

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE WREXHAM TENANT AND MEMBER
PARTNERSHIP HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, WREXHAM ON FRIDAY 27 JULY
2007**

MEMBERS

Representing Wrexham County Borough Council

Councillor	A C Bailey	Councillor	P Jeffares
“	* Nick S Colbourne	“	R Alun Jenkins
“	* Gerry M Craddock	“	* P M Shone
“	* Terry Evans	“	* J R Skelland
“	K H Hett	“	Malcolm Williams

Representing the Wrexham Tenants

Ms Sonia Benbow-Jones	Ms Dorothy Mitchell
Mr Charles Devlin	Mr Eric Moore
Mrs Jacqui Finn	* Mr Joe Skerrith
* Miss Natasha Hill	Mr Brian Stapley
Mr C R Lloyd	* Mrs Dilys Torrens

*Absent

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Nick S Colbourne, Terry Evans and J R Skelland, and Mr Joe Skerrith and Mrs Dilys Torrens.

2 Minutes

AGREED - That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Wrexham Tenant and Member Partnership held on 8 June 2007 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Page 2 - Item 4 - At the last meeting, Members were informed that a review of recharges to the HRA was expected to be completed by the end of July, and that following which, information relating to transport charges could be submitted to this Group. However, it was reported that this information has not as yet been received.

Page 2 - Item 5 - A question was raised as to whether consideration had been given to co-opt a tenant representative on the Social Affairs Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee. In response, the Chair explained that the issue had been raised at the Scrutiny Committee, but they did not support the proposal. However, a suggestion had been made to bring the Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme to meetings of this group to inform them of items due to be considered. Where appropriate, the practice of holding joint meetings would continue.

Page 2 - Item 6 - Reference was made to internal surveys which would be carried out at a sample of properties within the County Borough. It was confirmed that a pres release and letters have been sent to tenants informing them of these surveys.

Page 3 - Item 6 - A question was raised as to when a report on the pilot scheme regarding the condition of non-traditional houses would be submitted to this group. In response, it was pointed out that the scheme had been delayed due to new regulations, but it was hoped that it would commence in February 2008 and that a report be brought to this group soon after.

Page 3 - Item 6 - At the last meeting, it was reported that Local Members would be kept informed of all developments with regard to the closed estate offices in Llay and Chirk. However, a Member commented that this was not being done. An assurance was given that local members would be kept informed of progress.

3 Overall Performance of Landlord Services

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/93/07) informing Members of the Partnership about the overall performance of the services provided by Landlord Services as at 30 June 2007, as follows:

- Revenue Collection -at the end of June, the rent arrears figure stood at £602,645 which was lower than for the same period last year. Staff focus groups, in consultation with tenant groups, developed an early preventative approach to rent arrears, which included a poster campaign, and produced a debt advice leaflet containing information on budgeting which was issued to new tenants and for other tenants when appropriate.

Former tenant arrears remained a high priority, with the figure standing at £901,750 at the end of June. It was reported that all elements from the action plan had been implemented, and it was considered that the situation had improved.

- Housing Register and Lettings - it was reported that the number of applicants on the housing register had remained constant and demand remained high in all areas. As of June 2007, 2917 applicants were on the register, and Officers were surprised that this figure had not increased due to the rise in house prices, and lack of affordable housing.

Concern was expressed that local people were not given priority on the housing register. Officers informed members that people with a connection to Wrexham were given 10 points for living in the borough and 15 points for living in the respective community. Guidance from the Welsh Assembly Government was very prescriptive as to who housing was allocated to and that the Allocations Policy must comply with Equalities Policies. The general perception was that houses were let to migrant people, but it was noted that last year only four allocations were made to migrant Polish families.

- Voids and Re-lets - It was pleasing to note that the number of void properties had decreased. It was recognised that there was always room for improvement, and when noting that there were 132 properties needing repair, the target was to reduce the figure below 100 by year end.

Contractors were still working on the flats at Deva Way, and it was reported that a visit would be organised for the Partnership and the Social Affairs, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee to view the properties once the work was complete.

- Responsive Repairs - It was noted that bad weather was causing problems, as the amount of priority work had greatly increased. The time to complete urgent repairs was below the WAG guidance target of 9 days, however, more pressure had been added due to the weather. The target for priority 3 repairs (non-urgent) was 60 days.

