

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE WREXHAM TENANT AND MEMBER
PARTNERSHIP HELD AT THE GUILDHALL, WREXHAM ON MONDAY 29
OCTOBER 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 Mrs Dilys Torrens.

2 Minutes

AGREED - That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Wrexham Tenant and Member Partnership held on 24 September 2007 be received and confirmed as a correct record.

Matters Arising

Page 1 - Item 2 - The Landlord Services Manager informed the Partnership that a report on properties let to other statutory and voluntary organisations would be presented to the Social Affairs, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee in December 2007. He stated that he would be requesting a joint Meeting of the Partnership and the Scrutiny Committee take place.

Page 2 - Item 3(ii) - Members noted that a report would be presented to the Partnership in January following completion of the Airey houses repair pilot scheme in Ruabon.

3 Overall Performance of Landlord Services

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/122/07) informing Members of the Partnership of the overall performance of the services provided by Landlord Services as at 30 September 2007. In considering the report, the following points were highlighted:

- Revenue Collection - at the end of September, the rent arrears figure stood at £606,758.07, which was an improvement on the same period last year. It was noted that the trend in relation to rent arrears was the same for all Estate Offices.
- Voids and Re-lets - it was disappointing to note that the number of voids was slightly higher than for the same period last year. A number of fires had taken place over the last year, and structural works and improvements had been carried out to a number of properties, which had all contributed to the number of voids.

On a positive note, the issue surrounding long term voids had been tackled, and there would be an improvement in the figures once properties at Deva Way and Fford Llanerch were let. Problems with derelict properties had been resolved, but the issue of the turnaround time still needed to be addressed.

- Repairs - it was noted that a review of repairs was being considered by the Social Affairs, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee in December.

Officers reported that the way in which repairs were measured had been changed in line with other Local Authorities, and the day of the report was no longer included. The Audit Commission in England were working towards introducing reporting emergency repairs in hours rather than days in order to provide more accurate information in relation to the time taken to carry out the repair.

- Housing Register and Lettings - it was reported that applications on the housing register were reviewed every six months, and the number of applicants currently on the list was lower than in April 2007.

Members were informed that over the last quarter, 195 properties had been let. There had been a slight fall since April in the number of allocations made to migrant workers, but black and minority ethnic people, which included migrant workers occupied only 5.19% of the total number of properties within the County Borough.

- Tenancy Enforcement Issues - It was reported that there was an even distribution of cases throughout the whole County Borough. A large percentage was due to antisocial behaviour, and also for non-access for gas servicing and smoke alarm servicing.
- Right to Buy/Sold Properties - It was noted that the number of Right to Buy sales had fallen, with only 20 sales completed in the last quarter.
- Sickness - It was noted that sickness levels were slightly above the Council's average, and the Landlord Services Manager stated that, in line with National trends, Departments with high pressure and stressful jobs which had a lot of public contact, such as Housing, Social Care and Health seemed to have a higher sickness rate.

AGREED - That the report be noted.

4 Management Report - Caia Estate Office

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/123/07) informing the Partnership on performance and issues arising for the areas managed by the Caia Estate Office.

Jane Cotton, Estate Office Manager presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- The management area comprised 2609 properties on the Caia Estate.
- Members noted that there had been a dramatic reduction in rent arrears. Standard letters were sent, and home visits were carried out to tenants falling behind with their rent, and legal action was taken against tenants who did not pay. The Tenancy Support Team were available to provide help and support to tenants who were finding it difficult to meet their rent payments.
- Members were informed that there had been a lot of interest in the refurbished flats at Deva Way, and the first block of six had already been allocated. An allocations policy was in place whereby tenants only over the age of 30 could be allocated a property. It was also noted that no pets were allowed.
- It was reported that a number of environmental improvements had been carried out, including:
 - fencing schemes;
 - house rendering schemes;
 - upgraded flat door entry systems on communal areas;
 - painting of communal areas of flats and resurfacing of back yards;
 - parking schemes;
 - environmental action days
 - skip days, and estate tidying exercises.

A discussion ensued, and Members requested a further report on how much money was allocated to each Estate Office from the Environmental Improvement Budget.

AGREED -

- (i) **That the report be noted; and**
- (ii) **That a further report be presented to the Partnership on the amount of money allocated to each Housing Estate Office from the Environmental Improvement Budget.**

5 Variation in Order of Agenda

AGREED - That Agenda Item 7 - Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme 2008/09 - be brought forward and taken at this time.

6 Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital Programme 2008/09

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/124/07) consulting Members on the future direction of the Public Sector Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Capital

Programme, and to gain feedback from the Partnership to enable management to prepare proposals for the Housing Capital Programme in future years.

Alan Jenkins, Asset and Development Manager presented the report, highlighting the following points:

- Current principles for budget setting
- Key elements of the Capital Programme
- Financial Forecast for the next three years
- Capital Programme for 2008 to 2009
- Future Programme

In considering the report, the following issues were raised:

- Members were concerned that initial figures from the Stock Condition Survey showed that the Council would not have enough money to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard.
- In previous years, capital money was spent on housing rather than environmental improvements, but it was agreed that a decent roof, doors and windows were a priority.
- It was stated that the joint meeting between the Partnership and the Social Affairs, Health and Housing Scrutiny Committee to be held in December would allow further detailed discussion on the Capital Programme.

AGREED -

- (i) **That the report be noted; and**
- (ii) **That a further report on the Housing Revenue Account Capital Programme be presented to the proposed joint Partnership/Social Affairs, Health and Housing Scrutiny Meeting in December.**

7 Assisted Gardening Scheme

The Landlord Services Manager submitted a report (CHPPO/126/07), updating Members on the Assisted Gardening Scheme for Council tenants, informing them of proposals to seek formal quotations for future provision of the service.

The Partnership were informed that in preparation for 2008/09, it was proposed to tender the Assisted Gardening Scheme in accordance with Financial Regulations 10.10.1, and at least three formal quotations for the provision of the scheme would be obtained.

AGREED - That the report be noted.

8 Any Other Business

A Member raised concerns in relation to the old Housing Estate Office in Llay, and stated that the condition of the property was of a concern, questioning when it would be coming back into the housing stock. In response, it was noted that Officers were aware of the situation, and the Caretaker had been making regular check ups, and ensuring it was tidy.

It was reported that a family had been identified for the property, but they had moved out of the area and no longer required housing. Work with the Occupational Therapists was ongoing to identify another suitable family, and the Local Member would be provided with an update of the situation.

9 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Partnership would take place on Monday 17 December 2007 at 10.00 a.m. in Committee Room 3, Guildhall.

Councillor A C Bailey
Chair