

TENANTS' FORUM

Minutes of the meeting held on

Tuesday, 21 September 2021 at 2pm in the Drawing Room, Town Hall

PRESENT:

Chair & SV for Raglan & Corporation Terrace
Mandy Anderson

Street Voice for Roosegate
Nicola Bull

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

Street Voice for Broughton Road Dalton
Danny Green

Street Voice for Newton Road Area Dalton
David Pearson

Barrow Borough Council

Cllr Kevin Hamilton
Janice Sharp, Assistant Director People & Communities
Caroline Wagstaff, Operations Manager
Amanda Morris, Benefits Liaison Officer
Cathy Kirk (minute taker)

Street Voices for Lord Street Area Dalton
Jackie Scott
Irene Asbury

The group welcomed Nicola Bull and Danny Green to their first Tenants' Forum meeting and everyone around the table introduced themselves.

		ACTION
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received Cllr Bill McEwan and Caroline Kendall,</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>	
3.1	<p>Proposed Scheme at Raglan Court (5.3)</p> <p>Mandy advised provision of green metal fencing which will sit on top of the low wall in the ginnel is still to be progressed.</p>	
3.2	<p>Trainee Homelessness Officer (6.3)</p> <p>Two applicants were shortlisted, one withdrew before being interviewed and the other person decided not to accept the offer of the position. The position is to be re-advertised.</p>	
3.3	<p>Fly-Tipping (7.)</p> <p>Caroline advised we are still waiting for restrictions to be lifted which will enable us restart the community payback scheme with the Probation Service, whereby we provide the materials for fencing works/weeding/clearing areas and pay the supervision costs of a team from Probation who carry out works on our estates.</p> <p>We are working with Zest and MCU to assist FCC to try and keep on top of fly-tipping on estates.</p> <p>Jim advised the fly-tipping on Grange Crescent he had reported is still there. Cathy will chase this up with Streetcare.</p> <p>Post meeting note:</p> <p>The fly-tipping has now been removed.</p>	CK

3.4	<p>Review of Cumbria Choice Allocations Policy</p> <p>Awaiting confirmation of a new 'go live' date for the new CBL system – likely to be October/ November as negotiations are still ongoing. Once a decision has been made a communication will be prepared for website/social media advising customers of changes to the policy.</p>	
4.	<p>UNIVERSAL CREDIT UPDATE</p> <p>Amanda reported:</p> <p>Universal Credit</p> <p>There are currently 734 claimants, of these:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 336 are being paid direct to us (APAs) • Average arrears balance £526 	
5.	<p>TENANT PARTICIPATION COMPACT BUDGET <i>update</i></p> <p>Since 1st April, a total of £65 has been spent from the Community Involvement - Fostering Community Events budget for the children's fun day organised by Mandy Anderson (Street Voice for Raglan Court & Corporation Terrace). The balance is £9,935.</p> <p>Mandy said she had managed to secure some play equipment and footballs off Emma Broadbent from Cumbria County Council and it was suggested inviting Emma to a future meeting to look at what help is out there for community groups.</p> <p>Caroline advised the Council's risk assessment forms have been updated and any events on Council land will have to have an event management plan.</p>	CK
6. 6.1 6.2 6.3	<p>ENVIRONMENT ENHANCEMENT BUDGET <i>update</i></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>Current budget balance = c.£8,300</p> <p>Local Authority Treescape Fund</p> <p>As chair of the County Council's Local Committee for Barrow, Kevin advised they were looking at sites across the borough for planting trees and locations to allow natural rewilding. Locations to plant trees include Abbey Road, Risedale Road and Hartington Street. Kevin said he would welcome suggestions from the group as to other potential locations for tree planting – email: kevin.hamilton@cumbria.gov.uk</p>	
7. 7.1	<p>STAFFING/OFFICE UPDATE</p> <p>Council Restructure</p> <p>Since the last meeting, Jan has officially been appointed as the Assistant Director of People & Communities.</p>	

Caroline, who will become head of customer services, said it was apparent from the survey of customers and staff that people want a face-to-face presence back in the Town Hall. Years ago we had a central reception in the Town Hall but this was removed during austerity cuts. The findings from the survey have been fed into the Customer Services Strategy Action Plan.

The Chair said staff had done a fantastic job over the past 18 months keeping the service going; Jan said it had been difficult because of the restrictions but staff had been very flexible throughout the pandemic assisting other departments as necessary.

