

CUSTOMER SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee of the Bolsover District Council held in the Council Chamber, The Arc, Clowne on Monday, 18th October 2021 at 10:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Rose Bowler in the Chair

Councillors Rita Turner, Allan Bailey, David Dixon, Stan Fox, Ray Heffer and Andrew Joesbury.

Officers:- Sarah Sternberg (Monitoring Officer), Vicky Dawson (Assistant Director - Housing Management & Enforcement), Andrew Clarke (Operational Repairs Manager) (to Minute No CS24-21/22), Deborah Whallett (Housing Enforcement Manager), Eddie Raper (Planned Repairs Inspector), Marilyn Greveson (Specialist Housing Administrator) and Alison Bluff (Governance Officer).

CS18-21/22. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

CS19-21/22. URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

CS20-21/22. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

CS21-21/22. MINUTES – 13TH SEPTEMBER 2021

Moved by Councillor Ray Heffer and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that the Minutes of a Customer Service Scrutiny Committee held on 13th September 2021 be approved as a correct record.

CS22-21/22. LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE

Moved by Councillor Andrew Joesbury and seconded by Councillor Ray Heffer

RESOLVED that the List of Key Decisions and items to be considered in private document be noted.

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CS23-21/22. CONSULTATION ON HOUSING POLICIES - TENANT ALTERATION & IMPROVEMENT POLICY

Committee considered a report in relation to the Council's revised Tenant Alteration and Improvement Policy. A copy of the revised policy was attached to the report.

All tenants were entitled to make a request for alterations or improvements to their Council home. The Tenant Alteration and Improvement policy sat alongside and supplemented the tenancy agreement and ensured that all tenants were aware of their rights and responsibilities. It also ensured that officers involved in housing repairs and tenancy management adopted the same fair but firm approach and took account of the need to consider equality and proportionality when taking any action against a tenant.

The Council would not unreasonably refuse permission but may impose conditions or give genuine reasons why permission for alterations or improvements would be refused. For more complex requests an officer may be required to attend the property prior to any work being carried out to discuss the tenant's plans before permission could be granted. Where alterations or improvements had been carried out without permission or were considered dangerous, the Council would put this right and could recharge the tenant under the terms of the Tenancy Agreement. The policy set out how charges incurred by the Council were calculated to put work right and there was also a formal appeals process where a tenant was given an opportunity to challenge the reasons for refusal of permission and also any recharges or recharge amount.

In addition, where an improvement was carried out at the tenant's own expense, a statutory scheme set out the amount of compensation due to them if they vacated the property at a future date.

All requests must be made in writing and provide sufficient detail to be able to consider the request. Permission would be granted for 12 months and if the work was not commenced within that time, a tenant would need to re-apply.

In response to a Member's query regarding tenants who preferred to install their own kitchens, Committee was advised that the policy had been amended to no longer allow integrated appliances. This was to avoid any future problems with a kitchen if a tenant vacated the property.

In response to another Member's query, Committee was advised that the Council did not automatically replace kitchens in a property when a tenant vacated. However, if a kitchen was installed, then its expected lifespan would be around 20 years. If a kitchen installed by the Council was damaged on a tenant vacating a property, then the Council would pursue a recharge.

A Member commented that he felt the policy was a fair policy.

Moved by Councillor Andrew Joesbury and seconded by Councillor Rose Bowler
RESOLVED that the policy be noted.

The Operational Repairs Manager left the meeting.

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CS24-21/22 SCRUTINY COMMITTEE WORK PROGRAMME 2021/22

Committee considered their Work Programme 2021/22.

Moved by Councillor Rose Bowler and seconded by Councillor Andrew Joesbury
RESOLVED that the Committee's work programme 2021/22 be noted.

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 1020 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The formal meeting concluded at 1055 hours.