

LANDLORD SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD (EXECUTIVE WORKING GROUP)

25 April 2024

NOTES

Present:

Terry Daubney, Waverley Tenants' Panel
(Vice Chair)
Cllr Jacquie Keen
Cllr Alan Morrison
Cllr John Robini
Cllr Janet Crowe
Robert Stratford, Waverley Tenants Panel
Rod Blackmore, Waverley Tenant's Panel
(Substitute)

Apologies:

Councillor Paul Rivers and Sally Purcell

In attendance:

Cllr Steve Williams, Cllr Andrew Laughton

1 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Paul Rivers and Sally Purcell.

2 Notes of the previous meeting

The Board were informed that the notes of the previous meeting would be circulated shortly.

3 Declarations of interest

There were none received.

4 Questions from Members of Public

There were none received.

5 Questions from Members

There were none received.

6 Contract Extension: HSL Water Hygiene Contractors

Cllr Robini referred to the report and noted a risk around resources. Officers explained that there is not currently a dedicated Water Compliance Officer in place but the duties are being covered by the compliance team, therefore the risk has been mitigated.

The Board questioned the testing regiment for tenants' water. The officer noted that there is testing carried out on void properties before a new tenant moves in, but

otherwise there is no need as the risks have already been eradicated i.e. removal of all shared water tanks in flats.

The Board RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

7 Contract extension: PCM Gas and Electrical Auditors

Cllr Keen queried whether officers are still having difficulty accessing properties for gas safety checks. The Interim Head of Housing advised that this is an issue relating to the gas servicing contractor. He noted that their KPIs are still not at 100% and there are still issues with accessing properties. It is a key task to keep on top of gas safety checks.

The Board RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

8 Damp and Mould Report 2023-24

The Damp and Mould Officer presented the Damp and Mould report 2023-24 and delivered a presentation highlighting the Council's plan to deal with Damp and Mould issues henceforth. Key points from the presentation:

- Out of 995 reports, only 307 cases were mould and damp related. 162 cases have been complete. In March 2024 there were 145 outstanding cases.
- Officers have been following up with backlog complaints
- Customer service is working well - inspectors usually booked within 3-5 working days. Inspectors are asking if residents have any related health conditions (mainly respiratory) and the case is raised as urgent. Urgent cases should take 24 hours to 7 days to resolve.
- The team aims to have all issues resolved within 2 weeks.
- The Council is looking at installing mechanical ventilation systems as fabric first approach, rather than opening windows. This keeps heat within the property and distributes heat evenly and will cost £38-40 per year.
- There is a clear process to monitor cases post inspection
- Collaborating with other organisations/services such as health and safety, child protection and SCC. NHS advise tenants to contact us especially with respiratory problems but do not take direct action themselves.
- The Council is looking to procure a Mould and Damp specialist – the application process launches on 30 April 2024. The aim is to have a specialist contractor by July 2024 to comply with timeframes of 7 days to resolve D&M issues.
- The Council is trialling the smart monitoring system at Ockford Ridge, Godalming.
- Research has found that PIV (Positive Input Ventilation) and Extractor fans are the most effective methods to reduce Damp & Mould progression/reoccurrence. These had not previously been used due to high costs and issues with the look/noise of these devices and some tenants don't want them in their homes. It was noted that the extractor fans were mainly being refused due to bulkiness problems rather than noise issues.
- It was noted that when the new contractor is in place, they will pick up outstanding problems and install these in all properties.

Cllr Steve Williams addressed the Board and noted that as people struggle more with heating bills and become more energy aware, Damp & Mould problems have increased. He noted that people were keen to take part in the What Next energy saving initiative and What Next are looking to scale up the service to tenants in

Waverley. Energy surveys can show up small issues such as increasing insulation and closing windows which may also increase the possibility of damp and mould in colder months ~ can this be mitigated?

The Damp & Mould officer advised that the Council should be involved and track these surveys and the Energy Efficiency Officer will always take into account where extra ventilation will be required. Officers also agreed that the What Next energy efficiency surveys can be advertised in Homes and People in the winter months, with a note that ventilation devices may be needed.

The Board queried why the NHS is not required to report back to Council about tenants with medical symptoms related to Damp & Mould like the other organisations. The officer explained that this may be due to limited capacity of NHS staff and resources, however, the Council has encouraged that it is reported especially in extreme cases. The Council's priority is to have a contractor in place to install and monitor equipment (to have peace of mind of no reoccurrence) and create Damp & Mould management system.

Cllr Jon Robini questioned how the Council intervenes before it is known that Damp & Mould is an issue/is present? The officer advised that the team has ordered 500 humidity sensors/temperature systems to monitor humidity in the property. If the meter goes over 60-70% it gives a warning that the property may be at risk of Damp & Mould. Inspectors will install these in all properties and provide training for tenants. Officers will also look at data to analyse and pre-empt which type of properties are more at risk, etc. This information will allow officers to attend visits to properties that could be at risk.

The officer further noted that the 145 outstanding cases are currently being looked into. Some of the cases are due to the backlog and there are some cases where access could not be gained to the properties by the Contractor which warranted multiple visits or attempts at contact, etc. The outstanding jobs are due to difficulties with communication and other barriers which are aimed to be completed and mitigated by October/November.

The Board also emphasised the importance of looking at the fabric of the building and structural problems such as blocked cavities. The officer advised that inspectors are well trained and look for structural issues. They note that 90% of these cases are due to lack of ventilation. However, in cases where there is penetrating damp due to structural defects such as gutter leakages, inspectors will raise a job for structural or gutter works, rather than ventilation.

