



GREAT YARMOUTH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Great Yarmouth Tenants Forum

Date: Wednesday, 02 July 2014

Time: 17:30

Venue: Supper Room

Address: Town Hall, Hall Plain, Great Yarmouth, NR30 2QF

AGENDA

Open to Public and Press

1 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

You have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in a matter to be discussed if it relates to something on your Register of Interests form. You must declare the interest and leave the room while the matter is dealt with.

You have a Personal Interest in a matter to be discussed if it affects

- your well being or financial position
 - that of your family or close friends
 - that of a club or society in which you have a management role
 - that of another public body of which you are a member
- to a greater extent than others in your ward.

You must declare a personal interest but can speak and vote on the matter.

2 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive any apologies for absence.

3(a) **MINUTES - 7 MAY 2014**

5 - 9

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 7 May 2014.

3(b) MINUTES - 4 JUNE 2014

10 - 11

To confirm the minutes of the meeting held on 4 June 2014.

4 MATTERS ARISING

To consider any matters arising from the last minutes which are not included elsewhere on the agenda.

5 INVITATION FOR THE NEW GYCH GARDENING TEAM

The Chairman would like to extend an invitation to the Gardening Team to attend the meeting and tell the Forum how they operate in the Borough.

6 PROPOSALS FOR THE HOUSING ASSETS SERVICE

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods will report on the Consultation on proposals for the Housing Assets service.

COMFORT BREAK

7 TENANT PARTICIPATION BUDGET

To receive any updates regarding the Tenant Participation Budget.

8 OPEN DISCUSSIONS

To discuss any matters of interest to Forum members

- Code of Conduct
- Sending Apologies
- Tenant Handbook

9 CO-OPTION OF NEW MEMBERS

10 TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES

- Communications
- Neighbourhood Plans
- Foster's Liaison Group
- Scrutiny
- Forum Action Plan

11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

To consider any other business as may be determined by the Chairman of the meeting as being of sufficient urgency to warrant consideration.

12 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, 6 August 2014 at 5.30 pm in the Supper Room, Town Hall, Great Yarmouth.

13 EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC

In the event of the Committee wishing to exclude the public from the meeting, the following resolution will be moved:-

"That under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part I of Schedule 12(A) of the said Act."

Great Yarmouth Tenants Forum

Minutes

Wednesday, 07 May 2014 at 17:30

PRESENT:

Tenant Forum Members: Mr P Kirkpatrick (Chairman), Mrs C McDonald (Vice-Chairman), Mr P Burrage, Mrs D Gillett, Mr J McGarrity, Mr P Nicholls, Mr R Taylor and Mrs K Watt.

Councillors Linden, T Wainwright, Mrs D Molvaer, Mr P Molvaer and Mrs S Taylor attended as guests.

Mr P Bunn (Maintenance and Improvement Manager), Mr J Gibbs (Area Housing Manager), Ms H Notcutt (Neighbourhood Manager), Mr R Read (Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods) and Mrs C Webb (PA to CEO)

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Andrea Algar.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2014 were confirmed.

3 MATTERS ARISING

(a) Update from the Area Housing Manager.

The Area Housing Manager gave an update of service improvements following the recent appointment of a Neighbourhood Officer. Three multi-tasking Gardening Teams had been formed to tackle communal gardens and undertake duties such as weed control and sweeping. This had been piloted in Middlegate and would now be rolled out across the Borough.

The Caretaking service had also been reviewed and divided into 8 patches. Caretakers had been given better equipment and would clean stairwells/lifts more frequently.

Two teams of Tenant Inspectors would inspect every tenant garden, four times per year. The Neighbourhood Officer would assume the role of quality assurance.

The Area Housing Manager reported that he had been working with Reg Taylor to produce an Inspection Form to allow tenants to assess the services on each estate as tenant feedback was a crucial part of service improvement. Tenants who participated in the scheme would be entered into a Christmas prize draw as a form of reward.

The Area Housing Manager would write to all tenants who had previously worked with Elaine Turner and ascertain whether they were still willing to be involved in the monitoring process. The new Neighbourhood Manager would be implementing training to enable tenants to undertake this important role.

