

**MINUTES OF FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCILS' TENANTS' AND
LEASEHOLDERS' FORUM**

THURSDAY 14TH JANUARY 2016

1:30PM AT FERNEHAM HALL

In attendance: Barbara LeSueur (Chair); Paula Weaver (Vice Chair); Doreen Adams; Eileen Bailey; Carla Banks; Liz Bartlett; Jenny Brooks; Derek Buxey; Margaret Chandler; Roy Chandler; Marie Condon; Mr Corbin; Mrs Corbin; Allan Davies; Diane Davies; Dorothy Dicks; Ann Fells; Debbie Gibbs; Yvonne Goddard; Sheila Hewes; Mrs Hurst; Brenda Johnson; Ronald Johnson; Liz Leach; Phil Leach; Brian Lee; Doreen Mallows; Cliff Murray; Sylvia Murray; Joan Pascoe; Mollie Pearman; Ruth Payne; Sonya Prescott; Jenny Rigden-Murphy; Mariann Sampson; Maureen Tanner; Phil Taylor; David Town; Mary Tree; Linda Wylie.

Officers & Councillors in attendance: Cllr Katrina Trott; Jane Cresdee (Senior Area Housing Estates Officer); Jon Shore (Tenancy Services Manager); Jon Johnson, (Area Housing Estates Officer); Jennie Larkin (Tenant Involvement Officer).

1. Welcome and introductions:

Barbara LeSueur introduced herself and welcomed everyone to the meeting. The officers were asked to introduce themselves.

2. Chairman's announcements and apologies for absence:

Valerie Avery; Mrs Bath; Cllr Bayford; Terry Blackburn; Joan Chapman; Mr & Mrs Crocker; Sally Eeles; Sharon Findlay; Roy Gibbs; Gloria Hallett; Dave Hurden; Cllr Mandry; Jan McClean; Brian Shakespeare; Gina Shakespeare; Ken Tomlinson; Mrs Weir; Derek Whitear; Pam Woodnutt; Mrs Mc Intosh

3. Minutes of the last meeting:

These were proposed as an accurate record by Cliff Murray and seconded by Mary Tree.

4. Matters arising:

An action list was circulated at the meeting.

- The leaking guttering at Ramillies House has still not been repaired
- Periodic Electrical checks should generally be carried out every five years, but in some cases the frequency will be changed to every ten years
- The conservatory windows at Crofton Court are not part of the current cleaning contract, but, they will be part of the new contract from April 2016

- There are no plans to install CCTV to catch people dumping rubbish. This was confirmed by Jon Shore. There are plans to upgrade some existing CCTV systems at general purpose housing blocks.

5. Jon Shore (Tenancy Services Manager) The Sheltered Housing service & Cleaning contract:

Jon explained that due to funding changes, some changes have had to be made to the sheltered housing service that sheltered housing tenants receive.

- In 2003, the government introduced the Supported People Regime. Supported People grant was paid to the Council to fund the cost of support to those tenants on low incomes and in receipt of housing benefit. The budget was held by Hampshire County Council and approximately 75% of tenants in sheltered housing in Fareham benefited from this. Over the years, this fund has reduced and this has led to changes in the service provided. For example, when staff retired at Lincoln Close; Trafalgar Court and Garden Court, the tenants were consulted and the service was reviewed.
- In 2014, Hampshire County Council announced a radical review of their budgets which forced Fareham Borough Council to review the whole of their sheltered housing service. As a result, tenants at Barnfield Court, Crofton Court and Assheton Court were consulted and the service they receive was reduced from seven days a week to five. They continue to have access to the Careline.
- At Downing Court funding for support provided to tenants was lost. This had a knock on effect in how some tenants received support with cleaning, laundry and provision of a mid-day meal
- In sheltered schemes receiving a mobile sheltered housing officer service, residents were given a choice about the service that they received, such as a weekly visit, a monitoring and response service or just a monitoring service. The majority of tenants kept the weekly visit and the alarm monitoring service.
- The costs to Fareham Borough Council have not reduced as the same number of staff are still employed. In order to reduce costs, the service needs to be publicised to others in the community who might benefit from the service. If this is not done, then costs will have to be reduced.
- The new build sheltered scheme Collingwood Court is now open. The next scheme to be built will be Sylvan Court in Cold East.

Questions were as follows:

- What will happen about the hard to let sheltered housing on upper floors in blocks where there are no lifts? The Council is reviewing how it lets this type accommodation.
- Will the information updates for the Chichester Careline continue and the smoke alarm testing? Yes, this will continue.

- How do tenants get hold of mobile sheltered housing staff? Details of phone numbers for Sheltered Housing Officers would be communicated to those tenants that no longer receive a weekly visit.
- Who will tenants (those living in schemes serviced by mobile staff) notify when they go away? This particularly affects those who only have visits twice a year. The Council will write to the tenants concerned and clarify which officer covers what schemes in the next newsletter.
- What happens if a tenant gets locked out of a sheltered housing property serviced by mobile staff who hold master keys? Again, if contact details are circulated, this will help with such a problem. Also, tenants in this situation can call the out of hours' service or contact family or friends who hold a spare key.
- What are the duties of a sheltered housing officer? This information can be found in the Sheltered Tenants Handbook.

