

Tenant Board Meeting

Wednesday 25th June 2025

Attendees:

Liz Perryman	Tenant Board Member (Chair)
Gerry Crease	Tenant Board Member
Tony Cole	Tenant Board Member
Paula Warren	Tenant Board Member
David White	Housing Transformation Manager
Georgia Mecoy	Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator
Kerry Lecomber	Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator
Cllr Ruth Hendry	Housing Portfolio Holder

Apologies

Marcus Cooper and Charmaine Jolly

Cllr Hendry introduced herself and her role as the new Housing Portfolio Holder for Babergh.

Actions from last meeting and introduction

- GM sent all requested items since last meeting.
- TC advised he hadn't managed to do Consumer Standards training but would before next meeting.
- Complaints themes. LP advised most of the complaints seemed to be about communication – a main theme running through everything. PW advised exactly the same – so much comes back to communication.
- DW advised he's happy to do a presentation on Consumer Standards.

Action: KL to add in exercise on communication on Complaints workshop.

Declarations of Interest

PW declared conflict of interest in voting on scrutiny project (Customer Services) and will abstain from voting.

Council Housing Assurance Report

DW shared a presentation and took the board through this report. Previously Housing performance has been reported along with all the other performance information we provide as a Local Authority. Because of the new Consumer Standards, we need to change this going forwards and we will be producing a quarterly landlord performance report which goes to Tenant Board, SLT and Cabinet alongside the rest of the performance information.

PW: What an amazing piece of work – so impressed with that. DW advised it was quite a lot of work but hopefully once you're receiving that report red flags should really pop and give you the opportunity to dig down into it.

LP enquired if O&S will receive it and DW advised that he's going to the meeting quarterly now – twice with Tenant Board about scrutiny and twice with the performance report. This will really help us provide assurance to the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) that there is proper oversight of our performance.

LP advised that O&S really dig down and ask us new questions. GM advised that it's also proof that we're not marking our own homework. DW said key thing is that Tenant Board are seeing exactly the same report that Cabinet and all the senior leadership team see. LP advised much better to see it all.

Tenant Dashboards

GM sent the dashboards for Jan – March round including the void information which LP requested previously. This will be the last dashboard as it's being replaced by the report that DW has just taken the meeting through. GM took the meeting through the headline changes.

TC: On the void dashboard what really stood out to him with the benchmark being £30k rather than target of £7.5k?

DW advised there are a lot of contributing factors, one of which we have high levels of property not meeting decent homes standard so cannot be re-let and all that work may have to be done at the same time. This may be because older tenants haven't wanted disruptive works done while they are living there. The other element is we are not picking up poor condition properties very well. Some of our tenants can't or don't chose to look after our properties and may not have seen anyone from the council for a long time. The restructure in Tenant Services means all CHO's need to visit all of their tenants in the first two years and will be grading the properties they inspect. The majority of our voids come to us when the tenant either moves to a care facility or they pass away. Often they or their families can't afford to return the property to a good state and although we can recharge, it can't often be paid.

This also means that our void standard isn't as good as we would like it to be as the other costs are so high to get the property to a basic living standard. Most months we get one major void which will be in the £30 - £50k range.

Also people shouldn't be moving out and into a new property leaving it in a state. Currently we just provide a reference by checking rent and history but going forwards we'll be visiting and viewing the property and giving them a plan to get work done. We can then downgrade their banding on Gateway to Homechoice until the works are complete. We can currently recharge but it's rarely done.

TC asked if that's the same for all house moves and DW advised it's for any move – so if a family grow and need a bigger house they have been able to move out and leave it on a right state but they can't going forwards as legally we are allowed to lower their banding.

LP enquired about Mutual Exchange situation and DW clarified we do check at the moment but it is an agreement between the tenants and there is always a loser. We list as much as possible what the condition of the property is and the works needed. However, if there are H&S issues we will do the work and then recharge the tenant. We really advise tenants to view properties several times and at different times of the day. It's the quickest way to move but not always the best.

Next Scrutiny Projects

GM advised we have short time frame August – September to carry out one project so we can take it O&S in October. Can't vote on these today as Board is not quorate so can discuss and then she will share information for an online vote.

PW advised she thought it was a great idea.

TC enquired if it was just calling in and checking the service. GM advised can do whatever they like and DW added that he's done this several different ways, calling in, timescales, knowledgeability, politeness, fixed first time etc. We would then have to let Customer Services know it was a fake call.

LP advised yesterday she had to call about Council Tax and person she spoke to was immensely helpful – really explained everything brilliantly and she was calling on someone else's behalf and he spoke to him so well. Respect and understanding and gave lots of time to write information down. His name was Rob – no misguided information he was so well informed.

GC joined the meeting but still cannot vote on this as PW has abstained so still not quorate. Will send round a virtual vote with information from this discussion.

GM then took meeting through second possible project on Grounds Maintenance as it receives low satisfaction scores and our CAD and Greater Places are constantly being used to make improvements. That's fine for now but there must be a longer-term plan.

LP advised agreement as did GC, TC and PW. Vote taken with a result of 4 votes of yes.

Grass Cutting Consultation

LP advised she received a letter from Public Realm about grass cutting advising that the gardens in front of my bungalow were my responsibility but she was sure if communal land. They've advised they're keeping it as is for now but may change next year.

DW advised that Public Realm have been cutting grass in front gardens and the HRA is charged per square metre for grass cut. Previously they have been cutting grass that's actually part of tenants front gardens. Their budgets are very small and satisfaction is low. One of the things they can do is recharge that grass cutting to the tenant through service charges. Unfortunately, a letter was sent out before the consultation happened mistakenly so that's been rescinded and we will now consult with tenants.

RH: Is there a rough idea of the numbers of properties this relates to? **DW agreed to provide her with the numbers.** RH: Once again it's a communications issue – Liz is that how you feel? LP agreed and advised the communal bit of land she was advised she was responsible for the whole thing despite it being the front garden of two semi-detached properties. **Action: To be fed back to RL.**

TC: Is there a way that the tenants can chose to be service charged? **Action: to be fed back to RL to investigate if that could be an option.**

Any Other Business

GM took meeting through three items.

Action: Invite tenant board members to both workshops.

PW advised she will have to pull out of the TSM target setting workshop because of launch of new system but will try to attend the other workshops.

GM advised a huge thank you to the board members for their feedback on so much information in May and June and advised that if it ever gets too much, please do let us know.