

**MINUTES OF THE LANDLORD SERVICES WORKING GROUP**

DATE: 21 May 2024

VENUE: Forest Meeting Room (Council Chamber) TIME: 10:00am

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| **Present:** | | | |
| Janet Preston (JP) | | Laura Smythe (LS) NWLDC | |
| Shirley Green (SG) | | Amanda Harper (AH) NWLDC | |
| Nicky Larkin (NL) | | Sharon Cole (SCO) NWLDC | |
| Sue Quincy (SQ) | | Peter Warren (PW) NWLDC | |
| Isobel Harris (IH) | | Kerry Spiers (KS) NWLDC | |
| Cllr Alison Morley (AM) NWLDC | | Emily Hutchins-Stead (EHS) NWLDC | |
| **Apologies:** | |  | |
| Sue Carr (SC) | | Cheryl Gamble (CG) | |
| Graham Carr (GC) | | Sandra Newell (SN) | |
| Pam McGowan (PM) | | Cllr A Woodman (AW) NWLDC | |
| Sandra Houghton (SH) | | Jane Rochelle (JR) NWLDC | |
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|  | **ITEM** | | **ACTION** |
| **1.** | **Welcome & Apologies**  AH welcomed everyone. Apologies as above. | |  |
| **2.** | **Minutes of the previous Meeting**  Minutes approved and agreed as accurate. | |  |
| **3.** | **Matters Arising/ Actions**  *PM asks what the plans are for weed killing and bush cutting. PA advises this happens every winter and is still being completed now council instructed PA to not use a certain weed killer due to identified risks. JR advised that she would be asking for this to be revisited for the Housing sites.*   * Update 21/05/2024: AH advised that no update has been supplied as JR is unable to make the meeting. The action will be carried forward. AH has a meeting with Parks and she will see if she can get an update from that.   *LQ asked if it will be beneficial to have something in the tenant’s newsletter on what to expect from Grounds Maintenance. AH agreed and said she would add to the forward plan of InTouch.*   * Update 21/05/2024: AH advised that the Tenant Scrutiny Panel have completed their review of the Grounds Maintenance Service and Garden Tidy Scheme. The next step is the panel will meet with AH to go through the recommendations before the finalised report and recommendations are presented to the Senior Management Team and to Cabinet.   *SCO advised that a survey had been sent out to tenants and so far there had been 179 responses and 71 people interested in getting involved with resident involvement. SCO will look at feedback from customers in April/ May 2024.*   * Update 21/05/2024: SCO advised we held a couple of consultation events for involved tenants and potential new involved tenants. The feedback from those events and from the consultation will be fed back through Intouch. | | **JR/ AH** |
| **4.** | **Learning From Complaints**  KS introduced herself and ran through her presentation, a copy of which will be included with the minutes.  AH added, if you look at the table where we measure up against other services in the council, the important things to note are that it is inevitable that waste services are going to be up there, in terms of the number of contacts that come into the customer centre and feedback that we get about waste as it is the one service that touches every resident in the district and then if you look at the size of the different departments, housing is one of the largest teams in the council, so the numbers look high but in terms of the contact we have with the public it’s inevitable that we’re going to have a number of areas of feedback, whether that be complaints or compliments. AH continued, Parks is another team coming under leisure, as does everyone Active, so that puts that into a different arrangement. AH continued, another area hot off the press and not included in the presentation and worth mentioning is an area that has been picked up by customer services and the communications team is looking at the way that we communicate, we’ve all got services to provide and the nature of our services sometimes means that the answer is “no”, and we know for some people when we say no, it’s not the answer that they want, so we need to look at how we communicate information in the right way at the right time. AH concluded, something that’s been highlighted in the housing sector is that over 50% of social housing tenants have an identified mental health issue, so one of things we’re looking at is our letters, is the information we include in our letters creating some frustration, is it creating unnecessary contact, is that pushing additional calls through to the customer centre. AH confirmed that when looking at the letters she would like to engage with tenants as we did with the gas servicing letters a couple of years ago and some excellent feedback was given to develop some frequently asked questions (FAQ) to accompany those letters and AH announced that was delighted to say that the revenues and benefits team would be engaging with the process too.  KS added that the overall volume of complaints that housing had is low compared to the number of contacts, housing had 34,342 contacts last year via the various communication methods, so they are doing well. | |  |
| **5.** | **Q4 Performance Update – Housing Management**  AH ran through her presentation, a copy of which was include with the papers.  AM identified an error in the figures under Tenancy Audits: *1180 audits were scheduled and 1009 were completed which is 85.5% of our stock.*  AH advised the correct figure was 24.6%.  NL asked if people who are homeless get placed in the right sort of accommodation.  AH replied, people are eligibles for different property, usually going by sizes of accommodation, we don’t have any fully supported accommodation so we have to work with partner agencies to see if people can access support services if they need them, so we don’t have any accommodation where we have on site staff, we don’t have accommodation with floating support that some housing providers have, the role of the support officer is sometimes confusing and we do have plans to change that and move to more age-designated accommodation as opposed to labelling it “supported” as that’s misleading. AH continued, as mentioned before we have to recognise that we have more and more people with mental health challenges and more complex needs, but that is reflective of our communities as a whole, not just those in council housing, public funding has been reduced, services have been cut and for many individuals, it relies on them wanted to engage with support services, we do recognise that some people have periods where they are well, engaging with support services and then periods of time where they aren’t and that can have knock-on implications for their behaviour and then then spills out and affects their neighbours. AH concluded, it is important to note that we won’t just evict someone if they are causing an issue and it’s linked to their mental health, we have to look if it is appropriate to take enforcement action.  