



# Housing Engagement Board

Quarterly Meeting

28 September 2023 – 2pm to 4pm

Agenda Pack

# Housing Engagement Board Agenda

Date: **Thursday, 28 September 2023**

Time: **2pm – 4pm**

Venue: **Zoom (Virtual Meeting)**

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## **1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair will welcome all present and apologies will be noted.

## **2. Quorum**

A quorum shall consist of 50% of members.

## **3. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 17 July 2023 and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2023 are included for approval.

**Housing Engagement Board**  
**Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting**  
**held on Monday, 17 July 2023**  
**from 2pm to 4pm via Zoom**

- Attendees:** Cllr John Batchelor – Chair  
Peter Campbell (SCDC – Head of Housing)  
Dave Kelleway – Vice Chair  
Les Rolfe  
Oana Sutherland  
Margaret Wilson
- By Invitation:** Julie Fletcher (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Strategy)  
Geoff Clark (SCDC – Services Manager – Tenancy and Estates)  
Eddie Spicer (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Assets)  
Martin Lee (SCDC – Housing Accountant)  
Dave Armitage (SCDC – Resident Involvement Team Leader)  
Bronwen Taylor (SCDC – Resident Involvement Officer) – Minute taker
- Apologies:** Cllr Mark Howell  
Cllr Jose Hales (absent – no apology received)  
Jim Watson

**1. Ratification of East Co-option Board Member**

Bronwen Taylor advised that following the last meeting, Jackie Wrenn, the newly appointed HEB member had resigned due to personal unforeseen circumstances. She said that the vacancy for the East was re-advertised and four applications had been received, which included two qualified applications from the East area.

Dave Armitage advised that a meeting was held on 12 June 2023 to interview the two qualified applicants. He said that both Dave Kelleway and Les Rolfe agreed on the successful candidate, however, as the meeting was not quorate, they agreed to discuss their votes with rest of the board.

Dave Kelleway said that they had discussed the candidate and had all agreed with the vote.

The board were all in agreement with the co-option of Oana Sutherland.

## 2. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2.01pm. He especially welcomed Oana Sutherland, the new tenant representative for the East.

Apologies were received from Councillor Mark Howell and Jim Watson.

## 3. Quorum

The meeting was quorate.

## 4. Minutes of previous meeting – 23 March 2023

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2023.

The minutes were approved by the board as a true reflection of the meeting.

### 4.1 Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 23 March 2023

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

#### Item 2 – Appointment of Chair

Dave Armitage advised that the appointment of the Chair was on the agenda at the last meeting and that Cllr John Batchelor had been asked to stand for another year, to which he had agreed.

Dave Armitage said that at the last meeting he was asked to review the Terms of Reference document, in particular item number 6, Chairing Meetings. He asked the Tenant Representatives how they wanted it reworded as he could not make changes without consulting them first.

Dave Kelleway said that the concern was that the frequency and tenure of the Chair was not reflected and he suggested that it be changed every year and be aligned with the Vice Chair. He added that he did not think that there should be a maximum term for the Vice-Chair.

Margaret Wilson said that when discussions on the terms were originally held, the thought process was that the election of the Chair and Vice-Chair should not coincide for the purposes of continuity of the board. She added that a maximum term was added so that the same person did not indefinitely run it.

The Chair said that they needed something simple and to remove any restrictions.

Dave Kelleway suggested having elections annually for the Chair and Vice Chair.

The Chair asked for any objections to which there were none.

Dave Kelleway suggested that the Chair be the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing and the Vice Chair should always be a tenant.

The Chair said that it should be left as open as possible and that some tenants may not be happy with the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing being the chair.

Dave Armitage said that he would amend the Terms of Reference document and then send it to the board to approve.

**Action by: Dave Armitage**

#### **Item 4 – Minutes of previous Meeting – 15 December 2022**

Bronwen Taylor amended the last sentence in item 6.3 of the minutes to read “Eddie Spicer said that the problem was that people who hired the hall interfered with the heating system.”

