

## **HOUSING LIAISON BOARD**

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing Liaison Board of the Bolsover District Council held in Committee Room 1, The Arc, Clowne on Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2024 at 10:30 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor Sandra Peake in the Chair

Councillors Janet Tait, Ashley Taylor, Rita Turner and Jane Yates.

Officers:- Jane Calladine (Tenant Engagement Officer), Andy Clarke (Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) – Dragonfly Management), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement), Deborah Whallett (Housing Services Manager), Alice Willoughby (Customer Standards and Complaints Officer), Jo Wilson (Housing Strategy and Development Officer) and Matthew Kerry (Governance and Civic Officer).

Tenants:- Mrs. Kathleen Blair (Substitute), Mrs. Janice Payne, Mrs. Doreen Potts, Mrs. Angela Sharpe and Ms. Jackie Taylor (Substitute).

### **HLB13-24/25      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Mr. Steven Bramley and Mrs. Catherine Morley.

### **HLB14-24/25      MINUTES – 16<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2024**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of a meeting of the Housing Liaison Board held on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

### **HLB15-24/25      REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING INSPECTION JUDGEMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement presented the report to the Board.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, new legislation was brought in to protect tenants, ensure high quality services, and provide the Regulator with enhanced powers to inspect social landlords.

The Council had received a C2 grade (C1 was the highest achievable) following an investigation in May 2024. During the investigation, the Regulators had observed a Customer Services Scrutiny Meeting, a previous Board meeting, and had observed and met with Members, Tenants and Officers. They had also reviewed a wide range of Council documents.

The judgement was attached as Appendix 1.

The C2 grade recognised the Council had provided assurance and met the requirements

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

in many areas. It also identified areas where improvements could be made. The Regulator had recognised that the Council had understood where it needed to make these improvements and was assured work was already underway to improve these areas.

The Improvement Plan included the following:

- Completing the full Stock Condition Survey;
- Delivering fair and equitable outcomes to tenants;
- Complaint handling; and,
- Performance.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement expressed the need for tenants to hold the Council to account.

The Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) noted the judgements of other local authorities was increasingly available, providing information on what those judgements entailed (C1, C3, C4) and allowing comparisons to take place. A Member agreed. The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement added the judgements were all written slightly differently, similar to what Ofsted provided schools – direct comparisons depended on the wording used.

The Housing Services Manager noted the focus for the Council was data. The staff and teams operating on the ground were doing good work, but data was not being collected and analysed on the scale expected, and this was required if the Council wanted to achieve the highest grade.

The Chair agreed that the Council was not currently proficient at collecting and logging this data. The Board was accepted that additional resources were needed.

Tenants who had participated in the investigation in May 2024 were thanked for their contribution.

Moved by Councillor Jane Yates and seconded by Councillor Ashley Taylor

**RESOLVED** that the judgement attached at Appendix 1 be noted and confirm agreement to the proposed Improvement Plan.

### **HLB16-24/25      UPDATE ON TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

The Tenant Engagement Officer presented the report to the Board.

The report formed the next six-month update on progress against the Action Plan, and updated the Board on the changes required to the Strategy as a result of the Regulator of Social Housing's inspection.

The Action Plan was attached as Appendix 1. The original Objectives and Priorities was attached as Appendix 2. The proposed revised Priorities and Milestones was attached as Appendix 3.

An update on the Tenant Engagement Strategy would be carried out every six months.

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

The Council was in the process of introducing a framework which encouraged tenants to express their opinions. The Tenant Satisfaction Measure survey would ask new tenants to provide contact details (where they expressed interest in further involvement). More informal events like 'Tea with Tenants' would also take place.

To ensure tenant involvement was as inclusive as possible, the Council had recruited a fulltime Tenant Engagement Officer.

The Council were developing the use of the Gov.Notify service, which would allow large scale communication and surveys via email and text.

Leaflets for 'Customer Service Standards' and 'How to make a complaint' had been updated and actively used as part of tenancy sign-ups.

A Tenant raised they had not received the leaflet, had subsequently contacted the Customer Standards and Complaints Office, who then had proceeded to handle, agree with the complaint, and had then asked if there was any other help required. The Tenant was left impressed by the Council's Customer Services on the handling of this issue.

The Tenant Engagement Officer stated all property types had been contacted, with the Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) noting this would enable the Council to analyse the collected data and identify which tenant groups had submitted complaints and on what issues. The Housing Strategy and Development Officer added this was the result of the feedback that followed the inspection; the intent was to take tenant engagement to another level.

The Board was informed that the expansion of communication possible between the Council and tenants, while primarily digital, had produced the unexpected result of all age types responding well to emails and texts; it was not just from younger tenants.

The aim of this expansion was for improved modern interaction and cost efficiencies to take place.

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer highlighted the red text of Objective 3 of Appendix 3, which included: develop and implement a quarterly service performance report (which would be submitted to the Board and the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee twice a year); and produce specific 'Tenant Summary' reports, in conjunction with Tenants, for all core regulatory reports.

