**TACT (Tenants and Council Together)**

**Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 28th August 2019, 2pm**

**Jubilee Hall, Bishops Waltham**

**Attendance;**

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| Monica Gill | Central |
| Lin Mellish | Kings Worthy |
| David Chafe | Stanmore |
| Michael Fawcitt | Central |
| Deanne Adams | Denmead |
| Ted Shepherd | Denmead |
| Chris Barton-Briddon | Otterbourne & Compton |
| Sue Down | Compton |
| Chris Pink | Denmead |
| Mick Collins | Bishops Waltham |
| Liz Christian | Stanmore |
| Josh Christian | Stanmore |
| Doug Dobson | Winnall |
| David Light | Stanmore |
| Tony White | Hursley |
| Linda Rogers | Denmead |
| Chris Bone | Winchester |
| Sue Green | Stanmore |

**Guests;**

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| Michelle Smith | WCC |
| Gillian Knight | WCC |
| Lucy Spence | WCC |
| Janet Walton | WCC |
| Richard Burden | WCC |
| Amber Russell | WCC |
| Stuart Bailey | Southern Water |

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|  |  | **Actions** |
| **1** | **Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**  The chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced the guests.  Apologies have been received and accepted from;   * Cllr Caroline Horrill * Cllr Lisa Griffith   The Chair explained that two long standing members of TACT had recently chosen to resign due to ill health. Joan Stevens and John Bond have both contributed heavily to TACT and Tenant Involvement activities for many years, and warm thanks were given for their time and commitment. Thank you hampers and cards had been personally delivered by Lucy and Michelle on behalf of Tenant Involvement.  The Chair requested that all members at the meeting comply with the Code of Conduct and reminded all that questions must go through the Chair. |  |
| 2  2.1  2.2 | **Minutes of Meeting on Wednesday 3rd July 2019**  **Corrections**  Joan Stevenson needs to be amended to Joan Stevens.  **True Record**  Minutes proposed as being a true and accurate record of the meeting by Sue Green.  Seconded by Tony White. |  |

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| Action | **2.3** **Matters arising / actions from previous meetings** |

