

Date: 1 June 2012  
Contact name: Alethea Thompson  
Contact number: 01395 517525 (group number 01395 517546)  
E-mail: [athompson@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:athompson@eastdevon.gov.uk)



To: Members of the Garage Management Review  
Task and Finish Forum:  
(Christine Drew, Douglas Hull, Victor Kemp, Jim Knight, Pat Rous,  
Pauline Stott,)

East Devon District Council  
Knowle  
Sidmouth  
Devon  
EX10 8HL

Dennis Boobier - Housing Needs and Strategy Manager  
Jonathon Burns –Senior Housing Technical Officer  
John Golding – Head of Housing  
Jane Reading – Tenant & Communities Section Leader  
Janet Taylor - Senior Housing Needs Officer

DX 48705 Sidmouth

Tel: 01395 516551

Fax: 01395 517507

[www.eastdevon.gov.uk](http://www.eastdevon.gov.uk)

For information:

Councillor Jill Elson – Portfolio Holder, Sustainable Homes and Communities

Councillor Stephanie Jones – Deputy Portfolio Holder, Sustainable Homes and Communities

## **Meeting of the Garage Management Review**

### **Task and Finish Forum**

**Friday 15 June 2012 at 9am**

**Committee Room, Knowle, Sidmouth**

Councillors and members of the public are reminded to switch off mobile phones during the meeting. If this is not practical due to particular circumstances, please advise the Chairman in advance of the meeting.

## **AGENDA**

### **Page/s**

- |    |  |       |
|----|--|-------|
| 1. | To confirm the notes of the meeting held on 2 March 2012.  | 3 - 5 |
| 2. | To receive any apologies for absence.  |       |
| 3. | To receive any declarations of interest relating to items on the agenda.   |       |
| 4. | To consider the presentation of the Housing Needs and Strategy Manager of the garage tours undertaken by the TaFF on 13, 19 and 20 April 2012. |       |
| 5. | To draw conclusions and make recommendations to the Housing Review Board.  |       |

## **Members remember!**

- You must declare the nature of any personal or prejudicial interests in an item whenever it becomes apparent that you have an interest in the business being considered.
- Where you have a personal interest because the business relates to or is likely to affect a body of which you are a member or manager as an EDDC nominee or appointee, then you need only disclose that interest when (and if) you speak on the item. The same rule applies if you have a personal interest in relation to a body exercising functions of a public nature.
- Make sure you say the reason for your interest as this has to be included in the minutes.
- If your interest is prejudicial you must leave the room unless
  - a) you have obtained a dispensation from the Council's Standards Committee or
  - b) where Para 12(2) of the member Code of Conduct applies. [Para 12(2) allows a Member with a prejudicial interest to stay for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business but only to the extent the public are allowed the same rights. If you do remain for these purposes, you must not exercise decision-making functions or seek to improperly influence the decision; you must leave the meeting room once you have made your representation, answered questions or given evidence.]
- The Code states that any member of the Executive Board or other decision-making committee or joint committee or sub-committee attending Overview and Scrutiny committees has a prejudicial interest in any business where that member was a member of the committee at the relevant time **and** present when the decision was made or other action was taken (whether or not implemented). Members with prejudicial interests should declare them and are allowed to remain in the meeting for the limited purposes set out in the Code para 12(2) – see last paragraph.
- You also need to declare when you are subject to the party whip before the matter is discussed.

**EAST DEVON DISTRICT COUNCIL**  
**Notes of a meeting of the**  
**Garage Management Review Task and Finish Forum**  
**held**  
**at Knowle, Sidmouth on 2 March 2012**

**Present:**

**Councillors:**

Christine Drew  
Douglas Hull  
Pauline Stott

**Tenant:**

Victor Kemp

**Officers:**

Dennis Boobier – Housing Needs and Strategy Manager  
Janet Taylor – Housing Allocations Manager  
Alethea Thompson – Democratic Services Officer

**Apologies:**

**Councillors:**

Jim Knight  
Stephanie Jones

**Tenant:**

Pat Rous

**Officers:**

Jane Reading – Tenant and Communities Section Leader

The meeting started at 10.05am and ended at 11.10am.

