

SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 30 January 2023

Present: Luke Manning (Chair)

Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Colin England, Kevin Hellier, Ivor Hussey, Samantha Rickward, Cllr Mark Lithgow, Cllr Janet Lloyd and Cllr Francesca Smith

Officers: James Barrah, Stephen Boland, Ian Candlish, Shari Hallett, Simon Lewis, Sharon Yarde, Chris Hall, Adam Evans, Stephen Boland, Scott Weetch and Tracey Meadows

(The meeting commenced at 6.00 pm)

77. **Apologies**

No apologies were received.

78. **Welcome from the Chair**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

79. **Minutes from previous meeting**

Action points from previous meeting

Action points

Point 1 – Concerns raised again regarding Estate Walkabout letters still not been received by tenants.

Point 2 – concerns raised with regards to the drop-in surgery. Reported that in December several people have been seen queuing at a drop-in centre waiting to see an Officer who they believe did not turn up for the session. The group stated that as a group, the drop-in centre needed to be promoted as not all tenants felt comfortable speaking about their issues on the telephone and wanted to speak to Officers face to face.

Point 3 – Repairs action plan from a previous meeting. Concerns raised that employees working in tenants' properties were charging their power tools whilst working in that property without permission. At present we were in a cost-of-living crisis, electricity was not cheap and those tenants on a pre-payment meter did not necessarily have a funds on their meter. The attitude of some of those employees stating that the tools did not cost a lot to charge was not acceptable. All tools should be charged before embarking on work in tenants' properties. *All staff were reminded of their responsibilities in respect of charging tools.*

80. Repairs Service Improvement Plan Presentation

The Repairs Services improvement Plan was presented as a slide presentation with the following subjects;

- Day to day operations - Review and amend repairs ways of working;
- Stock and materials - Getting materials to the job -Imprest van stocks;
- IT systems Overall approach to repairs IT systems;
- Fleet management - Fleet & Use of Electric Vehicles;
- Health and Safety - Safety of staff, tenants and public;

During discussion of this item the following comments/queries were raised; (summarised)

- With regards to the monitoring of speed and driver behaviour for Fleet Management, is this something that you were monitoring anyway or has there been complaints regarding speeding. How will this be monitored?
There was a tracker withing the vehicle that not only confirms your location but also records the speed that the vehicle is traveling. This was part of our ongoing commitment to the Health and Safety programme;
- Can you explain how Customer Service staff are qualified to diagnose and send out the correct repair's team member for a repair. At present, an employee is sent out to assess the problem and then a repair is organised;
We have a piece of equipment called 'Locator Plus' is a tool that helps to diagnose repairs via visual and written prompts. You can talk with staff in the moment to go through a range of various probabilities regarding your query. This will help to prevent duplicate visits for tenants with regards to a site visit to identify and solve the issue. If the call cannot be diagnosed over the phone, this would need a site visit;
- Concerns that fleet vans were still turning up to properties with only one person in the van. This is causing issues for residents and parking. Please could this be looked at;
We will have a look at this as part of driver behaviour and awareness;
- Concerns with fleet vehicles parking over the pavement's causing obstruction pedestrians;
The message will fed back to our drivers to make them aware of parking on pavements;
- Could the Council take up an apprenticeship scheme instead of taking on outside contractors?
This has been done in the past with mixed success. This would be really a positive thing going forward and we would continue to commit to looking at this in the future;

The report was noted.

81. Directorate Report

The report is to update the Tenants' Strategic Group on work being undertaken and progress made by the Housing Directorate since the last TSG meeting.

James Barrah welcomed and introduced Chris Hall who has been appointed as the new Director for Communities in the new Council.

During discussion of this item the following comments/questions were raised; (summarised)

- Clarification was sought on whether all the Councils were now linked together with regards to rent increases ? *The rent increases have been consolidated and would be applied the same adhering to the Government cap of 7%. The base rents would be slightly different, depending on the location and history of that property;*
- The first builds at North Taunton are due to be let in February. Has the rent for these properties being set yet? *If we let them in this financial year we will utilise the rents for the remaining. The rent for 2323 will increase from the 1st of April onwards;*
- Has the repairs backlog being cleared or were there still challenges to this? *Currently there were no backlogs post Covid;*

The Tenants' Strategic Group noted this report.

82. **Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey Results**

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey was like a mini-STAR survey (will be regulatory requirement from April 2023)

- Done every 6 months, pilot done in May 2022 and was repeated in November 2022;
- 23 questions, including the 12 TSM questions in areas such as; Overall services ,The home, Neighbourhood (including estate, ASB and Grounds maintenance), repairs and Customer Contact;
- There were 301 completed interviews, 250 GN, 49 SH and 2 EC, 254 from Taunton area and 47 from Wellington

During discussion of this item the following comments/questions were raised; (summarised)

- Did we know why tenants in the survey were not satisfied with the grounds maintenance as the number's quoted were low? *We were meeting with the open spaces team to look at our Service Level Agreement and working with tenants to understand their issues. The TAG group were also looking to form a sub-group to look at grounds maintenance going forward;*
- A group member sought clarification on the results of the telephone survey company that had called. Was the figure stated just the tenants that had been called and what proof did you have that these figures were not made up? *This was investigated and the company did ring you twice but*

only on one survey. Periodic Excel spreadsheets were returned so there was no reason to doubt that the results were correct;

- A member of the group stated that the grass in his sheltered housing complex was the best that it had looked in 6 years with regular cuts; *Happy that this was a good new story. The TAG group noted that there was a good standard overall with grounds maintenance;*
- As a tenant, you get a letter if you do not keep your garden tidy. There were overgrown hedges and so-called 'wild areas' in the town which were untidy and unkempt which did not look inviting. If you do not keep the public areas tidy, how do you expect the tenants to look after their own gardens?
- One the customer satisfaction survey regarding complaints handling was, or are you able to consider telephone hang ups where tenants were trying to make a complaint but could not get through? *This was reflected in the tenant survey feedback, and we do acknowledge that there was a high call abandonment rate;*

The report was noted.

83. **Any other business**

The group requested that all tables are printed out on A3 to enable group to view without difficulty.

(The Meeting ended at 7.12 pm)