

Housing Engagement Board
Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting
held on Thursday, 23 March 2023
from 2pm to 4pm via Zoom

Attendees: Cllr John Batchelor – Chair
Dave Kelleway – Vice Chair
Jim Watson
Les Rolfe
Margaret Wilson
Peter Tye

By Invitation: Julie Fletcher (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Strategy)
Eddie Spicer (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Assets)
Dave Armitage (SCDC – Resident Involvement Team Leader)
Debbie Barrett (SCDC – Housing Services Team Leader)
Bronwen Taylor (SCDC – Resident Involvement Officer) – Minute taker
Gina Manderson (SCDC – Housing Communications Officer) – Admin Support

Apologies: Peter Campbell (SCDC – Head of Housing)
Cllr Mark Howell (absent – no apology received)
Cllr Jose Hales (absent – no apology received)
Jackie Wrenn
Geoff Clark (SCDC – Services Manager – Tenancy and Estates)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2.01pm. He especially welcomed Jackie Wrenn, the new tenant representative, however added that she had sent her apologies for this meeting.

Apologies were received from Peter Campbell, Jackie Wrenn and Geoff Clark.

2. Appointment of Chair

The Chair advised that as per the Terms of Reference he had been appointed as the Chair for the first year and thereafter a new Chair was to be appointed, however, no nominations had been received.

Julie Fletcher said that nominations could be given, and seconded, at this meeting. She advised that Cllr Batchelor had chaired for the first year as this was a new board, and that it would give them an opportunity to get familiar with how the HEB ran. She added that the plan was to then have a tenant representative as the Chair.

The Chair said that the tenant representatives would need to give some thought as to who should be elected as chair, however, he would chair this meeting. He asked the tenant representatives to meet to discuss the appointment of a chair for the next two years.

Dave Kelleway said that his preference would be that a tenant representative would be the Vice Chair and that the Lead Member for Housing would be the Chair, as this had more power when decisions were made. He added that Cllr Batchelor had done a good job and he hoped that he would continue as the Chair.

The Chair said that he wanted to make sure that the board was in agreement.

The Board agreed to Cllr Batchelor continuing as the Chair for the next year.

Dave Kelleway said that the Terms of Reference needed to be reviewed as not only did the terms of office for the Chair and Vice Chair differ, but there had been a change in the terms in the co-option policy.

Dave Kelleway proposed that Cllr Batchelor chair the board for another year which was seconded by Margaret Wilson.

The Board were all in agreement.

Action by: Dave Armitage

3. Quorum

The meeting was quorate.

4. Minutes of previous meeting – 15 December 2022

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 15 December 2022.

Margaret Wilson said that the last sentence in item 6.3 should read “Eddie Spicer said that the problem was that people who hired the hall interfered with the heating system.”

Subject to the amendment, the minutes were approved by the board as a true reflection of the meeting.

Action by: Bronwen Taylor

Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 15 December 2022

The matters arising from the previous meeting are listed below for noting.

Item 4.2 – Forward Plan

Eddie Spicer advised that the issue that Margaret Wilson had raised with her shed, etcetera, were inspected early in January 2023 and the remedial works were booked for Wednesday 8 March 2023 for completion.

Margaret Wilson said that the job had not been completed properly, as there was still a problem with the brickwork, and asked how this could be resolved.

Eddie Spicer said that he had not received feedback since the work had been completed.

Margaret Wilson said that according to the paperwork and the system it had been completed, and asked how they could address this problem of closure.

The Chair said he thought that tenants were asked to sign off on a job once it had been completed.

Eddie Spicer said that they were asked to sign off and the tenants received a customer satisfaction survey to complete following the completion of the job.

Margaret Wilson said that she received a text to click on a link on her phone, but she was unable to do this on her phone.

The Chair said that we would be adopting a different system for customer satisfaction and would employ a professional company to do this work rather than the contractor.

Eddie Spicer confirmed that the contractor would still be doing their survey, however, we would be having a monthly external sample taken.

Item 5.3 – Sheltered Housing Schemes Audit Accounts

Martin Lee advised that they would be preparing the statements at the end of February 2023 / early March 2023 and would send them out in order that they could be displayed in each Communal Room from April 2023, the start of the new financial year. The statements would be the estimated costs for the Year 2023 / 2024.

Margaret Wilson said that they still had unresolved audited accounts and that they wanted to see all incoming and outgoing transactions, for example, service charges.

Julie Fletcher said that she would take this issue back to Martin Lee to look into.

Margaret Wilson referred to the communal room heating that was still coming on at odd times and said that she had spoken to the Sheltered Estate Officer who said that she would look into the issue. She added that the system had to be updated each week and was not designed for a communal hall.

Cllr Batchelor asked Eddie Spicer to investigate this issue.

