

LANDLORD SERVICES EXECUTIVE WORKING GROUP

30 March 2023

NOTES

Present:

Cllr Paul Rivers (Chair)
 Terry Daubney, Waverley Tenants' Panel
 (Vice Chair)
 Cllr Jacquie Keen
 Cllr Stephen Mulliner
 Cllr Michaela Wicks
 Chris Austin, Lucas Field Residents Group
 Robert Stratford, Waverley Tenants Panel

Apologies:

Councillor John Robini and Danielle Sleightholme

13 Notes of the previous meeting

The Board agreed to the notes of the meeting held on the 23rd of February 2023.

12 Apologies for absence

13 Notes of the previous meeting

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14 Declarations of interest

No declarations were received.

15 Questions from Members of the Public

Councillor Follows invited Ms. Karen Lankester to speak at the meeting. Karen Lankester introduced the Nationwide Empty Homes Strategy ([New government must act on empty homes as 85,000 families will be homeless this Christmas \(nationwidemediacentre.co.uk\)](https://www.nationwidemediacentre.co.uk)) and Action for Empty Homes ([Action on Empty Homes](https://www.actiononemptyhomes.org)) to the Board. Karen explained that according to recent data there are around 1,063 empty homes in Waverley ([Download.ashx \(actiononemptyhomes.org\)](#)), and explained that there has been a Nationwide campaign to bring empty homes into the affordable renting sector; this has been showcased by other councils such as those in Suffolk and Oxford. She questioned Waverley's Homelessness strategy and pointed out that the metrics are out of date and suggested that a renewed strategy might show a more acute need for affordable accommodation.

The Board resolved to pass this issue to the Executive and add this to the Executive Committee Work Programme for the new Administration to look at. Officers noted that the Landlord Services Advisory Board deals with social housing issues and it is more appropriate for the Executive to look at this under the category of the acquisition of more housing through other means. The Board also recommended a review of the Council's Empty Homes Strategy.

16 Questions from Members

No questions from Members were received.

17 Customer Experience Group Presentation

Joseph Warriner, Housing Management Graduate Trainee, introduced the Customer Experience Group to the Board. He explained that this would be an evolution of the designated persons panel but it would deal with more systemic issues within the housing service. The Group would consist of 7 Members and tenants would be able to apply to join the Group through officers. The Group would aim to use their knowledge, experience, and contacts to work with the housing service examining performance data and complaints in order to scrutinise the customer experience. The Group would also examine performance data and communications to evaluate Service delivery and identify issues in poor practice, which means that they would be able to look at data on complaints, time to respond, lessons learned, etc. Conclusions drawn up by the Group would then be passed to the LSAB and recommendations can be made for service improvements.

The Board agreed to the premise set out in the presentation and agreed to proceed.

18 Tenant Satisfaction Measures Project update

Joseph Warriner, Housing Graduate Management Trainee, introduced the Tenant Satisfaction Measures project update to the Board. He explained that following the Charter for Social Housing Residents White Paper and a consultation on the introduction of these measures, the Regulator had introduced Tenant Satisfaction Measures; a series of 12 questions to gauge tenant satisfaction with the social housing provider. The main objectives were to meet the requirements of the Regulator and to identify key areas for improvement and to gain actionable insights through having statistically accurate and up-to-date information on the satisfaction of tenants. He noted that the Council had outsourced this to Acuity, a company that provides survey services to the social housing sector and have access to benchmarking services to measure rates against other Authorities and Associations. He further noted that along with the statutory requirement for 12 questions on each survey, an extra 4 questions were to be added which would rely on guidance and input from the director of Acuity and housing managers within the service to see what drives service needs and then also the tenants panel will take the questions too to identify if there are any issues or any other areas where they feel that service improvement needs lie.

Joseph Warriner, Housing Graduate Management Trainee, explained that the survey would go to around 560 tenants who would be selected at random. He noted that Acuity would analyse data and work out measures that were to be taken to improve tenant satisfaction. It was also confirmed that tenants will have a section to provide written feedback on the survey. Annalisa Howson, Housing Service Improvement Manager, further noted that the tenant satisfaction data would need to be reported back to the Regulator for Social Housing by April 2024 to be reviewed

and published. Joseph Warriner stated there were also another 10-12 measures focused on the management of the housing service which aim to provide a comprehensive view of the service.

In response to Councillor Mulliner's question officers confirmed that item 4.3 on page 9 is meant to say 1,000 homes.

***The Board resolved** to agree to the recommendations in the report.*

19 Housing Operations Service Plan 2022/24

Andrew Smith, Executive Head of Housing, introduced the Housing Operations Service Plan 2022/24. It was noted that this is a 3 year rolling document which is updated every year. It is an operation tool which aims to help officers manage the service and the Board can use this to hold the service to account. Annalisa Howson, Service Improvement Manager, noted that when the Board discusses agenda planning, a discussion around reporting service plan actions should take place. As these are currently reported in the Quarterly Performance Report, the Board may require more detail going forward as to how the service plan options are progressing.

Councillor Mulliner commented on the Service Plan, noting that an indication would be needed to show what has changed since the previous service plans and the reasons for change. Officers took these comments on board.

***The Board recommended** that the Housing Strategy is to be presented to the Board on an annual basis to discuss objectives and action plan. Andrew Smith, Executive Head of Housing, agreed to this recommendation.*

20 Q3 Performance report

Annalisa Howson presented the Q3 Quarterly Performance Report, including a summary of information from the Executive Head of Service, the change in senior management, damp and mould, the LSAB 1 year anniversary review, information on performance through KPIs, information about complaints and the financial information.

