

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 Monday, 20th January 2025 at 14:00 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Janet Tait in the Chair

Councillors Ashley Taylor (Chair from HLB30-24/25), Rita Turner and Jane Yates.

Tenants:- Mrs. Kathleen Blair (Substitute), Mr. Steven Bramley, Mrs. Heather Fretwell (Substitute), Mrs. Janice Payne and Mrs. Doreen Potts.

Officers:- Lesley Botham (Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager), Jane Calladine (Tenant Engagement Officer), Andy Clarke (Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) – Dragonfly Management), Victoria Dawson (Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement), Gemma Turner (Customer Advisor and Complaints Admin), 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).

HLB23-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed those in attendance and wished everyone a Happy New Year.

It was noted that Mrs. Catherine Morley was no longer able to attend meetings and so had stepped away from the Board – Ms. Jackie Taylor had agreed to become a full member of the Board.

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillor Sandra Peake, Mrs. Angela Sharpe and Ms. Jackie Taylor.

HLB24-24/25 MINUTES

Moved by Councillor Jane Yates and seconded by Victoria Dawson

RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of the Housing Liaison Board held on 22nd October 2024 be approved as a true and correct record.

HLB25-24/25 REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING - IMPROVEMENT PLAN

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

The report summarised the progress made following the C2 Grading by the Regulator of Social Housing in 2024 (C1 being the highest achievable level, C4 the lowest) as addressed in detail at the previous meeting.

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The C2 Grade recognised the Council had provided assurance and had met the consumer standards in many areas, but also identified areas where improvement was needed.

Improvements included;

- The Safety & Quality Standard – Stock Quality (completing the full Stock Condition Survey and using this data to meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standards – this stood at 82%, with the aim for 90% mid-February 2025 and 100% by the end of 2025);
- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – Fairness and Respect (delivering fair and equitable outcomes to tenants);
- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – Complaint Handling (need to ensure the complaint process was accessible for all);
- The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard – Performance (it was important that tenants could hold the Council to account and to do that information needed to be published in an accessible way and multiple locations).

A summary of the progress made on the Improvements was attached at Appendix 1.

For the tenant survey, reasonable adjustments would be made (e.g., large font for those with reduced vision).

To a question on the survey, the Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement stated Customer Services was assisting in the delivery and in conjunction the Council would include a summary of work ongoing / completed. It was noted there was a need to ensure the Council's performance was accessible so tenants could challenge performance where required.

More performance data and information on complaints compliance would also be published in the future (this data would be discussed further into the meeting, but primarily would be used to address identified shortcomings).

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement noted complaints against the Council were low when compared with other similar local authorities – this was either good news and that the Council was performing very well, or tenants were currently unable to easily make contact.

The Council had attended regular meetings with the Regulators to discuss progress made against the action plan. These meetings had been held on 16th October 2024, 3rd December 2024, and a further meeting would be held on 27th January 2025. This latter meeting would be attended by the Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement, the Housing Services Manager, and the Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance).

The Housing Services Manager noted the next stage was how the Council would analyse the data collected, as there were currently not enough resources to do this. The Inspectors of the Regulator of Social Housing had informed the Council it would not be able to improve and achieve a C1 Grading without knowing where possible shortcomings existed.

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The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement confirmed to the Chair that dedicated staff would be recruited to analyse this and future data.

Moved by Councillor Janet Tait and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOVLED that the Board note the judgement in Appendix 1 and confirm agreement to the proposed Improvements.

HLB26-24/25 TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES 2024/25

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer presented the report on Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) 2024/25 to the Board.

As reported at the previous meeting, the Council was undertaking the second year of data collection and the 2024/25 survey was underway.

