

# TENANTS' FORUM

## Minutes of the meeting held on

Monday, 26 April 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

Amanda Morris, Benefits Liaison Officer

Cathy Kirk (minute taker)

		ACTION
1.	<b>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</b>  Apologies for absence were received Caroline Kendall, Irene Asbury and Jackie Scott (Street Voices for Lord Street Area Dalton).	
2.	<b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 26 JANUARY 2021</b>  The minutes were agreed as a true and correct record.	
3.	<b>MATTERS ARISING</b>  There were no matters arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.	
4.	<b>TENANT PARTICIPATION COMPACT BUDGET <i>update</i></b>  There has been no spend since 1 <sup>st</sup> April when the budget starts again for this financial year – budget is £10,000.	
5.	<b>ENVIRONMENT ENHANCEMENT BUDGET <i>update</i></b>	
5.1	<b>Environmental Enhancement £5k Budget 2020/2021</b>  A copy of the final budget for 2020/21 was circulated, with all funds having been spent. Several estate tidies were held during March with remaining funds being spent on provision of skips.  Caroline Kendall was hoping to arrange more street tidies including one at Netherfield Walk working with Zest but being mindful of the budget as it's just the start of the new financial year.	
5.2	<b>Area Improvement £10k Budget 2020/21 (officers' budget)</b>  A copy of the final budget for 2020/21 was circulated with, again, all funds having been spent. Since the last meeting fencing schemes had been completed and funds used to top up EEB budget for provision of skips.	
5.3	<b>Proposed Scheme at Raglan Court</b>  Mandy advised new lights are to be provided by CCC either end of the ginnel by Salthouse Road/Raglan Court to illuminate the area and help stop drinking and drug dealing in the area.	

<p><b>5.4</b></p> <p><b>5.5</b></p>	<p>In Caroline Kendall's absence Mandy advised of a proposed scheme: Where the new lighting is to be provided there is a low wall in the ginnel which people use to sit on to drink and do drugs, proposal is provision of green metal fencing to prevent anyone from hanging around the area. Caroline will take this forward.</p> <p>The group discussed the issue of fly tipping on estates which appears to be getting worse.</p> <p>Jan advised since last March have been unable to use Community Payback so we have a year's credit so this is another option that could be used to clean up estates. Jan is hoping to do a campaign in an effort to encourage tenants to take pride in their estates.</p> <p>One of Kevin's chosen charities whilst as Mayor was the Over 55s clubs which was to be used to fund a dinner at the new community centre Ormsgill – would it be possible to use some of the budget to fund a grand opening and invite – as an engagement exercise.</p> <p>Will advised of a new initiative starting up on Ormsgill.</p>	<p><b>C Kendall</b></p>
<p><b>6.</b></p> <p><b>6.1</b></p> <p><b>6.2</b></p> <p><b>6.3</b></p>	<p><b>STAFFING/OFFICE UPDATE</b></p> <p><b>Estates Housing Officer</b></p> <p>Following the departure of Adam Morris, there is a vacant post in Estates, so looking at getting this advertised as soon as possible.</p> <p><b>Restructure within the Town Hall</b></p> <p>Jan advised that the restructure within the Town Hall will be from Asst Director Level to begin with then will cascade down looking at a restructure to meet the needs of the service. She will keep the group updated as the process rolls out.</p> <p><b>Trainee Homelessness Officer</b></p> <p>Within Homeless Team we have a Lead Senior Advice Officer and two Homeless Officers and Laura who triages all the calls. There isn't a lot of resilience within the team. We will be looking to advertise for a trainee officer role. A lot of homelessness training is mentoring and shadowing. Kevin said the homeless team do an amazing job – It was highlighted there are people within the town centre begging, the homelessness Team visit the clients to ascertain the situation. From cases recently the clients begging are not homeless.</p>	
<p><b>7.</b></p>	<p><b>FLY-TIPPING</b></p> <p>Caroline advised fly-tipping has increased in the borough with the knock on problem of seagulls and rats creating problems. MCU are assisting removing it, however it is difficult to keep on top of it along with voids, estate tidy's and work in the community. Caroline advised we have been liaising with the Street Care Team to try to improve the situation. Caroline K is working with Probation with a view to re commencing the community pay back scheme which has been on hold during covid and the restructure with Probation Service.</p> <p>Jan advised we pay from HRA considerably high tipping charges for MCU every time they empty their van. Ongoing issues with this and ongoing issues with FCC contract and there are some changes coming in regarding black bin bags - 'side waste' – they won't be removing this – they will empty the black dustbin and put any black waste bags into the empty bin.</p> <p>There are no plans for larger bins for those households with larger families.</p> <p>The Bulky Waste Collection has increased to £15 for five items.</p> <p>Mandy mentioned a yellow litter bin on Raglan – it was full to the top and FCC arrived but instead of replacing the full bin bag took the bin itself away and when the person enquired with Streetcare, the bin was subsequently returned.</p>	

