

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE WREXHAM  
TENANT AND MEMBER PARTNERSHIP  
HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, WREXHAM ON FRIDAY, 27 OCTOBER 2006**

**MEMBERS**

**Representing Wrexham County Borough Council**

Councillor	A.C. Bailey	Councillor	R. Alun Jenkins
“	Nick Colbourne	“	Mrs. Gwyneth Roberts
“	Gerry M. Craddock	“	Philip Michael Shone
“	K.H. Hett	“	J.R. Skelland
“	* P. Jeffares	“	Malcolm Williams

**Representing the Wrexham Tenants**

Ms Sonia Benbow-Jones	Mr. Dave Rimmer
Miss. Natasha Hill	Mr. Joe Skerrith
Mr. C.R. Lloyd	* Mr. Brian Stapley
Ms. Dorothy Mitchell	Mrs. Chris Thomas
Mr. Eric Moore	

\*Absent

**Also Present** – Barbara Roxburgh

**1 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed Sonia Benbow-Jones to her first meeting of the Partnership.

**2 Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence was submitted on behalf of Mr. Andy Lewis.

**3 Minutes**

**AGREED – That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Wrexham Tenant and Member Partnership held on 28 July 2006 be received and confirmed as a correct record.**

**Matter Arising – Minute 7 – Presentation on the Housing Repairs Scheme**

Details of the UPVC Door Replacement Programme 2007 – 2009 were tabled for information.

**4 Overall Performance of the Housing Department**

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/124/06) to inform tenants and Members of the Partnership about the overall performance of the services provided by Landlord Services during July – September 2006, as follows:-

- Revenue Collection – The level of rent arrears had shown improvement. This area remained a priority for the department along with Former Tenant Arrears (FTA). To aid

with the reduction of FTA an independent tracing agency was to be used to chase debt. Write offs would also be a focus area for 2006/07.

- Voids and Re-lets – The total number of properties empty was continuing to reduce. Further work was required regarding the level of voids under repair if the end of year target of 75 at any one time was to be achieved. A tenant member congratulated officers on their achievements to date commenting that often changing priorities affected the level of manpower that could be committed to priority areas. Further information was requested to be submitted to a future meeting regarding the number of tradesmen employed by the department by trade, with details of the work to which they were being seconded. In considering the average number of days to re-let a property Members expressed concerns regarding the level of work on occupation. The Officer reported that vacancies under repair was a significant pressure to the vacant house team. A tenant member suggested that upon occupation a list be provided to the tenant outlining the outstanding work to be completed. It was noted that this already formed part of the Letting Standard provided to all tenants and used as a working document by tradesmen undertaking repairs to vacant properties. The importance of ensuring that this was provided to all tenants was stressed and it was proposed that a Task and Finish Group be established to ensure that the Letting Standard was being consistently achieved. In addition, a report was requested for the December meeting outlining planned work for former rent offices and the estimated time to re-let or sale. Members and tenants expressed a wish that these properties be returned to housing stock given the shortage of available properties.
- Housing Register and Lettings – At the end of September 2006 there were 3055 applicants on the housing register. During July to September 2006 236 allocations were made. In considering re-lets by Estate Office it was noted that 47% of homeless allocations were made in the Caia area. A report considering the factors for this was to be submitted to a future meeting.
- Repairs – Information regarding the target and average time taken to complete responsive repairs was provided. As part of the service review priority 3 works would be rationalised.
- Right to Buy/Sold Properties – 95 applications were submitted during the reporting period with only 15 completions. A Member informed the group that following discussions at a recent Social Affairs, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee covenants restricting the use of gardens sold with properties under the Right to Buy Scheme would be in place for future sales.
- Sickness Information – Figures for sickness absence had reduced and figures for both APTC and Manual/Craft workers were below the Council average. It was agreed that when sickness figures fell below the Council average less detailed information was required by the Partnership.
- Tenancy Enforcement Issues – Further information regarding this service was requested to be submitted to a future meeting of the Partnership.