The initial mailout was 1st October to 27th October 2024. Key points to note after this mailout included:

- 3,179 emails, 2,233 texts and 794 letters had been circulated (in the previous year, contact had been by post with emails used as reminders);
- 394 responses had been received as of 5th November 2024 (the Council ideally needed around 550, as set out by the Regulator);
- Current responses did not mirror the stock profile with 57.4% from Housing for older people, 40.1% from General Needs and 2.5% from Sheltered. The stock profile at the end of March 2024 was General needs (53%), Housing for older people (43%) and Sheltered Housing (4%). A higher response rate from General Needs and Sheltered was needed;
- The largest number of responses were from single tenants – 42.5%;
- There was limited interest in downsizing;
- There was a significantly higher response from tenants in Clowne, with the other three areas more equal (Clowne had the highest concentration of Council properties, so to be expected). The lowest response at the end of the initial mailout was South Normanton;
- Over 60% of respondents were female; and,
- Over 66% of respondents were 65+.

An update on satisfaction levels so far received from returned surveys was attached at Appendix 1.

Of the 12 TSMs listed, 10 were above the national average for 2023/24 – the percentages may change as the Council collected the necessary level of responses as required by the Regulator (approximately 550 – the required figure was calculated based on the stock held on 31st March).

It was noted, due to the Council gathering this data differently for 2024/25, the combination of methods used had potentially impacted the level of tenant satisfaction. Responses received by post tended to provide higher levels of satisfaction than other methods (according to the Regulator's national analysis) – as such, due to the increased use of emails and texts, tenant satisfaction would likely be lower than 2023/24.

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The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement added, with post utilised in 2023/24, only 50% of tenants had been contacted due to cost. For 2024/25, all tenants had been contacted.

A Tenant asked, of the two TSMs below national average, were they lower than 2023/24. The Housing Strategy and Development Officer explained they were currently lower, but reiterated the current data still required more responses to be reflective of tenant experiences – it was not yet a true comparison.

Management Information for the first three quarters was attached at Appendix 2.

The Board were informed some data had been delayed when the reports were produced. It was noted, for NM01 (1), “*Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord – Number of anti-social behaviour cases per 1,000 homes*”, the actual figure was 52.5 for Quarter 3 2024/25, and for NM01 (2), “*Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord – Number of anti-social behaviour cases that involve hate incidents per 1,000 homes*”, the figure was 1.2 for the same period.

To a question on what water checks were being made, the Housing Strategy and Development Officer explained this was for Legionella and these checks were taking place in communal water supplies.

To a question on what definition of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) was being used, the Housing Services Manager explained the general definition for ASB was a negative act that involved 1-2 people outside of a household. However, the definition was overall vague and perceptions of ASB could be varying (poor car parking or acts of littering could be seen as ASB) – the data could be subjective.

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer added, as noted in previous meetings, the question asked in the survey, as required by the Regulator, was likely in need of being rephrased (this was not in the Council’s control).

A Tenant added the perception of an ASB act being appropriately handled could also be different between tenants. A Tenant agreed, providing an extreme example of ASB to the Board – the matter was resolved when the Council had replaced windows and installed CCTV. Another Tenant added dogs barking at high visibility jackets was an example of something that some might also term ASB.

The Board were informed ASB was now being handled by a different department at the Council with a new Assistant Director recently recruited.

To a question on the revision of the above figures (NM01 (1) and NM01 (2)), the Housing Strategy and Development Officer explained the Community Safety and Enforcement Manager had been contacted to clarify the increase in the rate of cases. One reason offered for the change was the reclassification and recording of ASB data (the Council had reviewed its approach to ensure it was in line with police recording – consequently more cases were now being recorded).

The first reminder was completed from 4th December to 29th December 2024, with 1,919 emails sent. These was sent to General Needs properties in order to create a more balanced response.

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Key points to note at this stage were:

- The reminder round had improved response numbers, but the Council still needed more responses from General Needs Housing (an improved response rate from Independent Living Scheme tenants for 2024 was due to visits by the Tenant Engagement Officer);
- The largest number of responses were from single tenants (over 75% of those were 65+);
- There was limited interest in downsizing;
- Responses were not equal across the four contact centre areas, with a higher response from Clowne and Shirebrook;
- Nearly two thirds of respondents were female;
- Nearly 60% of respondents were 65+; and
- 458 responses had been received as of 6th January 2025.

The Board was advised that the Regulator had now released national analysis of the 2023/24 TSM returns.

It was noted not all large housing providers (landlords with 1,000+ homes) submitted data that was weighted. The Council did have to weight responses, as did 24% of large providers, but this allowed the Council to compare results with these other local authorities.

