

Tenants' & Residents' Forum



TAI CANOLBARTH CYMRU
MID-WALES HOUSING
Yn barod **amdan** Equal to the challenge

TaRF meeting Friday 5th April 2019

Present – Brian Christopher, Bryan Owen, Rebecca Watson, Pam Barwell,

Apologies – Debby Crewe

Staff present - Alisa Cakebread, Rob Lambie, Charles Brotherton

Minutes of last meeting – 8th March 2019 read and accepted as correct

2) **Rob Lambie – Health & Safety Policy & Training**

Rob had provided a copy of the proposed Health & Safety Policy and Structure, which had previously been shared via email with TaRF. He said that it had been presented to Board and they had agreed in principle. It was now being shared with TaRF, the staff forum, H & S Forum etc. to make sure that they are also happy with the content before it is finalised.

RL – wanted to highlight a couple of points within the document.

- **Item 3** – “Risks arising out of or in connection with the activities of our employees or other persons who are not engaged in work either for or on behalf of Mid Wales Housing Group” Members of TaRF would only be covered while on MWA business.
- **Appendix 1 – Statement of Intent** – RL asked TaRF if they would like to be specifically mentioned in the following paragraph – “Whilst the Board of Management, led by the Chief Executive, has overall responsibility for ensuring that we maintain high standards of health and safety performance, we also rely on all of our employees, sub-contractors and tenants to play their part in effectively implementing our policy and sharing our commitment to these objectives” TaRF are happy if the wording is amended to “Tenants and Residents” **RL - said he will check the document and amend as necessary throughout.**
- **Appendix 2 – Responsibilities** –
 - The Board** – BO – has a board member been nominated to have responsibility for H & S yet? RL – Not yet, it should be all Board members responsibility. If a Board member is nominated it is most likely to be Sian Howells. But she is keen for all of Board to be responsible.
 - Safety Representatives** – RL pointed out that that TaRF do not need to have a nominated Safety representative as they are already represented in other areas.
 - Tenants and Residents** – RL – Tenants and residents also have a responsibility to provide MWA employees with a safe place to work.
 - Tenant safety Forum** – To gain the feedback from the wider group of tenants and residents MWA are hoping to invite tenants and residents to become members of

a Tenant safety Forum. This will be done through the soon to be formed “Armchair Group” where willing participants will ask to be consulted on certain subjects of interest to them. In regards to Health & Safety RL will then bring any issues to TaRF when he attends meetings.

BW – How does MSHA work with EOM in regards to H&S?

RL – EOM would handle their own H&S but we would monitor that and have an input if required.

- **RL** – The HSE Principal Inspector for construction in Wales is clamping down on any infringements. They will be charging £150 per hour to investigate any queries they may have. He has recommended more clamp downs because of an average of 39 deaths per year in Wales.

BW – Is this backed up with legislation?

RL – Yes the legislation came in 5 years ago.

BW – Do you know how many times the HSE Inspector has instigated an enquiry so far?

RL – I don’t know but I can try and find that out. He has said that he is recovering up to ½ his costs as a result of doing this.

PB – Is this made public?

RL – This information will be available on the HSE website. For instance, Injuries were a 491 million cost to the economy and ill health 580 million cost to the economy as a result of Health & Safety. There are new recommendations coming in regarding carcinogens, so even minor works like kitchen or bathroom refurbishments all have to be taken into account.

RL – MSHA will offer TaRF training to make sure that you have the skills to be able to do what you will need to do, eg H7S law, Risk assessments, gas & electric compliance etc.

Do TaRF have any feedback on what they would like training on?

BO – Fire Doors? There is an ongoing issue where they are being left open when they shouldn’t be.

- **Appendix 3 – Arrangements** – **RL** - The lists are the procedures which form the organisations arrangements for delivering the policy. I am in the process of going through and updating them accordingly at the moment.

AC – If anyone would like to see a copy of any of the documents listed in appendix 3 let me know and I can get them to you.

BW – So what happens next?

RL - If I come along to the next meeting to discuss H&S law for ½ an hour or so? From there we can see how we can carry on giving you more skills into the future.

BW – I have a specific interest in trees as I work 2 days a week in woodland. Can I ask who currently carries out any tree work for MSHA? I’m also a trained H&S representative from a previous job as well as my current job.

RL – We have a contractor who is ROSPA trained and we also consult with LANTRA. We are also hoping to provide further training for our gardener.

Carbon Monoxide Monitors – AC- following the questions below raised at the last TaRF meeting –

Can I ask if we are likely to install carbon monoxide alarms as standard into our properties?

Or do we have any guidelines that we follow at all?

RL – They are being installed into new build properties that have gas, solid fuel or oil heating. Once the policy has been looked at we will re-assess whether it would be possible to retrofit them into older properties or not. The supplier that we currently use – AICO have a dual-purpose smoke/carbon monoxide alarm available. But cost would have to be taken into account. This is an on-going issue that I would like to keep TaRF informed of if that's ok? **AC** – we will keep it on the agenda.

3) Charles Brotherton – Comparing rent structures with Tai Ceredigion

Charles had already provided a document, which had previously been shared with TaRF via email before the meeting.

CB – I've tried to give a bit of background on how the rents have been set for both organisations and in the report because of the rent differences and some of the issues that Board may face should the merger go ahead.

