

Housing Performance Panel Minutes

Date: Tuesday 1 December 2020

Time: 1pm to 4pm

Venue: ZOOM – Virtual Meeting

1	Welcome & Apologies	Action
Present: Councillors:	Eileen Wilson (EW) Hazel Smith (HS)	-
SCDC:	Geoff Clark (GC) – Chair Peter Campbell (PC) – Head of Housing Jennifer Perry (JP) – Resident Involvement Team Leader Pam Cowles (PCs) – Resident Engagement Officer, Minute Taker	-
Tenants:	Jackie Reape-Moore (JRM) Ffion Daniels (FD) Les Rolfe (LR) Paul Bowman (PB) Margaret Wilson (MW) Patricia Hall (PH)	-
Apologies:	There were none.	-
	GC opened the meeting by welcoming the HPP. He said that the Council has come a long way in view of the difficult year and challenges having to work remotely. In review of tenant engagement and what we are trying to achieve with the HPP. He personally thanked JP and PCs in Resident Involvement for their work and the tenants and leaseholders in volunteering their time. By working together, the HPP can achieve great things. Given what the Government has said on one of the Green Papers on social housing it is an exciting time to be involved in Resident Involvement.	-

2	Terms of Reference	Action
	<p>GC referred to the document and asked if anyone had any comments.</p> <p>PB referred to point 6.3 and 6.4 and asked to clarify what is meant by 'attendance' considering we are meeting virtually at present and will at some point return to meetings in person in office locations. Would there be technology in place for those that need to stay apart from others be able to join the meeting?</p> <p>GC confirmed technology is available at Cambourne. When COVID-19 is over, there will be a mixture of holding meetings in the office and remotely, so people can dial in if they cannot attend the office.</p> <p>Cllr Smith said the Mears Board is still meeting and so the HPP does some of the same job and more. GC said the one of the agenda items at the Mears Board is assessing KPIs & performance. These meetings are represented by tenants as agreed by the Tenant Participation Group (TPG). Feedback was requested from the TPG if tenants should continue to attend Mears Board meetings. GC opened this up for discussion to the HPP for their thoughts. The Mears Board covers both the Gas and Heating contract.</p> <p>PB agreed tenants should attend the Mears Board meetings. Previously feedback has not been brought back to the TPG meetings.</p> <p>It was agreed that tenant representation should continue at the Mears Board meetings until the Housing Engagement Board (HEB) is officially elected in 2021.</p> <p>PC commented on point 4.4, this should be amended to 'members' and on point 4.5, this should read for normal term of office for 'other board members' and not just for Head of Housing and Lead Council Member.</p> <p>This was amended on 4 December 2020. Revised document sent to HPP / uploaded onto library link.</p>	<p>JP / PCs</p>

	<p>MW raised point 5.3 – If Vice Chair will be appointed at the meeting of deferred till later?</p> <p>GC said he would Chair meetings going forward and if on occasion he is unable to then a Vice Chair would need to be appointed if anyone would like to nominate. JP was nominated and it was agreed she will stand as Vice Chair.</p>	
3	Code of Conduct for Members	Action
	<p>GC discussed this with the HPP and asked if they had any questions on the document that was sent to them.</p> <p>PC raised point 2 – should this not be changed to ‘We don’t expect any board member to’ and not just for involved tenants?</p> <p>This was amended on 4 December 2020. Revised document sent to HPP / uploaded onto the library link.</p> <p>Cllr Smith asked if either the Code of Conduct for meetings or membership supersede each other?</p> <p>JP said one is for when we start to have the local area meetings and working groups intended for non-members.</p> <p>LH raised point 4 – Expenses and what this includes as he would like to claim expenses?</p> <p>GC replied this would be travelling expenses if we return to meetings at Cambourne or other locations. JP added this would be printing and paper expenses as previous filed by some volunteers.</p> <p>LR asked for a form to be sent to him to claim expenses.</p> <p>PCs sent a form to LR on 2 December 2020.</p>	<p>JP / PCs</p> <p>JP / PCs</p>
4	Code of Conduct for Meetings	Action
	<p>GC asked if we have a timeframe when the local area meetings will be set up?</p> <p>JP said these will be set up after the HEB elections and representatives are in place. These should start in summer of next year.</p>	-

