

Public Document Pack

Lincoln Tenants' Panel

11 October 2017

Present:	Eric Jenkinson (<i>in the Chair</i>)
Members:	Kathy Hill, Debbie Rousseau (Vice-Chair), Caroline Coyle-Fox, Brian Botham, Christine Lamming, Sharron Elsom, Barrie Frith, Mick Barber, Sheila Watkinson and Richard Kelly
Officers:	Bob Ledger, Jordan Allmond and Chris Morton
Councillors:	Councillor Peter West
Others:	John Mather and David George
Apologies for Absence:	John Ranshaw and Felicity Kelsall

116. Welcome and Apologies

The chair opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. Apologies were received from Felicity Kelsall and John Ranshaw.

117. Confirmation of Minutes - 6 September 2017

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 September 2017 be confirmed.

118. Declarations of Interest

RESOLVED there were no conflicts of interest raised.

119. Quarterly Question Time (Bob Ledger and Councillor Pete West)

There were two sections to Quarterly Question Time on this occasion. The first was led by Councillor Peter West, Portfolio Holder for Housing and Bob Ledger, Director of Housing and Regeneration.

Q1) Would you agree when the new tenant signs the tenancy agreement, there is a space including the electrical register, so they could be signed at the same time?

A) Due to Individual Electoral Registration, the government is pushing more and more people to register themselves online in order that information can be verified via the Department for Works and Pensions. In view of this, we no longer provide hard copies of application forms. We undertake a canvas every year to confirm who is living at every property in the city (householder enquiry form), with invitations to register sent out to those who return the initial household enquiry form should they not already be registered. In answer to the question therefore, due to the requirements of individual electoral registration I would not be able to provide a form that they could complete at the same time as signing up to their tenancy. I could, however provide a letter with a link to the government's registration website or a contact number for ourselves (we can also process applications over the phone).

Alternatively, we have some bookmarks that we use for the University which has the governments register to vote web address on it which we could include in tenancy welcomes packs if that would be helpful.

Q2) Because sometimes it takes between two to ten weeks to complete some of the work carried out, is this caused by the lack of personnel employed by the council and if that is the case do we need to employ more?

A) We split the work between day to day repair and planned works. The former is done by ourselves and the latter by Kier (and their subcontractors). For the day to day work last financial year, taking the average from the 30,000 plus repair jobs, we did repairs in an average of five days.

Q3) Because there is a concern of the quality of the work regarding the contractors, is it possible it could be more scrutinised, before they receive payment?

A) If there are specific concerns about work by Kier and their contractors members of LTP and other tenants need to share the specifics of the concern as the issue arises and we'll look into it. In my experience the Kier criticism I have heard is usually based on something historical i.e. when I've asked for the specifics of an issue it I find it usually happened several years ago. We've spent the last year trying to get Kier to improve their processes and they are responding. Alongside that we also freeing up our investment team to carry out more checks on the quality of the Kier work. Monitored tenant satisfaction levels with Kier work is good.

Response. Did we ask the public if the satisfaction with Kier has improved?

A) These surveys were carried out by asking tenants for their opinions. .

Q4) In 2020 the elderly is going to be targeted for the bedroom tax, what are we putting into place to help them to downsize and help the situation?

A) The applicable age for bedroom tax moves up the age scale in line with the rise in pension age eligibility up to 2020. Looking at the regulations we can't see where it is confirmed that pensioners will be targeted.

For tenancies created since April this year and applying from April 2018 housing benefit will be capped at Local Housing Allowance rate in relation to the number of bedrooms 'needed.' We need to do some work to prepare and alert people who might be affected by the changes.

Q5) Because LTP is looking at a pilot system regarding furniture left at council properties, so we can allocate to tenants in need which is going to be means-tested, would he allow, so we could be allocated a couple of garages because there is a lack of space at Hamilton House?

A) Yes of course you could use empty garages. However there is a scheme operating currently although with minimal publicity. There is lots of history about the aim to set up a furniture project through charities but we haven't got a full blown scheme operating. There's a lot of work involved. The council can support with the establishment of a scheme and I recommend starting with a conversation with Tenancy Services and their experience in working with the charities.

Q6) This is a true and blunt question, what does he think the good and the bad things regarding LTP, and what would he like to see for the future of the LTP while he remains in office.

A) We genuinely value the commitment in time and effort that you all make. We and our contractors spend thousands of pounds getting tenant feedback on the work we undertake and services we provide. The whole point of Housing is that we are all tasked with providing services that meet tenant requirements and therefore we need to keep an effective dialogue going with tenants.

LTP has a crucial role to play in this. As a sign of that commitment we are one of very few councils who have tenants as standing members of a formal committee.

The council would like to support LTP to grow and develop its role further in providing feedback and the tenant perspective on housing services.

Councillor Peter West also answered and stated that we are very grateful and take LTP's views into account. We also appreciate how much effort LTP members put in and we should look to see if LTP's role could grow in the future.

Councillor Peter West left the meeting at this point.

The second set of questions concerned the Big Local Project on Birchwood and the questions were answered by John Mather, Facilitator, Birchwood Area Community Land Trust (BACLT) and David George, Vice-Chair (BACLT).

David George explained the background to the project:

- a) Explained the Birchwood area was given £1m funding and one of the projects is to provide recreational facilities on the land off Jasmin Green
- b) Stated that the COLC has agreed in principle to transfer the freehold of part of Jasmin Green to the Birchwood Big Local through a community land trust known as Birchwood Area Community Land Trust (BACLT). Part of the remainder of Jasmin Green is to be leased short-term to BACLT
- c) Advised the proposal is for housing to be built on part of the land, however these houses were to be built anyway under the central Lincoln plan but this way will see the Birchwood Big Local receive income from the developers. This will then be used to fund recreational facilities on the remaining section of the land.

