

LANDLORD SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD (EXECUTIVE WORKING GROUP)

28 September 2023

NOTES

Present:

Cllr Paul Rivers (Chair)
Terry Daubney, Waverley Tenants' Panel
(Vice Chair)
Cllr Jacquie Keen
Cllr Alan Morrison
Chris Austin, Lucas Field Residents Group
Robert Stratford, Waverley Tenants Panel
Sally Purcell, Waverley Tenants Panel
Danielle Sleightholme (Co-optee)

Apologies:

Councillor John Robini and Councillor Janet Crowe

In attendance:

Cllr Andrew Laughton

21 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Robini, Cllr Crowe and Executive Head of Housing, Andrew Smith.

Cllr Laughton was in attendance to observe the discussions regarding Responsive Repairs and Voids as the O&S Resources Committee had expressed concerns about the KPIs.

22 Notes of the previous meeting

Members agreed that the notes of the previous meeting, attached, were an accurate and complete record.

The Chair addressed a few matters arising and provided the following updates:

- The Decant Policy and Re-let Review are on the work programme, scheduled to come to the Board in November.
- Drew Roberts, Fire Safety Officer, has agreed to consult with the Home Ownership Team RE: leaseholders' obligations to install smoke detectors. He confirmed that any leaseholder letting out their property will be required to install smoke detectors as part of their legal responsibilities as a Landlord. Homeowners however, are not obligated to install them and the only mechanism is if there is an applicable term in their Lease. This is a legal issue and Drew will seek further clarity.
- The Chair noted that CDM refers to Construction and Design Management; CDM Regulations 2015 set legal responsibility for all parties regarding construction projects .
- The Chair clarified that bi-annual meant twice a year in the context of Senior Living Reviews.

- Drew discussed the suggestions to allow Tenants Panel representatives to join the Senior Living Reviews with David Brown (Senior Living Careline Services Manager), however when each manager brought this up at the Tenant meetings for respective sites, no one wished to take up the offer. Managers will continue to offer this in future.

23 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations received.

24 Questions from Members of Public

There were no questions received.

25 Questions from Members

There were no questions received.

26 Responsive Repairs and Voids Update

The Chair urged attendees to keep their questions as general as possible. William Jones, representing Ian Williams, the Council's Responsive Repairs and Voids Contractor, then presented an overview of the last five months of their business operations.

William Jones noted the performance record since he entered the role in June. He mentioned the average monthly volume of reactive orders (around 1,100 to 1,200) and the significance of maintaining a two-and-a-half-week work-in-progress (WIP). He displayed a graph indicating a decline in live orders from 1,200 in April to approximately 650 by the end of August. He emphasised that this change marked a positive impact from the steps and measures they had implemented, even though they hadn't reached their ideal state. He also noted improvements in emergency and urgent performance, aiming for 90% completion on routine jobs in the next quarter.

William outlined the changes made, including restructuring the operational management, dividing the workforce for efficiency, conducting performance reviews, recruitment efforts, and optimizing the supply chain.

Graphs in his presentation showed performance metrics for emergency, urgent, and routine tasks. The performance in April and May was not optimistic. However, since June, performance began to improve, and by August, the emergency and urgent tasks had reached their desired performance levels. They aimed to continue improving routine performance to reach their target of 95%.

William elaborated on the changes made:

1. They reviewed their operational management structure to provide more clarity in roles and responsibilities.
2. The workforce was split into fast response jobs for emergencies and larger works that required pre-site planning and specific delivery schedules.

3. A performance review was conducted with direct labour, leading to the departure of five employees who weren't meeting performance standards. Simultaneously, seven new employees were recruited with specific skill sets, and resources were brought in-house for areas like electrical work and flooring.

4. Recruitment efforts were ongoing with more robust recruitment criteria, as it was essential to maintain a talented workforce.

5. The supply chain underwent changes to ensure alignment with their performance goals. They transitioned out underperforming contractors and introduced new contractors, even though this was an ongoing process.

6. Their goal was to decrease outsourcing to about 20%, focusing on specialist tasks like drainage, large roofing jobs, and flooring.