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|  | TV reception and Service Charge at White Wings. This is a topic that has been raised previously at TACT and has not had a sufficient reply to resident of White Wings.  **1) Update;** A letter was sent on 24/01/19 to the tenant explaining the aerial charges and channels received  **2) Update:** 20/05/19 A further letter was sent to the tenant to clarify information regarding the query  **3) Update** TACT 3/7/19 Tenant expressed that they were still not satisfied with the explanation in the letters received due to inconsistencies and had contacted Cllr Read for assistance. Richard Burden agreed that the best way to resolve the issue is for him to visit White Wings with a Property Services engineer.  **4) Update** 3/7/19 Cllr Read has contacted WCC regarding this matter on behalf of tenant. He will be invited to attend the proposed meeting as per update 3 above.  5) **Update 28/8/19** Meeting held as per point 4 above. Tenant thanked WCC Officers for visiting White Wings to discuss the outstanding issues which have now been fully understood. **Action to be closed.** | Action;  Richard Burden  **Closed** |
|  | 13/03/19 Will tenants of sheltered accommodation have to pay for their TV licence in the future?  **Update 23/07/19**: Amber has provided a response from the TV Licensing body received on 19/07 –  The Concessionary TV Licence, that covers residents aged over 75, will remain the same up until the end of May 2020.  At this time, we are unsure of how the ARC licence will be affected by the change. However, we will ensure that we give sufficient notice to Housing Authorities/Charities/Councils who manage their own concessionary licences, when we have more information.    **03/07/19** Investigate setting up generic WCC email address for ‘Climate Emergency Ideas’ from tenants  **Update 04/07**: Gillian Knight has raised this with the Director of the Corporate Team to investigate options.  **03/07/19** Simonds Court – investigate what is happening with the closed day room and update tenants.  **Update 15/07/19:** The day room is now reopened and available for tenant use until the Autumn. Amber Russell has written to all Simonds Court tenants to inform them of this.  **Update 06/08/19:** Service charge refund to be issued to affected tenants from Feb to July 2019. Letters to go out to tenants to communicate this.    **03/07/19** Simonds Court – arrange walkabout with Cllr Hiscock and tenants to look at current issues.  **Update 12/07/19**: A walkabout was held with tenants from Simonds Court with Gilly Knight, Amber Russell, Monica Gill and Cllr Hiscock on 10/07. A list of actions were taken and then passed to the appropriate teams and officers to action. Thanks given to Amber and teams for acting so quickly in response to this being raised at TACT.  **03/07/19** Investigate issue of chickens being kept in dwelling in The Valley.  **Update 10/07/19** Michelle Smith has passed this to the Estates team who are going to investigate as part of their rounds when in the area.  **Update 28/08/19** Team found no evidence of chickens, although tenants continue to voice concerns regarding animals being sold from the property and also drugs.  **Update 18/09/19** MS spoke to Housing Estates who advised that any concerns regarding drugs should be reported directly to the police.  **03/07/19** Issue of Scam letters, and also the inappropriate wording of genuine contractor letters to tenants.  **Update 03/07/19** Scam Letters - Cllr Read contacted WCC regarding this action on request of the tenant who raised this at TACT. Concerns have been passed onto WCC Sheltered Team to provide a response.  **Update 15/07/19** CCS Letters - upon receiving further information from tenant who raised this, the issue regarding the CCS letters has been passed to Andrew Kingston to investigate further. | Action:  Amber Russell  **Ongoing**  Gillian Knight  **Ongoing**  Action:  Amber Russell  **Closed**  Action: Gillian Knight  **Closed**  Action:  Michelle Smith  **Closed**    Action:  Andrew Kingston  **Ongoing** |
| 3 | **New Action:** Confirm process for ensuring that personal oxygen cylinders used by tenants in Sheltered Schemes, are known of and recorded.  **Update 28/08/19 Response from Sarah Turpitt:** Anyone that has oxygen in the flat has a note on the door and where there is a fire panel it will be highlighted on the Fire Officers list. This will be identified at Pull Cord checks or new tenant visit if we are not informed beforehand directly by the tenant. All staff are aware of the need to have oxygen notices on flat doors.  **Speakers and Guests** | Action:  Amber Russell  **Closed** |
|  | **Southern Water – Stuart Bailey**  **Vulnerability Liaison Officer**  Stuart explained the Affordability and Vulnerability Team are a contact point for those who are struggling to pay their waste water bills or are in vulnerable circumstances. To assist, Southern Water have Affordability schemes and tariffs available as follows:  Essentials Tariff – provides a discount on your future bills for those on an income of £16,105 or less, offering a sliding scale of discount from 20-90% off. If you are in receipt of pension credit, you are also entitled to 20% off your bill. Equally, if you cannot have a water metre fitted but are a sole occupant, you are entitled to 20% off your water bill.  WaterSure tariff – if you are on a water metre but need to use extra water (due to a disability for example) then this can cap your bills.  Priority Services Register – extra support for you or someone in your household (of a pensionable age) with additional needs e.g. mental or physical health disabilities or chronic illness. This service can provide password protected services on the account, (if you are visited by Southern Water, they have to quote your password to ensure they are legitimate employees). Also assistance available in braille, digital, text and other formats for those who have difficulty seeing, hearing or communicating.  Water efficiency checks for those on a water metre – free visit to ensure that your home is as water efficient as possible. Equipment can be fitted for free e.g. new shower heads, shower timers and other gadgets to reduce your bill.  