#### **Item 5.3 – Sheltered Housing Schemes Audit Accounts**

1.) Dave Armitage said that transparency of the accounts for sheltered housing schemes had been requested and that he had a spreadsheet with the details. He added that Marianne Crozier, the new Sheltered Estate Team Leader, was working through the spreadsheet and as soon as she had a better understanding of the details, would present the information to the board. He asked the board if they wanted this as a regular agenda item or as and when it was required.

Margaret Wilson said that they had asked for copies of accounts, showing the incomings and outgoings for the sheltered schemes, to be placed in all communal halls in order for all residents to see them.

Martin Lee said that it was agreed at the meeting in March 2023 that the assumed cost and income for the sheltered scheme, based on the service charges, should have been displayed since April 2023.

Dave Armitage said that the accounts that he was referring to was not the sheltered scheme accounts but the income that was generated from the communal halls, example, room bookings, and asked who would record this information.

Martin Lee said that he thought it would be the Sheltered Estate Officer.

Dave Armitage said that he and Marianne Crozier were busy working on this.

Margaret Wilson said that they required a straightforward book-keeping ledger with income and outgoings outside of the service charges. She said that the reason that this had arisen was because a.) hiring charges were introduced to residents who already paid which were the same for non-residents, which was unfair, and b.) it would appear that the Parish Council had been using the hall for many years without paying.

**Action by: Dave Armitage and Marianne Crozier**

- 2.) Eddie Spicer advised that the heating systems at the Communal Halls had been looked at by Chris Brown and he had spoken to the responsible Sheltered Estate Officers. He said they were all happy with the operation of the system and knew how to use it, and were satisfied that it was working appropriately.

**Item 6.1 – Communal Areas (Flats)**

Dave Armitage advised that a review was in the process of being conducted by Debbie Barrett, which was not yet complete, and that consultations would be held with residents to find out their views on the cleanliness of their blocks of flats and if they were willing to pay a service charge. He added that he was looking at in-house training on communal block inspections and asked if any of the tenant representatives would be interested in attending.

Les Rolfe said that when there were blocks of flats at the formal estate inspections, they were inspected and suitable comments were made.

Geoff Clark said that a project group had been set up to review the communal areas which Debbie Barrett reported on at the last meeting. He added that he and Eddie Spicer were meeting to discuss introducing a more formal inspection regime on blocks of flats, and what was needed to cover off in terms of what was being inspected, and then moving those areas of work onto the appropriate people. He said that when the Housing Officers were at an estate with blocks of flats, they did check on them which meant that inspections were happening all the time, but some were on an informal basis.

## **Item 8 – Proposed Meeting Dates for 2023 / 2024**

Bronwen Taylor sent out all the meeting invitations for 2023 / 2024.

## **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 the contract was going well. He said that one or two issues had been raised by the working group and were being investigated.

### **5.2 Forward Plan 2023 / 2024**

Julie Fletcher referred to the Forward Plan included in the pack and said that this was a standing item on the agenda on what we had been working on. She asked if there were any items that were missing or that the board wanted brought to the meeting to discuss to be added to the Forward Plan.

Margaret Wilson referred the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy and asked what it was about.

Julie Fletcher explained that it was a joint strategy with the City Council which covered a wide aspect of housing. She said that social housing was a small element of it and it also looked at the planning side, which was linked in very closely with the new local plan, planning policies and the private rented sector, and it covered a wide range of housing topics which was bringing everything that we do, together. She added that it was a high-level document and earlier this year a consultation, looking at our key objectives and aims, was held. She said that we were almost at draft stage and that once officers had viewed it, we would share it with the board.

Margaret Wilson said she had queried this as there was all the fuss about charging for vehicles which was the Greater Cambridge Partnership and she asked if SCDC had any contact with them.

Julie Fletcher said that the links were there in terms of strategy, however, they were separate policies.

Margaret Wilson asked about the re-tender of the grounds maintenance contract.