The Chair noted that Danielle Sleighthome, Tenants Panel Co-optee, had sent a question regarding item 4.3 which indicated that the target for reletting normal void properties had been changed to 25 days. Danielle Sleighthome asked whether this target is achievable. Annalisa Howson, Service Improvement Manager, responded by telling the Board that officers hope the target is attainable however the Relet Review Process focuses on the quality of the void and the tenant experience rather than the speed. Financial analysis focuses more on creating a positive relationship with tenants, however officers are hopeful that this is achievable. She further explained that the statistics show that the 20 day target was unattainable as this has not been reached in at least 3 years and 25 days is believed to be more reasonable. The relet review aims to look at the overall experience for tenants rather than void loss. Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing Operations, further explained that some properties are being returned after very long tenancies and need a lot more work including new bathrooms and kitchens being fitted, which prolongs this relet period. He stated that it is preferable to finish necessary works on

the property before reletting, to improve tenant satisfaction with the quality of the relet.

Councillor Keen commented on neglected properties that required a lot of extra work. Members linked this to the knock on effect from flexible tenancies that had been fixed for 5 years and suggested that tenants may not have been invested in maintaining the property for this reason. Councillor Mulliner expanded on this by questioning if there were any measures in place to ensure that tenants maintained their properties well. Annalisa Howson explained that there was a Tenancy Audit Programme in place which would soon be reviewed as well as the responsive repair programme and stock condition surveys which would identify these issues. Issues such as neglect can also be reported when annual gas safety checks take place. Andrew Smith, Executive Head of Housing, stated that officers should have more engagement with tenants on the ground to deal with issues in social housing such as vulnerable tenants and antisocial behaviour, however staffing difficulties and resourcing have hindered this. He explained that officers could signpost to other services if issues are identified. Tanielle Wellenger (on behalf of EM Williams) noted that there was not an efficient reporting system in cases that warrants concern during gas boiler inspections. Inspectors are often directed to the website but this is generally complicated and long winded for staff with limited time.

Andrew Smith, Executive Head of Housing, actioned that this would be looked into and an easier more efficient reporting system should be put in place as well as safeguarding training for staff involved in visits.

The Board noted the Q3 Performance report and had no further comments or recommendations to make to the Executive.

21 Housing Asset Management Strategy Implementation Progress report

Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing Operations, discussed key updates highlighted in the report.

Councillor Keen raised a case of a tenant who contacted her about a delayed response time for damp/mould in the roof of her property. Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing Operations, noted that timeline targets need to be reviewed within policy and resources must be identified to deliver that. Jeanette Englefield, Tenant Involvement Officer, further noted that roofing and other large repair works for mould would not be a quick fix, especially if it is to be dealt with properly. She stated that it is advised not to hurry the process of asbestos and mould removal but temporary solutions should be applied where necessary within a certain timeframe. Tenants Panel members also raised a case of a tenant with suspected damp and mould and identified a design issue with insulation and extractor fans. Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing Operations, commented that staff will be provided with technical and non-technical training programmes so housing officers and inspectors can better identify damp and mould. Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing Operations, requested further details of these cases after the meeting so they can be dealt with appropriately.

Tenant's Panel Members raised a point about pumped in and cavity wall insulation and how these link to damp and mould. Hugh Wagstaff, Head of Housing Operations, responded by informing the Board that 4 years ago a programme to

remove cavity wall insulation was carried out for this reason and further checks will be carried out by the Energy Efficiency Project Officer.

The Board resolved to agree to the recommendations in the report.

22 Decant Policy

The Board agreed to defer this item to a later date to allow for further discussion and review of the Policy and to incorporate more tenant experience.

23 Executive Head of Service Update incl. Heating complaints

The Executive Head of Housing, Andrew Smith, updated the Board on staffing changes and shortages and how this is being dealt with by the Housing Department. He thanked staff, councillors and officer for their continued participation and efforts.

Andrew Smith, Executive Head of Housing, introduced the Heating Complaints report requested by the Executive following an increase in complaints. Councillor Mulliner and Councillor Follows raised concerns about missed boiler repair appointments that had been reported to them by tenants. Annalisa Howson responded by reminding Members to report missed appointments. She noted that the Customer Service Group will be reviewing the process of reporting complaints as one their first reviews.

In response to concerns raised, Officers agreed to set up a new programme for Smith and Byford to come back and speak to the Board.

24 Executive Feedback on LSAB comments

Paul Rivers, Vice Chair and Co-PFH for Housing commented on the link between the Executive and the LSAB. He commended the Board Members for their participation in the rent increase discussion and noted that the 4% rent increase was passed with consideration to comments made by the Board. Councillor Follows, Leader of the Council, thanked the Board for dealing with many important issues such as changes in Policy, rent discussions, flexible tenancies and quarterly reports. He further noted that the feedback by this Board had been invaluable to decisions made by the Executive.

25 Review Work programme

Annalisa Howson, Service Improvement Manager, noted that the new work programme is to be confirmed by the new Board.

26 Date of next meeting

Annalisa Howson, Service Improvement Manager, proposed Tenant's Panel meeting on the 27th of April to discuss meeting format and agenda items going forward. This will be with officer and Tenant's Panel Members.

Annalisa Howson, Service Improvement Manager, proposed an introductory session on the 25th of May 2023 for new Councillors to understand what the purposes and functions of the Board and to meet the Panel Members.