CB – Flats – TC are charging significantly more. TC don't currently take into account the number of persons in relation to bedrooms that can live in a property. The MWAHA rent for flats is currently a lot lower. MWAHA always take into consideration affordability. We would be recommending this should a merger go ahead. You will note that there are no figures for bungalows as TC currently charge the same rent as a house with the same amount of bedrooms. There are many variations between the two associations.

MWAHA base affordability on the following – rent should be no more than 30% on income coming into a property. This is also based on the benefit cap of £20,000 and low income working tenants. They are linked to earnings in our areas. We flex the rents dependant on the size of the property. I feel to keep that balance would be appropriate.

Some Associations link their rents to the PRS & the market value/rent.

AC – What do TC base their rents on?

BC – They have used whatever the Council had set previously.

CB – TC's 1 & 2 bed properties don't seem to be affordable to me. This could be based on the level of earnings in that particular area. For instance Aberystwyth might have higher earnings.

BW – Where would that sort of information be available?

CB – I sourced it from the Office of national Statistics.

BW – Would you be able to look at a specific smaller area?

CB – Probably not, at the moment I am only able to search for the whole country. The earnings vary greatly over such a large area. I have fed back to the ONS that smaller search areas would be more helpful.

BO – Are the rents adjusted accordingly when a property has a higher SAP rating?

CB- If the SAP rating is higher than a C there would be a higher rent as a result. C and below there would be no reflection on the rent as a result of the SAP rating.

BO – Can we have SAP rating for our own individual properties?

AC – **I can organise for those to be sent to you.**

CB - What would TaRF want to be taken into account when we are setting the rents should the merger go ahead?

How should we deal with the phasing of the rent?

How should we set the rent amounts?

TaRF – We would like the rent to be linked to affordability rather than market rent.

We would be happy if rents were brought up gradually to meet the higher rent.

A maximum increase of £2 per week would be acceptable.

4) TPAS Training for TaRF & staff

Following receipt of an email from Bryan Owen on 13/3/2019 regarding a training event that TPAS are running titled “Effective Complaints within social housing Opportunities not threats North” on 1st May 2019 – AC sent an email to Mo Woosnam, Heidi Burns and Charles Brotherton asking whether it would be appropriate to share with Board – specifically the tenant board champion. This would be to see if anyone would be interested in attending. Heidi Burns and Bryan Owen are both interested in attending. **AC to action**

5) Proud of my property

Following an email from a member of TaRF asking “how many tenants have received the £100 payment for leaving the property in an acceptable state, and what are the criteria they have to meet?”

AC – explained that when a resident terminates their tenancy a maintenance officer visits the property on a “Pre-void” with the resident present and advises them of any work that will need to be carried out before leaving the property. The lettable standards list that is followed by the maintenance officer reflects the same criteria that is on the “Proud of my property” reward scheme form that is sent out to residents when they terminate their tenancy. The resident would also need to have a clear rent account at the time of termination. Following inspection and agreement by Association staff – the payment would be authorised

Maintenance have a budget of £1000 per financial year and payments to 11 properties were issued in 2018/19 totalling £980. The payment is up to the value of £100. An estimated amount of properties that were refused payment in 2018/19 was three. The refusals are not currently recorded. This information was discussed with Jan Ramsey – Technical Services Manager

6) Tenants receiving information electronically

Members of TaRF had previously asked if it was possible to request to receive all correspondence electronically as this would be a good way to save money on postage and to save paper.

AC – had contacted Phil Williams – ICT Manager to ask whether this information is recorded on tenants individual accounts?

PW had responded that this information is available in the Hub. It appears in “Key Information” as an attribute to a particular person. It would be down to the individual person sending out correspondence to search on the residents account to find this information out.

AC – asked if it would be possible to introduce a “Flag” to each account to make it more immediately obvious to anyone sending correspondence out. PW had responded that it is not practical to have a “Flag” as they lose importance when too many appear.

TaRF agreed that they would like this to be discussed further as they felt that this method could possibly be improved. Tenants are still getting post when they have requested not to. If this was possible it would save money, save paper and tenants would be happier and

receiving correspondence in a method that they would like. **AC – to speak to PW to see if there is anything more that can be done to try to resolve this.**

7) Tenant Participation Strategy

AC – confirmed to the members of TaRF that the Board had approved the TPP and Action Plan.

8) AOB

Signing in procedure on reception – TaRF had a few questions regarding the new procedure for signing into reception. They understand the need for anonymity for visitors but asked if there could be signing in books. One for visitors to MWHHA and one for visitors to other organisations within the building. They asked if I could find out what the procedure is and why it has to be the way it is. Also asked to check if the carbon in the book is working correctly. AC to action

Tenant Board Members – Are there currently any serving tenant board members? AC to action

Filming of future TaRF meetings – AC explained to TaRF that we would like to film a section of a future TaRF meeting to enable remote access/participation by other residents who are unable to attend a meeting. Following the live showing of a section of the meeting, residents would be able to send in any feedback/questions to be discussed at the meeting. TaRF were concerned that they did not want to be visible in the filming as this might make them feel vulnerable. They were also concerned that only residents should be able to access it and not the wider public. Would it be possible to have audio recording only? AC to investigate further and report.

Board Meeting Minutes – Are the minutes from board uploaded to the website? AC to find out if this is supposed to be happening or not.

Questionnaire – Bryan Owen had taken part in a recent “Tenants being at the heart” questionnaire being run by the Welsh Government. BO will feedback to TaRF at the next meeting.

Date of next meeting - Friday June 7th June 2019