	<p>MW asked if any personal details (names and addresses) of those wanting to apply to join the HEB will be made available to the public?</p> <p>JP said we will have the name, picture and statement of the candidate. No name or address will be given out to the public.</p>	
5	Sharing Information	Action
	<p>GC mentioned the link has now been set up prior to the meeting for all Members.</p> <p>JP confirmed a file in google docs has been set up for everyone to access via the link that was sent to all Members by email that week. All the documents should now be in the library. If any Member has difficulty accessing any of the documents, they should contact the Resident Involvement Team.</p>	-
6	Review 1 & 2 Quarter Data for SCDC	Action
	<p>GC discussed this data and said this had been looked at during the training and key performance sessions we just had. Focus was given on data where performance had changed this year and expenditure particularly on B&B & temporary accommodation in point AH212.</p> <p>These changes were due to COVID-19 and around SCDC supporting homeless persons. This has resulted in an increase in expenditure during the year.</p> <p>It is anticipated that this will fall next year as the organisation returns to business as normal and more properties become available through Home-Link.</p> <p>FD asked if those people housed due to COVID-19 will be made homeless again or will they be given priority to be housed by the Council?</p> <p>GC said from his understanding everyone in temporary accommodation will be picked up and provided permanent accommodation.</p> <p>PB queried how much of the shortfall of the figures in red, had been funded by the Government?</p>	

GC replied, funding from Government was received for the increase duties around Homeless persons and expenditure for this item comes from the general fund and is not Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Not sure how much of Government funding will be covered here.

PC said the final return to Government has not yet been completed and his understanding is the excess (not all the costs) are covered by the Government grant, but the extra that was spent to be met by the Government should be met by them.

PB asked if any shortfall would come from Council Tax payers? PC cannot guarantee this at present and it does not seem to be the intention of Government.

LR would like the B&B data to be shown by each month giving a breakdown of each month's expenditure, so the data can be easily understood. GC said we will try to have this data made more user friendly for next time.

There is a concern, not criticism, from Members around voids and empty properties, however they accept the reasons for slow down recently, and not much we can do. Concern around increase in demand for properties by those in temporary accommodation and homeless persons.

GC said it is not only our properties that people can bid for but properties belonging to other housing provides via Home-Link as well.

GC commented on point AH211 noting the figures had improved for relets and we are down to 63 or 64 which should continue over the months due to Mears bringing in another contractor called Fosters.

LR suggested if we could look at the comparison between Mears and Fosters and how well they are performing with our void properties, since Mears contract is due for renewal in 2022.

It was agreed that it would be useful to have a breakdown of the data of how many properties are re-let in how many numbers of days. How many properties had been emptied since last year or

	<p>JP said we have not had any update from Mears. Only Housing Services Officers are asking for contact details. On average we get 20 more emails per month.</p> <p>GC said we have some mobile solutions coming which will help when with the tenants to get details on the spot.</p>	
7	Review 1 & 2 Quarter Data for Mears Group	Action
	<p>Complaints & Compliments Data</p> <p>GC referred to data and types of complaints received.</p> <p>JP clarified these are complaints coming into SCDC and not ones that go to Mears.</p> <p>GC asked the Members if they had any comments on this data.</p> <p>PB asked why are we keeping figures of complaints about Mears when they submit figures for complaints they receive to SCDC?</p> <p>JP said Mears deal with complaints they receive and we deal with complaints we receive at SCDC. Other reasons why we receive complaints about Mears is because they do not have a process for complaints on their website. Tenants have not received a satisfactory response and come to us, instead of or in addition to Mears. It was suggested that complaints be discussed separately in more depth at a later date. GC agreed with this.</p> <p>PH said another problem with Mears complaints system is that tenants cannot get through to them by phone, which is why they are coming to SCDC.</p> <p>GC said the focus may need to be on developing a new maintenance contract that would solve some of the issues raised since Mears contract is ending in April 2022. This included suggestions from members to carry out tenant surveys.</p> <p>JP said she spoke with Mears about having an online complaints form on their website as part of the complaints process they are developing.</p> <p>Members said there is no email address for Mears complaints and customers struggle to complain by phone.</p> <p>PC commented the Mears contract is 12 years old and in place for 10 years and dated compared to how others operate now.</p>	