Questions were then asked by LTP and the answers were summarised below.

Q1) Are you aware a petition to stop the development has been submitted by a local group set up to oppose the plans?

A) Yes we are aware of this.

Q2) Some residents are homeowners. Will the development lead to a devaluation in house prices?

A) It's not possible to say categorical if this will happen or not but it's not something that planners would normally take into account.

Q3) Not one resident of Lyneham Close has been contacted by the Big Local or voiced their opinions in support of this project. Why were we not consulted and engaged with directly?

A) We have held public events and carried out as much consultation as possible, however due to resources it is not possible knock on every single door in the area.

Q4) Who are the 326 people in favour of the project? Where do they live? Will they be directly affected? What are group are they?

A) 98 % of people who responded to consultation in 2015 were in favour. In the autumn of 2015 two rounds of leaflet drops were carried out to all properties in the area and around 400 people came to consultation events.

Q5) Why has it taken around five years to get to this point with the project?

A) We didn't get much notice that Birchwood had been awarded this money and there wasn't an organisation or structure in place to facilitate the project. Therefore, we have had to start everything from scratch and this has taken time.

Q6) Where will the road access be for the new housing?

A) Initially we wanted to provide a road through the back of the shopping centre carpark, however this was not possible, so we are now considering access through Aldergrove Crescent.

There were a number of other questions that it was not possible to answer at the meeting due to time constraints. It was agreed that answers would be provided and circulated to LTP members.

ACTION circulate answers to LTP members.

120. Service Delivery Plan Update (Paula Burton)

Paula Burton, Housing Quality and Performance Manager presented an update of the Service Delivery Plan.

A) Explained that housing have a service delivery plan and this has a list of tasks that housing need to complete in 17/18

B) Advised the plan states a list of tasks, who is responsible and deadlines for these

C) Updated LTP on the current status of all tasks within the plan.

D) Invited LTP members to ask any questions about the plan.

Q1) For task 30, do you have a timescale yet?

A) Not yet as we are still monitoring the affect that all of the changes are having and therefore haven't added a completion date to the projects.

RESOLVED the update be noted.

121. Under Occupation Scheme (Paula Burton)

Paula Burton, gave an update on the under occupation incentive scheme to the panel.

RESOLVED the update be noted.

122. Code of Conduct

123. Community Investment Application (Chris Morton)

RESOLVED item deferred due to the application still awaiting assessment by the community investment panel.

124. LTP Budget Update Q2 (Chris Morton/Mick Barber)

Chris Morton, Resident Involvement Manager, gave an update on the LTP budget:

- a) Explained the current expenditure of the budget and that sufficient funding remains to allow LTP and other groups to operate until the end of the year
- b) Advised that expenditure is similar to the amount spent this time last year.

RESOLVED the report be noted.

125. ARCH Feedback

RESOLVED item deferred as no further update received regarding ARCH.

126. Leasehold Matters (Felicity Kelsall)

RESOLVED no further update available.

127. Scrutiny

128. Allocations and Tenancy (Caroline Coyle-Fox)

Caroline Coyle-Fox, Chair of Allocations and Tenancy:

- a) Explained that the group is looking at furniture collection schemes provided by charities in Lincoln
- b) Advised at the next meeting a representative from Alive Church would be attending and asked questions about the scheme that is in operation.

RESOLVED the update be noted.

129. Neighbourhood, Community Involvement and Home (Chris Morton)

Chris Morton gave an update on behalf of the chair of Neighbourhood, Community Involvement and Home group.

- a) Advised the group are looking at repairs and at the meeting yesterday arranged to shadow operatives and send out a satisfaction survey to residents about repairs.

RESOLVED the update be noted.

130. Anti-Social Behaviour Monitoring (Debbie Rousseau)

Debbie Rousseau, Chair of the LTP ASB group.

- a) Advised the group had agreed to join forces with council officers and reform the ASB development group that would meet monthly
- b) Explained the LTP ASB group would still meet on a quarterly basis.

RESOLVED the update be noted.

131. Gardens Group (Debbie Rousseau)

Debbie Rousseau advised that a number of LTP members felt that the state of untidy gardens should be looked at by the panel and therefore a task and finish group should be formed.

RESOLVED it was agreed that CM should contact DR and arrange a date for this meeting.

132. LTP Publicity and Membership (Chris Morton)

RESOLVED no further update available.

133. LTP Training

The next LTP training session will take place on 8 November, 10:00-11:00 at City Hall and will cover allocations.

Following this a workshop on Homelessness will take place at Trafford Hall on 21-22 November.

RESOLVED the update be noted.

134. Items for the Next Meeting

LTP members were reminded the next LTP meeting will now take place on 15 November 17.

135. Review of the Work Programme (All)

RESOLVED-item noted and LTP members didn't request any changes to the LTP workprogramme.

136. Non Agenda Items

Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee

It was explained that Caroline Coyle-Fox was elected to stand in for Gaynor Brown at HSSC but still needs electing into the seat. It was felt she should continue to cover

the seat until the LTP AGM in March. This was because there is only three meetings left until then and it would mean holding an election in November and then again in March.

RESOLVED Caroline Coyle-Fox to continue to cover the seat until the LTP AGM elections.

EMTPF Conference 23 November 17

LTP members were notified that the next EMTPF conference is taking place on 23 November 17 and to contact CM if they wished to attend. It was also explained the housing minister would be attending.

RESOLVED LTP members to contact CM about attending.

This page is intentionally left blank