Geoff Clark said that Debbie Barrett was working on the tender for the new contract and a decision had been made, however, it was not yet public knowledge and would be announced in the next few weeks.

Margaret Wilson asked if tenant representatives would be involved in the shaping of key performance indicators.

Geoff Clark said that the new contract would only start in September / October this year and, as soon as the winning bidder was announced, we would get together with tenant representatives to look at how we shape the new contract and set the service standards.

Dave Kelleway asked about the progress the Fixed Term Policy.

Julie Fletcher advised that as part of the policy review, there were a great deal of other policies that were aligned to the tenancy policy, which was the reason we were still working on it, although the critical thing was ending the fixed term tenancies which we had done as we were no longer offering this.

Geoff Clark said that we were consulting with those tenants whose fixed term tenancies were coming to an end and had been transferring them to a secure tenancy, which had been going well.

Les Rolfe said that the grounds maintenance contract had again been appointed without consultation with tenant representatives.

Geoff Clark said that we had previously discussed the difficulty in getting tenant engagement as this tender process was being led by the City Council with sensitive information.

Les Rolfe said that the tenants could have been involved in what they would have liked to see happen which could have been relayed back to City Council.

Geoff Clark explained that the tenders were scored together as it was one contractor who was delivering both services although they were managed separately. He said that tenants would be consulted to assist with shaping the contract and setting the key performance indicators.

Les Rolfe said that on behalf of Paul Bowman, it would be nice to see the service contract as they had never seen one.

Margaret Wilson said that at the last meeting the tenants were advised that they would have some information before the contract was awarded. She said that now that the legislation had the Royal assent to empower tenants more, were the County Council not bound by this or because they were not their tenants, they did not have to listen to them.

Geoff Clark said that as they were a separate organisation, they were not part of that process and the tender documents had gone out earlier this year. He said that the focus now should be shaping the new contract.

Margaret Wilson asked if the contract had already been awarded, how could it be shaped further.

Geoff Clark explained that they would have won the contract based upon pricing and what they were going to provide for us but that did not mean that we could not talk to them about shaping the service standards, the key performance indicators, etcetera.

Les Rolfe agreed with Margaret Wilson and said that as the contract was already awarded, they would not want new input.

### **5.3 New Tenant Representatives Complaints Portal**

Julie Fletcher advised that the new Tenant Representatives Complaints Portal was live and available for tenant representatives to use to escalate queries on behalf of tenants. She said that the process on how to access the online form was included in the pack and asked the tenant representatives to test it.

Margaret Wilson asked if this form should be used after an initial query was raised by a tenant to which Julie Fletcher replied that it was.

### **5.4 Key Amnesty Campaign**

The Chair referred to the reports enclosed in the pack and said that the Key Amnesty Campaign had been useful in raising awareness of tenancy fraud.

Les Rolfe asked if the 71 tenancy terminations were due to the council terminating tenancies.

Geoff Clark said that they were not and were natural terminations.

Margaret Wilson referred to the second sentence in the last paragraph on page 26 of the agenda pack and asked what was meant by “The reasons for each termination described mirrored typical trends.”

Geoff Clark advised that typical reasons for terminations were tenants passing away, going into care, transferring within South Cambs, transferring to another housing provider, moving in with family, moving out of the district for various reasons, to name a few, and the 71 terminations fell into these categories.

## 5.5 Estate Inspections Report

Bronwen Taylor referred to the enclosed report for noting.

Margaret Wilson asked for an explanation of the gradings of 1 to 4.

Bronwen Taylor explained that the gradings were from 4 to 1 and that four meant in an excellent condition and one meant in a very bad condition. She advised that the tenant volunteers and housing officers agreed on the gradings at each inspection.

Les Rolfe asked for the gradings document to be sent to the board.

Margaret Wilson said that there had been a couple of mentions of spraying of weeds and had been questioned in relation to nature. She referred to the pond at Wisbey's Yard and said that one had to be extremely careful with any kind of spray near water, and asked what care was taken when sprays were used.