For the first year of running the survey, 65% of providers used telephone surveys as their main collection method to contact tenants. The Council, in contrast, had used post.

A Tenant asked how many providers submitted and how many responses did the Regulator receive. The Housing Strategy and Development Officer stated this information was in the main report and informed post meeting that the analysis was based on 360 submissions from large landlords (over 1000 homes). Landlords had completed over 480,000 surveys, so around one in ten households of social housing owned by registered landlords fed into the 2023/24 set of TSMs.

A Table was attached at Appendix 3 which showed the Council's tenant satisfaction performance against the national average. Of the 22 measures, 4 were broken down into 2 parts. The Council had exceeded the national average in 16 and succeeded in part for 2 more measures. 4 of the indicators had calculated a 'rate' for which there was no clear indication of what 'good' performance looked like – the Council had assumed low was good compared to the national average.

For TSM BS04, "*Water safety checks*", and TSM BS05, "*Lift safety checks*", these had not been on track due to other works taking place – they had subsequently been completed after works had finished in 2024/25.

One of the final tasks that remained in relation to the 2023/24 data was to design and launch a tenant version of the final outcomes. The Board had reviewed examples at the previous meeting, and a final draft for approval was attached at Appendix 4. A further example was handed out at the meeting for the Board's input.

The Board discussed both options. It was decided another example would be produced and presented to most of the Tenants in attendance at another meeting that week for

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their approval – an email was also circulated after the meeting to collect feedback from those unable to attend.

The Chair stated, while the Council's results were high and above the national average, improvements could still be made. The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement noted the Council was also above the local average across Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire, and the Housing Services Manager agreed with the Chair that the Council's aim should always be to achieve 100%.

RESOLVED that: 1) the performance for 2024/25 documented in the attached reports is reviewed and acknowledged;

- 2) The Board review how the Council performed in 2023/24 compared to the national average and advise of any action to be taken; and,
- 3) The Board review the draft tenant version of the 2023/24 data, and agree the final format.

HLB27-24/25 CUSTOMER SERVICE COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS AND STANDARDS - REPORT FOR HOUSING & REPAIRS QUARTER 3 1ST OCTOBER 2024 TO 31ST DECEMBER 2024

The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager informed the Board that Customer Services was working closely with the Council's Housing and Enforcement team to ensure the Council met the new regulations and changing Ombudsman's code.

A meeting had been held in the previous week to accomplish this, with a further meeting in the following week. Due to the increase in work, the recruitment of staff had taken place and if the Customer Standards and Complaints Officer was unavailable to attend future Board meetings, the Customer Advisor and Complaints Admin would be.

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

Some customer contacts / complaints received during Q3 2024/25 covered more than one service area; when analysing the data, these did not mirror the actual volume of contacts received.

30 Compliments were received during Quarter 3 2024/25. When analysing Compliments received, Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) had received the most, followed by Housing Options and then Housing Allocations.

It was noted, as also shown in the Q1 and Q2 data of 2024/25, that whilst repairs and maintenance had featured heavily as a core reason for complaint, data showed that a tenant's personal experience of the service appeared to influence their bias in response to the Council – there were positives to be taken from the service delivered, as well as areas identified for improvement.

There was 1 written comment received for Quarter 3 2024/25, with 3 M.P. Enquiries for the same period.

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19 Stage 1 Complaints were received during Quarter 3 2024/25, with the largest proportion related to Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance). Themes included lack of action taken by the Council, communication issues and the customer being unhappy with the action taken / standard of the repair.

6 Stage 2 Complaints were received during Quarter 3 2024/25, with the largest proportion related to Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance). Themes could not be identified due to the varying differences of issues recorded.

Neither the Housing Ombudsman nor the Local Government Ombudsman reviewed any complaints during Quarter 3 2024/25.

