

## **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, 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 at 10:00 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor Donna Hales in the Chair

Councillors Amanda Davis, Louise Fox, Vicky Waplington and Deborah Watson.

Officers:- Steve Brunt (Strategic Director of Services), Jim Fieldsend (Monitoring Officer), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement), Lesley Botham (Customer Service, Complaints and Standards Manager), Alice Willoughby (Customer Standards and Complaints Officer), Joanne Wilson (Housing Strategy and Development Officer), Thomas Dunne-Wragg (Scrutiny Officer), Alison Bluff (Governance) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

Also in attendance at the meeting was Councillor Sandra Peake, Portfolio Holder for Housing, and Mr. S Bramley (Bolsover Tenants Challenge and Change Group).

### **CS1-24/25            APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received on behalf of Councillor Lisa Powell.

### **CS2-24/25            URGENT ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

There were no urgent items of business to consider.

### **CS3-24/25            DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **CS4-24/25            MINUTES – 25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2024**

Moved by Councillor Vicky Waplington and seconded by Councillor Amanda Davis  
**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of a meeting of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

### **CS5-24/25            EXTRAORDINARY MINUTES – 22<sup>ND</sup> APRIL 2024**

Moved by Councillor Vicky Waplington and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox  
**RESOLVED** that the Minutes of an Extraordinary meeting of the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

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### **CS6-24/25 LIST OF KEY DECISIONS AND ITEMS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PRIVATE**

Committee considered the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document.

Moved by Councillor Vicky Waplington and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox  
**RESOLVED** that the List of Key Decisions and Items to be Considered in Private document be noted.

### **CS7-24/25 BOLSOVER TENANTS CHALLENGE AND CHANGE GROUP - REVIEW OF THE VOIDS PROCESS**

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer introduced Mr. S Bramley to the meeting.

Mr. Bramley was one of six tenants of the Bolsover Tenants Challenge and Change Group. The group's objectives were to provide a direct link for tenants to give feedback to the Council and Mr. Bramley had been invited to Committee to talk about a review the group had undertaken on the Council's void property process.

Mr. Bramley explained that the Group had chosen to review the Council's void property process as a priority to find out the standard, speed, and whether tenants were satisfied with work undertaken by the Council.

The Group had visited the Council's Doe Lea offices to look at the systems and processes used and also three void properties at different stages of the void process.

At Doe Lea, the Group had seen how the Council and Dragonfly Development Ltd. handled void property work. This included a whiteboard system which helped portray the start and finish timeline and Mr. Bramley had noted the statutory steps which were required such as removal of asbestos from a property. Mr. Bramley advised the meeting that the Group had been very impressed with the handling of the work involved and the next step which was witnessing the work being undertaken.

The visits had taken place independently and away from the Council's own inspections team so as not to confer and influence the Group's views.

At one of the properties visited, the tenant had sadly passed away with no next of kin which meant a legal process had to be followed. The property required clearing of all furniture and personal possessions before repairs could be undertaken. During the visit, the Group had carried out their inspection with guidance from the Repairs Co-ordinator and a worksheet was used to categorise the repairs required. The Repairs Co-ordinator had explained that the works would be ordered via a computer system which would automatically produce a costing, including a separation of materials and labour costs.

Two other properties had been visited, one which had been partway through a refurbishment of major works being undertaken, i.e., new bathroom, kitchen, and rewire, and the second property, which was almost complete; a wet room installed and a rewire of electrics. There had been an intention to visit a fourth property, however, due to time constraints this had not been possible.

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The group had looked at the “lettable standards” and had put forward a number of recommendations, including more electrical sockets be installed in properties during the voids process and better detailed information regarding water and gas meter serial numbers matching the relevant property. As a former electrician by trade, Mr. Bramley stated he was impressed with the electrical standards carried out on properties. Other recommendations were if flooring left down by the previous tenant was in very good condition, i.e., carpets, these should be left in the property for the incoming tenant which would save on expense, and decorating vouchers be made available in lieu of a cleaning allowance.

Mr. Bramley noted the group had been impressed by the quality of service in relation to voids and how staff were engaged with the process which was a credit to the Council. The group wished to work with the Council to develop an action plan which set out ways to implement the recommendations and they would welcome the opportunity to discuss the report with senior management. The group wanted to leave a legacy for the next group of tenants to build upon and Mr. Bramley noted that feedback was incredibly important as it would enable the Council to maintain and develop the high standards exhibited. Mr. Bramley further credited the staff and contractors involved throughout the process and thanked the Committee for their time.

The Chair thanked Mr. Bramley for attending the meeting and for the recommendations the group had put forward. In response to a query from the Chair, the Housing Strategy and Development Officer noted that the suggestion of a decorating voucher scheme would be considered.

In response to a query from the Monitoring Officer, the Housing Strategy and Development Officer advised Members that the report had been presented to the Housing Stock Management Group and was being considered at an operational level.

