

## **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, 29<sup>th</sup> July 2025 at 10:30 hours.

### **PRESENT:-**

Members:-

Councillor Phil Smith in the Chair

Councillor Ashely Taylor.

Tenants:- Mrs. Kathleen Blair (Substitute), Mr. Steven Bramley, Mrs. Heather Fretwell (Substitute), and Mrs. Angela Sharpe.

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), Jordan Kyle (Housing Performance Manager), 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).

### **HLB1-25/26      APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Janet Tait and Vicky Waplington, Tenants Mrs. Janice Payne, Mrs. Doreen Potts and Ms. Jackie Taylor, and Deborah Whallett (Housing Services Manager).

### **HLB2-25/26      MINUTES**

Moved by Mr. Steven Bramley and seconded by Councillor Ashley Taylor

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of a meeting of the Housing Liaison Board held on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2025 be approved as a true and correct record.

### **HLB3-25/26      INSPECTION IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

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

The Council was one of the first to be inspected under the new inspection regime and had received a C2 Grading (C1 being the highest achievable, C4 the lowest).

The C2 Grading recognised that the Council had provided assurance, met the Consumer Standards in many areas, and had identified areas where improvement was needed.

A comprehensive Improvement Plan had been devised to show how the Council would drive improvement and demonstrate to the Regulator that weaknesses had been addressed – the Council had met with the Regulator on 5 occasions since inspection,

## **HOUSING LIAISON BOARD**

most recently 17<sup>th</sup> July 2025.

A summary of progress to date on the 4 key areas of improvement was attached at Appendix 1.

92.7% of the Council's housing stock had been surveyed (350 properties had not been inspected).

It was intended for properties to be surveyed every 5 years or via a rolling stock programme – the Executive would be presented both options October 2025.

To identify trends and drive improvement, the Council had established the role of Housing Performance Manager. The Housing Performance Manager was introduced and shared previous knowledge and experience as a Housing Options Officer.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement explained the Tenant Census had been undertaken to establish, amongst other matters, basic information on tenancy household (incl. ages, languages and any disabilities within tenant households).

To a question on future access to properties currently proving challenging (whether deliberate or not), the Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement informed communication with the Council's Legal Team had taken place to agree a process to gain access to every property (especially for the gas checks required annually).

It was noted several of the 350 properties not surveyed had been due to the inflexible arrangements of these households' schedules. For the households which were proving intentionally challenging, injunctions would be utilised.

**RESOLVED** that the Board note comments of the Improvement Plan.

### **HLB4-25/26      TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES**

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

Following the Board's April 2025 meeting, the final Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) figures had gone through internal data checks and had been provided to the Regulator before the deadline 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

Included in the report was a Table that detailed tenant perception satisfaction surveys for 2024/25 in comparison with 2023/24.

For 2023/24, 50% of tenants had been surveyed. For 2024/25, 100% had been surveyed to allow the evidence collected to be more representative.

The rate of complaints had decreased from 2023/24, while the rate of Anti-Social Behaviour cases had increased. 4 out of 5 safety measures had met internal targets, with Gas Safety checks fractionally below target.

Response times for Stage 1 Complaints had improved and had met the internal target. The response times for Stage 2 Complaints were also considered satisfactory (only one

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

complaint was out of timescale by 1 day).

The volume of repairs was comparable with 2023/24 and performance had improved for non-emergency repairs (both repairs targets were met).

2025/26's survey was likely to commence September / October 2025.

A discussion was held on the technicalities of Complaints received. It was agreed to add some wording prior to the complaints section to define the difference between a complaint and a service request, to guide tenants answering the question that they should only answer in relation to formal complaints.

Printed versions of the posters would be provided in the Council's Contact Centres as well as digitally for the information screens.

