

TENANTS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on

Tuesday, 25 January 2022 at 2pm in the Drawing Room, Town Hall

PRESENT:

Chair & SV for Raglan & Corporation Terrace

Mandy Anderson

Street Voice for Roosegate

Nicola Bull

Street Voice for Broughton Road Dalton

Danny Green

Barrow Borough Council

Cllr Kevin Hamilton

Janice Sharp, Deputy Director People & Place

Caroline Wagstaff, Head of People & Communities

Caroline Kendall, Assistant Operations Manager

Amanda Morris, Benefits Liaison Officer

Cathy Kirk (minute taker)

		ACTION
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received Jimmy Christie, Jackie Scott, Irene Asbury, David Pearson and Cllr Bill McEwan.</p>	
2.	<p>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26 APRIL 2021</p> <p>The minutes were agreed as a true and correct record.</p>	
3.	<p>MATTERS ARISING</p> <p>3.1 Proposed Scheme at Raglan Court (5.3)</p> <p>Mandy advised the metal fencing has now been fitted and passed on thanks on behalf of neighbouring resident Brian Hudson.</p> <p>3.2 Homeless Assessment Officer (6.3)</p> <p>Caroline advised interviews have been held and the position offered to an applicant; currently awaiting enhanced DBS check.</p> <p>3.3 Fly-Tipping (7.)</p> <p>Caroline Kendall advised following estate visits, skips days have been organised to take place over the next week or so, targeting the Roosegate estate in particular which is looking very untidy with rubbish in many gardens and open spaces. Letters are also being sent to all Roosegate residents alerting them to the skip days and reminding them of their own personal responsibility and that enforcement action will be taken if there is no improvement.</p> <p>Caroline K will ask Cheryl Waite to link in with Nicola on this issue.</p> <p>Nicola mentioned the issue of the street cleaner now doing their rounds of the estate the day before the weekly bin collection – rather than the day after which made more sense. Caroline W will contact FCC to request the clean up day is moved to the day following the bins being emptied.</p>	<p>CazK/Cheryl</p> <p>CW</p>

3.4	<p>Choice Based Lettings – new system</p> <p>The go live date set for January has been postponed with negotiations still ongoing between the partnership and Civica regarding the new system. We have publicised that CBL is changing, giving a brief overview of the changes and requesting customers ensure their contact details are up to date. The group will be kept updated.</p>	
4.	<p>UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE</p> <p>Amanda reported figures so far this year financial year:</p> <p>4.1 Reduced Water Tariffs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 62 applications made • 58 successful applications • 4 pending applications • Total number of tenants on water support = 874 <p>4.2 Universal Credit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently 783 claimants • Of these, 391 are being paid direct to us (APAs) • Average arrears balance £529 <p>Amanda advised once a tenant is receiving Universal Credit, we are able to get the arrears paid too – seeing a massive reduction in the level of arrears.</p> <p>4.3 New Rent Figure</p> <p>Tenants will be required to advise the DWP of their new rent charge with effect from 4th April. Cathy K will post details on social media/website.</p> <p>4.4 Thanks to Lettings Team</p> <p>Whilst on the subject of benefits, Kevin wished to pass his thanks on to Jackie Rimmer who had recently assisted an elderly gentleman who had turned up at the Town Hall needing a Housing Benefit receipt – she did an absolutely fantastic job.</p> <p>Caroline added the Lettings Team in particular (Jackie, Alison and Andy) - have been office based since the start of the pandemic in March 2020 - and have consistently helped customers turning up at the Town Hall whilst doing their own work. Well done to them and to all Housing teams, who have, in their own way, stepped up to the mark to make it work.</p>	
5.	<p>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM</p> <p>5.1 Housing Maintenance Investment Budget 2022/2023</p> <p>Les' report is requesting Members approve the Investment Budget and delivery of planned works through the Procure Plus framework.</p> <p>5.2 Housing Revenue Account Budget 2022/2023</p> <p>Bex ran through her report which includes details of the proposed dwelling and garage rent increases.</p> <p>If anyone has any queries about either report, they should email ckirk@barrowbc.gov.uk and she will forward it on to Les or Bex.</p>	