Peter Campbell said the point of the inspections was to identify problems and it was not up to the person who identified the problem to decide what action was needed. He said that once it was reported, it would be up to the contractor to decide the best course of action to be taken.

Geoff Clark said that pesticides and spraying could be a part of shaping the new contract. He said that they were having a conversation with tenants in Cottenham about introducing a pilot project where we cut back weeds by hand instead of using pesticides to spray them. He said that we encouraged weed growth in certain areas, however, we did get complaints from some residents asking why some areas were left untidy and why they were not being maintained. He added that there was a fine balance between finding suitable areas to leave to let weeds grow and encourage biodiversity and but other areas that need to be maintained.

Margaret Wilson said that when weeds were sprayed, they often grew back as they were not cleared properly.

**Action by: Bronwen Taylor**

## 6. New Matters

### 6.1 Co-option of New Member (West Area)

Bronwen Taylor advised that following the resignation of Peter Tye, she had uploaded the details of the co-option vacancy and application documents for the West area to SCDC's website on 22 June 2023. She added that it was advertised in the July 2023 newsletters as

well as regularly on Facebook, and that the closing date for applications was 24 July 2023. She said that one application had been received, which would be sent to the HEB members after the closing date together with any others received.

Peter Campbell requested a letter of thanks be sent to Peter Tye.

**Action by: Bronwen Taylor**

## 6.2 Complaints

Julie Fletcher referred to the document included in the pack and said that this was discussed in detail at the quarterly Housing Performance Panel (HPP) meetings, and said that the board should refer to the tenant representatives on the HPP for clarification. She said most of the complaints received were for repairs and maintenance, which was expected and was in line with national trends. She said that although the number of complaints were very low at 2%, this was taken very seriously and we did have a robust system on place.

Dave Kelleway asked why there had been a high number of 23 unresolved complaints at stage 1.

Julie Fletcher said that a number of issues contributed to this, one being that we promoted our complaints process more, so we were probably capturing more complaints properly now than how we were before.

Geoff Clark said that some of this was down to COVID and the cost-of-living crisis.

Dave Kelleway said that a useful comparison would be against other councils.

Eddie Spicer said that post Grenfell and the regulations of the white paper had encouraged residents to put issues forward and to be more involved.

Dave Kelleway asked where the outcomes of the Ombudsman complaints were reported to?

Julie Fletcher said there was only one last year and they needed to look at how to publish the information. She added that we do have benchmarking with other service providers with HouseMark.

## 6.3 Policy Review

Julie Fletcher said that as Abida Ruma's contract had come to an end at the end of June 2023 and Martyn Hilliam was still on secondment, we would either be recruiting for a

new officer or Martyn Hilliam would return to that position. She reported on the policies as follows:

- Mutual Exchange Policy – to be presented to Cabinet on 26 September 2023. As representatives of the HEB, the tenant representatives could make a written statement or attend the meeting and make a statement at the meeting. Details of how to do this would be sent after the meeting as well, as the report that would go to Cabinet which would include the notes from their previous meeting.
- Damp and Mould Policy – we were working with an independent technical expert to develop this policy which would be presented to the HEB at the September 2023 quarterly meeting, if not before.
- Aids and Adaptations Policy – we were busy with the first draft. Julie Fletcher asked if any tenant representatives would like to volunteer on this group.
- Tenancy Policy – Abida Ruma had made good progress on this policy. This policy inter dependencies with the Introductory Policy and the Assignment and Succession Policy, which we needed to tie together and bring them together in terms of a suite of policies.
- Communications Standard Policy – this had come out of the service and improvements plan following the Tenant Satisfaction Survey and should be done by the end of the financial year.
- Homelessness Review and Strategy – would be presented to the HEB.
- Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy – would be presented to the HEB.

Margaret Wilson asked if Ermine Street and Shire Homes provided social housing or private renting?