**\*1 Election of Chairman and opening remarks**

Councillor Pauline Stott was elected as Chairman. She welcomed all the members of the Forum.

**\*2 Appointment of Vice Chairman**

Councillor Mrs Drew was appointed as Vice Chairman of the Forum.

**\*3 Scope**

The Forum considered the scope of work for the Task and Finish Forum, which was presented at the meeting. Those present agreed the scoping document and the need to be clear in what the TaFF was trying to achieve.

**RESOLVED:** that the scope of the TaFF be agreed as set out in the agenda.

#### \*4 **Garage management**

Members noted the report of the Housing Needs and Strategy Manager which had previously been considered by the Housing Review Board on 12 January 2012. The report provided an update on current garage management performance. The Council had 762 garages that provided a rental of £424,000. 120 garages were empty at a loss of £70,000 per annum – 16% of total debit. The economic situation and the perceived high rental charge has seen the number of void garages increase from an average of 70 at any one time to this increased level.

The report set out the current position with regard to garage management and options for the TaFF to consider.

Empty garages were advertised on the Devon Home Choice website, as well as in newsletters and when possible, with the twice yearly rent statements. All garage applications were treated in strict date order. Priority for letting garages was given to existing Council tenants, then to RSL/HA tenants, and finally to private persons. The tenancy of let garages was not regularly reviewed, however all the rental agreements were on a licence, therefore the Council could give tenants 28 days notice to vacate a garage.

Many Council garages were used for storage and not for keeping a car in. This tenancy condition was not enforced and regular checks of the tenancy of the garages were not undertaken. The garages were locked, the Council had no access to them and enforcement was not practical.

There were some locations where garages were in great demand and there was a waiting list of applicants.

There were pockets of garages that had significant numbers of voids. These included:

- Millwey Rise, Axminster
- Whitebridges, Honiton
- Harepath Road, Seaton
- Payhembury
- Musbury
- Beer

The Forum went on to consider lists and a map, circulated with the agenda, showing the following (as at 16.02.12):

- Quick view of garages
- Garages let
- Vacant garages
- Garages vacant but unavailable to rent
- Garages void dates

It was noted that there was no specific budget for repairing garages and replacing doors. So far in the current financial year almost £30,000 had been spent on garage repairs, with funds coming from the responsive repairs budget. It was thought that there should be an annual identified budget for garage maintenance and repair in order to maintain the garages to a high standard.

#### \*4 **Garage management (cont'd)**

It was suggested that a comprehensive feasibility study should be undertaken. The Housing Needs and Strategy Manager reported that Yarlinton Housing Group had previously offered to carry out a feasibility study on all of the Council's garage sites. However, conditions were attached to this offer. At some point it was hoped that all the garages would be professionally surveyed.

Options for garages in the future included demolishing low demand garages and/or those in poor condition or not fit for purpose and to provide parking areas for use by residents. Consideration was also given to linking garages to properties which would allow the Council to receive additional income. It was noted that some garages were already linked to properties and that linked garages would be Housing Benefit eligible.

Where a garage had been identified by the Housing Enabling Officer as needed to help facilitate housing development the garage would be left empty.

It was agreed that initially the garages should be assessed according to whether they were in demand, fit for purpose and/or did not require significant repair expenditure in the short to medium term. Garage sites with development potential would also be identified. Members of the TaFF also wanted to know how long garages had been vacant. As many garages as possible would be visited, with a technical officer present to give as much information as possible.

**RESOLVED:** that tours be undertaken of as many Council owned garages in the district as possible, with special consideration being given to the following points:

- How many garages were vacant
- How many garages were long term vacant
- Condition of the garages
- Whether they were fit for purpose
- Information on repairs
- Income and expenditure information

#### \*5 **Programme of future meetings**

The Forum agreed that they needed to undertake a tour of the whole district in order to identify problem areas as well as any areas for potential development. This would then help inform the Forum of the future options for garages.

Members discussed their availability of dates and it was agreed that the Democratic Services Officer would ascertain the Forum's availability and organise the tours with the Housing Needs and Strategy Officer.

On behalf of the Forum the Chairman thanked the officers for their work, and thanked all those present for attending the meeting.