

## Housing Performance Panel Minutes

**Date:** Thursday, 4 March 2021

**Time:** 1pm to 4pm

<b>Attendees:</b>	<p>GC – Geoff Clark (Chair)</p> <p>JP – Jennifer Perry (Vice Chair, Resident Involvement Team Leader)</p> <p>PC – Peter Campbell (Head of Housing)</p> <p>EW – Cllr Eileen Wilson</p> <p>LR – Les Rolfe</p> <p>PB – Paul Bowman</p> <p>PH – Patricia Hall</p> <p>FD – Ffion Daniels</p> <p>JRM – Jackie Reape-Moore</p> <p>MW – Margaret Wilson</p> <p>TH – Thomas Horseman (Resident Engagement Support Officer, minute taker)</p> <p>WN – Wayne Newman</p> <p>DB – Debbie Barrett</p> <p>BT – Bronwen Taylor (Observer)</p>
<b>Apologies:</b>	<p>HS – Cllr Hazel Smith</p>

Item	Subject	Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies</b></p> <p>Apologies were received from Cllr Hazel Smith (HS)</p>	-
2.	<p><b>Minutes of the previous meeting</b></p> <p>Amendments made to terms of reference, and code of conduct. (Training – Jennifer sending out invites)</p> <p>Last month minutes agreed by all attendees.</p>	<p>JP – send out invites to training sessions</p>

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3.	<p><b>Empty Properties</b></p> <p>DB explained empty homes (relets) process, both for a tenant moving out of their home and introducing a tenant to their new home, including both the tenant’s perspective and the housing officer perspective.</p> <p>FD – Suggests a clear set time be given for when tenants can move to prevent causing extra moving costs. DB agrees, Housing Officers do try to be flexible, will relay to team.</p> <p>FD –standard utility deal with SSE poor value, is renegotiation possible?</p> <p>DB responds that SSE agreement is with SCDC only, and tenants can negotiate a better deal with SSE or a new supplier. SSE contract being reviewed. Will talk to team about making this clear on sign up.</p> <p>FD – When being allocated a new property, does the housing officer bear in mind potential neighbourhood issues? DB: housing allocation based solely on need. when showing properties potential issues should be made clear, so the viewer can make an informed decision on whether to accept or refuse.</p> <p>FD – Wickes vouchers for decoration can only be used in store, can be difficult to redeem during lockdown. DB agrees this is a problem need an alternative in case of another pandemic.</p> <p>GC – Shall set up a working group to discuss these issues in more detail (supported by PC)</p>	<p>DB – reiterate to housing officers about being flexible for tenants’ circumstances</p> <p>DB – reiterate to housing officers the importance of reminding tenants that they are able to change their own utility contract</p> <p>DB – to return to the issue of Wickes vouchers and redeeming remotely.</p> <p>GC – organise working groups for</p>

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	<p>EW – Can tenants set their rent payment frequency? (example, calendar month).</p> <p>DB confirms can choose monthly, fortnightly, or weekly.</p> <p>MW – is gas supply capped when a tenant moves out?</p> <p>DB confirms, and new tenant (or a housing officer) arranges uncapping.</p> <p>MW – some staff assume new tenants know more than they do (example, permission for alterations).</p> <p>DB agrees, will reiterate to team to make rules / expectations clear at sign-ups.</p> <p>MW – Feedback from other tenants that housing officer attitude is a common issue.</p> <p>DB to discuss with MW later.</p> <p>MW – Is there a service that could provide furniture for those in hardship?</p> <p>DB agrees that some thought should be given to this.</p> <p>PH – Praised new key-safe measure for returning keys.</p> <p>LR – Is it possible for fixtures and fittings to be kept from previous tenants? PC suggests a working group out of this.</p>	<p>relets, fittings and furnishings removal.</p> <p>Everyone to send DB questions on relets to be answered in a FAQ.</p> <p>DB – Reiterate to housing officers that tenants need the rules and conditions of tenancy clearly explained.</p> <p>DB – pick up attitude issues of housing officers with MW.</p>

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	<p>JP – could top 10's for moving in be written up for new tenants?</p> <p>DB confirms this already exists for Housing Officers (checklist) but will put together a checklist for tenants.</p> <p>WN explains the process of preparing a newly void home before it is reallocated.</p> <p>FD –There are problems of long-term issues in older homes causing continuous maintenance (example, mould). MW concurs.</p> <p>WN to investigate FD's personal issue. PC comments: a new maintenance management strategy in the works, working with tenants to establish standard for all South Cambs homes to be brought up to and maintained to.</p> <p>PB – complimented operations team on listening to tenant suggestions and requests. Asked what is done to charge tenants that leave homes in poor condition.</p> <p>GC asked anyone interested to get involved with discussions on methods to prevent these situations. PB thinks lack of resources could be a cause.</p> <p>JP – New framework and activities could help educate less knowledgeable tenants and give them tools to help neighbours.</p> <p>MW – A clear interior standard could lessen work needed for relets. PC disagrees, council tenancies should be secure and give an opportunity for a family to grow. The council cannot / should not legislate lifestyle choices.</p>	<p>DB – create top 10 checklist for tenants moving in.</p> <p>WN – investigate damp and mould problems at FD's home</p>

