

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, 22nd April 2025 at 10:30 hours.

PRESENT:-

Members:-

Councillor Phil Smith in the Chair

Councillors Rita Turner.

Tenants:- Mrs. Kathleen Blair (Substitute), Mr. Steven Bramley 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), 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).

HLB34-24/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Sandra Peake, Janet Tait, Jane Yates, and Mrs. Heather Fretwell, Mrs. Janice Payne and Ms. Jackie Taylor.

HLB35-24/25 MINUTES

The Board were informed the recommendation for HLB31-24/25 (“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”) should have read as “that the Board note the planned delivery under the new Housing Strategy 2024-2029, which directly affects tenants”.

Moved by Mr. Steven Bramley and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that the minutes of a meeting of the Housing Liaison Board held on 20th January 2025 be approved as a true and correct record subject to correction of the resolution of HLB31-24/25 read as “that the Board note the planned delivery under the new Housing Strategy 2024-2029, which directly affects tenants”.

HLB36-24/25 REGULATOR OF SOCIAL HOUSING - INSPECTION IMPROVEMENT PLAN

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement presented the report to the Board, which summarised the progress made under the Council’s Improvement Plan following the C2 Grading by the Regulator of Social Housing in 2024 (C1 being the highest, C4 the lowest).

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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 for improvement.

4 key areas of focus were identified:

- Complete the full Stock Condition Survey (the 'Survey') and use this data to meet the requirements of the Decent Homes Standards – the results would show needed improvements to the Council's housing stock and drive future capital spending;
- Deliver fair and equitable outcomes to tenants – recognise and understand the individual and whole tenant base and use this data to shape services provided to benefit all tenants;
- Complaint handling – ensure the complaint process was accessible to assess the outcome of complaints in more depth, recognise lessons learned, and where changes were made to process and procedure explain this to tenants; and,
- Performance – it was important tenants hold the Council to account by publishing information in an accessible way and in several different places.

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

Meetings had been scheduled every few months since the inspection in 2024, with the aim for the Council to achieve a C1 Grade.

Savills had reported a 92.7% completion of the Stock Condition Survey (the 'Survey'), with 360 properties remaining to inspect. Savills would produce a report on work accomplished and likely present this to the Executive in June 2025.

The Regulator stated Surveys had to be completed (at a minimum) every 5 years. While it would depend on funding, the current aim was for the Council to inspect 1,000 properties annually in a rolling programme.

A Tenant recalled the Council (at times) struggled to access properties to carry out necessary Gas / Electricity safety checks. It was also asked if there was an intent to bring future Surveys into the Council. The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement shared the Council would prefer to bring the Survey inhouse, but that it would depend on what was most cost effective.

The Housing Services Manager noted Council staff might not be able to carry out such work. The Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) added the Council could only utilise competent surveyors and would need the correct hardware and software required to carry out the Survey – the Council currently did not have this resource available.

Regarding the 360 properties still needing inspection, the Housing Services Manager informed tenants could have been indisposed at the time and inspections could be now completed – only a core of properties would likely require Court injunctions to carry out inspections.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement added that 20 of the 360 properties had recently become void – inspections would soon be carried out.

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For the Tenant census, the Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement explained it was to collect up to date information from tenants (phone numbers, email addresses, disabilities, suitability of property to be a home, etc.) and 700 responses had been received so far. The Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) was also asking Gas engineers to collect such information if possible.

It remained important for tenants to hold the Council to account – performance data would continue being presented to the Board. A performance poster with key information, as well as the minutes of the Board's meetings and a video explaining the Council's responsibilities, would continue to be accessible online.

A 6 month summary of Complaints, provided by the Customer Standards and Complaints Officer, would also be included in the newsletter.

To a question on the newsletter including information on Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance), the Board briefly discussed and officers would explore providing relevant information on Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) and Dragonfly Development Ltd.. A Tenant commented some articles relating to both companies may be of interest to tenants.

RESOLVED that members of the Board note the judgement in Appendix 1 and confirm agreement to the proposed Improvements.

HLB37-24/25 UPDATE ON TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN

The Tenant Engagement Officer presented the report to the Board, which detailed the following six-monthly update on progress against the Action Plan.

The Action Plan Update was attached at Appendix 1 with key activity listed in the report.

Attention was brought to figures 1.3a – 1.3c (to promote engagement), 3.1b (locality events and consultation attempts), 3.5b (tenants conference in collaboration with Chesterfield Borough Council and Rykneld Homes) and 4.1a (members of Repairs Action Network Team (RANT) were consulted on newsletter ideas).

