

SWT Tenants Strategic Group - 30 May 2022

Present: Councillor Alex Akhigbemen (Chair)

Councillors Jessie Bunn, Paul Cram, Colin England, Ivor Hussey, Luke Manning, Samantha Rickward, Mark Lithgow and Janet Lloyd

Officers: James Barraah, Stephen Boland, Chris Brown, Ian Candlish, Shari Hallett (Housing Performance Manager) and Sharon Sloan

Also Present: Councillors

(The meeting commenced at 6.02 pm)

43. Apologies

Apologies were received from Kevin Hellier.

Officers Simon Lewis and Sharon Yarde had also offered their apologies.

44. Welcome from Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

45. Notes from previous meeting

The Chair raised a query in relation to the matter of the communal lights not working in Kelway Road as this was raised two months ago and was still not rectified.

CLlr Lloyd requested that, as an Appointed Member by the Independent and Greens Group she be recorded in the membership of the Group in the minutes, rather than being also in attendance.

46. Appointment of New Chair

The Chair advised that this would be his last meeting, and that Luke Manning had agreed to take over the Chair role, starting on 1st June 2022. He would remain on the Group and be willing to support the new Chair.

Ivor Hussey put on his record his thanks to the Chair for his service.

The Housing Portfolio Holder and Director for Housing also placed on record their thanks to Alex Akhigbemen for his work over the past few years, and looked forward to working with the new Chair.

47. Annual complaints Report

The report provided:

- Headlines from April 2021 to March 2022. This report was an Annual Report and flowed from the weekly complaints reported to the Housing Senior Management team and wider process of stages to this report.
- The Council was governed by the Housing Ombudsman Code.
- In the last year a Housing Performance team which had been set up to help manage complaints.
- A Redress Policy had been introduced in June 2021
- There had been 331 Stage 1 Complaints and 34 Stage Complaints. Stage 2 complaints could be very complex. It was being explored whether a Tenants Panel could be created to consider these.
- All Managers had undergone complaints training.

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

- Did the Council undertake a post-inspection of repairs following a complaint?
- *It was confirmed that this was not done, but residents would be surveyed.*
- 18 percent of complaints about staff conduct and 1 percent about unfair treatment were considered concerning.
- *Officers were happy to seek to share further details on these to reassure Group members on these.*
- The report was praised for its quality. The number of complaints upheld was concerning however, with personal experience of issues with getting issues raised via the telephone.
- *Officers recognised that there was issues with the volume of calls being dealt with by the Customer Services teams. In terms of complaints it was recognised that the service was not where it wanted to be due to issues around Covid and Staff turnover which were being addressed.*
- It was posited that a large number of complaints were down to issues with staff being adequately trained for their roles and being able to engage with tenants. Communication was a major concern.
- *The feedback was welcomed and the service was learning from its complaints. An example was given in the reduction of tenancy complaints and the improvements seen there.*
- Further information was sought on the specific recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman in those cases where they had intervened and whether there was any fines levied.
- *Further detail could be provided in a written answer.*
- A question was posed on how many complaints related to Voids?
- *Further detail could be provided in a written answer.*

The report was noted.

48. **Q4 Performance Report**

The Report provided provided an update on the housing performance through key performance measures and financial information for the fourth quarter of 21/22 (January to March 2022).

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

- In terms of Anti-Social Behaviour, did the Council liaise with the Police and have procedures in place like other Councils in the South West?
- *Officers outlined the procedures that the Council had in place, with two specific staff members in the Tenancy Management team dealing with ASB. The Council emphasised a multi-agency approach to the issue.*
- Concern was raised on the length of time for voids to be re-let and the lengthy delay for particularly those in Woolaway properties awaiting their alternative offered property.
- It was recognised that Woolaway's were not a standard type of property.

The Report was noted.

49. **Planned capital works for year, alongside retrofit approach presentation – Ian Candlish & Chris Brown (Informal agenda item,(presentation to be given on the night)**

The Reports provided information on the planned Capital works for the year ahead and further information on the retrofit approach for the Council. Group Members were provided with case studies based on their own properties factors and the SAP/EPC scores. Group Members were being counselled specifically for their input into the Strategy, raising customer awareness, embedding good practice to enable access to homes, promoting of better practices to support those with additional requirements and approaches to collect monitoring data to evidence benefit. A Task and Finish Group was proposed to be set up from a range of partners was sought and volunteers were requested.

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

- It was raised that parking was a major issue in Sheltered Housing, with Emergency Services unlikely to be able to gain passage through blocked roads. Could this be looked at as a priority in specific areas where it was a safety issue?
- *Officers would look at this as a priority but unfortunately it was a case of prioritization, with parking just but one. It was recognised that certain areas were under pressure, with STAR survey comments highlighting this. Officers hoped that the under-utilised garages could meet some of this demand. An update was given in relation to the specific design issues with Leycroft Road.*
- A concern was raised on the procurement processes for obtaining temporary workers to deal with the Capital Works backlog and the potential for extra costs associated with this.

- *The Council had undertaken a fully compliant procurement exercise for this contract. The intention was to seek a longer-term arrangement to seek best value for the Council.*
- *In terms of the Asbestos works, it was confirmed that the Council regularly inspected those areas where it was encapsulated to ensure there was no damage or risk of contamination and this was why it was included in the Capital Programme.*
- It was requested that Tenants Action Group were invited to be involved.

The Report was noted and certain Group Members notified Shari of their willingness to serve on the Task and Finish Group being setup.

50. **Directorate Report**

The Director introduced his Directorate Report and gave a brief update on matters related to Local Government Re-organisation. This was starting to draw on more officer time to ensure the new organisation stood up successfully.

The Report was noted.

51. **AOB**

A request for information on the opening of the Wellington Office opening?

- *A written answer would be provided.*

(The Meeting ended at 8.15 pm)