

TENANTS' FORUM

Minutes of the Meeting held on Monday, 28 October 2019 at 2pm in the Law Library, Town Hall

PRESENT:

Chair (SV for Barrow Island):
Allan McIntosh

Leaseholders' Forum Rep
Clive Kitchen

Vice-Chair (SV for Raglan & Corporation Terr)
Mandy Anderson

Barrow Borough Council
Janice Sharp, Assistant Director - Housing
Caroline Wagstaff, Operations Manager
Amanda Morris, Benefit Liaison Officer
Cllr Bill McEwan
Cllr Kevin Hamilton

Street Voice for Grange & Cartmel Crescent
James Christie

Street Voices for Lord Street, Dalton Area
Jackie Scott
Irene Asbury

	<i>The Chair welcomed Jackie Scott and Irene Asbury to the meeting as newly elected Street Voices for the Lord Street area of Dalton. Everyone around the table introduced themselves.</i>	
		ACTION
1.	APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Apologies for absence were received from Caroline Kendall (Assistant Operations Manager); Mike Waller and Mervyn Gray (observer).	
2.	MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING HELD ON 4 SEPTEMBER 2019 The minutes were agreed as a true and correct record.	
3.	MATTERS ARISING	
3.1	Fencing on Holker Street (7.1) Caroline advised Probation no longer have any wood in their stores to build fencing along Holker Street. The cost of providing wooden fencing would be approx. £5,000. In view of the lack of response to letters sent out to residents and the cost implications, a decision has been made not to progress this fencing scheme. The problems of ASB in the Middle White Close area have subsided. The police have funding to provide shrubs if needed in the area.	
3.2	Eamont Close Community Centre (8.1) Jan advised residents in the area had been invited to a meeting held at the centre on 24 September when proposed plans for the conversion of the centre were discussed and viewed. Residents were happy with the proposal to create two two-bedroomed bungalows and retain a small community room. A report is being presented to HMF.	
4.	UNIVERSAL CREDIT Amanda circulated current figures. At the current date: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 361: tenants claiming Universal Credit • 49 Alternative Payment Arrangement: 46 in arrears/ 3 in credit. 	

<p>5.</p>	<p>HOUSING MANAGEMENT FORUM REPORTS</p> <p>Kevin requested Universal Credit be included as a standing item on the HMF agenda.</p> <p>Jan summarised reports which will be presented to next HMF on 30 October:</p> <p>Asset Management Strategy 2020-2025</p> <p>Members will be asked to agree the Strategy and prioritisation of future investments and agree officers produce a new Five-Year Asset Management Investment Plan for each of the five housing management areas for the next meeting.</p> <p>Future use of Eamont Close Community Centre & Guest Bedroom</p> <p>Members will be asked to agree Jan investigate the option and costs to convert the building into two separate units of wheelchair accessible accommodation with a smaller community centre and note the appointment of Chris Bugler, Chartered Architect to provide a design and cost evaluation, following which a contractor will be appointed to undertake the work.</p> <p><u>For Information reports:</u></p> <p>Housing Maintenance Investment/Commitments 2019/20 – Budget updates</p> <p>Housing Performance Information – Noting the void figures, Jan advised Hughes Brothers have appointed a new Contracts Manager. Maintenance and Lettings officers are now meeting with Hughes every week to monitor and manage voids and there has been an improvement. Identified a few issues which have been impacting on void period, including the fact that not necessarily all properties need a final clean.</p> <p>Staffing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jan advised ManagementTeam had agreed the appointment of an additional Mobile Caretaker but as this needs approval of Council in January, approval had been given to appoint a caretaker on a temporary three-month basis. From a recommendation given by a local cleaning company, Jan had appointed Barrie Coleman to this temporary position. • Jan had also requested approval from Management Team to appoint another full time member of staff in the Income & Debt Recovery Team to assist with the increased workload resulting from Welfare Reform. Again, this request will have to be ratified by Council in January. In the meantime, a member of staff from Business Support has moved over to assist the team. • In the Homelessness Team, struggling to recruit a Housing Solutions Officer – despite a change in title and two lots of interviews, have been unable to appoint anyone suitable. Another member of staff is on long term sick leave; and contract post leaves on Friday. <p>Kevin requested Staffing Update be included as a standing item on this agenda.</p> <p>Allan McIntosh raised issue of unkempt and overgrown hedges on Barrow Island. Caroline acknowledged this is an issue generally at the moment and has met with Marie Richards who oversees the contract with Continental Landscapes and specifications are being looked at before the contract is re-tendered. Caroline said estate walkabouts will be starting again in the near future.</p>	
<p>6.</p>	<p>TENANT PARTICIPATION COMPACT BUDGET <i>update</i></p> <p>The current budget was circulated and travel spend noted.</p> <p>The group agreed a £20 Love2Shop voucher could be offered as a prize to those tenants responding to a social media poll to identify the name of the self-serve portal.</p> <p>Allan noted there had been no spend on training so far this year. Caroline agreed to look for potential training for members.</p>	<p>Caroline W</p>

	<p>Jim queried how street voices can access grants. Caroline advised as part of the scrutiny of tenants/resident association constitutions, an audit of all existing accounts was necessary – which has been a lengthy process. Recommendations from Audit are awaited. Once these are received, the scrutiny process can then continue. In order to be able to award grants, the association/street voice has to demonstrate accountability.</p> <p>Caroline also added, going forward, if associations organise events it won't be possible to pay for entertainers/services in cash on the day – they will have to use people/services who can provide invoices for payment – there has to be an audit trail.</p> <p>Mandy confirmed the Vulcan Resident & Tenant Association no longer exists.</p>	
7.	ENVIRONMENT ENHANCEMENT BUDGET <i>update</i>	
7.1	Environmental Enhancement £5k Budget 2019/20	
	There has been no spend from this budget so far this year. Caroline will seek funding requests from officers.	Jan
7.2	Area Improvement £10k Budget 2019/20 (officers' budget)	
	Since the last meeting, officers have spend just over £1,000 on skip days and a safety gate. Caroline will again email officers, including surveyors advising there is still £7,000 to spend.	Jan
8.	ANY OTHER BUSINESS	
8.1	Painting on Raglan Court	
	Mandy queried whether painting works are still going ahead. Will check with Graham Harcourt and get back to Mandy.	Cathy
8.2	Windows on Grange & Cartmel Crescent	
	Jim advised 14 residents on the estate have reported the windows which were replaced over a few years ago are very draughty – problem with the seals. This will be passed on to Maintenance.	Cathy
8.3	Raglan Court	
	Mandy advised CCTV cameras on Raglan Court has captured drug dealing taking place from one of the flats. Caroline will pass this information on to Police.	
8.4	Cumbria Choice Lettings Policy	
	Caroline advised following the introduction of the Homeless Reduction Act, changes to the lettings policy are required to reflect the homelessness criteria. A report will need to go to HMF.	
8.5	Supporting People	
	Caroline advised CCC Supporting People funding is to be reduced. Across Cumbria there are 37 units of supported housing – eight of which are in Barrow – which could mean full service closure for Stonham; nine units are at risk at Furness Homeless Shelter. Under the Homeless Reduction Act we have a duty to assist and prevent homelessness. The Council has written to the county's Director of Public Health requesting a meeting and the Leader of the Council has sent a letter voicing her concerns.	
9.	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
	The next meeting will be held on Monday, 13 January at 2pm in the Law Library, Town Hall.	