Moved by Councillor Phil Smith and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that progress against the action plan, as stated, is reviewed and tenants provide feedback on current activity.

HLB38-24/25 TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES 2024/25

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer presented the report to the Board. As conveyed at the Board's October 2024 meeting, the 2024/25 Survey was underway. The initial mailout had been 1st to 27th October 2024.

Key points noted after this phase included:

- 3,179 emails had been circulated – 794 sent by post;
- 394 responses received by 5th November 2024 – ideally around 550 responses were needed; and,

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- 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 first reminder wave was completed 4th to 29th December 2024. A total of 1,919 emails had been sent to General Needs properties to create a more balanced response.

Key points noted after this phase included:

- The reminder round had improved things, though more responses were still needed from General Needs Housing – a much better response rate from Independent Living Scheme tenants had been possible following visits by the Tenant Engagement Officer;
- The largest number of responses were from single tenants, and over 75% were aged 65+; and,
- There had been limited interest in downsizing.

From January to March 2025, a further reminder round had been posted out to General Needs tenants not contacted during the December 2024 reminder round.

Following this, the Council had now met the minimum return target by the deadline of 31st March 2024 with 668 responses received. However, these responses still did not fully mirror the tenant population and / or housing stock. The data would therefore go through additional analysis, with calculations applied to ensure the final figures reported were representative.

A summary of the unweighted data for satisfaction levels from returned surveys was attached at Appendix 1. Management Information for the first three quarters of 2024/25 was attached at Appendix 2.

It was noted that for CH02(2), one Complaint had not been responded to in the appropriate timeframe (sent the following workday). Due to the overall low numbers of Complaints received, this one Complaint had brought the results to 94.4% for Quarter 4 2024/25, resulting in the Council not meeting its 100% target (of responding to Complaints within the defined timescale).

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement informed that for RP01, this was currently an estimate with the Council awaiting the results of Savills' Stock Condition Survey – it was expected this would be a single percentage figure rather than the current 11.45% result.

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer noted that for BS01, this figure currently stood at 99.5% as the Council was awaiting access to 24 properties – this would likely be completed before 30th June 2025.

The Chair observed the results were good, with the few targets missed being understandable (the safety checks not being 100% completed due to the Council having not been able to access those 24 properties). The Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) agreed – the Council only needed access (though would likely have to do so through the Courts).

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The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement informed the Council had to submit the report to the Regulator by June 2025. This would be published online with a tenant friendly version also created.

A Tenant noted good progress was being made, even with the Council awaiting the completion of the Stock Condition Survey.

The Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement shared it was important for the Council to continually know the decency of its housing stock and have accurate figures. The Chair added knowing the stock was decent meant it could then be well maintained, with a rolling programme of maintenance and investment possible.

Moved by Mr. Steven Bramley and seconded by Mrs. Angela Sharpe

RESOLVED that the performance for 2024/25 documented in the attached reports is reviewed and acknowledged.

HLB39-24/25 HOUSING & REPAIRS COMPLAINTS QUARTER 4 (1ST JANUARY 2025 TO 31ST MARCH 2025)

The Customer Standards and Complaints Officer presented the report to the Board, which provided information on the Council's performance in relation to its customer service standards, Compliments, Comments and Complaints on behalf of the Housing Management and Repairs Services.

24 Compliments had been received 1st January to 31st March 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 being polite and described as 'lovely' and 'nice'. Work carried out was also described as 'above and beyond', 'fantastic', 'excellent' and 'brilliant'.

Compliments for Housing Options were primarily thanking officer's for their support and assistance in finding / securing suitable accommodation, with the Team described as 'fantastic', 'excellent', 'amazing' and going 'above and beyond'.

Compliments for Community Safety & Enforcement were to thank officers for being helpful, with the service offered / officers described as 'excellent' and 'fabulous'.

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 response to the Council – there were positives to be taken from the service delivered (above), as well as areas for improvement.

6 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 Council to ensure tenants were kept updated.

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7 M.P. Enquires had been received in the same period, with Housing Allocations receiving the most. Nearly all enquiries were in relation to refused housing applications for various reasons.

20 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 Housing Allocations.

There was a range of reasons Complaints had been made about Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance). Themes included behaviour and attitude of Repair Operatives and long standing repair issues (multiple repair jobs).

Tenancy Management complaints related to communication and officer behaviour / attitude. All Complaints for Housing Allocations were regarding housing application assessment (handling, eligibility for properties and banding).

5 Stage 2 Complaints were recorded in the same period, with all but 1 responded to within the Council's customer service standard and the Housing Ombudsman Code of 20 working days.

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

The Housing Ombudsman (HO) and Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) had not reviewed any Complaints during this period.

