for the Burns Way flats. Often it takes 3 weeks to fix the single bulbs in the stairwells.

RH explained that sending out an electrician for a single defective lightbulb would prove expensive. The external lights at Burns Way are usually checked periodically by one of the Housing Caretakers when any defective bulbs are replaced.

MG stated that the whole lighting circuit had blown in the bin area at Tillingham Bold, but workman have not returned to resolve the matter.

BBC was very good on resetting the lights in the stairwells, but this hasnt worked. JE has experienced similar problems at Tollesbury Court.

WD had not had a number of phone calls returned by the Planned Maintenance Dept in regard to the broken gate at 146/148 Whittington Road flats.

LA said that BBC is trying to simplyfy what tenants should expect from the Planned Maintenance Service PM used to cover external repairs and windows, doors and gutters.

There is a big flaw in which department tenants should go to and who deals with the problem. Contractors are also less controlable than direct labour

MM believed there to be slippage between PM and the Responsive Repairs Service. Her view is that the Contractor who originally carried out the work should be made to put right any problems with it. There appears to be no proper inspection of works. Some tenants are still waiting for works to be completed.

LA explained that BBC gets a 6 months warranty on all newly fitted kitchens and bathrooms. He explained however that there is an issue because contractors are very reluctant to return to complete 'finishing touches' which causes BBC problems. Saltash were asked to leave because of the quality of their work. BBC has now appointed new contractor Kirkman and Jourdain. At the moment the disturbance period for works is currently 4 weeks. Would you like to see this decreased?

MC outlined that stairs and balconies in Burns Way were supposed to have been done in August. LA confirmed that Planning permission had only been granted last week.

MG enquired what was happenning regarding the replacement/repairs to the Storage Sheds in The Bolds.

LA outlined the works that are due to take place early next year which included underpinning/rebuilding the storage sheds in Woodland Avenue flats
clearing guttering of all blocks, Woodland Avenue
replacing the balcony flooring at Tollesbury and Tendring Court .
All PVC windows of The Bolds are to be serviced outside the PM contract.

MG asked whether provision had been made for storage at Tillingham Bold while works take place. LA confirmed that Containers can be lifted into the communal garden.

LA explained that BBC is currently 6 weeks behind in completing PM works due to structural problems at Masefield Court.

MC was concerned that all the newly fitted door in Burns Way are sticking. LA said that the doors and frames are to be examined.

CP - Could something be done to avoid what has happened in West Horndon with Oakway and the replacement of the boilers. LA explained that the Government had insisted that BBC installs A Band Boilers, which require a lot of pipework.

JE is still waiting for a new toilet door, the window is draughty with pipe holes left. Gas works were done 2 years ago but the Council still has to tidy up outstanding works. LA will deal with these matters.

AL requested a list of the External Planned Maintenance works for all the Flats in the Communal areas in advance. LA agreed and will provide these details.

JE has received complaints about PM. Why not make sure tenant representatives are aware of what is going on?

LA will take this offer up, but warned of disappointment if tenants' expectations are not fully met.

MM asked whether Talkback Members can sit on contractor selection panels. MK agreed and felt that this should be encouraged, especially as BBC is about to embark on the biggest procurement exercise ever.

Carolann Pozzi indicated that tenants of Ivor Road need security doors. The pavement is also uneven within the communal garden of Harewood Road Sheltered Scheme.

RH explained that these works would need to be factored into the BBC housing service business plan. Carol Ann and RH will discuss and take this forward.

Cllr Vicky Davies expressed concerns about painting and rendering falling off the Danes Way flats. LA has the matter in hand.

The Talkback group agreed that LA attend a future meeting in order to maintain good communications.

6 Rent Increase – First Thoughts and Consultation Proposals

MK went through the proposals for the rent setting. **Please see the attached handout for further details.** The key date for rent setting is 30th Sept. This is when the Inflation Rate is set. On a positive note inflation was set at 2.6%, compared to 5.8% last year

Rents will be discussed at the Health and Housing Panel first and will then be finalised at the Special Policy Committee on 12th February 2013.

Tenants will be invited to a Rent Consultation Meeting on Tuesday 8th January to discuss the issues. This meeting will be webcast .

MM commented that target rents keep moving. Why is this?

MK stated that this was not completely true. The Government has shifted rents due to high inflation. Some properties have already reached their target rent.

CP indicated that Rent Setting was authorised before the Credit Crunch and the Welfare Reform Act. Why can't the Government and BBC take this into consideration.

MK questioned what the objective is for the BBC housing stock. Is it to keep the rents as low as possible or create more social housing
We must also consider self financing. How much revenue do we want to generate?

MM enquired whether BBC is in receipt of grants

MK said that BBC is in receipt of no grants, only from sales from Right to Buy. The Homes and Communities Agency provides grants but there is limited funding available. BBC will have the opportunity to build housing again through Self Financing

LS asked why BBC needs to stick rigidly to the formulae

MK The reduced grant from Essex CC was spread over 3 years. The shortfall is not falling on the Housing Revenue Account

7 Tenant Participation Update

Projects

AL gave an update on the projects that are currently taking place

Harewood Road Patio - Planning Permission Approved
Greenshaw – Awaiting decision on the installation of fencing
Wadham Close Car Parking – Ongoing

Training

AL asked if any Tenant Representatives would be interested in attending a Learning Exchange on Wednesday/Thursday 30/31st Jan. Details have been forwarded to Talkback Group members by email. Please can you advise AL by Monday 7th January if you are interested in attending as places are limited.

AL and JE have booked on a Minute Taking Course taking place on Thursday 15th January

Please contact AL if you are interested in any other training courses.

It was agreed for a Laptop computer to be purchased for Tenant Participation Works. This will be kept at the Town Hall.

Those present agreed that Talkback Group Members be given the opportunity to share what they have learnt from training at future meetings.

It was agreed that a Learning Agreement be drawn up for tenant representatives attending future training. This will be discussed at a future meeting.

Resource Centre

The proposal has been submitted. AL is currently awaiting response from Brian Partidge – Head of Localism & Partnerships.

Events

Thanks were expressed to those involved in organising the Learning Exchange with other housing providers. It was agreed that this had been very successful. Ideas to take forward will be discussed at a meeting early next year.

New Groups

AL will be sending out surveys early next year with the aim of getting more resident involvement, ie new groups, individual block reps.

8 Any Other Business

None

9 Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday 14th January 2013 at 5.30pm in the Council Chamber