

Tenant Board Meeting

Thursday 3rd September 2026

Attendees:

Liz Perryman (LP)	Tenant Board Member (Chair)
Gerry Crease (GC)	Tenant Board Member
Tony Cole (TC)	Tenant Board Member
Tim Riach (TR)	Tenant Board Member
Sara Szczepanski (SS)	Tenant Board Member
Paula Warren (PW)	Tenant Board Member
Ceri Theobald (CT)	Director of Housing
Victoria Freer (VT)	Tenant Insight and Improvement Manager
Kerry Lecomber (KL)	Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator
Georgia Mecoy (GM)	Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator
Ellie Boudier (EB)	Tenant Engagement Intern
Cllr Ruth Hendry (RH)	Housing Portfolio Holder (Babergh)
Carly Adams (CA)	Community Housing Officer

Introduction

LP thanked everyone for attending the rearranged meeting and made introductions.

Apologies were received from:

- Cllr Richard Winch, Housing Portfolio Holder (Mid Suffolk)
- Carole Richards, Tenant Board Member
- Louise Tully, Head of Housing Transformation and Regulation
- Carly Adams will have to leave at 7pm

Actions from last meeting

GM to send Board a reminder about TPAS as they have a new portal and have changed how you log in – Action.

Declarations of Interest

None.

Empty Homes Workshop

See slides.

Good, Bad, and Better – What Went Well?

KL advised that positive customer service feedback reflected recent survey of tenants who had moved out in the last 12 months. KL advised that feedback reinforces the importance of having a mix of face-to-face and digital communication. KL advised that Sheltered Housing tend to have information packs provided so this is something to look into expanding across the service.

And What Didn't ...

KL advised that info highlighted in yellow is currently being reviewed/ is in the works. KL asked board what they think about suggestions.

PW advised that there is a real lack of care with some of the properties, and that inspections being carried out before the end of tenancy could address this.

LP advised that providing floor plans on Gateway to Homechoice would be unnecessary but should be included in physical information packs. She also advised that details about boundaries is very important so people know where they can and can't put up division fences – not many people will read the Fence Policy so would be a good idea to include within information packs.

GC advised that tenants should be able to move to another council property if there are outstanding repairs that have been reported and not actioned if the tenant was not responsible for the damage.

RH advised that providing floorplans before tenants get keys can be risky – people may go out and buy carpets, but tenancy could still not go ahead for many different reasons. She also advised that once tenants have the keys, they don't need the floor plan because they can measure themselves.

TR advised that tenants should do annual video inspections themselves – would solve lot of the issues with voids.

CT advised that we are looking into doing regular tenant inspections at least on a three yearly basis. He advised that inspections are most useful when a tenant is moving out of a property to ensure the condition is as expected, and to ensure tenants remove the contents from the property and garden.

TR advised that video inspections should be every 12 months, whether a tenant is moving out or not so the council is regularly informed of the condition of the property. He advised that it would save time and money as the council will only have to send out inspectors when there is an issue.

GM advised that this could be a good idea for tenants identified as low risk on the Tenancy Risk Dashboard – still want that face-to-face interaction but tenants with a vulnerability may prefer it.

TC advised that the video inspections could be an option but not mandatory as elderly tenants are likely to struggle. He also advised that more info on Gateway (such as floor plans) could make tenants too picky.

GC advised that a significant number of tenants won't have access to a video camera, and that a lot of tenants will only show you what they want you to see. He also advised that most contractors insist on doing their own measurements so providing floor plans would not be a good idea.

RH advised that video inspections would be a good idea for low-risk tenants to save time.

And What Didn't ... (2)

KL advised that measures should be put in place to ensure Lettable Standard is consistently being met. KL also advised that the average cost of redecorating a property is £1500 so we should look into finding out whether tenants intend on redecorating to ensure quicker handovers.

LP advised that getting tenants involved with inspections could lead to them asking things of the council that are tenant responsibilities.

KL advised that automated texts to remind tenants of responsibilities before ending their tenancy is a great low-cost idea.

RH advised that automated texts go out to those with a vulnerability that means they wouldn't be able to do certain things as this would leave them panicked. She also advised that we need better signposting for the Crisis Resilience Fund.

LP inquired what is meant by giving longer notice before tenancy starts.

KL advised that this means the time between property allocation and key handover.

And What Didn't ... (3)

KL advised that if tenants are digitally excluded, they should be directed to in-person support e.g. Customer Access Point in Stowmarket, Eye, Sudbury etc.

RH advised that it's uncomfortable when other prospective tenants are waiting at the property because it makes it competitive.

LP advised that viewing time depends on the property size.

CT advised that viewing a property is an emotional decision for tenants which is made worse if other prospective tenants are waiting.

CA advised that most viewings go very quickly because tenants are excited. She also advised that they used to use a system called Remote Assist which would enable remote inspections.

GM advised that SCC have a contract with Remote Assist.

TR advised that 15 minutes between viewings would mitigate overlap. He also advised that viewing a property does not require over 30 minutes.

And What Didn't ... (4)

GM advised that recharges in deceased cases will be addressed in the upcoming Guidance booklet.

PW advised that repairs wouldn't know if they've been given certain info from tenants on online forms before about their individual characteristics.

VF advised that ethnicity and language is captured on Gateway to Homechoice, but reasonable adjustments and vulnerabilities need to be asked every time in case they change. She advised that as part of Getting to Know You Phase Two, unnecessary repetition on existing forms can be addressed.

And What Didn't ... (5)

GM advised that the newsletter reminds tenants to ask contractors for their ID.

TR inquired whether all contractors have BMSDC ID.

KL advised that BMSDC operatives will, but external contractors won't but will have own uniform and ID and this should be clear and consistent.

VF advised that we link our Contractor Guide in the My Home Bulletin and the Tenant Handbook so tenants can see what logos to look for on ID badges.

CT advised that we need to educate tenants on not falling down traps of letting fraudulent contractors into their home. He also advised that tenants should be able to phone the council to verify their ID.

KL advised that there is a password for entry to Sheltered Homes.

Moving forward

KL to share action plan with board in between now and submission of full report on 25th Sep – Action.

TR and SS advised that they would like to join KL at Overview and Scrutiny.

Tenant Board get together event

CT advised that the Regulator has recognised the hard work of Tenant Engagement and the Tenant Board.

Board to email Georgia dates available in October for celebration event, and December for Christmas get-together – Action.

Tenant Board forward plan review

GM advised that someone from Housing Solutions will join a future meeting.

Tenant Board AGM Preparation

Board to review the Terms of Reference to see if anything needs changing – Action.

Board to email Georgia if they're interested in being Chair/ Vice Chair – Action.

Any Other Business

- CHAR Q1
- Estate walkabouts starting next week (9th Sep) – 24 areas total across Sep and Oct