**RESOLVED** that: 1) the performance for 2024/25 documented in the attached reports is reviewed and acknowledged (Appendices 1 and 2);

2) Tenants acknowledge and approve the Tenant version of the TSM Data attached at Appendix 3;

3) the performance for the Management Information Measures Q1 2025/26 is reviewed and acknowledged (Appendix 4).

### **HLB5-25/26      REPORT FOR HOUSING & REPAIRS QUARTER 1 (1ST APRIL 2025 TO 30TH JUNE 2025)**

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

20 Compliments had been received 1<sup>st</sup> April to 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025 – Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) had received the most Compliments, followed by Housing Options and Community Safety & Enforcement.

Compliments for Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) focussed on the Repairs Operatives who were praised for their work being 'excellent' and 'impeccable', and were reported to be 'friendly', 'pleasant', 'polite', 'courteous' and 'respectful'.

Whilst Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) Complaints had featured heavily for 2024/25, a tenant's personal experience of the service appeared to influence their bias in their response to the Council.

5 Comments had been received in the same period – 100% were acknowledged and passed to their respective department within the target time of 5 working days.

Most Comments received were for Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance). The only theme found was in relation to communication from the Repairs Team.

2 M.P. Enquires had been received in the same period. It was believed information provided to the M.P.'s Office could have led to a reduction in M.P. Enquiries overall as constituents were being appropriately advised of the action required (and dealt with) through other Council processes (i.e. as a service request / first enquiry).

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

Both M.P. Enquiries regarded Housing Allocations.

25 Stage 1 Complaints were recorded in the same period, with 100% responded to within the Council's customer standard and the Housing Ombudsman Code of 10 working days. Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) had received the most Stage 1 complaints, followed by Tenancy Management then Property Services.

There was a range of reasons Complaints had been made about Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance). Themes included communication issues, conduct of officers, and a perceived lack of action.

Tenancy Management complaints were mostly related to actions taken by officers such as the rent arrears process. All Complaints regarding Property Services were low and the only theme derived was a lack of / poor communication.

4 Stage 2 Complaints were recorded in the same period, with all responded to within the Council's customer service standard and the Housing Ombudsman Code of 20 working days (up to the point of the writing of the report). There were still 2 outstanding Stage 2 Complaints, both still within timescales.

The largest proportion related to Tenancy Management, though no theme could be identified as all Stage 2 Complaints related to varying issues.

The Housing Ombudsman (HO) and Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) had reviewed 1 Complaint during this period – a decision had not yet been made regarding this case.

Service improvements included:

- 1) The Managing Building Surveyor / Contract Administrator had confirmed they would review the process of sending letters out with the contractor;
- 2) Debtors would look at changing their system so that a bailiff letter was not triggered for debts under a certain value;
- 3) Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) had increased their presence on site to ensure standards were being maintained by Contractor Operatives;
- 4) New processes had been agreed for future contractors to monitor and respond to emails from the start of mobilisation;
- 5) A new process had been put in place for the scheduling of works which did not rely on jobs being sent back to the system before rescheduling was completed – this should prevent jobs being missed in the future; and,
- 6) The Council would check all out-of-hours repairs had been completed the following morning or ensure these were correctly logged to a Contractor.

The Council would continue reviewing the data at the Department Service Reviews, to explore themes and discuss any improvements which might not have been reported.

When analysing how customers contacted the Council to pass on a Compliment, Comment or Complaint, nearly all Compliments and Comments were made via telephone. Stage 1 Complaints were mostly made via telephone (followed by self-service) and stage 2 Complaints were equally made between telephone and email.

## **HOUSING LIAISON BOARD**

When analysing the data on who was making reports to the Council for Compliments, Comments, M.P. Enquiries and Complaints, it was found that Tenants had submitted the most reports when compared to residents.

When compared to Q1 2024/25, there proved a similar number of Compliments and Stage 2 Complaints received in Q1 2025/26, though Comments had slightly increased from Q1 2024/25.

For both Q1 2024/25 and Q1 2025/26, Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) had received the most Compliments and Stage 1 Complaints.

