

Landlord Services Advisory Board 27 June 2024

Item 11 – Head of Service Update

The Head of Housing wishes to update the Portfolio Holders and Board members of the following:

Consumer Standards Regulatory Review and Assessment

New regulations came into effect on 1 April, including four additional Consumer Standards which put tenants firmly at the centre, holding landlords accountable for providing safe, good quality homes. The Regulator of Social Housing will inspect landlords with 1,000 or more social homes to ensure they are meeting the standards.

We are pleased to share that the Housing Quality Network has been appointed to undertake an initial review and assessment against the Consumer Standards for Waverley Borough Council. This important piece of work will provide us with an indicative grading and a clear improvement plan to address any gaps before we are inspected for real. The project with HQN will run from June–September 2024.

- The Safety and Quality Standard ensures the provision of safe and good quality homes. It ties in with the Decent Homes Standard and health and safety requirements. The Council will be required to provide evidence that homes are maintained to the proper standard.
- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard aims to improve the landlord/tenant relationship and create a culture of transparency and accountability. All Housing teams will need to demonstrate how policies translate into outcomes, how they listen and respond to the tenant voice and how they involve residents in service design.
- The Neighbourhood and Community Standard focuses on creating well-maintained neighbourhoods so tenants can feel safe in their homes.
- The Tenancy Standard sets out requirements for allocation, lettings, and tenancy management.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures are part of the Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standard. They are made up of 12 tenant perception measures from a survey and 10 operational measures. This board looked at the tenant perception measures together a few months ago and the information included in the operational measures is very similar to the information included in the Housing Dashboard at these meetings. These have all now been collected.

[Update on the day based on whether they have been published yet or not – but need to be published by the 30 June]

Ian Williams Executive Working Group

Earlier this year, in February, a temporary Executive Working Group on Social Housing Maintenance was created to investigate whether the amount of contact received by Councillors about maintenance and repairs was an indication of poor performance by both Waverley and its contractor.

The group comprised of:

- the Co-Portfolio Holders for Housing, Councillor Paul Rivers and Councillor Janet Crowe,
- the Chair of the Tenants Panel, Terry Daubney,
- and was supported by Officers within the Housing Service.

The group has met twice so far to review performance information and identify areas of concern. The group are due to meet with the Contract Manager from Ian Williams at the beginning of July to discuss this further. They will then report their findings to this Board and to the Executive.

Compensation

At the meeting last month, information about the amount of money paid in compensation to tenants was requested. After investigating this, it was found that the amount of compensation given has increased significantly in the latest financial year to around £120,000. 78% (£98,000) of this was paying settlements in legal disrepair cases. In these cases the majority of the cost goes towards the tenants legal fees. Further investigation is needed to identify why these costs have increased so significantly, but it is suspected that this is due to an increase of cases caused by heightened public awareness after the governments 'make things right' campaign and several high profile news stories about poor performance from social landlords.

There are two ways in which the Service will seek to reduce this increase:

1. Improve repairs performance. There is an ongoing project to work with Ian Williams to improve their performance. This will prevent legal disrepair cases by ensuring that a greater proportion of repairs are completed to the agreed standard and within the agreed timescales.
2. Improve the complaints process. A new Housing Complaints Officer has been recruited and they will offer support to Housing Managers in responding to complaints which will improve the Service's complaints handling. By making the complaints process more effective, it is hoped that this will encourage tenants to use this as a route to 'make things right' rather than legal disrepair cases.

Waverley and Guildford Housing Together

On the 13 June the staff Waverley's and Guildford's Housing Services met at a joint morning away day as the first step in finding ways in which the two services can support one another. It was a great day full of interesting and constructive discussions about the future of social housing and the role that Waverley and Guildford will play in this together. Some excellent

ideas were shared, and relationships were built between colleagues which will provide the foundations for future collaboration.

Recommendation

The Portfolio Holders and Board are asked to note and comment on the contents of this report.

Hugh Wagstaff

Head of Housing

20 June 2024