William Jones continued his presentation, highlighting various changes made, such as restructured management and the division of the workforce to address emergencies and larger projects. The company also performed performance reviews for direct labour, recruiting new talent, and optimizing the supply chain by transitioning away from underperforming contractors. Their goal is to reduce outsourcing to 20% of work, focusing on specialist tasks like drainage and large roofing jobs.

There were questions raised about the presentation;

1. Terry Daubney, Waverley Tenant's Panel, highlighted his disappointment with the service; most significantly that tenant satisfaction was continuing to drop and that missed appointments, delays and failure to communicate by Ian Williams set a poor standard for social housing in the Tenants' perspective. He highlighted that Ian Williams had promised to carry out tenant meetings across the borough on a regular basis; he is not aware that any such meetings had been carried out. He requested that the Waverley Tenant's Panel are involved in these meetings as tenant involvement is crucial.
2. Cllr Keen expressed her disappointment, particularly with delays, communication issues and missed appointments. She emphasised that respect for tenants should be at the heart of the service and noted the case of two tenants in her ward, who had complained regarding missed cooker and toiler repairs. William expressed his understanding and offered to discuss the specific cases in detail outside of the meeting.
3. Danielle Sleightholme, Waverley Tenant's Panel Co-optee, queried whether the Council should carry out a review of the systems in place to look at what has gone wrong and lessons learned as well as improvements that can be made. Matt Alexander, Housing Operations Manager, confirmed that officers were in the process of setting this up and were looking at resourcing this. He confirmed that Tenant's Panel involvement would be ensured.
4. Chris Austin, Lucas Field's Residents Group, stressed the importance of optimizing communication by keeping the Council in the communication loop between tenants and Ian Williams.

Annalisa Howson, Service Improvements Manager, addressed the Board and noted that the KPI information from the Q1 report was based on performance in April, May and June. Therefore, when we get the same statistics back by the end of Autumn, we will be able to see an improvement in the service as the impact of changes in the service will start to become apparent.

27 Customer Experience Group presentation

Rod Blackmore, on behalf of the Customer Experience Group (CEG), addressed the Board and delivered an overview of the Customer Experience Group's review of complaints data. The group had access to council complaints data to identify areas where improvements could be made in the council's services.

The CEG discovered that many upheld complaints lacked recorded "Lessons Learned," and this was mainly due to lack of awareness of this function. To address this issue, the group recommended that actionable "Lessons Learned" should be recorded on all upheld complaints. They suggested conducting an investigation into the process of adding these lessons. Additional training for staff handling complaints was also recommended. The group planned to review the results of these actions in six months.

Members praised the group's dedication and suggested that a 10-day response time to complaints might be too long. It was emphasized that tenants should be updated throughout the complaints process. Acknowledging compliments received was also highlighted as important.

Officers outlined the complaints handling process, highlighting the importance of immediate issue resolution for tenants. The process includes a 10-day formal response period for written explanations and "Lessons Learned." An automated system sends acknowledgments and updates to tenants throughout the process.

28 Regulator for Social Housing Consultation

The Chair actioned that lengthy agenda papers are to be sent out earlier as Members received their papers a few days prior to the meeting and were not given adequate time to study them.

Annalisa Howson, Service Improvement Officer, addressed the Board and reminded Members of the reading that was sent over summer RE: the RSH Consultation and new Consumer Standards set by the Regulator.

Annalisa discussed the recently enacted Social Housing Regulation Bill, which grants the regulator increased powers to hold social landlords more accountable. It also focuses on ensuring good quality homes, tenant safety, and compliance with various issues such as gas safety, damp, mould, asbestos, and more. Members were informed that the Regulator was consulting on a set of new Consumer standards. The purpose was to get feedback on these standards and to increase awareness. There was also a call for suggestions from the regulator on improving tenant involvement.

A few points were raised about the Safety and Quality Standard;

- i. The Chair mentioned that accurate assessment databases must be maintained within the Safety and Quality Standard.
- ii. There was also a question about re-lets within this standard; which appeared to have been dropped out. There was emphasis on getting repairs 'right first time' with categorized jobs. Although it was acknowledged that some jobs will never be fixed right the first time, WBC asks for tenant feedback to track this rather than looking at it from a categorized perspective.