From the Complaints received in this period, the following service improvements included:

1. In any future Stock Condition Survey (or similar), the Council would ensure an established way of sharing data at the beginning of contracts;
2. Decision to provide all properties whose outbuildings were due to be demolished with replacement storage;
3. Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) had changed their working practices and the external follow on works would now be contacted and receive an appointment date; and,
4. All officers had been reminded that a tenant should be alerted to their presence at a property.

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. The next Service Review for the Housing Department and Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) was scheduled for April / June 2025.

The method of contact, the share of responses from tenants (73%) and residents, the 2024/25 quarterly comparison, as well as details on some of the Compliments and Complaints received were included in the report.

The Board noted that Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) had likely received the most Compliments, Comments and Complaints due to the type of face-to-face work it entailed (these officers being most likely to interact with tenants / residents than other

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Housing departments).

It was noted Dragonfly (Housing Repairs and Maintenance) had received more Compliments than Complaints.

The Chair shared it was important for the Council to set a high standard and assure tenants and residents of work completed (i.e. acts of inconsiderate parking should be minimised). For such concerns, the Head of Property (Repairs and Maintenance) informed all vans had numbers and of course registration plates (if acts of inconsiderate parking / driving occurred, tenants and residents only needed to inform the Council).

The Customer Service, Standards and Complaints Manager and Customer Standards and Complaints Officer informed the drop in M.P. Enquiries during Q2 2024/25 was likely due to the General Election and the new Bolsover M.P. establishing their office.

As for the increase in Q4 2024/25, the Council was working with the M.P.'s office to address enquiries before they could escalate to Complaints.

Moved by Victoria Dawson and seconded by Councillor Rita Turner

RESOLVED that members of 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 and Customer Standards and Complaints Officer left the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:34 hours for a comfort break. The meeting was reconvened at 11:45 hours.

HLB40-24/25 CURRENT SERVICE PERFORMANCE

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

The Council's Housing Management team produced significant amounts of performance related information and wanted to ensure tenants were provided with informative data to hold the Council to account on the services delivered.

A summary of performance against these service indicators for 2024/25 was attached at Appendix 1.

Attention was brought to KP05, which should be coloured red rather than green due to an issue with the electricity contract.

For KP06, only Q4 2024/25 should be red, and the figure for all of 2024/25 was 79.1%, above the annual target (75%).

The Board were informed many properties in the private rented sector were unaffordable. Homelessness services that partners provided were also at capacity.

For KP10, 2 callers had registered unhappy as they had been expecting assistance when using the bathroom or having their television switched on (both of which the Council's

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lifeline system was not for).

The Chair observed a decline for KP06 over 2024/25 and stated it was important to correct this – such an emerging trend was concerning. The Housing Services Manager informed an increase in resources had taken place and this should improve results in 2025/26.

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer stated the updated quarterly performance posters would be included in the Bolsover Homes Newsletter moving forward – it had not been included with the report as the latest data was still to be received.

Information contained on the poster included: a total of 9,947 repairs had been carried out; and 700 households remained on the waiting list, with 60 properties allocated in Q4 2024/25.

A Tenant remarked the amber grading for KP10 was not applicable with regards the nature of the 2 Complaints recorded – it was an unfair representation. The Housing Strategy and Development Officer informed this data had been provided by a colleague and could raise it with them after the meeting. The Tenant insisted it was not a true reflection of the service.

RESOLVED that the performance documented in the attached report is reviewed and acknowledged.

HLB41-24/25 REFRESH OF POLICIES

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

The Neighbourhood and Community Standard required all landlords to engage with other relevant parties so tenants could live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods (therefore feeling safe in their homes).

It also set out that all Registered Providers must have a policy for how they recognised and effectively responded to cases of Domestic Abuse (DA).

The Domestic Abuse Policy (the 'Policy') was attached at Appendix 1 and set out how the Housing Team would tackle DA and hold perpetrators to account.

The Council had used the definition of DA from the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and by the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance:

Any incident or pattern of incidents of controlling, coercive or threatening behaviour, violence or abuse between those aged 16 or over who are or have been intimate partners or family members regardless of gender or sexuality. This can encompass, but is not limited to, the following types of abuse:

- *Psychological / emotional – e.g. victim-blaming, name-calling, belittling;*
- *Physical – e.g. hurting or threatening to hurt physically;*
- *Sexual – e.g. forced to take part in unwanted, unsafe or degrading activity;*

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- *Economic – e.g. restricting finances / access to work, getting a victim into debt;*
- *Coercive control – e.g. isolating, monitoring, threats, humiliation.*

The Act also recognises the impact of domestic abuse on those who are ‘personally connected’ and defines what is meant by this as:

“...intimate partners, ex-partners, family members or individuals who share parental responsibility for a child.”