Reference was made to:

- the need to target priority 3 work and question the definition of the jobs that should be included within this category; and
- the need to define responsive repairs and improvement works. It was noted that a report on these issues would be presented to the Partnership.

In response to a question, it was reported that the door replacement programme was currently on target, and set to complete by March 2009. Cumulative and actual figures would be presented to the Partnership at a future Meeting.

- Tenancy Enforcement Issues - It was noted that 43 Notices Seeking Possession were served for a series of complaints, ranging from drug related matters to untidy gardens. It was also noted that a problem had been experienced with 3 properties whereby the tenants were not allowing access for the instalment of hard wire fitted smoke alarm. As this issue was so serious, it was reported that court proceedings would take place in order to gain access.
- Right to Buy/Sold Properties - It was noted that only 14 sales had been completed this year, which was below average. If the number of sales continued at the same rate, then there would only be approximately £1 million to go into the capital programme from capital receipts at the end of the year. It was reported that there was a possibility that WAG may suspend the Right to Buy scheme, although this had not yet been confirmed. The Partnership would be informed if guidance on this issue were received.
- Sickness - It was noted that sickness levels remained steady. In response to a question, members of the Partnership were informed that a breakdown of the types of illness/sickness that were causing absences was reported to the Corporate Governance Scrutiny Committee.

AGREED -

- (i) That the report be noted;**
- (ii) That further information on defining priority 3 work, and responsive repairs and improvement works be presented to a future meeting of the Partnership;**
- (iii) That a report providing cumulative and actual totals for doors fitted in the door replacement programme be submitted to a future meeting of the Partnership.**

4 Review of HRA Properties Let to Other Organisations

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/94/07) seeking views on the Housing Revenue Account properties currently let to other organisations and the charges made. The Officer presented the report, and responded to questions made. The following points were highlighted:

- There were 38 properties currently let to other statutory and voluntary organisations, producing an income of approximately £78,000. When the arrangements were introduced, the Council had a number of empty properties, with low demand. However, the situation had now changed, and consideration would need to be given as to the way forward.
- It was noted that Members did not feel that organisations should be subsidised from the Housing Revenue Account for accommodation, due to the present situation regarding the need for housing.

AGREED - That the report be noted.

5 Wales Housing Management Standard for Anti Social Behaviour

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/95/07) advising Members of the draft consultation document, Wales Housing Management Standard for Anti Social Behaviour, seeking comments to inform the consultation process.

In considering the report, Members were informed that the consultation period for relaying comments back to the Welsh Assembly Government would end on 14 September 2007, and it was noted that a Tenants Assembly Meeting would take place at the end of August 2007 to discuss the document and draft a response to the Welsh Assembly Government.

AGREED - That the report be noted.

6 Open Plan Areas of Land - Daniels Drive and Bryn Way, Ruabon

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/90/07) updating Members on the proposed plan to fence in the open plan gardens in the Daniels Drive and Bryn Way areas of Ruabon. In presenting the report, the following points were highlighted:

- The fencing of open plan estates had become complex due to the number of properties sold under the Right to Buy Scheme. In order for fencing to be provided, occupiers of all effected properties would need to be in agreement, but unfortunately, full support had not been obtained from owners/landlords in Daniels Drive and Bryn Way to allow the scheme to be implemented.
- Some areas within Daniels Drive and Bryn Way could benefit from the proposals, as a number of rows of dwellings had not been affected by the Right to Buy scheme. It was therefore envisaged that these dwellings would shortly be supplied with wrought iron intermediate and boundary fencing.

AGREED - That the report be noted.

7 Dates of Future Meetings

It was agreed that future meetings of the Partnership would take place as follows:

- Monday 24 September 2007
- Monday 29 October 2007
- Monday 17 December 2007
- Monday 28 January 2008

It was noted that these meetings would be held at 10.00 am in Committee Room 3, Guildhall, Wrexham.

8 Any Other Business

It was noted that when the Housing Estate Office in Llay closed, a condition was put in place to ensure that the surgery remained open. However, a Member raised concern that an Officer had not attended a recent surgery, and had not informed of their absence. The Landlord Services Manager confirmed that he had spoken to the Estate Office involved, and apologised for the non-attendance, confirming that it would not happen again. A letter of apology would be sent to the tenants involved.

Councillor A C Bailey
Chair