8. HMF BRIEFING

Because we only need to report issues relating to Council stock which require a decision to Housing Management Forum, the last few meetings have been cancelled. In order to keep HMF members in the loop, we now hold HMF Briefings. Janice and Caz summarised items which will be taken to the HMF Briefing on 23 September:

8.1 Update on Women's Support & Accommodation Service

A report on the new scheme was approved by Executive Committee in July. We are now progressing the scheme in conjunction with Women's Community Matters (WCM) and Furness Homeless Support Group (FHSG) to provide specialise support and accommodation for single women experiencing domestic abuse and needing support to develop independent living skills. FHSG have repurposed four units of accommodation within their own stock. The accommodation will be staffed 365 days a year with access for emergency support out-of-hours. All residents will have on-site support with housing-related support being provided by FHSG and specialised holistic wrap-around support provided by WCM.

Residents will be referred into the service via the Homeless Advice Team. In addition, all residents will be awarded a priority banding ready for move-on to independent accommodation through Cumbria Choice or into the private sector.

The scheme is nearly ready to open with the accommodation having been refurbished and staff at FHSG having undergone domestic abuse awareness training provided by WCM.

We will continue to house domestic abuse victims with children in temporary accommodation. We have found victims of domestic abuse still want to live locally – safe away from the perpetrator – but with the support of families and schools – very rarely are victims housed outside of the borough.

Due to the nature of the new scheme, it will not be publicised extensively.

Updates will be given at future meetings.

8.2 Update on Housing First

The Housing Service is looking to convert a Barrow Borough Council-owned disused property into four self-contained units with The Well Communities (The Well) providing housing and social support, which can be supplemented by clinical and psychological support by local agencies.

The project will be used to accommodate chaotic/complex clients presenting to our service who are not eligible for supported housing projects, as they are not abstinent and the subsequent risk they pose. With the support of The Well and relevant agencies, provided while the clients are accommodated in the project, the aim is to stabilise them to enable them to move on to alternative accommodation with continued support from The Well in the community.

8.3 Afghan Relocation Scheme

Following the Council taking part in the Syrian refugee resettlement programme and which is still ongoing, Members have agreed participation in the Afghan Relocation Scheme and it has been agreed the Council's contribution to the scheme should be to assist 10 families using two-

	<p>bedroomed flat type accommodation (on Ormsgill where one family has already been assisted. Simone Singleton our support officer is working closely with the family together with CCC's resettlement officer. Obviously, we have to remember they are from a different culture, so it can be difficult for them.</p> <p>Some concern was raised at Executive Committee at the number of people already on the waiting list for accommodation despite the fact these people have risked their lives translating for the British Army. As with the Syrian refugees, the Afghan refugees will be housed on Ormsgill where there is availability of two-bedroomed property, and it was felt appropriate to house them together in the same area. It has been noted that the community has been very welcoming, and the local school is very supportive.</p> <p>If needed, and once they have been tenants for a year, they can then under the Choice Based Lettings Policy apply to transfer to alternative Council accommodation. They are treated no different to anyone else on the waiting list.</p> <p>The Government is to make available £50m for Afghan families that need large sized accommodation – which will help fund a deposit in the private sector.</p> <p>When they first arrive in UK they don't qualify for Universal Credit, the Government provides funding until such time they can access public funds.</p> <p>Regarding the Council's contribution to the Afghan Relocation Scheme, this is likely to be reviewed in the future and a further report taken to Executive Committee.</p>	
8.4	<p>Anti-social Behaviour during lockdown</p> <p>Caroline advised there had been a steep increase in ASB incidents during lockdown period. Typically, during the course of a year, we would expect to take legal action against four/five perpetrators, but in less than a five-month period we took action against four. Securing injunctions against perpetrators is very time consuming and involves collation of a great deal of paperwork. Throughout the country, there was a 67% increase in ASB during the pandemic.</p>	
8.5	<p>Safeguarding</p> <p>Jan as the Council's Designated Safeguarding Lead has co-ordinated the roll out of safeguarding awareness training to all Council staff.</p>	
9.	<p>ANY OTHER BUSINESS</p>	
9.1	<p>Role of Street Voices</p> <p>Jan acknowledged it is easy for street voices to be 'targeted' by locals who, for example, want them to report repairs on their behalf. Jan stressed the role of street voices is to represent the community – and to point people in the right direction – not to represent individuals. If they have any queries they can call the office on (01229) 876578 or email: housing@barrowbc.gov.uk</p>	
9.2	<p>Roosegate Community Centre</p> <p>Nicola said she and The Ways group are keen to organise activities/events for people on the estate and they have approached Barrow Community Kitchen to request use of the community centre but they are reluctant to give them access. Cllr Hamilton and Caroline said they would look into this and get back to Nicola.</p>	Kevin & CW
9.3	<p>Complaints re FCC on Raglan Court</p> <p>The Chair said painting the blocks grey (instead of white again) was a really good idea – the area is looking great. However, there are continuing problems with FCC not returning bins to the bin store areas and the road sweeper is missing areas of the estate.</p>	

	Kevin said he was hopeful problems with FCC would be resolved in the near future.	
10.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING The next meeting is to be arranged.	