Examples of Compliments and Complaints were detailed in the report.

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

### **HLB6-25/26      ANNUAL COMPLAINT HANDLING AND SERVICE IMPROVEMENT REPORT 2024/25**

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer provided a verbal update and copies of the draft report to the Board.

The Housing Ombudsman Service's (HOS) Complaint Handling Code (the 'Code') had become statutory from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024, and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 placed a legal duty on the HOS to monitor social housing landlords' compliance with the Code.

Section 8 of the Code required landlords to produce an annual performance report which provided analysis of the Compliments, Comments and Complaints received by the Council during 2024/25.

The draft report presented to the Board sought to provide information on the performance of the Council's handling of Complaints in terms of the volume and timeliness of the responses. In addition, the report sought to identify themes, trends, and lessons learnt that drove service improvements.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement noted that from the 18,000 repairs carried out, the few numbers of Complaints received could be taken as respectable. The Chair and a Tenant believed the percentage of Complaints received out of the repairs made should be published to highlight the good work being achieved.

**RESOVLED** that the draft annual report be noted.

### **HLB7-25/26      CURRENT SERVICE PERFORMANCE**

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

The Council's Plan "The Future 2024 - 2028" had outlined the provision and delivery of essential key services. The following 4 main aims were:

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

- 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 Council's Housing Service had developed a number of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that showed its contribution to these ambitions. Attached at Appendix 1 was a summary of current performance for 2025-26.

A significant amount of performance related information (Complaints information, the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, the Council's own KPIs, etc.) were produced by the Council's Housing Management Team – the Council wanted to ensure tenants were provided with useful and informative data to ensure accountability.

Attached at Appendix 2 was the Q1 2025/26 performance poster for circulation in the Council's Contact Centres.

Following the recent refresh of the Council's website, a specific page for performance information had now been developed. Moving forward, the quarterly performance posters would be included in the Bolsover Homes Newsletter 'Tenant Participation'.

To a question on KPI.07, "Homelessness successful relief cases", the Housing Performance Manager informed it related to private tenants either remaining in their current properties following receivership of a Section 21 Eviction Notice or them moving into a Council property before officially being listed as homeless.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement informed more private landlords were leaving the sector, though the Council's performance in response to this was satisfactory.

The Chair noted the income absent from rent arrears could stretch back 10+ years – the Council was performing admirably with regards the current circumstances of the private rental sector.

The Chair also noted that the 'Average time taken to re-let properties' had been omitted pending formal discussion with tenants today. The Chair noted that this combined figure could potentially be misleading to tenants as there was no distinction between the different types of void (vacant) properties.

It was noted that there were 3 different types of voids that could be presented:

- Major repair voids;
- Standard voids; and,
- Management voids.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the re-let times would be presented for the 3 void types listed above and that this information would be positioned at the bottom of the poster in a larger section. The full definitions for the 3 void types would be agreed by officers at Housing Stock Management Group September 2025. To accommodate the extra information, it was agreed to remove the rent arrears figures and just keep rent

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

collected.

The Board was informed the number of voids included new-build units that had yet to be moved into (for the first time). A Tenant stated the number of empty properties should not include the new-builds recently completed until the first tenant had successfully moved in. The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement added the loss of rent and the fact the Council had to pay Council Tax for these empty properties was not ideal.

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

2) the quarterly performance poster be amended as per discussion and agreement with tenants.

### **HLB8-25/26      HOUSING DAMP AND MOULD POLICY**

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

The Board was informed the Damp and Mould Policy (the 'Policy') could not be provided to it before the Executive meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025 (attached at Appendix 1). The Executive had approved the Policy at that meeting.

The Council, as a landlord, was responsible for maintaining the properties it owned and managed them in line with the relevant regulations, legislation and guidance. This included keeping tenants' homes safe from hazards under the Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) under the Housing Act 2004 – one of those identified hazards was damp and mould.

