

Tenants Panel – 2020:2021

1. As with us all, this financial year started with and will finish with, the effects of Covid-19. The Panel quickly decided that if we intended to continue to assist tenants, liaise with Waverley Officers and take part in decision making, we had to plunge ourselves into virtual technology.
2. Our skills quickly grew, the Tenants Panel began holding weekly Zoom coffee chats, which normally included a photo quiz, then partnership meetings with the Waverley Head of Housing , members of the Housing Management Team, Rent Team & Councillors, along with the vital contacts with Tenants.
3. We continued to raise issues with the Housing Management Team on behalf of tenants throughout the year, issues being, long waits for housing repairs, with one senior tenant waiting over 6 weeks for the electrical supply to his cooker to be replaced. Refuse collection at Ockford Court and Riverside Court were resolved following input from Panel Members, Rents arrears, neighbour disputes, a very nasty ASB with could have been considered as racially motivated, which was addressed by the quick intervention from Housing Officers. We then had the Cat Flap incident that again following intervention by the Panel was resolved amicably.
4. The Tenants Panel held its Annual General Meeting via Zoom in October, possibly the first of its kind. We had a guest speaker, who gave an interesting presentation on the historic sites around Waverley and neighbouring areas. The AGM was well supported by Panel members, Waverley Officers but disappointingly only a few tenants. We believe this was mainly due to problems with promoting the event.
5. The Panel continued to work closely with the Housing Management Team. We held Zoom meetings with managers and residents of Waverley Senior Living Schemes, we heard of the good work that managers and residents were doing to help reduce the effects of lockdown. However, it was clear that many residents feel the effects that continued isolation is having on their health, particularly though the autumn and winter months. The Tenants Panel members are to hold a Zoom open meeting with the residents of the schemes to gauge the issues that residents feel have gone well and the not so well.
6. With resident's permission, the Panel will encourage Waverley Housing Management Team to review the policies implemented though Covid, again to see what went well and what we can improve on in the event of further or future lockdowns. We have held meeting with other Tenant groups looking for ideas on best practice.

7. In December, the Tenants Panel were asked to judge a Christmas window competition being held through the Senior Living schemes, which our members were pleased to do. A few days before Christmas members attended schemes and awarded prizes to 10 residents for their wonderful window displayed.
8. Some members have attended webinars held by HQN & CIH although in parts interesting I found it difficult to sit in front of a screen for long periods and look forward to the return of seminars.
9. One of the major events for tenants this year has been publication of The Charter for Social Housing Residents, Social Housing white paper. This was circulated promptly to all Panel members and I had the opportunity to view the Residents' Network Conference in December which addressed the Charter. The first chapter in the papers Executive Summary states that a home should provide safety, security and dignity for all tenants, regardless of who is your landlord.
10. The charter sets many challenges that Waverley and Tenants will have to address, performance, complaints, respect, neighbourhood and environment. There will be a Regulator of Housing Services whose role will be to ensure providers of social housing provide viable, efficient and a well governed social housing sector, able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs.
11. Landlords will need to prove how they have sought out and considered ways to improve tenant involvement, ensuring that the tenant voice is heard both individually and via representative groups. Keeping tenants at the heart of future policymaking. Residence Empowerment will provide tenants with the tools to better influence and hold landlords to account that are focused on their needs.
12. There is to be a Housing Ombudsman Service Residents Panel, two of our residents have made application to join this panel.
13. The Panel continues to strengthen its membership with 2 new members starting in February and hopefully post Covid, the return of 2 members who have not been able to participate fully to virtual meetings.
14. 2020-21 has been a difficult year, our Tenants Panel members have worked hard to continue to support tenants whilst dealing with their own issues and we are looking forward to the challenges 2021-22 will bring.

15. We have started our plan for 2021-22, to continue to support Waverley tenants, to work with the Housing Management Team and support the implementation of the Tenant Involvement Strategy, in provide the best possible housing service to tenants.

16. We plan to strengthen our Panel membership, return to Open Tenant meetings, when safe to do so. We hope to celebrate the 26th anniversary of the foundation of the Tenants Panel, having had to cancel its planned 25th event.

Chair Tenants Panel

Feb 2021