Peter Campbell explained that they were two separate companies. He explained that Shire Homes was set up to do private lets which was funded through the general fund and rented properties which were not only within the district, and made a commercial return. He said Ermine Street was slightly different in that it had accommodation in the district and surrounding authorities. He said it was not social housing but was intended to provide accommodation for people who were struggling to find housing elsewhere and who were referred by our Housing Advice Service. He added that it got more complicated as we had properties that were owned by Ermine Street but were managed by Shire Homes, which provided more housing options for people who were struggling to identify options.

**Action by: Julie Fletcher**

## 6.4 Service Plan and Resourcing

Peter Campbell said that this document was produced annually which was a summary of the department, which set out who we were, what we did and what our plans were for the year. He said it included the landlord and non-landlord services. He added that it referred to Ermine Street, but had not gone into much detail, as it had its own business plan which was agreed by its own board.

Peter Campbell said that it was influenced by a number of things both internal and external within the department, such as achievements that were promised through the Asset Management Strategy, Corporate Council wide aims, for example doubling nature, and the wider changes that go on in the industry, for example the changing and increasing influence of the Housing Regulator on the way that we operate. He said that wider than this was that we tried to reflect the economic pressures on the service, which recently included refugee housing and the cost of living.

Peter Campbell referred to the document and said that we had included our service vision which the tenant representatives had helped us develop through the Asset Management Strategy. He also referred to the background of each of the five primary functions of the Housing Service and went through the document. He added that this was an internal document but it was important to get unput from tenants.

A discussion on affordable homes was held.

Julie Fletcher said that this was a current document where we were trying to set out our key priorities for the coming year and we were looking at April 2024 for the next service plan. She added it was to get input from the tenant representatives and to make sure that we had the right priorities in context of our budget constraints. She said it was to ensure that we had not missed any issues and to better understand the challenges faced by the Housing Service. She asked if the board thought if there were any missing items.

The Chair asked if a working group would be set up.

Julie Fletcher said that although this was a corporate document, input from the board, on how they would like to take this forward, would be welcomed.

Martin Lee said that last year he had presented the budget after it had been formed and the tenant volunteers had asked to be involved earlier. He said he would invite them to a meeting in September to give their input.

Dave Kelleway referred to item GTOC – 3bi in the table on page 54 of the agenda pack and asked if the maintenance programme included watering.

Geoff Clark advised that it was included for Bourn and Great Abington, and that we worked with the Parish Councils for other trees.

Dave Kelleway referred to the third item (data analysis of reasons for refusal) in the table on page 56 of the agenda pack and asked if the reports could be shared with the HEB.

Peter Campbell said they could be.

Dave Kelleway referred to the fourth item (allotments owned by the Council) in the table on page 57 of the agenda pack and said that he did not know that South Cambs had allotments.

Geoff Clark said that we did not have many and that historical arrangements were in place and this was one of the items that would be looked at by the new Lands Officer.

Dave Kelleway asked for support for allotments schemes.

Margaret Wilson referred to GTOC – 3bii in the table on page 54 of the agenda pack and asked if St Vincent's Close was one of the pilots?

Geoff Clark said it was not and asked for suggestions for wildflower areas.

Julie Fletcher asked for feedback to be sent to her and if the board would like a separate session. She said that this would be brought to the September 2023 meeting. She also asked for a few volunteers to assist with working on the Aids and Adaptations policy.

**Actions by: Peter Campbell and HEB / Julie Fletcher**

## **7. Any Other Business (AOB)**

### **7.1 Stock Condition Survey**

Les Rolfe referred to the Stock Condition Survey and said that he thought that the tenants were going to notify Housing and that they could make appointments if they needed to. He said he had received a complaint from a tenant who had tried to make an appointment but could not, however, when he got back from shopping one day found them sitting on his doorstep and was told that they had come to look at his house. He said he did not think that this was acceptable.