Action: Damp and Mould officer to show a ventilation unit to the Board.

9 HRA Hardship Fund Breakdown 2023/24

The Tenant Involvement Officer updated the Board on the HRA Hardship Fund Breakdown 2023/24 and noted that the main spend was Sainsburys vouchers mainly due to ease of giving these out and these are more readily available. Carpeting had fewer awards but were quite significant cases under more drastic circumstances i.e. being unable to sufficiently heat the homes. Energy and rent payments were the next largest spend, although they were request frequently. Sainsburys vouchers were easier to issue as the Energy and rent payments often required a longer more complex process for tenants and Sainsburys vouchers were used to cover gaps in such cases. The overall spend was £23,062.79.

Cllr Jackie Keen suggested that Town Councils and charities in Waverley should be made aware of the fund as they are influential in the community. The officer explained that the plan is to contact all charitable organisations and outreach organisations. Officers agreed that Town and Parish Councillors and inspectors/external staff should be made aware in order to deliver targeted support/awareness to tenants in Waverley. However, it was noted that balance is key as it is important to remember that this is rent money and there are other charities/support available and the HRA Hardship Fund should be used as a last resort fund.

Members queried whether there had been any dialogue with CAB. The Tenant Involvement Officer advised that this is a target for 2024/25. Housing officers encourage tenants to go to CAB first and then come to the Council. Rents officers are contacting people with arrears and that is the individual point of contact. He noted that rent officers will be taking a proactive element this year where officers may foresee issues with tenants being able to pay their rent. Housing officers with more regular contact with tenants can pick up on those issues more effectively.

Action: Rent officer to attend a meeting of the LSAB to talk about this further.

Action: LSAB is to continue to monitor this on a quarterly basis. If there is a drastic change it should be brought to the LSAB.

10 Q4 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 2.2 Report

The Energy Efficiency Officer delivered a presentation and noted that the Council has been successful in its SHDF Wave 2.2 bid and plans to improve the energy efficiency of 59 of its worst performing homes through a fabric first approach. The grant funding and 25% of the co-funding must be spent by 31st March 2025, with the remaining 75% of the co-funding possible to spend until 31st March 2026. Key points from the presentation:

- The Council will look at a fabric first approach with loft and cavity wall insulation, improved ventilation and solar panels (for 2 properties).
- Delivery Partner: the project will be in collaboration with an experience contractor for data support and project delivery, with resident engagement managed in-house.
- There is a plan to understand different housing archetypes, integrate energy efficiency into repairs and maintenance, and develop a modern home standard.
- Next steps: To apply for Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund Wave 3, to create a home passport for each property, proactive asset management and to engage the community.

Q&A:

1. There was a question about whether the funding will definitely be utilised by March 2025. The officer confirmed that the funds will be utilised by the March 2025 deadline as the Council has partnered with an experienced contractor who has supported in gathering robust data and creating a detailed project plan. Work will begin rapidly once the contracts are signed. The plan also allows for wiggle room to ensure all funding is utilised within the specified timeframe.
2. There was a question about the cost per home and whether the budget would cover homes that demand more works. The officer confirmed that the average cost is approximately £9,500 per house. She advised that all houses will receive loft and cavity wall insulation and improved ventilation. Two houses will also get solar

panels. There are no plans to install heat pumps with this funding round, but officers are focusing on maximising impact within the available budget.

3. There was a question about the Ockford Ridge refurbishment project, and where any insights from that project can be applied here. The Energy Efficiency officer advised that officers have incorporated learnings from previous projects, such as the Ockford Ridge refurbishment scheme, into the bid to demonstrate the Council's capability and experience in managing similar initiatives. She added that the insights and experiences gained from that project are invaluable and have been considered in our current strategies and bids.
4. There was a query about mitigating issues with supply chain and skilled labour shortages and how the Council will ensure timely completion. The officer noted that the scheme is using standard building contracts with provisions to manage any additional costs or delays. The delivery partner also has extensive experience and capacity to handle projects of this scale. Officers have factored in potential delays and have a robust plan to mitigate these risks.

The Board RESOLVED to endorse the recommendations in the report.

11 Housing dashboard (standing item)

The Service Improvement Officer presented the latest Housing dashboard data including voids, complaints data and rent arrears.

The rent arrears data will be coming to the Board continuously to track the changes as the latest information shows 1.5k tenants in arrears, though 60% of these cases are under £100.

There has been progress with housing management data and are setting up reporting from the records re: case types and targets when contact and action should have been made.

The Head of Housing suggested that next time this data should be split into 2 sections: 1. The development of the KPIs so the Board can 2. analyse the actual performance data.

12 Head of Housing Update

The Board congratulated Annalisa Howson on her appointment as *Joint Executive Head of Housing* for both WBC and GBC. Hugh Wagstaff will be managing the operational side of the housing service at WBC as *Head of Housing Operations*.

The Joint Executive Head of Housing explained her new areas of focus, notably looking at uncovering information about the services, identifying improvement plans, looking at improving the structure of the housing service and ensuring good governance.

She noted that she is delighted to continue working with the Landlord Services Advisory Board and thanked the Board for its brilliant work.

13 Work programme

Officers are to circulate this at the next meeting.

14 Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Landlord Services Advisory Board (EWG) will take place on Thursday 30 May 2024 at 10am in the Council Chamber.