Also highlighted was the red text of Objective 4 of Appendix 3, which included the following: expand reporting and evaluation of complaints data, with specific emphasis on trend analysis.

The Board briefly discussed the need for the data to be collected, analysed, and for the Council's performance to be compared with other local authorities.

Moed by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Janet Tait

**RESOLVED** that: 1) progress against the action plan, as stated, is reviewed and tenants provide feedback on current activity; and,

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

- 2) members of the Board review the proposed amendments to the Strategy Objectives in appendix 3 and confirm which additions/amendments are to be approved.

### **HLB17-24/25      TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES 2024/25**

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer presented the report to the Board.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) were introduced by the UK National Government in April 2023. They were designed to monitor landlords in providing quality homes and services, and to identify improvements.

Officers had completed a review of the methodology used in 2023/24, evaluating the response rate and quality of the data. They had also adapted additional questions asked by the Council.

Data was being gathered for 2024/25 via email, text and post. With email the first point of contact, the cost of delivering the survey had reduced.

There was a need to match the same number of respondents as the previous year.

Attached as Appendix 1 was the Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Perception Measures 2024/25. Attached as Appendix 2 was the Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Management Information 2024/25.

Prompted by the Chair, the Housing Strategy and Development Officer explained the weighted and unweighted data to the Board. Unweighted was the raw data received, while weighted used a specific calculation to allow the data to better reflect the general tenant population – not all demographics had submitted responses in the previous year, hence the need for weighted data sets to better reflect the Council's performance.

To improve the data further, the housing type and geographic location of properties would also be collected.

The Council had an overall favourable satisfaction level when compared with other providers.

A Member noted in the 2023/24 results that Bolsover Town had a lower satisfaction rate when compared with the rest of the District. The Housing Strategy and Development Officer stated the response for 2024/25 from South Normanton had been limited to date, unbalancing the District's data; Members from the area would be informed to try and help drive up participation.

To a question on how many responses were required to provide the data that would better reflect the District, the Housing Strategy and Development Officer stated there had been 1400-1500 responses received in the whole stock survey of 2021 out of approximately 5000 households contacted. The first Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) survey of 2023/24 had surveyed 50% of the tenant population, securing 608 responses (of which 547 were valid). With the intention to contact all tenants this year, it was hoped that 2023/24's figure should be matched and surpassed; a response rate of 20-30% was more than acceptable.

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

To a question on incentivising tenants to respond, the Housing Strategy and Development Officer explained in 2023/24 a shopping voucher had been provided to a random winner in each batch of responses collected. This would be repeated for 2024/25.

It was noted the TSM Code TP12, “satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling anti-social behaviour”, was multifaceted and difficult for tenants to respond to. The Housing Strategy and Development Officer agreed, stating the question was mandatory but poorly written, with no feeder question provided to filter out satisfaction from those tenants actually using that service element.

Many ‘don’t know’ answers were recorded but not included in the data, resulting in only ‘satisfied’ or ‘dissatisfied’ answers shaping and negatively affecting the result.

A Tenant felt the question on the handling of anti-social behaviour could be unfair, as some may regard children playing outside as anti-social behaviour.

To a question on if the Council followed up on those tenants who had responded that they did not feel safe in the home, the Housing Strategy and Development Officer stated the responses were anonymised and only those who had answered the supplementary questions, and who wished to be contacted, could be contacted.

One final task in relation to the 2023/24 data was to design and launch a tenant version of the final outcomes. Examples were presented for Tenants to consider, with the aim of agreeing a final concept for how the Council presented the data.

The Board discussed what would be most suitable to inform tenants on the Council’s results and came to a decision.

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Ashley Taylor

**RESOLVED** that: 1) the performance documented in the attached reports is reviewed and acknowledged; and,

- 2) members of the Board review the example options, as presented in the meeting, for a tenant version of the 2023/24 data, and agree a format to be used moving forward.

### **HLB18-24/25      HOUSING COMPLAINTS - QUARTER 2 2024/25**

The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer presented the report to the Board.

The report provided information on the Council’s performance in relation to Customer Service, Standards, Compliments, Comments and Complaints on behalf of Housing and Repairs for 1<sup>st</sup> July 2024 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2024 (Quarter 2 2024/25).

The information provided included:

- 35 Compliments (a chart and breakdown of the data was provided in the report);
- 2 Written Comments (one for the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Team, one for the Housing Allocations Team);
- 0 MP Enquiries (a new MP was elected during the General Election July 2024);

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

- 35 Stage One Complaints (100% responded to within the required 10 working days at time of writing the report – a chart and breakdown of the data was provided);
- 6 Stage Two Complaints (100% responded to within the required 20 working days at time of writing the report – a chart and breakdown of the data was provided);
- 0 Housing Ombudsman Complaints had been reviewed;
- 2 Local Government Ombudsman Complaints had been reviewed (one related to Housing Allocations, one to Housing Repairs and Maintenance. The Council had provided information and evidence into both Complaints – it was concluded there would be no investigation into either due to ‘insufficient evidence of fault causing injustice’).