Action by: Julie Fletcher and Eddie Spicer

Item 5.4 – Fixed Term Tenancies

Geoff Clark has provided an updated report on Fixed Term Tenancies which is included for noting.

Julie Fletcher advised that we would be contacting all tenants who were coming up to their 9 year tenancy by the end of April 2023.

Item 5.5 – Co-option Policy

Bronwen Taylor has added the word “leaseholder” to the policy documents where applicable.

Item 5.7 – New Repairs contract – Performance Review Joint Working Group

The HPP and HEB meeting dates have been set to be held after the working group’s meetings.

Item 5.11 – Damp and mould

Eddie Spicer advised that he had not received any issues from the Board members, however, a great deal of work was being done and a new policy would be ready soon.

Item 6.1 – Stigma

Margaret Wilson provided a summary of the national Stigma meeting she attended on 28 November 2022 and would report back under item 6.7.

Item 6.2 – Housing Strategy Review

Julie Fletcher advised that a questionnaire on the high level vision and objectives had recently been sent to the board. She said that this was much wider than our landlord services and covered all housing, and was a much more wider overarching strategy. She said that a lot of meetings had been held with stakeholders and that feedback would be provided in August / September 2023.

5. Standing Items

5.1 New Repairs Contract – Performance Review Joint Working Group

Eddie Spicer referred to the report included in the pack and advised that two meetings had been held. He said that they were looking at Key Performance Indicators and overall satisfaction, and that there had been no issues to discuss. He added that the meetings were useful and that the tenants feedback was valued.

The Chair asked about the restructuring of the voids targets.

Eddie Spicer said that Peter Campbell, Geoff Clark and he were doing research work on this and that voids reporting would be broken down into different categories of 5, 10 and 25 day voids, and then a section on major voids being the refurbishment of kitchens and bathrooms. He said that once all the data were collected, they would have a proposal for targets which should be ready by April 2023.

The Chair said that at the moment it would appear that there was no chance of getting to target as the vast majority were in the 25 day KPI.

Margaret Wilson asked to avoid the use of the word “void”.

Eddie Spicer apologised and said that it would not be used. He explained the different situations with delays of empty properties.

A discussion on the refurbishment of properties was held.

Margaret Wilson asked if prospective tenants could be consulted on new kitchens, etcetera, before they moved into a property.

Eddie Spicer said that it was difficult to always consult with incoming tenants as there was a 6 week lead time to refurbish, however, if a property was in an acceptable standard, tenants would be allowed to move in and the work would be done at a later stage. He added that they would then be consulted on the new kitchen or bathroom.

5.2 Forward Plan

Julie Fletcher referred to the Forward Plan included in the pack and asked if there were any items the board thought should be brought forward.

Margaret Wilson asked for an update on the progress of improving the website.

Julie Fletcher said that as this was the corporate website, the Communications team were currently looking at our intranet which was the basis for the website. She said they were looking at providers and the style in terms of what that may look like. She added that the improvement of the website was still in the early stages of development, however, we would look at improving Housing's pages on the website in the meantime.

Dave Kelleway said that the Garage and Land Review decisions made needed to come back to the HEB.

Julie Fletcher said that it would not go straight to Cabinet and she was not sure of what was contained in the Garage and Land Review, however, Bronwen Taylor had set up a meeting to be held in April 2023 for Kirstin Donaldson to discuss with the HEB. She said from that discussion we would look at what decisions, if any, and what process would be taken. She added that going forward, in terms of Cabinet decisions, they should come to the HEB first and we needed to get smarter internally to ensure that that happened.

5.3 Mutual Exchange Policy

Julie Fletcher advised that she was hoping to present the draft copy of the policy today, however, we were near finalising it and it would be distributed shortly. She said that the board would have an opportunity to review the document and make comments before meeting to go through it, and that the meeting would be set up after 26 April 2023.

5.4 New Tenant Representatives Complaints Portal

Julie Fletcher advised that we were in the process of tweaking a few questions on the electronic form and as soon as this had been finalised, we would provide training. She added that in the meantime, if there were any tenant queries that needed escalation, to send the details to Bronwen Taylor.

5.5 Key Amnesty Campaign

The Chair advised that the Key Amnesty Campaign ended on 28 February 2023 and that he was not aware of any keys being returned, however, it was a good way of raising

awareness of tenancy fraud. He added that the team were in the process of analysing the data and that a report would be sent out in due course.

6. New Matters

6.1 Communal Areas Review

Debbie Barrett said that there was a need for improvement and that there was no consistency in any of the communal areas. She said that they were already doing some work, examples being bike and bin storage areas and ensuring notice boards were kept up to date. She added that there was a good argument to have an increase in service charges in order to employ cleaners for the common areas.

Debbie Barrett said that she had spoken to some tenants and they all felt that they would like the communal areas to look better and to be safe. She said that she wanted to move forward with a consultation on service charges.

The Chair asked who was responsible for the communal areas.