The Vice-Chairman asked that the bollards at the Queens Crescent Swing Park be removed to enable the grass to be cut.

A member was concerned that two teams of Garden Inspectors would have the capacity to inspect every tenant garden four times a year. He reported that the Northern Parishes did not have any estates and asked that the word "estate" be replaced with "property". He also questioned whether the new service improvements would include cyclical maintenance.

The chairman raised the issue of non-box cutting of grassed areas followed by the blowing of loose grass onto pavements which was unsightly, dangerous when wet as it could lead to slipping and falling of tenants and led to additional cleaning of communal areas. The Leader of the Council reported that this method of grass cutting was not ideal but was as a result of the drastic cuts in funding to the Council by the Government. However, it would make sense for the grass to be blown back onto the grassed areas as opposed to the pavement.

The Vice-Chairman raised the issue of weeds which were not killed off at the root. The Area Housing Manager reported that the Council used the strongest weedkiller available under EH guidelines.

A member reported that he felt that GYB Services cut the grass well in high profile visible areas but did a much poorer job elsewhere.

The Cabinet Member asked that attention be given to the area to the rear of Tyrollean Square, Cobholm which needed to be cleared and cleansed. The Area Housing Manager agreed to look into this matter.

4 OPEN QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION FACILITATED BY PETER BURRAGE AND PETER NICHOLS

A member asked whether the funding which had been earmarked for external wall insulation to properties in the Northern Parishes had been spent on undertaking similar works at Middlegate instead. The Maintenance and Improvement Manager reported that the original funding streams CESP and CERT had ceased and the Government had changed the funding streams to Eco and Green Deal which have also been superseded. A consultant has been employed by Community Housing to secure the best funding deal to undertake future energy saving works to our properties. The monies allocated to the Northern Parishes had gone back into the central funding pot.

A member asked why the contractor was not sourced through the EPC. The Maintenance and Improvement Manager reported that the contractor was not the issue, it was the funding.

Another member asked why Community Housing would not allow tenants to fund solar panels on their properties if they were able to afford to do so. The Maintenance and Improvement Manager reported that the Energy Providers should talk to the Council directly about available schemes and not to individual tenants. The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods reported that installation of solar panels could not be allowed on an ad-hoc basis due to considerations such as insurance and long term tenure.

RESOLVED:

That Messrs. Burrage and Nicholls present a report, to include costings, for the private installation of solar panels on Council dwellings at the July 2014 meeting.

5 OPEN QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION REGARDING FORUM MEMBERS FINANCES FACILITATED BY CHRISTINE McDONALD

The Vice-Chairman reported that a meeting had taken place to discuss Forum expenses prior to this meeting and that an update would be given.

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods gave a presentation regarding an assessment as to where Community Housing was now since the introduction of self-financing two years ago and what challenges and opportunities lay ahead for Community Housing.

The Vice-Chairman reported that she was disappointed that no mention of mutual exchanges had been made in the presentation.

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods reiterated the need for tenants to become involved at identified stages of the transformational journey and improvement of services.

The Chairman reported that the meeting had been attended by the leader of the Council, a Director, a Cabinet member and three senior officers which showed the level of commitment on the Council's behalf to the Forum.

The Chairman thanked the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods for his presentation.

COMFORT BREAK

The meeting adjourned at 19:00

The meeting reconvened at 19:15.

6 TASK AND FINISH GROUP UPDATES

- **Communications**

The next edition of the magazine had gone to print and would be ready for delivery in

2/3 weeks. The Summer Edition was the best to date and it was hoped that tenants would be pleased with the improved content.

The Chairman reported that the production of the tenant magazine accounted for a large chunk of the Forum budget but the Director of Housing had assured him, that as the Forum budget had repeatedly been underspent year on year in the past, that funds would be made available for Forum activities. If tenants from the Northern Parishes required taxi transport then they should contact the Chairman in good time, and those from the Southern Parishes should contact the Vice-Chairman. Car sharing was also being looked at as an option. The Chairman could be contacted by telephone for any reason from transport requirements to agenda items.