Cleaning contract:

- The new cleaning contractor is a company called Hi-Spec and they will start work with us at the beginning of April 2016. There are plans for a meeting with the new contractors; officers; tenants and leaseholders in February/March.
- Will the same cleaning staff still be employed? Yes, this could be the case.
- Who cleans the windows at Collingwood Court as they are not being done? The windows should be cleaned four times a year, but, this issue will be raised at the next meeting with the cleaning contractor.
- Jon Shore confirmed that the service charges for cleaning had increased due to the increase in the minimum wage payable to staff.

6. Update on Tenancy Services and performance reports (Jane Cresdee):

Cleaning:

Jane Cresdee confirmed that the last meeting with OCS (the present cleaning contractors) would be held on 27th January. About twelve tenants/leaseholders will be invited to a meeting with the new cleaning contractors.

Letting council properties:

Jane said that the Vanguard intervention in letting Council properties is looking at the way in which the service is provided to tenants. All void (empty properties) are being looked at in terms of what needs doing to them and who they are let to. At the moment, we don't know if other parts of Tenancy Services will be reviewed.

Staff changes:

Jane said that Jon Johnson and Tania Meskouri will be swapping jobs. As from 7th March, Jon will only work Thursdays and Fridays and will job share with Helen Ayers. Tania will work five days a week and will initially cover North Fareham.

Martyn George has now retired. Tenancy Services now has a new Head of Service called Caroline Newman and the Director of Operations is Paul Doran.

Performance Monitoring:

Since October 2015, rent arrears have increased. Two evictions have taken place from a two bed and a three bed property.

The Council has been to court on 10 occasions since October and nine tenants have been placed on court orders. They have to pay a set amount each week including an amount off their arrears. £245,000 is currently owed in rent.

There are about 50 empty properties at the moment. The relet time has increased slightly as new tenants are given more time to move in, but, we identify new tenants at an earlier stage.

Estate management:

Satisfaction with the cleaning service for the last quarter (Oct-Dec) has reduced to 87%. Satisfaction with the grounds maintenance service remains high at 95%.

Block inspections:

These are carried out monthly and there are also regular estate walkabouts which are advertised in the tenants' newsletter.

Anti-social behaviour:

There are seven tenants on Acceptable Behaviour Contracts which are tailor made to suit the individual and their circumstances. The contracts are valid for six months and if breached, the individual has to go to the Police Station. Any breach can lead to possession proceedings.

7. Feedback from the Health & Housing Panel

Barbara LeSueur attends this meeting and she said that the next meeting will be on 21st January. Jennie Larkin will be presenting a report about Tenant Engagement and feedback will be given at the next meeting of the Forum.

TSG

Paula Weaver represents tenants at these meetings. Paula has information from three tenants to raise at the next meeting with TSG. All have experienced problems with their boilers over the last month. Issues have included not having the right tools; not completing the job first time and poor communication. Liz Bartlett will advise Paula of the problems that she has had. Liz also asked if TSG should be leaving a certificate of completion when boilers are serviced?

Cleaning

Tenants and leaseholders said that they hoped that the new contractor will deal with the problems of poor window cleaning.

Grounds Maintenance

Yvonne Goddard said that the last meeting had been in December. The meeting had focused on winter tidy ups of areas. Grass cutting and assisted gardening does not start until 1st March 2016. The next meeting will be held in March.

South Coast Training

- The last event was held in October 2015. Eleven tenants and leaseholders attended. Liz Leach went to the workshop 'Get That Job' and said how useful and interesting it had been. It had enabled her to help her son and others, particularly with writing CV's. Liz said that a lot had changed and she was given an interesting update on how things are done now when applying for jobs.
- Yvonne Goddard attended the workshop 'Anti-Social Behaviour' and found this very interesting as did Cliff Murray. Mollie Pearman said the same about 'Welfare Reform'.
- The next event will take place at the end of April 2016 and all on the mailing list will be sent details.

Tenant Participation Advisory Service event held on 8th December 2015:

Barbara said that along with Yvonne Goddard; Liz Bartlett and Jennie Larkin, she had attended an event in Southampton where we were asked to talk about our estate monitors. Gosport also did a presentation which was made to tenants from other organisations including Southampton City Council; New Forest DC and Winchester City Council.

Southampton City Council have asked us to send them details of our cleaning schedules for estate monitors as they are interested in what we do.

8. Any other business:

- Mary Tree said that the paths around Lincoln Close were not being swept and that the paths flood in places when it rains. There will be an estate walkabout in this area on 9th February, so, these issues will be picked up.
- Mollie Pearman asked about the improvements to the parking at Spencer Court. This work will be started this summer. Cllr Trott confirmed that it will not be possible to introduce permit parking and parking restrictions as these measures are difficult to enforce. The number of cars cannot be restricted and there is not enough parking as there are more permits than there are spaces. Cllr Trott advised tenants and leaseholders to take any issues up with their local councillor.

9. Date of next meeting:

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 21st April 2016. This will be the Annual General Meeting of the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum and the meeting will start at 1:30pm.