<p>6.</p>	<p>TENANT PARTICIPATION COMPACT BUDGET <i>update</i></p> <p>Caroline reiterated the need for risk assessment forms to be completed for any events planned to take place on Council land.</p> <p>Since the last meeting, funding from the ‘Community Involvement – Foster Community Events’ budget has been granted as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ormsgill Stronger Together (for litter pick clothing & refreshments) : £100 • Raglan Street Voice (Christmas selection boxes): £100 <p>Both groups passed on their thanks to the Council’s support via their social media pages.</p> <p>Of the £10,000 budget, so far this year £265 has been spent.</p>	
<p>7.</p> <p>7.1</p> <p>7.2</p> <p>7.3</p>	<p>ENVIRONMENT ENHANCEMENT BUDGET <i>update</i></p> <p>Caroline K advised she has a list of about 20 properties where there are access problems caused by overgrown hedges. She is looking to arrange for the hedges to be cut back before the new grounds maintenance contract is adopted.</p> <p>Nicola mentioned the problem of Japanese knotweed in some tenants’ gardens and will pass on addresses to Caroline K.</p> <p>Environmental Enhancement £5k Budget 2020/2021</p> <p>Current budget balance = c.£2,040 (cost of Lord Street environmental works has been paid from this year’s budget)</p> <p>Area Improvement £10k Budget 2020/21 (officers’ budget)</p> <p>As mentioned earlier in the meeting, skip days have been organised with 12 skips in total being funded from this budget. This leaves current balance c.£4,837</p>	<p>Nicola</p>
<p>8.</p> <p>8.1</p>	<p>RESTRUCTURE</p> <p>A chart was circulated to the group which shows the ten new Heads of Service under the Directorate of People & Place (with Steph Cordon the Director of People & Place and Deputy Chief Executive). The chart gives an overview of the responsibilities of each new Head of Service, which includes ‘Housing’ staff as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan is the Deputy Director of People & Place. • Caroline Wagstaff is the new the Head of People & Communities – managing Customer Service, Lettings, Homeless and the Safe & Strong Communities teams. • Bex (Rebecca Halton) is the new Head of Business Support – covering business support duties for the whole of the Council. • Les is the new Head of Asset Management, managing now all Council public buildings as well as the Council housing stock. • Caroline Kendall will become the Safe & Strong Communities Manager and will be responsible for anti-social behaviour across the whole of the Borough. 	

	<p>Jan reassured the group that the Housing Revenue Account budget is ring-fenced – any work carried out unrelated to the Council’s housing stock is funded from the Council’s General Fund.</p> <p>It was noted that a majority of the Heads of Service have also become directors of the new arms length company, Barrow Forward Limited, which has been created to manage the Leisure Centre.</p> <p>The restructure has been prompted by the up and coming Local Government Reorganisation which will see Barrow Borough Council, Eden District Council and South Lakeland District Council and Cumbria County Council merging to become the new Westmorland and Furness Council from April 2023.</p> <p>The restructure process will now progress to the next layer of staff.</p>	
<p>9.</p> <p>9.1</p> <p>9.2</p> <p>9.3</p>	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p> <p>Grounds Maintenance & Grass Cutting Contract</p> <p>Caroline W advised the Grounds Maintenance Contract for the Housing Service has come back under our remit. She is currently working with CHIC a not-for-profit organisation to procure and award a new contract for the Housing Service which will hopefully improve our customer services and efficiencies. The new contract will be in place by the beginning of April.</p> <p>Staffing</p> <p>Homeless Assessment Officer</p> <p>Discussed under Item 3.2.</p> <p>Mobile Neighbourhood Operative</p> <p>Caroline W is shortlisting today for the two positions</p> <p>Thank you</p> <p>Mandy thanked the group for the flowers she had been sent (following her tragic bereavement).</p>	
<p>10.</p>	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>The next meeting is to be arranged.</p>	