To contact the team you can call 0330 303 0116  **Questions asked by TACT members;**   1. Is it only Southern Water who offer these schemes? Some WCC properties fall outside of their area. 2. Portsmouth Water do have similar services and schemes and have a department which deals with these enquiries.   Q. Is it true that Southern Water have no direct competitors? If so, how do they ensure that their prices are fair?  A. Southern Water is regulated by OFWAT and as such have to comply with them. Prices are set every 5 years and a plan has to be submitted to OFWAT with justification for the charges. This has to be approved by them to ensure fairness to customers.  Q. Why can’t separate properties in a 2 storey block each have water metres?  A. Each dwelling has to be appraised individually, and the complexity of pipework could mean that in some cases, it isn’t possible to split the water supply. Older properties were not built with water metres in mind.  Q. Water metres in Stanmore outside/inside etc……  A. XXXXX  Q. Is it correct that Southern Water offer only one tariff for all outside of these discounts?  A. Yes, this is correct. |  |
|  | * **Refreshment Break -** |  |
|  | **Preventing Homelessness Strategy**  **Gilly Knight - WCC**    Gilly opened by explaining it is the council’s statutory duty to protect those who are homeless and at risk. WCC has built its approach based on early intervention and is supported by government grants. Since 2012, no 16-18 year olds or families have been placed in bed and breakfast accommodation within the district, which goes against the national trend, and is a result which Housing are proud of. This result has been helped by WCC having its own housing stock. In 2017 the Council’s housing options service achieved the Government’s Gold Standard award for its committed approach to preventing and tackling homelessness for all. We were the first in the County and only the 5th LA nationally to achieve this award.  Gilly explained that becoming homeless is often the end result of a long journey for people, whereby interactions with many agencies will have worked to try to prevent this. Gilly continued that there are many reasons why people find themselves homeless including the loss of private rental, marital breakdowns or young people leaving difficult home situations. Partnership working is central to the WCC strategy and is a very practical approach.  In 2015/16 the number of rough sleepers in the district was just below 10. Gilly mentioned that Winchester does attract those who are homeless who come from outside the area, as Winchester is a pleasant, affluent city and is seen as a ‘safe place. But those from outside of the district are not able to join the local housing register to discourage this.  By 2023, the strategy aim is that no one will have to sleep rough on the streets. The 4 key priorities of the strategy are:   * Provide early intervention and support to prevent homelessness * Promoting systems change through partnership arrangements * Ensuring sufficient supply of accommodation * Provide the right support and services so that no one needs to sleep rough.   Housing First Led is a new initiative that recognises that those with multi faceted issues are not ready or equipped to live on their own. Outreach support will aim to work with them to provide tools and support to enable independent and long term living within a home. This has to be built on trust and a concentrated level of 1-1 support. The strategy has now been through the scrutiny group and will proceed to be presented to cabinet.  **Questions asked by TACT members:**  Q. How does the Localism Act impact those who come from out of the area?  A Gilly explained that there is no longer a reserve list and that only those local to the area can access many of our supported offers for which you need a local connection.  Q. A tenant mentioned that there have been rough sleepers in Stanmore begging for money over a period of several days, and sometimes it is known that these people do have homes and are begging for drug money.  A. Gilly admitted this does happen, as we are a small city. The Night Shelter is not open in the day, and often tourists will give money to individuals on the street. The SpareChange4Real Change campaign has tried to reduce this, but despite lots of directed PR it is hard to get the message across to the public.  Q. Are their implications if benefits are stopped for an individual in a vulnerable situation?  A. Yes, this has a very detrimental effect, and the introduction of Universal Credit has caused difficulties for people. WCC are being very proactive in these instances to assist people who are struggling.  The attendees took a vote on the Preventing Homelessness Strategy. A majority vote in favour of the paper was cast. |  |
|  | **Fire Strategy**  **Lucy Spence and Janet Walton – WCC**  Janet Walton explained that the Grenfell tower disaster of 14 June 2017 has made the reassessment of approaches to fire safety a key priority for all social landlords. WCC’s Fire Safety Strategy will set out standards and policies relating to fire prevention, protection, risk assessment, inspection, testing and enforcement. A resident fire safety engagement strategy will identify how the Council will share information and engage with residents on fire safety.  A first draft will be available in late 2019, and it will be finalised once the Grenfell Tower Inquiry has published its recommendations. The time scale for the this is not yet known, but the second phase of the Inquiry is not set to start until early 2020. The strategy will also reflect the recommendations of the Hackitt review of building regulations and fire safety which has called for clearer standards and guidance on how to keep buildings safe.  The project comprises the following sub groups, each including a tenant representative:   * Tenant information and complaints * Fire Risk Assessment and evacuation strategy * Construction * Alarms * Mobility scooter charging * Leaseholders * How we learn from fires * Rubbish chutes   The project is vast and comprehensive, and tenant/resident feedback will be essential in understanding the concerns and thoughts regarding fire safety.  