

# TENANTS' FORUM

## Minutes of the meeting held on

Tuesday, 26 January 2021 at 2pm in Committee Room 4, Town Hall

### PRESENT:

**Chair & SV for Raglan & Corporation Terrace**  
Mandy Anderson

**Vice-Chair & Street Voice for Grange & Cartmel Crescent**  
Jimmy Christie

**Street Voice for Newton Road Area Dalton**  
David Pearson

**Barrow Borough Council**

Cllr Kevin Hamilton  
Cllr Bill McEwan  
Janice Sharp, Assistant Director - Housing  
Caroline Wagstaff, Operations Manager  
Cathy Kirk (minute taker)

*As this was the first meeting the new Street Voice for Newton Road area Dalton had attended, everyone around the table introduced themselves and welcomed David as a member of the Tenants' Forum.*

		ACTION
1.	<p><b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b></p> <p>Apologies for absence were received Irene Asbury and Jackie Scott (Street Voices for Lord Street Area Dalton).</p>	
2.	<p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 2020</b></p> <p>The minutes were agreed as a true and correct record.</p>	
3.	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <p><b>3.1 Large Trees on Raglan Court (3.2)</b></p> <p>Kevin advised of a tree task group which has been is to be set up between Cumbria County Council, Borough Council and possibly the Rotary Club. There are currently over 3,800 highway/verge trees, 240 of which need to come down. They will be looking at maintaining and increasing the tree population in the county.</p> <p><b>3.2 Survey of Tenants &amp; Residents (STAR) (3.9)</b></p> <p>Results of the survey have been shared with members of the group (and via social media and our website).</p> <p>It was agreed, once lockdown is over, Caroline will organise a presentation of the findings by MEL Research.</p> <p><b>3.3 Bin Store at Raglan Court</b></p> <p>Mandy raised issue of the bin store area in the area is still a problem with people from other streets dumping rubbish there.</p> <p>Caroline said she had raised this matter with Bryan Walker who was looking into providing metal fencing in the area to include possibly locks. She will get an update from Bryan and get back to Mandy.</p>	<p>CW</p> <p>CW</p>

<p><b>4.</b></p> <p><b>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM REPORTS</b></p> <p>Jan summarised the reports which will be presented to next HMF on 28 January:</p> <p><b>4.1</b></p> <p><b>Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22</b></p> <p>Jan said her staff had worked really hard since lockdown to ensure there had been no negative impact on our rent income. Evictions due to rent arrears are still on hold and the level of debt claimaints on Universal Credit are in has not increased.</p> <p><b>4.2</b></p> <p>Members will be asked to note/agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Expected Outturn Budget for 2020/21 and the balances on the Expected Outturn Budget for 2020/21 and agree the basis on which the 2021/22 draft Budget is proposed;</li> <li>• dwelling rent increase of 1.5%</li> <li>• garage rent increase of 1.5%</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing Maintenance Investment Programme 2021/22</b></p> <p>Members will be asked to approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the 2021/22 investment budget; and</li> <li>• delivery of planned investments through the Procure Plus framework.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.3</b></p> <p>Jim said following the last two gas safety checks he has never received a copy of the gas certificate. Caroline will look into this and get back to Jim.</p> <p><b>4.4</b></p> <p>Janice confirmed that we have a statutory duty to carry out annual gas safety checks and unless a tenant is shielding/self-isolating (in which case the check will be done as soon as this period ends), these checks are continuing. Four warrants have been obtained where access has been denied.</p>	<p><b>4.1</b></p> <p><b>Housing Revenue Account Budget 2021/22</b></p> <p>Jan said her staff had worked really hard since lockdown to ensure there had been no negative impact on our rent income. Evictions due to rent arrears are still on hold and the level of debt claimaints on Universal Credit are in has not increased.</p> <p><b>4.2</b></p> <p>Members will be asked to note/agree:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Expected Outturn Budget for 2020/21 and the balances on the Expected Outturn Budget for 2020/21 and agree the basis on which the 2021/22 draft Budget is proposed;</li> <li>• dwelling rent increase of 1.5%</li> <li>• garage rent increase of 1.5%</li> </ul> <p><b>Housing Maintenance Investment Programme 2021/22</b></p> <p>Members will be asked to approve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the 2021/22 investment budget; and</li> <li>• delivery of planned investments through the Procure Plus framework.</li> </ul> <p><b>4.3</b></p> <p>Jim said following the last two gas safety checks he has never received a copy of the gas certificate. Caroline will look into this and get back to Jim.</p> <p><b>4.4</b></p> <p>Janice confirmed that we have a statutory duty to carry out annual gas safety checks and unless a tenant is shielding/self-isolating (in which case the check will be done as soon as this period ends), these checks are continuing. Four warrants have been obtained where access has been denied.</p>	<p><b>CW</b></p>
<p><b>5.</b></p> <p><b>TENANT PARTICIPATION COMPACT BUDGET <i>update</i></b></p> <p>Since the last meeting and so far this year just £38.35 has been spent from the Hospitality and Travel funds.</p>		
<p><b>6.</b></p> <p><b>ENVIRONMENT ENHANCEMENT BUDGET <i>update</i></b></p> <p><b>6.1</b></p> <p><b>Environmental Enhancement £5k Budget 2020/2021</b></p> <p>Jan advised that Caroline Kendall had previously contacted the group to request – from a health and safety aspect - their approval to progress provision of handrails (and general tidy up) at the communal garden area of Lord Street at an estimated cost of £2,500. Members had given their approval to this request and the work is being progressed.</p> <p>Approx balance = £2.500</p> <p><b>6.2</b></p> <p><b>Area Improvement £10k Budget 2020/21 (officers' budget)</b></p> <p>For information, spend since the last meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• October: Provision of 2 skips on Abbotsmead Approach to assist clear up by HMP Haverigg workers: £215</li> <li>• November: Removal of tree at Fife Street by South Lakes Tree Surgeons: £968</li> <li>• December: Provision of 6 skips at Roosegate and 2 skips at Greenhill Close: £1,760</li> <li>• January: Provision of 2 skips at Conway Gardens: £400</li> </ul> <p>Balance = £5,867</p>		