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	<p>FD – could Mears notify of maintenance issues spotted during visits? GC confirms Mears do this already. FD suggests reviewing data on this area from Mears. PB concerned it comes across as Mears creating more work for themselves. JP suggests inspection guide to help tenants themselves check.</p>	
<p>4.</p>	<p><b>Review Q3 data for affordable homes performance</b></p> <p>PC said the B&amp;B spend was a legal requirement due to covid-19 and had received extra funding. Is not a failure sign.</p> <p><b>Average days to re-let housing stock.</b> PB – how much of time increase is from lack of steering by Mears management? GC thinks drop is from loss of Mears workers leaving or having to self-isolate, Covid-19, and material shortages. A new contractor was trialed for relets but did not work out. Another contractor being trialed currently.</p> <p><b>Satisfaction with responsive repairs.</b> GC – below target due to Covid-19’s impact on services.</p> <p>PB – concern of Mears sharing incorrect info on complaint quantity (all data recording issues seem to come from Mears). PH agreed, citing personal experiences. Suggested renegotiation of Mears contract. GC replies could be problem with Mears record protocol (service requests vs complaints). Contract will be revisited shortly. PC thinks contract will be difficult to renegotiate.</p> <p>FD – Mears good at responding if told to by council, poor response if contacted by tenants. Experienced unprofessionalism and negative council rhetoric from contractors.</p>	

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	<p>GC asked for the contractor's name and will investigate.</p> <p>MW – not knowing whether Mears or SCDC authorise a job can lead to confusion. Are the jobs counted as a complete job or not? FD and PB concur. GC suggests contacting WN to send a surveyor. JP suggests making a complaint.</p> <p>JP – consistent reporting of unanswered Mears calls since October and no info from Mears. GC thought that situation had been resolved. Data need to be explicitly requested, not yet a KPI.</p> <p>FD – Job summaries should be sent to customer once complete. PB concurs.</p> <p>MW – Disagreements on responsibilities between organisations (example, pathways) a problem, those who report not given updates.</p> <p>PC to give update on responsive repairs at the next meeting.</p> <p><b>Emergency repairs</b></p> <p>GC – performance not bad considering COVID-19</p> <p><b>Other comments</b></p> <p>PB – disappointed by Mears data recording, impact on figures understandable due to COVID-19. GC agrees but does not want COVID-19 to be used as a recurring excuse for missed targets.</p> <p>MW – rent arrears. Is rent arrears data for former tenants broken down into the nature, and is it pursued by council? GC yes, former tenant arrears is pursued. Funds spent investigating debt is greater</p>	<p>GC – investigate reports of unprofessionalism from Mears contractors.</p> <p>PC – update on responsive repairs and contract</p>

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	<p>than the arrears recovered. PC concurs, it is low value and easy to spend more than is recovered when chasing. Chasing arrears is more about sending a message.</p> <p>MW – is debt and arrears being worsened due to COVID-19? GC thinks not, hasn't heard of any cases of tenants not being able to get welfare support in time. MW thinks it is a problem being caused by DWP.</p> <p>FD – is rent arrears impacted by problems with Universal Credit overlap due to payments not being backdated? GC stated there are emergency funds that are paid back that can be claimed. Is a matter of completing an application and putting a claim in as soon as possible. LR said correct that with Universal Credit you can get an advance to prevent arrears.</p> <p>LR – website rent system consistently giving incorrect figures on rent arrears, in some cases more than £8,000. PB concurs.</p> <p>GC states revenues team working on revamping online self-service. Transition of rents system onto orchard may have caused some issues.</p> <p>PB – consistent yearly arrears rise noted. GC concurs, panel would benefit from inviting a member of revenues &amp; benefits team to ask questions about this.</p> <p>GC – number of SCDC received complaints in Q3 increased compared to Q2 &amp; Q1, which does not reflect data from Mears.</p>	<p>GC – invite member of revenues and benefits team to future meeting.</p>

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	<p>PB – are Mears sending all data / complaints to a single point at SCDC? Is a filter applied at SCDC to prevent duplicate complaints? JP investigated with Grace Andrews and no complaints from previous quarters have been ‘duplicated’. Core problem appears to be that Mears are unclear as to when to register a complaint. This has been fed back to Mears Corporate who are more understanding. Reporting issues appear to be a local issue within Mears. Mears have answered this with more training and have reassured that the January / February figures reflect more complaints being recorded (more accurate complaint recording).</p> <p>Meeting time lapsed before all data reviewed – will need to be continued later.</p> <p>MW – suggests leave reviewing of data until Housing Engagement Board is up and running. JP disagrees, the HEB is not relevant to performance reviewing.</p>	
5.	<b>Review Q3 complaints data Mears</b> – not reviewed in meeting	-
6.	<b>Review Q3 data for Mears Group</b> – not reviewed in meeting	-
7.	<b>New Heating Report data for SCDC</b> – not reviewed in meeting	-
8.	<b>Housing News</b> – not discussed in meeting	-
9.	<p><b>A.O.B</b></p> <p>PH – suggests focusing on any areas that are not improving. GC concurs.</p>	-



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	<p>PB – how much input will be given from tenants for the renewal of Mears contract? PC replied that the plan is to share a roadmap to putting contracts in place and give tenants an opportunity to be involved in the process.</p>	

**Date, time, and venue of the next**

**meeting:** Thursday 3 June 2021, 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Venue – Zoom (Virtual meeting)

The meeting ended at 4pm.