Awaab's Law, introduced by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, would come into force for the social housing sector from October 2025 (with a phased implementation approach).

The key aim of the Policy was to raise awareness of the issues surrounding damp and the Council's tenanted properties. The Policy would additionally:

- Provide a clear framework for identifying, reporting, and addressing damp and mould issues;
- Ensure timely and effective responses to reports of damp and mould, and ensure that repairs to alleviate damp (for example work to guttering and drains, replacing tiles, repairing leaks to pipework, etc.) were carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible to minimise impact on the health of the resident and any damage to the structure, fixtures and fittings of the property;
- Promote tenant awareness and provide access to information in a variety of formats, and access to support to help residents prevent and reduce risks of damp and mould in their homes;
- Ensure all tenants were treated in a fair, respectful, empathetic and consistent way; and,
- Comply with relevant legislation and regulatory standards (including the HHSRS).

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

The Council would ensure all resident-facing housing officers and operatives were responsible for spotting instances of damp and mould, reporting and recording information gathered (relevant training would be provided).

The Council would additionally ensure Dragonfly Management (Bolsover) Ltd. staff and subcontractors were also competent to diagnose and remedy damp / mould issues – all submitted reports would be assessed and responded to appropriately

One factor of Awaab's Law was for social landlords to use a person-centred approach and that a hazard did not need to be reported as a Category 1 Level (under HHSRS) where a particular tenant was at greater risk from hazardous conditions – it was imperative to know who was residing and what their vulnerabilities were (if any).

**RESOLVED** that members of the Board note the Policy.

### HLB9-25/26      HOUSING SERVICE STANDARDS

The Tenant Engagement Officer presented the report to the Board.

The Regulator for Social Housing Consumer Standards had been updated (with effect) from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard stated the following:

*“1.4.1 Registered providers must communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants [could] use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account”; and,*

*“2.3.1 Registered providers must provide tenants with accessible information about the[...] available landlord services, how to access those services, and the standards of service tenants [could] expect”.*

The Council wanted to ensure tenants were provided with information to hold the Council to account – tenants could only do that when provided with a set of service standards and if they knew the level of service to expect.

Attached at Appendix 1 was the Customer Service Standard – it was intended to introduce a similar set of service standards for all Housing services.

Details of the possible Housing Service Standards was attached at Appendix 2.

**RESOLVED** that the Board note the contents of the report and confirm agreement to introducing Housing service standards.

### HLB10-25/26      CHALLENGE & CHANGE GROUP UPDATE

The Tenant Engagement Officer presented the report to the Board.

As part of the Tenant Engagement Strategy, one of the ways in which tenants could engage with the Council was via the Challenge and Change Group (the 'Group').



## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

The Group delivered the scrutiny function of the Tenant Engagement and Governance Structure (attached at Appendix 1).

The Group had completed a review of the void process in 2024. At its meeting April 2025, the Board had been presented with the Void Process Review Monitoring Action Plan. One action was to carry out site visits to monitor completion of works and ensure the lettable standard was being met – these site visits had taken place 12<sup>th</sup> June 2025.

7 Tenants had attended site visits to: 3 void properties; 2 standard voids; and 1 refurbished flat. Tenants had agreed on the following:

- The standard of voids had improved;
- The lettable standard was being met;
- The 2 standard voids were eligible for full redecoration allowance; and,
- The standard of finish was of a “typical Council standard”.

The Ground Maintenance Review had taken place June 2024 – March 2025 (across 6 meetings and 1 day of site visits).

Tenants had chosen to review Grounds Maintenance (provided by Streetscene) due to concerns on the quality of the service, and whether void gardens were being maintained (to the required standard) and the negative impact non-maintenance could have on neighbourhoods.

A site visit to 3 new build schemes, 2 existing estates with communal open spaces, and 2 void properties were made to assess the standard of Grounds Maintenance.