<p><b>8.</b></p> <p><b>8.1</b></p> <p><b>8.2</b></p> <p><b>8.3</b></p> <p><b>8.4</b></p> <p><b>8.5</b></p>	<p><b>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</b></p> <p><b>Universal Credit / Reduced Water Charge Update</b></p> <p>Amanda reported:</p> <p><b>Reduced Water Tariff 2020-2021</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 137 applications made</li> <li>• 123 accepted and water reduced</li> </ul> <p>Total number of tenants on reduced water charges = 892</p> <p><b>Universal Credit</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 697 claimants; of these <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 255 in credit; and</li> <li>• 283 managed payments direct to us and of these 78 are in credit</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Average arrears balance £509 (At year end it was £499)</p> <p>Amanda advised tenants have to update their UC account with their new rent figure. DWP have put a To Do on the tenants' journal advising them what to do. Cathy has been publicising on social media what tenants need to do. DWP are sending a sample amount through every day for us to verify the rent. Tenants have been really good in managing their claim but if there is any vulnerability, Amanda applies for an APA (Alternative Payment Arrangement) so the housing element of UC is paid direct to us.</p> <p>The portal has been updated and the more we can update it the better.</p> <p><b>HSBC New Bank Accounts</b></p> <p>HSBC are now allowing tenants who have struggled in the past to open a bank account. Simone has assisted the first tenant to successfully open their bank account. With the Government due to end the contract with the Post Office in November, DWP are writing to tenants advising them that if they have their benefits paid into a Post Office bank account they will have to make alternative arrangements. Support agencies can also sign up to assist people open a bank account. This is being publicised on our social media/website.</p> <p><b>Rewarding Good Tenants</b></p> <p>Cathy asked the group if they were happy to approve a nomination for Mr. Parkinson of Vernon Street – all the necessary checks had been done and Mr. Parkinson met the eligibility criteria. As no other nominations had been received, Mr. Parkinson will be awarded £100 of Love2Shop vouchers.</p> <p><b>Lack of Litter Bins on Coronation Drive</b></p> <p>David raised problem of there is lack of litter bins on Dalton estate. He has raised the issue with Streetcare. Kevin as a member of the Waste Management Group are currently looking at the issue of bins. Jan said the matter would be raised with John Byford.</p> <p><b>Fencing on Jarrow Street</b></p> <p>Kevin raised issue raised by Karen Dodding of Abbotsvale Community Centre re ongoing problem of lack of fencing at Jarrow Street (opposite infant school) - she has new neighbours who have dogs which are coming into her garden. Caroline will look to adding this on the list when Probation's Community Payback work resumes.</p>	<p><b>C Wagstaff</b></p> <p><b>C Wagstaff</b></p>
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<p><b>8.6</b></p>	<p><b>Review of Cumbria Choice Allocation Policy</b></p> <p>Caroline advised a review of the policy has been carried throughout all the district in Cumbria and this has now been agreed by all respective committees/boards. Caroline circulated information. One of the main differences is the number of bands has reduced from five to three (A, B and C). The handout gives a breakdown of the three bands:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Band A is urgent need to move any disability/medical/statutory homelessness/care leavers/probation cases/ high risk cases.</li> <li>• Band B is statutory reason to move ie overcrowding/armed forces/key workers/homeless prevention.</li> <li>• Band C anyone else on waiting list.</li> </ul> <p>Key workers have been put into a category of their own. Kevin asked for clarification on who are classed as a key worker: Caz advised that's anyone working for NHS/armed forces/school workers – they have been put into a category of their own.</p> <p>There has been a lot of consultation involved, including CAB who came back with a few amendments which have been done. Also assessed by consultant working with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government.</p> <p>Civica have been awarded the contract for Choice Based Lettings and they have the contract for our inhouse system.</p>	
<p><b>8.7</b></p>	<p><b>Complaints from Raglan Court</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mandy has received complaints from tenants that a dog is sticking its head through a cat flap in one of the doors in the flats and is barking at passersby including during the night which is causing a disturbance. Caz would arrange for this to be looked into.</li> <li>• Mandy also advised of a leaseholder who has a tumble dryer which is kept and being used on the first-floor landing, the condenser hose is fed through the landing window. There are obvious health and safety concerns with this. Mandy gave the details to Caz who said she would arrange for a member of the Estates Team to look into this matter.</li> </ul>	<p><b>C Wagstaff</b></p> <p><b>C Wagstaff</b></p>
<p><b>9.</b></p>	<p><b>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</b></p> <p>The next meeting is to be arranged.</p>	