Lucy Spence explained part of this will be the distribution of a digital fire survey sent to all tenants we hold an email address for.  A random sample of sheltered tenants will receive a paper copy (as we understand that not all sheltered tenants use the internet), to ensure a wide spread of feedback is sought.  This survey will ask tenants to identity their key concerns regarding fire safety in their homes. The results of this will feed into the larger strategy.  **Questions asked by TACT members:**  Q. Will this project require a large budget?  A. It is not possible to say until further down the line, and depends on the Hackett review findings. However, it is a vast piece of work with a wide remit taking a very thorough and transparent approach.  Q.How will the strategy cover individual needs in shared blocks e.g. those who use oxygen tanks, which are a fire risk?  A. WCC should be informed of such equipment upon the commencement of a tenancy. It is the tenant responsibility to ensure that the council is notified of equipment such as this so that it can be recorded appropriately. An action was taken by Amber to feedback the correct procedure regarding this. | Action:  Amber Russell |
|  | **Housing Company – Update**  **Richard Burden – WCC**  The Housing Company strategy was approved in principle in March. The last six months have been spent bottoming out the practical application of the concept and the governance requirements. The Housing Company will be an ethical Landlord offering flexible tenure within sub market rental.  It will not be funded from the HRA but instead have a £10 million budget comprising of £7.5 million loan and £2.5 million equity from the General Fund.  The next paper detailing the plans in more depth will be submitted to Cabinet on the 18th September and it is hoped that the company will be set up over the next few months.  Although it may seem a complicated approach to providing affordable tenure options to graduates, carers, keyworkers etc in the area, it is the only way legally that WCC can provide this offer.  The company may also look at alternative rental options e.g. Assured Shorthold Tenancies, for short term rentals or ‘pocket living’ (smaller) housing options. This will help to encourage people to live and work in the City who are currently unable to do so due to high rental prices. |  |
| 6 | **Any Other Business** |  |
|  | **Cleaning Contractor (YBC Services)**  The Chair reported that there have been lots of complaints recently regarding the cleaning contractor and some of their staff who clean the Sheltered Schemes. This includes staff being rude to tenants, cleaning at inappropriate times and to a poor standard, and also unrealistic time allowances for cleaning an area.  Amber Russell addressed these concerns and complaints by confirming that WCC now has a designated officer (Fiona Churcher), monitoring the contract on a full time basis. The contract has been in place since May, and admittedly, there have been staffing issues which have affected the quality of the service. Amber explained that staffing and resourcing are part of the procurement process and that there is a legal obligation under TUPE’ (Transfer of Undertakings- Protection of Employment Regulations) for staff to transfer across to the new employer. As such, there is often a period of staff unrest at the beginning of a new contract which can effect motivation and performance.  Amber confirmed that the contract does have break clauses in place should YBC continue to perform below an acceptable level and contracts can be dissolved following prolonged levels of dissatisfaction; however, this would result in a re-tendering process which still has implications for service.  It is therefore hoped that detailed discussions with the contractor and closer monitoring should lead to an improvement. Amber requested that issues regarding the cleaners continue to be reported to Fiona to assist with the process.  Amber was then asked if contracts are awarded purely to the lowest bidder, which compromises on service. Amber responded that the cost/quality ratio is set at 60/40, and that service is an important consideration in the tender evaluation process.  Amber re-iterated that the closer monitoring of the service in line with the specification should hopefully lead to a significant improvement, and that all feedback from this meeting would be fed back to the contractor.  One attendee did ask if WCC had considered bringing the cleaning service in house, which may lead to more motivated, committed staff. Amber took this on board as a potential idea which may be explored in the future.  **Glass Recycling**  A tenant commented on the new glass recycling boxes which have been issued as part of the waste collection service. They felt that the boxes are too large for a single person household, and that it would make more sense for a shared scheme to have a large, communal one instead.  Amber confirmed that feedback had already been received regarding the containers, with some tenants feeling that a small wheelie bin would have been more practical than an open box (which collects rain if left outside, and is also potentially dangerous due to glass being openly visible). It was suggested that tenants should contact Biffa directly to discuss alternative container options.  Another tenant commented that there are still issues with the general waste bins being emptied regularly. Amber explained that there have been issues with the waste management contract but that the provision of a new fleet of vehicles should improve things. However, please do keep on reporting any problems should they arise.  As a general discussion, tenants commented that the fees Biffa charge for removal of large waste items is exceptionally expensive, and encourages fly tipping. |  |
| 7 | **Forthcoming meetings**  Wednesday 13th November 2019 – Hope Church, Winchester.  Cllr Learney (Portfolio Holder for Housing and Asset Management) will be main speaker. |  |