- **Neighbourhood Plans**

The Neighbourhood Manager reported that this was work in progress.

- **Foster's Liaison Group**

It was reported that the reporting forms were being looked at to make them user-friendly and was work in progress.

- **Scrutiny**

It was proposed that the Scrutiny Committee should meet every month prior to the Forum meeting to reduce travel expenses. The next meeting will take place on 22 May 2014 at 2.30pm to respond to the Director of Housing.

- **Forum Action Plan**

The Neighbourhood Officer reported that a meeting had been held to discuss the provision of outreach events during the summer months. The Tenant Involvement document also required updating to keep tenants informed of tenant activities and ambitions. This would be published on the Council website and was a useful tool for new members and as an audit trail for tenant participation. The Vice-Chairman reported that a new TP leaflet was being designed in partnership with MESH which would be brought to the Forum for approval prior to being distributed to 11 properties on the Magdalen estate.

- **Voids**

The Vice-Chairman reported that a visit had been made with an Officer to three houses in different stages of the Voids process which had been informative and given them a better understanding of the difficulties which could arise throughout the process and lead to delays. A new Voids Manager would be in post shortly which would result in regular meetings once again.

7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

(a) Reg Taylor reported that he had copies of the Tenant Inspection Forms to distribute to Forum members.

(b) The Neighbourhood Manager reported that she had contacted Adult Education and had developed a Menu of Training Opportunities which would be launched in September 2014. The Chairman asked that Charlotte from NRCC and Jilly from Adult Education be invited to attend a future meeting to discuss training needs.

(c) The Neighbourhood Manager reported that she would like nominations from the Forum to sit on a Grant Appraisal Panel to consider the Small Grant Awards to Community Groups.

(d) A member asked for clarification regarding the Tenant Handbook and when this document was due for updating and whether tenants would be involved in this process.

8 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Tenant Forum would be held on Wednesday, 4 June 2014 at 5.30pm in the Supper Room, Town Hall, Great Yarmouth.

The meeting ended at: 19:47

Notes from the Tenants Forum held on the 4.6.14.

Peter Kirkpatrick and Jack Jones sent apologies for the meeting.

We had 2 new tenants join us.

A Forum member complained about having no clerk and that the Forum had been cancelled. I explained that there was a breakdown in communications and asked Holly to explain. The Forum member was quite unhappy and forcefully said so.

I moved on quickly to minutes and matters arising. Matt Dillon together with Mark Edwards, Chloe Poll and Lauren Bocz from Fosters gave a presentation. This was followed by a short question and answer session.

I then called a comfort break reminding members that if they wished to smoke, would they stand off the ramp at the entrance to the Town Hall and stand by the ash tray outside.

We restarted the meeting 11 minutes later.

A Forum member asked about the Tenants Handbook and I explained that Jack Jones would give an update when he attended the next Forum. The same Forum member then asked why one person was undertaking this task working with Holly when he felt it should be done by a group. Holly then explained that the Forum had voted on this and the Forum agreed that they were happy for Jack and Holly to work in partnership.

A Forum member then asked if Scrutiny Panel meetings could be held on the same day as the Forum. Another member felt that this would be too much information to digest at one time.

We then went on to Task and Finish updates.

Holly asked the members that as we had no clerk, would a Forum member like to arrange the next Forum meeting and the next Scrutiny meeting. I asked the Forum for volunteers but no-one wanted to do it so I volunteered.

We then had any other business. I raised 2 points, 1, has a new Voids Manager been appointed and 2, when will the Tenant Inspector training start again. Another member wanted to ask the new gardening team to be invited to the Forum to explain the new way of working. A member asked if Leanne and Neil Barks could be invited to the Forum to explain their involvement with tenants.

The meeting was then closed.

Items for the next agenda

Tenants Handbook, Invite to the new gardening team, Invite to Leanne and Neil Barks

I would like the Forum to be reminded of the Code of conduct and finally, I would like to remind members about sending apologies if they cannot attend and the consequences if they do not attend meetings for a certain time.