**AGREED -**

- (i) **That the report be noted and that the reports requested be submitted to future meetings of the Partnership.**
- (ii) **That a Task and Finish Group be established comprising of the following Members and tenants to evaluate the use of the Letting Standard:-**

**Mr. C.R. Lloyd**  
**Miss. Natasha Hill**

**Ms. Dorothy Mitchell**  
**Ms. Sonia Benbow-Jones**  
**Councillor A.C. Bailey**  
**Councillor J.R. Skelland**

## **5 Council Garage Stock**

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/117/06) to advise Members and tenants of the condition of Council garages throughout the Borough and the amount of expenditure that would need to be spent over a 30 year period to put the garages, and keep them, in good repair. Mr. Alan Jenkins, Asset and Development Manager, gave a presentation which outlined the following:-

- A review of garage stock across the Borough had been undertaken to identify the current condition, requirements for the long-term and to propose a solution.
- Rental prices by Council tenants and owner occupiers/private.
- Rental income per annum.
- Garage types.
- Forecast for expenditure over a 30 year period for maintenance and repair was slightly in excess of £10 million.
- Current condition of stock considering a wide variety of elements such as roof coverings and doors.
- Options for addressing garage stock condition.

In debating the report, the following points were made:-

- It was not practical to embark on a 30 year investment programme for garages when Council housing was still beneath the requirements of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
- Noted that priority was to be given to asbestos repairs.
- Concern that the level of rent charged was not economical given the level of remedial works required.
- Charges for rent of garages was traditionally higher in the private sector.
- Suggested that differing rent levels be charged for Council tenants and private rented.
- The importance of effective communication if rents were to be increased so that the public understood the reason for the increase.

**AGREED –**

- (i) That the information contained in the report be noted.**
- (ii) That the Executive Board be recommended to increase the rental of Council garages as follows:-**
  - (a) £5.00 per month for Council tenants**
  - (b) £7.50 plus VAT per month for private/owner occupiers.**

## **6 Local Housing Strategy Review**

The Principal Housing Strategy Officer submitted a report (CHPPO/120/06) to advise tenants and Members of the current review of the local housing strategy and seek comments on the priorities and vision for housing within the Wrexham County Borough for the next five years.

It was reported that the production of a local housing strategy, outlining the Council's vision and priorities for all housing in the area, addressing issues such as homelessness and supported housing was required by statute. The strategy relied largely upon partnership working for effective delivery. It was required that a review of the strategy be undertaken by April 2007. Consultation with stakeholders to allow input into the strategy at an early stage was underway.

Members considered the report and asked questions of the Officer. It was confirmed that the strategy would be used to inform priority setting and enable the development of an action plan. Homelessness support organisations would form part of the consultation through the Wrexham Housing Alliance.

**AGREED – That the information contained in the report be noted.**

## **7 Tenancy Support Scheme**

Tina Warne, Tenancy Support Co-ordinator gave a presentation to tenants and Members about the work of the Tenancy Support Scheme and referrals process. The presentation outlined:

- The aims of the service – to promote tenancy sustainability and community stability through settled occupancy, reduce tenancy breakdown and prevent homelessness.
- The service could support 167 tenants at any time.
- Funding was provided by the Supporting People Grant.
- Eligibility criteria.
- Referral process.
- The service helped people with a range of issues from applying for benefits and grants to links to training and job opportunities.
- The level of referrals and the tenants success fully supported for April 2005-06.

Members thanked the Officer for the presentation and commented on the benefits of the service to the people of Wrexham.

Queries were raised regarding the security of the Supporting People Grant funding. It was hoped that the positive reviews of the service would aid in securing long-term funding.

In response to a question the Officer confirmed that the service supported Council tenants and that some schemes existed for the private sector.

A tenant member congratulated the Officer for the work and queried whether other Council services could be supported by WAG funding, such as that of Occupational Therapists. It was noted that this was an area that could be pursued with Health colleagues through partnership working.

**AGREED – That the information be noted.**

## **8 Any Other Business**

A report regarding recycling and street cleansing was requested to be submitted to a future meeting of the Partnership.

**9      Date and Time of Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 6 December at 2.00 pm in Committee Room 1.

Councillor A.C. Bailey  
Chair