Members thanked Mr. Bramley for attending the meeting and for the Group’s time in undertaking the visits and their recommendations and positive comments.

*Mr. Bramley left the meeting.*

### **CS8-24/25                      CUSTOMER    SERVICE    STANDARDS    /    COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS REPORT 2023/24 (1<sup>ST</sup> JANUARY 2024 TO 31<sup>ST</sup> MARCH 2024) AND ANNUAL SUMMARY**

The Customer Service, Complaints and Standards Manager explained the report was to provide information on the Council’s performance in relation to its customer service standards.

For the Revenues & Benefits Telephone line, the target for ‘direct dial’ Revenues incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds was 60%; for Q4 2023/24 this was 84% and the cumulative performance for 2023/24 was 79% - both exceeding the target. The target for ‘direct dial’ Benefits incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds was 78%; for Q4 2023/24 this was 93% and cumulative performance for 2023/24 was 92% - both exceeding the target.

For the Contact Centres telephone line, the target for incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds was 75%; for Q4 2023/24 this was 75% and the cumulative

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performance for 2023/24 was 80% - on or exceeding the target.

For E-mails, target 1 was for 100% of emails to be acknowledged within 1 working day, and for target 2 for 100% to be replied to within 8 working days. For Q4 2023/24, 8,804 email enquiries from the public were received through [enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@bolsover.gov.uk); all were acknowledged within one working day; and 100% were replied to in full within 8 working days cumulatively for Q4 2023/24.

For Live Chat, which remained a relatively new service, the target was 75% of incoming Live Chats to be answered within 20 seconds. Contact Centres achieved 91% for Q4 2023/24 and the cumulatively performance for 2023/24 was 93% - both exceeding the target.

It was noted for E-mails and Live Chat, handling these communications took longer on average than traditional methods.

For the Corporate Telephone Standard, the total received calls to the authority (direct dial internal/external), the target was 93% to be answered within 20 seconds. Cumulatively, performance was 87% for 2023/24 – below target. For incoming calls not answered, cumulative performance was 10% for 2023/24 – above the target of 5%.

For Compliments, a total of 55 written compliments were received during Q4 2023/24. For Comments, 12 were received and 100% of these were acknowledged and passed to their respective departments within the target time of 3 working days. For Stage 1 Complaints, a total of 45 were recorded – Customer Information System had 33, Open Housing Repairs system had 12 – for Q4 2023/24, 89% of which were responded to within the Council's customer standard of 3 working days. For Stage 2 Complaints and M.P. enquiries, 26 formal complaints were registered in Q4 2023/24 42 M.P. enquiries during the same period – 100% Stage 2 Complaints and 100% M.P. enquiries were responded to within 15 working days. For Stage 3 Complaints, 9 were received and all responded to within 20 working days. 1 Ombudsman Complaint was received in Q4 2023/24, but no fault was found by the Housing Ombudsman.

The Chair thanked the Customer Service team for a good set of results.

Moved by Councillor Vicky Waplington and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox  
**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

### **CS9-24/25            HOUSING OMBUDSMAN SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer provided a verbal update on the Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment report.

Following a period of consultation, the Complaints Handling Code became a statutory requirement from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, with the Housing Ombudsman having a duty to monitor compliance with the Code by way of an annual submission. This would ensure that all landlords provided information in a consistent way that allowed effective analysis and insight into compliance with the Code.

The required documents needed to be submitted by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024 and this date aligned

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with the Regulator of Social Housing's requirements for the publication and submission of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) outcomes, of which complaint handling was included.

Although no prescribed format, the Annual Submission must include the following;

- The self-assessment against the Code;
- The annual complaint performance and service improvement report;
- The governing body's response to the report;
- The complaints policy.

There was also a requirement that these documents must be available on the Council's website by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

The Annual Complaint Handling and Service Improvement Report would be considered by Executive at its meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> June.

The Assistant Director Housing Management and Enforcement referred to changes made to the Housing Allocations Register and that appeals were being looked at. Previously, there had been 2,300 people on the Register waiting for a Council property but many of these had been present for as much as 15 years as a "just in case" measure, however, the new rules would not prevent those in genuine need of a Council property being housed. A report regarding this would be presented to a future Scrutiny Committee.

Moved by Councillor Amanda Davis and seconded by Councillor Vicky Waplington  
**RESOLVED** that the verbal report be noted.

*The Customer Service, Complaints and Standards Manager and the Standards and Complaints Officer left the meeting.*

### **CS10-24/25      WORK PROGRAMME 2024-2025**

Committee considered their Work Programme 2024/25. The Scrutiny Officer reminded Members that the work programme was a fluid document and changes could be made to it throughout the year.

Moved by Councillor Vicky Waplington and seconded by Councillor Louise Fox  
**RESOLVED** that the Work Programme 2024/25 be noted.

The formal part of the meeting concluded at 10:51 hours and Members then met as a working party to continue their review work. The working party concluded at 11:36 hours.