Following Complaints, service improvements included:

1. The Dragonfly Repairs Team had implemented a fully automated system for the fire alarm and CO2 detector dates (to ensure none could go out of date);
2. The Dragonfly Repairs Team had implemented a measure to inform the Council if a Contractor could not meet their contracted hours deadline;
3. The Central Control Operative would clarify any similar circumstances with their line Manager (prior to giving a response);
4. The Careline Team had informed Support Workers to contact 111 to seek further advice to reassure service users the correct course of action was being taken;
5. The Dragonfly Repairs Team would ensure Contractors used base sheets for glass.

The Council would review the data to explore themes and discuss improvements which may not have been reported.

The Council’s tenants were found to be more likely to submit a Compliment, Comment and/or Complaint than residents.

The report provided a direct comparison of the Quarter 2 2024/25 data with that of Quarter 1 2024/25. It was noted with Stage 1 and Stage 2 Complaints, there had been a small increase for both in that time.

Examples of Comments and Complaints were provided in the report.

### **HLB19-24/25      DRAFT HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24**

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement presented the report to the Board.

The Regulator for Social Housing had updated the Consumer Standards with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. The Tenancy, Influence and Accountability Standard, which specified the Council’s duties with regards performance information, stated the Council had to “*collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord’s performance in delivering landlord services.*”

This information had to then be published annually in compliance with the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). This had been achieved, and the publication of a tenant friendly version of the Perception Survey Results was in process.

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

The Council also needed to publish complaint performance.

It was intensioned that a Housing Annual Report 2023/24 would be produced, and the Board had confirmed at the previous meeting the format and content that Tenants wanted to see included.

The draft Housing Annual Report 2023-24 was attached as Appendix 1.

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Jane Yates

**RESOLVED** that members of the group review the draft Housing Annual Report 2023/24 and provide comment prior to this being published in the November 2024 Newsletter.

### HLB20-24/25 CURRENT SERVICE PERFORMANCE

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement presented the report to the Board.

In early 2024, the Council had launched its new Council Plan, "The Future 2024 – 2028". This described the key role the Council played in supporting the District, through the provision and delivery of key services that were essential to everyday life.

The plan outlined four main aims:

- Customers – providing excellent and accessible services;
- Economy – drive growth, promote the District, and be business and visitor friendly;
- Environment – protect the quality of life for residents and businesses, meet environmental challenges, and enhance biodiversity; and,
- Housing – deliver social and private sector housing growth.

The Housing Service of the Council had developed a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that showed how they were contributing to the Council's Ambitions. A summary of Quarter 1 2024/25 and Quarter 2 2024/25 KPIs was attached as Appendix 1.

The intention of the report was for the Board to agree a suite of 10-12 KPIs, these be reported quarterly to the wider tenant base, and that the Board review examples of a quarterly performance poster.

The Board discussed what topics they would like to see, with a Member stating a mixture of what the Council was successful with and what it was not would be appropriate.

Moved by Councillor Sandra Peake and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

**RESOLVED** that: 1) the performance documented in the attached report is reviewed and acknowledged;

- 2) members of the Board agree to a suite of 10-12 key performance measures which are reported quarterly to the wider tenant base;
- 3) the members of the Board review example options for a quarterly performance poster, to agree a format to be used moving forward.

## **HOUSING LIAISON BOARD**

### **HLB21-24/25 STOCK CONDITION SURVEY - VERBAL UPDATE**

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement provided a verbal update on the Council's Stock Condition Survey to the Board.

On the day before the meeting, Savills had carried out 2,602 property inspections in 8 weeks.

A Tenant requested that their experience of the inspection by Savills be noted.

Having failed to attend the original appointment, the Savills officer proceeded to take many photographs. While this would have been for items such as radiator valves and security locks, it also included the image capture of many personal possessions on windowsills and in cupboards.

If there had subsequently been a burglary, the Tenant would have been asked by the police and insurers who was likely responsible/had visited recently, and the Tenant would have had to answer Savills on behalf of the Council.

The Tenant maintained the feeling of discomfort on this issue.

A discussion was held on why the photographs would have been taken (to ensure Council properties were appropriately safe and up to standard – primarily the structure and exterior, but also potential hazards).

To provide context, the Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) stated the Stock Condition Survey would provide 132 lines of data and an Energy Performance Certificate for every property. However, the photographs taken should have been properly explained.

Another Tenant stated they had experienced a professional and courteous inspection from their young Savills officer. The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement added the Council had received compliments from the majority of inspections.

It was agreed the Council would review the photographs to determine if more care could have been taken to avoid the image capture of the Tenant's personal possessions.

The other Tenants were asked, after they had received their own inspections, to notify the Council and share their experience.

### **HLB22-24/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The Board agreed the next two meetings of 2024/25 would take place in Committee Room 1, The Arc, Clowne on the following dates and times:

- Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> January 2025, at 14:00 hours; and,
- Tuesday, 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025, at 10:30 hours.

The meeting concluded at 12:22 hours.