

SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 22 November 2021

Present: Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Colin England, Kevin Hellier, Ivor Hussey, Luke Manning, Samantha Rickward, Councillor Mark Lithgow and Councillor Janet Lloyd

Officers: James Barrah, Ian Candlish, Richard Burge, Simon Lewis, Stephen Boland, Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager), Bryony Cole, Sharon Yarde (Housing) and Tracey Meadows

Also Present: Councillor Brenda Weston and Wayne Hobson (Chair TAG)

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

23. **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Alex Akhigbemen (Chair) and Chris Brown

24. **Notes from previous meeting including action points**

The notes from the previous meeting including action points were agreed.

25. **Directorate Report - Director and Assistant Directors**

The group considered the Directorate report on work being undertaken and progress made by the Housing Directorate since the last TSG meeting in September 21.

Details of the report
(summarised)

- HRA New Homes, Housing Strategy and Housing Enabling;
- Housing Property Team;
- Capital Programmes;
- Asset Management;
- Housing and Communities Team;
- Housing Performance Team;

Comments/queries from the group included;
(summarised)

- Why were we setting up a new HRA Account from day one if we were all going to be one Council? *Due to legalities there was not enough time to 'stitch everything up' in the time frame. We would also like to consult with*

tenants, this would also take time to achieve. There was lots of work to be completed over a number of years and was still up for discussion;

- *Concerns with void challenges; we are running a workshop to see if we can improve that side of things;*
- *We should run some incentive workshops to encourage people to apply for work at SWT. We were looking at the job evaluation process to see if we can encourage people to apply for roles in SWT;*
- *Concerns with the capital programme, zero carbon compliance and retro fit. There were two big areas now that relied on retro fit, these were Heating systems and the installation programme. A retro fit working group was being set up to look at the whole area;*
- *Clarification sought on how the tenants scheme to down size was working. This scheme was really well received and was going well;*
- *Concerns with the ongoing ASB cases; an update on this will be discussed on the AOB item;*
- *What had been learnt from the Mystery Shopper exercise that took place in Customer Services? The exercise highlighted a few improvements that need to be made so we will give this time to embed and then do the exercise again to see if the Customer contact had improved;*

The report was noted

26. **TAG Annual Report - Wayne Hobson, Chair TAG**

The Chair of the Tenants Action Group gave an update on the Annual Report 2020-21

The report included;
(summarised)

- Estate Walkabout's;
- Leycroft Grove Estate Improvement Groundworks;
- Funding through the Estate Improvement Fund;
- Funding the Local Community Projects through the Youth Initiative Fund;
- Development of the Youth Initiative Fund;
- Development of the Group;
- Involvement in the newly established Damp and Mould Task Group;
- Financial Summary

The Chair stated that despite the challenges presented over the past year, the group had continued stay connected through their online meetings. Over the next year, TAG was committed to increasing their membership and reinstating a more active role, working with the Council to improve their services, and continuing to support as many local projects as possible through funding opportunities. He also thanked the Housing Performance team for their support and advice.

Comments, questions from the group included;
(summarised)

- Were there any group posters with the TAG Logo on it to encourage tenants to get involved ? *posters will be distributed to areas stating what we are and what we do;*
- Were that tenant group meetings only held in Taunton? *We are intending to go around the Taunton area to promote ourselves;*

James Barrah thanked the Chair for all the work that the group were continuing to do and was happy to support them in the future.

The report was noted.

27. **Customer Service Report - Richard Burge**

The Customer Services Manager, Richard Burge gave an update on the Customer Service Report, Quarter 1 & 2 included in the agenda.

Comments/question from the group included;
(summarised)

- Concerns that the Council Office in Wellington was still shut after 2 years? *There was no decision yet for opening this office due to lack of staff at this present time;*
- Concerns that the Customer Service staff were not trained on what was an emergency for tenants who call out of hours. *The out of hours helpline was manned by the Deane Helpline and they should all be aware of what is an emergency in out of hours call outs;*
- Concerns with the call abandonment rate;
- With regards to the mystery shopper exercise, what have you learnt from this? *The feedback that we have received is that customers waited to long on the phone. Staff members did not have access to Academy, all staff now have access and are trained on this;*
- Was the Academy system now up to date? *A patch was applied and the system was now up to date;*
- Were there details on the Wellington Office door for contact details whilst this office was shut? *All contact details were posted on the door for customers stating contact details for queries;*

The report was noted.

28. **AOB**

Verbal update report from Stephen Boland regarding the outstanding Anti-social Behaviour figures.

A table of figures circulated to the group at the meeting detailed the number of current and outstanding ASB cases.

Reported that there had been an increase in ASB and crime with Officers threatened with assault which had been challenging.

The guidance for Help with anti-social behaviour for social housing tenants was updated by the Local Government on the 8 November 2021. The information aimed to make it easier for social housing tenants to know how to get help to tackle anti-social behaviour. It set out the powers, roles and responsibilities of the different local organisations so tenants knew where to get help in their situation as many local organisations, including the Police, local authorities, and social housing landlords had different powers, roles and responsibilities to help support victims.

Comments/queries from the group included;
(summarised)

- What happens when the ASB is coming from a privately owned home? *We can make interventions to try and resolve the matter through mediation between the homeowner and the Council tenant or we can take the homeowner to court for breach of conveyancing conditions;*
- Tenants feel that they had not had any support from the Council as their lives had been made a misery by ASB. *Unless the perpetrator responded positively to intervention, we needed to follow a process. We did support victims of ASB keeping them informed of the progress made before all interventions were exhausted and the perpetrator taken to court;*
- A process to move this procedure along quicker was needed;

The report was noted.

(The Meeting ended at 8.24 pm)