<p><b>7.</b></p> <p><b>7.1</b></p> <p><b>7.2</b></p> <p><b>7.3</b></p>	<p><b>STAFFING UPDATE</b></p> <p>Jan advised staff who can work from home are working from home. As the vast majority of staff are working from home, working practices have had to be adapted to ensure all housing services continue to be provided:</p> <p>Letting of property is continuing with staff adapting working practices to ensure both they and new tenants comply with Covid-19 guidance. There have been 140 new lettings since the end of March last year which is testament to great team work involving Lettings and MCU Team and the Maintenance Team.</p> <p>The Arrears Team has also had to adapt the way in which they have contact with tenants – including speaking to tenants via Zoom, and to their credit the level of arrears has not increased – in fact there has been a reduction of £66,615 in the January 2020 to January 2021 period.</p> <p>Officers have also been regularly phoning our vulnerable tenants to ensure they are okay and where necessary contacting supporting agencies on their behalf.</p> <p>There has been a massive increase in anti-social behaviour since the first lockdown and our Estates Team have been very proactive and successfully obtained four injunctions – with another one potentially to be served.</p> <p>The Homeless Team has continued to provide advice and assistance and have carried out 398 homeless assessments since March last year and have accommodated 48 people into temporary accommodation.</p> <p><b>Senior Advice Officer in Homeless Team</b></p> <p>Jan advised she had been given approval to advertise for an experienced Senior Advice Officer to build resilience in the team. The current situation would not allow for effective training (including shadowing) of a trainee post.</p> <p><b>Potentially Homeless People in Town</b></p> <p>Caz advised she had emailed all staff and councillors to give assurance that anyone spotted in the town –begging/with sleeping bags – are always spoken to by officers. One woman at the top of Portland Walk who was begging and taking money and food off well-meaning passersby did in fact have accommodation – paid for by this Council – including food. Information on advice and assistance given to any potentially homeless people was posted on social media recently.</p>	
<p><b>8.</b></p>	<p><b>REWARDING GOOD TENANT ENTRY</b></p> <p>Cathy advised of one eligible entry that had been received from Adam Kyte. Mr. Kyte will receive £100 of Love2Shop vouchers.</p>	
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p>There was no other business.</p>	
<p><b>10.</b></p>	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>The next meeting will be held on Monday, 22 February at 2pm in Committee Room 4. Zoom invites will be sent out nearer the time for those able to join online.</p>	