	<p>Going forward there will need to be an up to date way of reporting complaints.</p> <p>Rent Arrears 2020 / 2021</p> <p>Cllr Wilson has been involved in the Cottenham COVID-19 support group. Some in sheltered are going to the post office to pay rent, since they do not have bank accounts and she asked if this was a reflection on the rent arrear figures?</p> <p>GC was aware of this and support was provided to help ones in sheltered accommodation to pay their rent.</p> <p>GC discussed the performance data. There has been an increase across the weeks this year, partly due to Government introducing measures, so we could not go to court to seek possession for rent arrears. Or issue Notice of Seeking possession for those in serious rent arrears. Measures have been put in place to support tenants to engage with us.</p> <p>PC noted in 2016 (lowest point) it shows £300k and the highest point is £600k, showing rent arrears has doubled in 3 years. This is not all as a result of COVID-19.</p> <p>GC said the rent collection service is part of the Finance Team whereas most in the country have rent collection within Housing. GC and PC have discussed in moving forward how best to tackle rent arrears.</p> <p>GC suggested that we have someone from Revenue & Benefits attend the meeting to explain the data for the last few years further.</p> <p>Mears Performance Data</p> <p>GC went through the data for emergency and routine repairs reported. Early in the year Mears only tasked to do emergency repairs and tougher to get to these properties due to COVID-19 restrictions. We have a price per property. First fix does not affect us financially for Mears having to complete a repair on multiple occasions. Number of appointments kept are fine.</p> <p>PB said Mears have had issues losing operatives and recruiting.</p>	<p>JP / PCs</p>
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	<p>GC agreed that this is something SCDC will need to speak to Mears about as it must be on their radar if they decide to bid for the new contract for 2022.</p> <p>JP said that it is not reflected in the data that Mears had problems with their phone network to take calls. This would have an impact.</p> <p>GC said from his understanding Mears office staff were issued mobile phones to take calls and this has improved call waiting time to report repairs.</p>	
8	Any other Business	Action
	<p>GC asked if Members had anything to raise.</p> <p>MW said going forward she noticed in the Green Paper to remove the stigma of people living in Council housing.</p> <p>Terminology such as 'void' for empty properties and if the standard of homes can be noted down as an agenda item.</p> <p>PC responded that SCDC use 're-let' and we can discuss capital works on a contract by contract basis at a later time.</p> <p>JP said we are conscious about the language we use, so it is positive and not saying to the tenant what they can and cannot do. The tenant handbook will also be reviewed in due course.</p> <p>The consensus from the Members is the state of repair of properties to include fencing and overgrown trees needs to be reviewed.</p> <p>PC agreed this should be for discussion at a future time, as this involves tenant's rent contribution and they should have a say in this.</p> <p>JP asked the Members what type of training they would like, for example to do with scrutiny or housing?</p> <p>PB recommend training on how to ask questions or convey thoughts that can benefit SCDC.</p> <p>Cllr Smith wanted to discuss the gas performance as part of the HPP meeting.</p>	JP / PCs

	<p>JRM expressed she would have to know how to interpret and review data. Other Members agreed they would benefit from this training.</p> <p>MW said that one of the Council's objective is Green to The Core and what this means to the Council?</p> <p>GC said that this can be brought to the meeting as an agenda item</p> <p>JP confirmed the meeting agenda items for future meetings are: Arrears, Green to The Core, Voids, stigma, Gas performance data.</p> <p>JP said for the next meeting having a presentation on new build services or Housing Advice service. The White Paper and Residents Charter would need to be discussed.</p>	<p>JP / PCs</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>Additional Item – Follow-up from Mears Group</p>	<p>Action</p>
	<p>Check if the returned survey is charged at a text rate to the tenant</p> <p>Yes this is charged at the standard text rate</p> <p>Confirm at what point the survey goes out to the tenant (is this as soon as the job is completed)</p> <p>Yes this is the case as soon as the job is closed on MCM the survey is generated</p> <p>Voice of the Customer Data from July, August, September and October.</p> <p>Mears are just waiting for data back on this and will return asap. The data to be forwarded is that belonging to South Cambs containing details of their customers. Whilst we will do all we can to ensure that in our reports personal data has been removed please double check prior to forwarding to the tenant group there is no personal information contained within.</p> <p>Set up the link between Grace and Mears for regular complaints review, please can I have Grace's surname – (received thank you).</p> <p>Mears will pick this up in the next couple of weeks and establish contact.</p>	<p>-</p>

	<p>Share Mears revised. reviewed Complaints Process once signed off by Your Voice Board</p> <p>Mears will send this out as soon as it is released</p> <p>Q1 and Q2 Data enclosed</p> <p>JP emailed documents to the HPP on 2 December 2020 and filed them in the google drive folder under 1 December meeting</p> <p>The Chair concluded the meeting at 4:10pm</p>	
	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p>	<p>-</p>
	<p>Thursday 4 March 2021 from 1:00pm to 4:00pm ZOOM – Virtual Meeting</p>	<p>-</p>