Debbie Barret replied that SCDC was responsible for maintenance and repairs but not for cleaning these areas.

The Chair asked if there were any private owners.

Debbie Barrett said that there were some leaseholders, however, more investigation into this was needed.

Les Rolfe said that there were some very clean and tidy communal areas, however, when issues at communal areas on estate inspections were reported, it would appear that no actions or follow ups were made.

Debbie Barrett said that she would ask the HSOs to provide her with all the issues and she would investigate. She added that she would be checking on the issues raised on the estate inspections actions and records worksheet.

A discussion on issues in communal areas was held.

Dave Kelleway said that he thought it was a good idea to consult on service charges, however, we would need to check if leaseholders could be legally charged. He added that all recommendations should be referred to the HEB.

Peter Tye said that if cleaners were employed they would be able to provide feedback on the condition of the communal areas.

Action by: Debbie Barrett

6.2 Co-option of New Member

Bronwen Taylor advised that the co-option vacancy and application documents were uploaded to SCDC's website on 20 January 2023, as well as being advertised in the February 2023 newsletters and regularly on Facebook. She said that two applications had been received and as one of the applicants was from the East area, the applicant, Jackie Wrenn, had been duly elected onto the board. She added that emails were sent to both applicants on 7 March 2023 advising them of the outcome.

6.3 Review of Resident Engagement Framework

Dave Armitage said that the previous review was for 2020 – 2023 and that a meeting with the tenant representatives to discuss this would be held in May 2023.

6.4 Asset Management Strategy Action Plan

Julie Fletcher said that good progress had been made on some of the key actions and that eleven projects had been completed in the first year. She said a further two actions (highlighted in green) were on track to be completed by the target date and a further thirteen actions (highlighted in amber) were anticipated to be completed by the target date or the target date had been revised. She added that a further seven actions were dependent on other actions being completed before these could be started, the majority being down to the Housing Stock Condition Survey.

The Chair said that we would only see the results of the Housing Stock Condition Survey towards the end of the year.

Julie Fletcher said that it was on the Forward Plan for the first quarter of next year and that we were in the process of appointing the contractor.

Eddie Spicer said that it was due to start at the end of April 2023.

Dave Kelleway said that he was concerned about the delays with the policies, in particular the Green Measures policy (G5) which had a revised date of October 2023 and the renewal of the Grounds Maintenance contract which was due in September 2023. He asked if they were connected and should they not be considered together.

Julie Fletcher said the Grounds Maintenance contract was separate and the Green Measures policy was how we were going to double nature. She added that we have tried to be a bit more realistic with some of our targets.

Eddie Spicer said that the Grounds Maintenance contract would be procured in partnership with County Council, who were leading on this project.

Margaret Wilson said that she was a part of the Doubling Nature project and had not heard anything about this. She added that there were some enthusiastic tenants who were interested in making some improvements to a communal area and that she had spoken to Geoff Clark about it who said that SCDC could provide some funding, however, she had received no feedback since. She asked how the HEB would be involved in appointing the new grounds maintenance contractors.

Julie Fletcher said that as the contract was in conjunction with County Council they may not have as much involvement with the procurement, however, they would still be involved with helping with the specifications, looking at the performance indicators, etcetera. She referred to the doubling nature activities and said that Dave Armitage would be getting involved with community grants and community activities.

6.5 Community Activities

Dave Armitage advised that he had met with all the tenant volunteers at the end of February 2023 and said that he was planning to arrange community activities, for example, litter picking, together with tenant volunteers, in order to make ourselves visible and to encourage residents to find out more about what we do. He said he would be sending out a schedule of planned events.

Action by: Dave Armitage

6.6 Summary of the National Stigma Meeting

Margaret Wilson referred to her report in the pack and said that she hoped that the board got the general gist, which was similar across the country. She referred to the HEB's involvement in the new Sheltered Estate Team Leader role and said that they had received dates at the last minute. She said that they needed to be involved in the process from an early stage.

7. Any Other Business (AOB)

7.1 Parking of vehicles on grass areas

Jim Watson referred to vehicles parking on the grass areas in Willingham and asked how stopping this could be enforced. He added that it had been reported but it would appear that no action had been taken.

Debbie Barrett said that this rule was in tenancy agreements and that this complaint was addressed, however it was difficult to enforce. She asked Jim Watson to send her the details of his complaint.

8. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2023 / 2024

The Chair referred to the proposed meeting dates for 2023 / 2024 as follows:

- 29 June 2023 (Zoom / venue to be confirmed)
- 28 September 2023 (Zoom / venue to be confirmed)
- 14 December 2023 (Zoom / venue to be confirmed)
- 28 March 2024 (Zoom / venue to be confirmed)

Bronwen Taylor said she would send out meeting invitations.

Action by: Bronwen Taylor

9. Closing

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting ended at 3:58pm.