During Quarter 3 2024/25, the following service improvements had been implemented as a consequence of complaints:

1. Amended the gas safety check letter to advise that both gas and electric would need to be switched on and amended the electrical safety check letter to advise that electric would need to be switched off for a short period;
2. The Repairs system had been updated to ensure that all jobs were locked to a date and the specific Operative;
3. The Repairs Team must double check the appliance type in properties to ensure the correct Operatives and tools were taken;
4. The Gas Engineer had been spoken with regarding the importance of informing the Office of any further works required in the future;
5. The Repairs Operative in question would be given further training procedures and expectations for customer services and working practices; and,
6. The Housing Options Team would ensure that any landlord was contacted with updates / information if grants could not be progressed.

The next Service Review for the Housing Department and Dragonfly was scheduled for April 2025.

Most compliments were made via telephone, followed by email for Quarter 3 2024/25. The one comment made was by email. Most Stage 1 Complaints were made via telephone, followed by email then self-service. Stage 2 Complaints were equally made via telephone and email.

Tenants made most reports compared to residents in Quarter 3 2024/25.

There had been a large decrease in Stage 1 Complaints from Q2 to Q3 2024/25, and a small decrease in Compliments. In Q1 and Q2 2024/25, Stage 1 Complaints were comparative whereas in Q2 and Q3 2024/25 Compliments were comparative. Comments had remained low throughout Q1 to Q3 2024/25, and the number of Stage 2 Complaints had remained similar.

The report provided more detail on Compliments, Comments and Complaints, along with the Council services in receipt of them.

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The Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) noted if trends were identified, improvements would follow.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement noted that with Complaints so low, it was important to learn who was making them. Additionally, as previously mentioned, it was theorised tenants were either struggling to submit Complaints, were choosing not to submit Complaints, or the Council was performing well and so there was no Complaint to submit.

However, if there were barriers that prevented tenants from submitting Complaints, it was important to address so the Council could respond to issues appropriately.

RESOLVED that the Board review the overall performance on Compliments, Comments and Complaints handling performance as detailed in the report.

The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager, the Customer Standards and Complaints Officer, and the Customer Advisor and Complaints Admin left the meeting at 15:19 hours.

HLB28-24/25 HOUSING KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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

The Council's Housing Management team was producing a significant amount of performance related information, whether this be the Complaints information, the Tenant Satisfaction Measures or the Council's own Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

The Housing Service had developed a number of KPIs that showed how contributions were being made to the Council's Ambitions. A summary of current performance was attached at Appendix 1.

Only one KPI was slightly off target ("*Current tenants arrears as a % of rent due in the financial year*").

The Council's Housing Management team was producing a significant amount of performance related information.

At the Board's previous meeting, Tenants had agreed to a minimum set of indicators that they would like to see included as part of a quarterly report to the Council's tenants. A draft had been produced for Members to consider. The Council envisaged this would be a one sided poster and be put up in all contact centres and on the Council's website.

It was envisaged the poster would also be produced quarterly.

The Board discussed what options would be most suitable for the poster, including:

- Simplified language;
- The retention of the use of percentages;
- The use of arrows to help define trends;
- The amount of rent collected and in arrears; and,

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- The use of colour (which matched the Tenant Engagement Strategy).

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

- 2) the Board review the draft quarterly performance poster to be used in the Contact Centres/on the website, and agree the final version.

HLB29-24/25 STOCK CONDITION SURVEY - VERBAL UPDATE

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

HLB30-24/25 COMPLIANCE POLICES

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

The Safety and Quality Standard required landlords to provide good quality homes and landlord services to tenants. The main compliance areas for housing were:

- Fire safety: Ensuring properties are safe from fire;
- Gas safety: Ensuring properties are safe from gas;
- Electrical safety: Ensuring properties are safe from electrical hazards;
- Lift safety: Ensuring lifts are safe to use;
- Asbestos management: Ensuring properties are safe from asbestos;
- Legionella: Ensuring properties are safe from legionella bacteria.

The Council reported on the compliance of all the above areas as part of the annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures, and quarterly updates were provided to the Board.

The produced Gas and Heating Compliance Policy 2025-2028 was attached at Appendix 1. The produced Electrical Safety Policy 2025-2028 was attached at Appendix 2.

To a question on the checks and maintenance of a multi-fuel cooking stove that had not recently been Council approved, the Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) stated the compliance of such items would be investigated.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement added the Council would intend to incorporate all six policies listed above into a single policy, but the Gas and Heating Compliance Policy and Electrical Safety Policy were of most import to tenants and so were produced.