NL asked if North West are obliged to house homeless people.  AH replied, it depends on the circumstances, there is very clear legislation and it’s David Scruton’s area of responsibility, the legislation dictates what we can and can’t do in terms of those who are homeless and where we have a duty to accommodate. AH continued, whilst we are completing our investigations, we will look to have a duty to accommodate on a temporary basis, that accommodation may not be in a preferred location it may not be the sort of accommodation that they want, however those individuals may refuse the offer of that temporary accommodation or they miss-behave whilst in that temporary accommodation, for example a B&B, they may be asked to leave so would lose the right to be accommodated by us temporarily.  SG asked how many council houses have been sold as she wasn’t aware we still did that, did it include any properties.  AG replied, some properties are excluded from right to buy, for example those properties that have had significant adaptations and are considered suitable for hose who are disabled, it excludes sheltered accommodation, those with shared services and communal rooms. AH added, we sold 16 properties last year, in previous years we sold 30 to 40 properties, so the number did come down last year but the number of application that we get still takes up time in terms of the work we have to do.  NL asked how we were getting on with the Oak, Whitwick.  AH replied, the Oaks is a former pub which we identified and bought with a view to develop the site, we need to submit the planning application to demolish it and we have sought advice from planning colleagues about our initial thoughts on what we’d like to do with the site. AH added, we don’t have any timescales on when all this we happen and we have other sites in the district and we may prioritise the former sheltered housing Queensway scheme in Measham, which has been demolished and we have planning approval for that and we are looking to develop that site  NL commented that it does look an eyesore.  AH agreed and added that we were hoping to have it demolished by now, however we do still have to abide by planning rules the same as everyone else. | |  |
| **6.** | **Q4 Performance Update – Repairs & Asset Management**  Agenda item moved to the June meeting as JR not able to attend the meeting. | |  |
| **7.** | **Support Contractor and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)**  Agenda item moved to the June meeting as JR not able to attend the meeting. | |  |
| **8.** | **Forward Plan**  *Support Contractor and Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF)* and *Q4 Performance Update – Repairs & Asset Management* to be moved to the June meeting.  PW advised that PM had requested that the recent policy reviews be brought back to the group for an update of how tenants have influenced those changes and this will be added to the June meeting.  SCO asked if an update on the involvement days and what senior management have said about how we move forward with the groups would be beneficial. This was agreed and to be added to the June meeting.  AH asked SCO if the draft Tenant Scrutiny Panel inspection report and draft Resident Involvement Strategy should also be added to the forward plan. SCO agreed. | | **PW** |
| **9.** | **Any Other Business**  AH advised that in the past we have used the July issue of Intouch to publish our annual report, but JR had asked that she would like a different approach in relation to the annual report, we will be including some of the performance information and that being the centre pages of Intouch, other items to be included as requested by tenants are gardening tips, places of interest, key information about leavers and starters, puzzle page, a section about the update on the review of policies, high level feedback on repairs, the re-introduction of the satisfaction survey once a repair has been completed, update on stock condition surveys, mutual exchanges with a link to permissions and approvals, an introduction to the Housing Improvement Board and include an article about the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund. AH advised that the Tenant & Leaseholder Consultation Forum had requested that we include an article on community champions and get tenants to nominate champions in their community. AH added, there may be an article about the management restructure, but that is dependant on the outcome of the Corporate Leadership Team meeting on Thursday, it is also the 50th anniversary of the creation North West Leicestershire District Council.  JP mentioned she had a number of issues to raise with AH. AH advised she would catch up with her at the end of the meeting.  JP asked what the plans were for electric car chargers at Howe Court/ Smith Court.  AH replied that she wasn’t sure what the Asset Management Team were planning for that, but the council won’t pay for private chargers to be installed and you would need permission to have one installed at your property. AH added, it may have to feature as part of the parking improvement plan of the Asset Management Strategy which has yet to be written, but would ask if we can have an update on what that might be.  SQ, IH and JP all gave their apologies for the June meeting. | | **AH** |
|  | **Date and Venue of Next Meeting**  Tuesday 11 June 2024 in the Abbey Meeting Room (Board Room), Stenson House, London Road, Coalville, LE67 3FN | |  |