

**TENANTS PANEL
25 JUNE 2019
WIX VILLAGE HALL**

Attended by: Mike Wyatt (Chair), John Johnson (Vice Chair), Iris Peacock, Linda Bradnum, Sid Payne, Angie Payne, Roy Payne, Judy Heath, Carol McDougall, David Bird, Patrick Gafney.

Also in attendance: Emma Norton (TDC), Heidi Foster (TDC), Steve Pearce (TDC) and Louise Curtis (Essex Fire Service).

1. Welcome and introductions

Mike Wyatt welcomed everyone and thanked Panel members and TDC and Essex Fire Service representatives for attending the meeting.

A minutes silence was held in memory of Robert Martin, Tenants Panel member.

2. Resignation of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

Mike Wyatt and John Johnson resigned from their respective positions of Chair and Vic Chair of the Panel in accordance with the terms of the agreed constitution for the Panel. Emma Norton thanked them both for their contribution to the work of the Panel during the last year.

3. Election of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson

Emma Norton advised that all of the nominations received for the position of Chairperson were for Mike Wyatt and so it was proposed and unanimously accepted by members of the Panel that he continue in this position for the coming year. Mike Wyatt thanked members of the Panel for their support and confidence in his continued undertaking of the role of Chair.

Emma Norton advised that two people had received nominations for the position of Vice Chair but that one of these had confirmed that they did not wish to be considered for this role. All of the other nominations were for John Johnson and so it was proposed and unanimously accepted by members of the Panel that he continue in this position for the coming year.

4. Apologies for absence

Emma Norton advised that apologies for absence had been received from Hazel Harris, Teresa Retter, Christian James, Dennis Smith, Brenda Bragg, Brian Jones and Jackie Garner.

5. Minutes of meeting held on 26 February 2019 and any matters arising

The minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record.

In connection with matters arising, Mike Wyatt advised that proposed amendments to the Constitution and Code of Conduct would be addressed as a separate agenda item.

Mike Wyatt also advised that a draft procedure for tenant representative involvement in staff recruitment matters was currently being produced, based on examples

obtained from other authorities and that, once this has been completed, this will be presented to a future meeting of the Panel.

6. Fire Safety

Louise Curtis, Community Builder, Essex Fire and Rescue Service gave a talk about fire safety in the home and outlined how Community Builders and Community Fire Safety Officers can give advice and help to people in the community to reduce the risk of fires in the home.

In response to a query from Mike Wyatt, Steve Pearce outlined details relating to the five fires that have occurred in the Council's housing stock in the district to date this year, which have affected six properties. This compares with an average of 1 to 2 fires in previous years.

Louise Curtis confirmed the types of support that can be provided to vulnerable and other individuals but Heidi Foster referred to a recent case where this assistance had been provided but the individual tenant involved did not wish to engage and make any changes to their behaviour or lifestyle.

In response to a query from David Bird, Steve Pearce confirmed that tenants are allowed to smoke in their own properties but it is not legal for them to smoke in any internal communal areas.

Mike Wyatt enquired about the impact of the fire at Grenfell Tower and the subsequent enquiry into this. Steve Pearce advised that the specification for fire doors had altered and these now have to be tested for their fire resistance from both sides. To date, 200 fire doors have been replaced with a planned programme in place to replace all other doors leading onto communal areas, including those in sheltered housing.

7. Assisted Decoration Scheme

Steve Pearce outlined the criteria for and operation of the proposed Assisted Decoration Scheme, which formalises the ad hoc process currently in place and mainly applicable in sheltered housing. Copies of this were circulated for member's information.

In response to a query from Angie Payne, Steve Pearce advised that consideration would be given to carrying out decoration where a tenant had bought their own paint, subject to the paint being of an approved type.

Mike Wyatt asked whether other housing providers operate a similar scheme and also who would undertake the assessment as to a tenant's physical capacity. Steve Pearce confirmed that similar schemes are in place elsewhere and that the assessment would be carried out by an Occupational Therapist.

Steve Pearce advised that a budget of £10,000 had been set aside for this scheme but, if demand exceeded this, additional funds could be made available.

Members of the Panel confirmed their support for the scheme and it was agreed that, once operational, this would be publicised via Council publications, website and via Tenancy Management and other staff during visits to tenant's properties.

8. Communal Cleaning Contract

Emma Norton gave an update on the current position regarding the retendering of the communal cleaning contract and outlined the role of the Tenants Panel representatives in connection with this. Following receipt and evaluation of the tenders received, a recommendation will be made to the Housing Portfolio Holder to award the contract to the company submitting the lowest tender, subject to statutory consultation with affected leaseholders. It is anticipated that the new contract will commence in October, immediately after the expiry of the current contract and the successful contractor will be asked to attend a future meeting of the Tenants Panel to explain how the contract will operate.

9. Proposed amendments to the Tenants Panel Constitution and Code of Conduct

Mike Wyatt explained the background to and outlined the proposed changes to the Panel's Constitution and discussed each one of these, as highlighted in document tabled for members.

In connection with these, a discussion took place regarding the proposed changes to meeting frequency and venue. It was agreed that all members of the Panel would be contacted to obtain suggestions for possible venues and details of preferred meeting days / times so that these could be cross referenced.

All proposed amendments to the Constitution were agreed and it was also agreed that the two meetings still to be held this year would be held at Wix whilst alternative venues were investigated. The dates of future meetings would be arranged around need for Housing Investment Programme to be presented for approval in February of each year.

10. Grounds maintenance

Michael Wyatt introduced a request for Panel members to take a role in monitoring the standard and frequency of grounds maintenance work carried out across the district with the purpose of this information being used to improve service delivery.

In response to a question from Angie Payne, Heidi Foster confirmed that all direct complaints received are forwarded to the Open Spaces team for investigation and response but also outlined the recruitment and workload pressures being experienced by the team.

It was agreed that Emma Norton would produce and send to Panel members a form that could be used to monitor standards and that this information could then be collated and discussed with Open Spaces.

11. Feedback from themed sub groups

Michael Wyatt provided feedback on the meeting of the Tenancy Management Sub Group meeting held on 9 April 2019. In connection with this, Michael Wyatt asked that rent management issues be given sufficient time at future meetings.

Michael Wyatt provided feedback on behalf of Dennis Smith regarding the ARCH Tenants Group on 17 June 2019. In connection with attendance at the ARCH Tenants Conference, Michael Wyatt advised that there are many examples of good practice being undertaken by the Council, as landlord, and in partnership with tenants

and that these should be promoted by those attending this. Anyone who attends this conference and requires assistance with preparing a briefing outlining these should contact Michael Wyatt or Emma Norton. There will also be a requirement on those attending to providing full feedback to the next meeting of the Tenants Panel.

Iris Peacock provided feedback on the meeting held on 28 May 2019 to monitor the planned maintenance and improvement programme.

12. Any other business

In response to a query from Michael Wyatt, members of the Panel confirmed their wish to continue receiving documents relating to the Panel in hard copy rather than electronically. Michael Wyatt also confirmed his contact number for any communication regarding the Panel as well as his email address although advised that this is not accessed daily.

13. Date of next meeting

As the number of meetings being held each year is being reduced from six to four, it was agreed that the next meeting would be held on 29 October 2019 at Wix Village Hall with the next meeting being held in December. In 2020, meetings will commence on a three monthly basis.