The Policy statement at Section 4 explained the training that officers would undertake to recognise the signs of DA and how to make appropriate referrals.

The Policy explained the role of the Specialist Domestic Abuse Officer, who had expertise in this area and whose role was to work with and support victims and survivors of DA.

It was important to always support the victim and their choice: they might not wish to stay in their property, or they might choose to stay and therefore require different support.

To a question on the victims of DA, the Assistant Director of Housing Management & Enforcement informed the Policy had been written to ensure all who experienced DA (female, male, transgender, old, young, etc.) were safeguarded.

Apologies were given to the Board as the Policy had already been presented to the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee and approved by the Executive at its meeting on 14th April 2025.

RESOLVED that members of the Board note the Domestic Abuse Policy.

HLB42-24/25 CHALLENGE & CHANGE

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

The Challenge and Change process had been introduced in early 2023 with existing tenants who had been involved in the Repairs Action Network Team (RANT) meeting at the time.

The first review had started in 2023 but had taken time to complete due to the scheduling of meetings and visits around other tenant commitments. Towards the end of that review, some new tenants had been recruited which had helped to progress the tenant challenge process (scrutiny) further, allowing for more regular meetings.

The process for the submission and prioritisation of review topics was detailed in the report.

An example of the form tenants would submit for new topics, similar to what Members of the Council’s Scrutiny Committees used, was attached at Appendix 4.

Also provided at the meeting was a scoresheet for the ranking of proposals.

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As part of the decision-making process, all tenants that had either been involved with Challenge and Change or had expressed an interest in involvement in decision-making had been contacted.

Tenants who had interest in some topics would be invited to participate in those associated reviews (first come first served basis).

Chosen topics would be reported to the Customer Services Scrutiny Committee to prevent duplication of work. The Board would monitor all review work.

Not all tenants might be comfortable at public speaking on behalf of their group's review / findings – it was being explored if training could be provided.

Councillor Rita Turner left the meeting at 12:19 hours.

The Tenant Engagement Officer guided the Board through the suggestions thus far received.

Members of the Board were requested to choose the next priority topic for review, with Tenants choosing Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB).

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer offered to collect some finer details on ASB as it was not necessarily a Housing issue. A Tenant agreed; collecting information on Void properties had proven straight forward, but ASB might be challenging.

The action plan outlining the agreed recommendations and progress against them with regards the Review of the Void Process was attached at Appendix 1.

The revised "Welcome to your Home" leaflet, which reflected the new lettable standard, was attached at Appendix 2.

A sample of the decorating voucher was attached at Appendix 3.

RESOLVED that: 1) members of the Board review the process for choosing topics and delivering reviews as set out in the report, and approve for future review work from April 2025 onwards;

- 2) members of the Board review progress against implementing the recommendations from the Review of The Void Process, and associated appendices (1a-1c) and agree if they are satisfied that the Review has been fully delivered;
- 3) members of the Board acknowledge the verbal update on progress of the Review of Ground Maintenance on Council Estates; and,
- 4) members review existing suggestions for Challenge and Change Reviews and choose the next priority topic.

HLB43-24/25 BOLSOVER HOMES NEWSLETTER - NEXT ISSUE

The Tenant Engagement Officer presented the report to the Board.

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A priority of the Tenant Engagement Strategy action plan was to “*publish and promote our tenants’ newsletter and encourage tenants to become actively involved in its production*”.

In March 2025, a survey was sent to 134 tenants who had expressed interest at being involved in the production of a tenants’ newsletter – 20 anonymous responses had been received (it was noted no follow up could be carried out due to the survey being anonymous – what did and did not work well was not entirely known).

2 tenants had stated they had not received a copy of the issue published November 2024.

While 7 tenants were happy to keep Complaints presented in text, 13 had requested a combination of written articles with graphics / charts.

Tenant suggestions for articles in the following edition and one-off and regular articles were detailed in the report.

The Housing Strategy and Development Officer noted there was a difference between tenants who wanted to be involved and those who became involved. A Tenant agreed, recounting their experience as a Public Governor for Chesterfield Royal Hospital.

RESOLVED that: 1) members of the Board review the contents of the report and comments received; and,

- 2) members of the Board agree if there are specific suggestions they want to see taken forward for content in issue 10 of Bolsover Homes.

HLB44-24/25 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, 29th July 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, 21st October 2025;
- Tuesday, 27th January 2026; and,
- Monday, 20th April 2026.

The meeting concluded at 12:40 hours.