- iii. There were questions around meeting the demands of tenants within the decent homes standard. Annalisa noted that there will be a Decent Homes Part 2 policy in the future which will give tenants a say over the expected standard of decent homes.
- iv. A point was raised about assessing tenants' homes for safety and health, especially in cases of hoarding or living conditions that may require assistance. Annalisa reassured Members that the stock condition surveys were actively identifying and signposting individuals with safeguarding, health and safety and hoarding concerns.

A few points were raised around the Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standard;

- i. The idea of having senior officers' roles and responsibilities and their salaries transparently was mentioned and how this might be put in context proportioned to the Landlord service and tenant's rent, to be open and transparent.
- ii. Tenant involvement was highlighted and the Chair thanked Jeanette Englefied for her years of service as Tenant's Involvement Officer. He noted some of her achievements. It was noted the Joesph Warriner had successfully been recruited to role of Tenant Involvement Officer. The Chair suggested that a representative of the Tenants Panel should have involvement within the recruitment process of specific housing service officers. Annalisa Howson noted that the service was looking into this through the correct legal channels. This could be added to the consultation feedback to ensure tenant views are taken into account through the recruitment process.
- iii. Questions were asked about ensuring tenant involvement within decision-making processes. Terry Daubney highlighted the importance of learning from other successful councils in improving tenant relationships and engagement and the need to explore innovative ways to engage tenants and encourage their involvement. Some examples included offering incentives like paid board membership, gold status for repairs and conducting focus groups for upcoming policies. Annalisa noted that the Regulator expected social landlords to learn from good practices from other councils. Joesph Warriner, Tenant Involvement Officer, would look a divising a new tenant involvement strategy and channelling more initiatives to get tenants involved in the service. Satisfaction surveys on responsive repairs and mutual exchange reviews will provide a means to bring tenants into the service.

Annalisa Howson reminded Members that there was a lot of work to be done to ensure the Housing service is meeting consumer standards and the involvement of the Board is key in this process. Feedback taken will go back to the Regulator and Officers will need to start coming back to the Board and the Regulator with self-assessments against these standards. Officers will need to demonstrate actions in place to meet standards and this will feed into the budget setting process to invest resources, where needed, into areas such as compliance, tenants engagement and IT systems to hold data and reports.

The Chair actioned for the RSH Consumer Standards presentation and responses to the Regulator to be circulated to Members.

Annalisa noted that the Regulator was conducting a second consultation around fees, as there will be a cost attributed to the consumer standard regulations when

they come into effect in April 2024. This will cost around £7-8 per social housing unit for a large Local Authority registered provider. It was estimated that this will total around £40,000 per year for WBC. Members raised concerns about the financial implications of this and whether those funds could be put to better use, as fees would be drawn from the Housing Revenue Account. There were concerns about the rates being the same as Housing Associations, given that we do not receive the same level of finance or governance assessments and services. However, the Tenant's Panel were supportive of the proposed fees as they would ensure regulation of the housing service.

The Chair encouraged further comments on the Consultations and fees to be fed back to Annalisa.

29 Q1 Corporate Performance Report (2023-24)

Annalisa Howson addressed the Board and discussed the Q1 Corporate Performance Report (2023-24), acknowledging improvements in gas safety, stock condition surveys, carbon monoxide detectors, and security for senior living schemes. It was also noted earlier in the meeting, that the impact of changes within the Responsive Repairs and Voids service would be seen in the Q2 Performance Report. The Vice Chair, Terry Daubney, noted that he was pleased with the performance in gas safety checks, but noted the case of a tenant who issued a complaint as the inspector only spent several minutes performing the gas safety check and there was a concern about its validity.

There were no further comments on the Performance Report.

30 Asset Management IT Solution

The Board were happy to endorse the recommendations highlighted in the report.

31 Aids and Adaptations Extension Procurement

The Board were happy to endorse the recommendations highlighted in the report.

32 HRA ex local authority buy back

The Board were happy to endorse the recommendations highlighted in the report.

33 Work programme

Annalisa Howson noted that the following items were expected at the next meeting:

- A 6 month update from Smith and Byford Ltd – gas safety checks and provisions for the winter.
- Aids and Adaptations Service Review and action plan
- Senior Living fire alarms procurement
- Asset Review on St. James Court.

34 Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 19th of October 2023.