RESOLVED that the Board note the draft Policies and provided comments for consideration as part of the development of the Policies in advance of formal Executive approval and implementation.

Councillor Janet Tait left the meeting at 15:47 hours.

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Councillor Ashley Taylor in the Chair

HLB31-24/25 HOUSING STRATEGY 2024-2029 - IMPACT ON COUNCIL TENANTS

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

Within the new Strategy 2024-2029, the Council would deliver the corporate priorities relating to Housing as set out in the Council's corporate plan – Bolsover District: The Future. These priorities would be addressed within the new strategy through:

- Priority 1 – Providing Good Quality Housing (this would cover building more council housing and being a decent landlord);
- Priority 2 – Enabling Housing Growth (this would cover all strategic housing growth and working with the East Midlands Combined County Authority in the area);
- Priority 3 – Supporting Vulnerable and Disadvantaged People (this would cover all aspects related to homelessness, supported housing and partnership working to deliver solutions to the District's vulnerable residents. This would also support delivery of one of the Council's 'Customer' priorities – Promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion, and supporting and involving vulnerable and disadvantaged people); and,
- Priority 4 – Maintaining and improving property and housing management standards and ensuring that standards and living conditions in the District contributed towards better health outcomes for all (this would cover all aspects related to the private sector (rented and owner occupier) and partnership working with the Council's colleagues in environmental health and public health, and any work with the East Midlands Combined County Authority in the area).

For Priority 1: the Council was due to complete a Stock Condition Survey by April 2025 (once completed, the Council would move to a rolling annual inspection programme covering 1,000 properties per year); there was a target to build a further 200 homes by March 2028; the Council would meet the Regulator's revised Consumer Standards; increase Council stock through private developers; through the Tenant Engagement Strategy 2023-2026, a wide range of options for tenants to get involved with, to help the Council evaluate delivery of services and make improvements, had been devised; and meet Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) C-Rating where possible for all Council stock.

The Board were also informed of the increase of 1 bed properties and 3 bed bungalows to provide adapted homes for those with specific needs.

Identifying where the Council could improve would also help achieve the desired C1 Grading.

For Priority 3, the Council would: allocate housing to the most vulnerable through the Allocations Policy; support Care Leavers through the revised Allocations Policy for 2024; support Armed Forces personnel through the revised Allocations Policy for 2024; and provide support through the Bolsover Lifeline Services.

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To a question of what defined an 'affordable' property, the Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) informed the Council used the 80% of rent measure to define affordable accommodation.

To a question on the cost to elevate older properties to EPC C-Ratings, the Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) explained, once completed, the Stock Condition Survey would help shape the Council's 30-Year Business Plan – once the data was available, the Council could then investigate the need to elevate properties to EPC C-Ratings.

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer added a new version of the Decent Homes Standard was in production and the Council expected the UK National Government's consultation on this in due course. Once the Stock Condition Survey was completed, the Council would proceed from there.

RESOLVED that the Board note the proposed outline structure of the new strategy and provide comment on the proposals, revised timetable for development and the planned consultation.

HLB32-24/25 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The Board were informed the next meeting of 2024/25 would take place in Committee Room 1, The Arc, Clowne at 10:30 hours on:

- Tuesday, 22nd April 2025.

The Board were further informed the following meetings of 2025/26 would take place in Committee Room 1, The Arc, Clowne at 10:30 hours on:

- Tuesday, 29th July 2025; and,
- Tuesday, 21st October 2025.

HLB33-24/25 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A Tenant asked what the impact of the UK National Government's English Devolution White Paper would be on tenants of the District – an expression of concern on social tenants was widely expressed, as while always in need of improvement, the Council performed well in comparison to other local authorities.

The Chair noted the English Devolution White Paper was seeking unitary councils of around 500,000 residents, which would lead to drastic changes to services and local democracy. However, there was still very little known.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement informed an Item on devolution would be added to the following Board meeting's Agenda for further, appropriate discussion.

The meeting concluded at 16:12 hours.