Tenants had looked at the different areas of Ground Maintenance, reviewed work schedules, and sought clarification on how the service adjusted when impacted by weather.

Tenants had agreed recommendations across 4 areas:

- Clarification of responsibilities for both tenants and the Council;
- Clarification of the current maintenance programme and potential factors which could impact planned works;
- Evaluation of the quality of maintenance works and how this was assessed by the service; and,
- Analysis of Complaints related to Grounds Maintenance and action taken.

The final report from the review for the Board's attention was attached at Appendix 2.

The Tenant Engagement Officer circulated the Review of Grounds Maintenance on Council Estates Action Plan (attached appendix 3).

The Board was informed the next review would be on Anti-Social Behaviour – a review scope would be discussed at the Group's next meeting.

**RESOVLED** that the Board note the recommendations of the Bolsover Tenants Challenge and Change Group in relation to the site visits for the voids review and the Grounds Maintenance on Council Estates.

## **HOUSING LIAISON BOARD**

### **HLB11-25/26      BOLSOVER HOMES NEWSLETTER**

The Tenant Engagement Officer provided a verbal update on the Bolsover Homes Newsletter (the 'Newsletter') to the Board.

Due to the number of items expected for the next issue, the Newsletter would likely prove substantial – performance information, policies updates, advice on managing damp and mould would be some of the topics included.

While discussing the look of the newsletter, the use of all angled images on the front page of the Complaints report was questioned. Officers agreed to speak with the Communications Team and source revised images / redesign the front cover.

*Mrs. Heather Fretwell left the meeting at 12:28 hours.*

The Chair noted advice on managing damp and mould would be appropriate. A Member added information on scams and fraud might also prove useful, as might the education of online connected doorbell cameras.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement agreed the newsletter would prove substantial but contain high-quality, important content.

*The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer left the meeting at 12:31 hours.*

A Tenant noted the use of photos of only new-build properties in publications was likely not a true reflection of all Council units. The Tenant Engagement Officer stated more general photos could be utilised in future.

All agreed to a redesign of the front cover following feedback from a tenant. The Tenant Engagement Officer would work with the Communications Team on some examples which could be circulated for comment. All agreed a more 'magazine style' approach with snippets / titles identifying main articles would capture readers' attentions.

### **HLB12-25/26      HOUSING SECTOR UPDATE**

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

Following the formation of the Electrical Safety in Social Rented Homes Working Group in 2021, a consultation in summer 2022 had invited views on proposals to introduce mandatory checks for electrical installation, bringing parity with the private rented sector and requiring mandatory checks of appliances provided by social landlords.

On 25<sup>th</sup> June 2025, the UK Government had issued a response to the consultation with the conclusion being there would be: mandatory electrical safety checks at least every 5 years in the social rented sector; and that the requirement of a copy of the Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) report be issued to social tenants within 28 days (or to any new tenant before they occupied the property).

A copy of the EICR report could be issued to the tenant in person, by post or electronically.

## HOUSING LIAISON BOARD

*Mrs. Heather Fretwell returned to the meeting at 12:33 hours.*

It was noted the EICR reports were technical in nature with potential confusion for tenants to understand. Landlords were encouraged to provide a summary sheet or cover letter alongside the report which would explain the contents of EICR reports to tenants.

*The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer returned to the meeting at 12:34 hours.*

It was proposed the required changes would commence November 2025 for new tenancies and May 2026 for existing tenancies. The Council would work towards achieving an EICR every 5 years by the end of the 2025/26 financial year.

A brief discussion was held on tenants being able to decorate their homes themselves, though it was noted those typically residing in social housing might still require support.

**RESOLVED** that the Board note the update.

### **HLB13-25/26      DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

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

- Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> October 2025.

The Board were further informed of the other meetings of 2025/26, which would take place at the same time and location on:

- Tuesday, 27<sup>th</sup> January 2026; and,
- Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2026.

The meeting concluded at 12:43 hours.