Eddie Spicer agreed that it was not appropriate at all and asked Les Rolfe to send him an email with the details, and he would investigate. He advised that they were working in batched areas and every property that was to be visited would have been a sent a letter advising them of when they would be in the area to do the survey, and that if they would prefer to, they could make an appointment.

Les Rolfe asked if shared equity properties were going to be inspected?

Eddie Spicer advised that they were not on the first round of the survey.

Dave Kelleway said that he had also received the letter and that only 20 minutes was allocated to the survey, which he did not think was enough time for the inspection of both the inside and outside of the property.

**Action by: Eddie Spicer**

## **7.2 Reporting of parked vehicles on grass areas**

Oana Sutherland asked how to go about reporting parked vehicles that were hit and damaged by delivery and other vehicles.

Geoff Clark said that this had been raised at the Parish Council and SCDC were going to make sure that the current parking arrangements were being used appropriately. He added there were reports that some people who did not live locally were using the parking spaces. He said that the council were looking at increasing the number of parking spaces without taking away from our green spaces and would consult with tenants to find out what they would like to see happen.

## **8. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2023 / 2024**

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

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

## **9. Closing**

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting ended at 3:55pm.

3.1 The items raised at the previous meeting have been actioned and are below.

**Item 4.1 – Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 23 March 2023**

**Item 2 – Appointment of Chair**

**Action:** Dave Armitage to amend the Terms of Reference document.

**Report back:** The following amendments have been made to the Terms of Reference document:

- Point 6.3 – the term of office for the Vice-Chair has been changed from 24 months to 12 months
- A point has been added after the above point which reads “The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected every 12 months

A copy of the Terms of Reference document is included in the agenda pack for review and approval.

## South Cambridgeshire District Council

### Housing Engagement Board – Terms of Reference

Please note: The term “Tenant” is used throughout this report as a generic term and includes both council tenants and council leaseholders.

#### **Abbreviations:**

HEB – Housing Engagement Board

HPP – Housing Performance Panel

SCDC – South Cambridgeshire District Council

HS – Housing Services

HSMT – Housing Services Management Team

#### 1. Purpose

The purpose of HEB is to represent tenant and leaseholders’ interest in relationship to the development and performance of the HS. The HEB will work at a strategic level to scrutinise and be consulted on key issues that affect the HS. Feedback from the HEB will be considered as part of the decision-making process in line with the Council’s constitution.

#### 2. Objectives of the HEB is to scrutinise and make recommendations for improvement for the housing service on behalf of all service users

- To be a critical friend, recommending improvements for the HS
- To ensure the Council delivers a high standard HS
- That the HS is fair, equitable and tenant friendly
- That tenants’ priorities are represented, and their views are an integral part of the decision process
- HS service ambitions are achievable, within budget and resources
- HS service offers value for money
- HS meets government regulatory standards
- HS reflects the Council’s business plan’s objectives

### 3. The Role of the HEB is

- To ensure strategic decisions are in line with HEB objectives
- To review housing policy and finance issues, and make recommendations where appropriate
- To scrutinise the housing service's plans and policies.
- Input into the setting and monitoring of targets and performance indicators for housing.
- To feed into the development of the annual service plan and the Annual Report for tenants
- Work with other tenant groups, including task and finish groups, to improve services and help review objectives and aspirations.
- Represent SCDC tenants to outside persons and organisations
- Elected tenant board members to act as the Chairperson for their Area-based tenant Forum

In doing the above the HEB will ensure that due consideration is given to value for money, available resources, and the corporate objectives of SCDC.

### 4. Membership

#### 4.1 The HEB will consist of:

- the Cabinet Lead Member for Housing (or a nominated substitute in their absence)
- two councillors nominated by the two main political parties of the Council
- the Head of Housing (a non-voting member) (or a nominated substitute in their absence)
- six elected tenant representatives (one of which to be a leaseholder) made up of two from the North Area, two from the East Area and two from the West Area.

4.2 Tenant Representatives to the HEB will be elected every 4 years by the tenants.

4.3 Tenant representatives will be tenants or leaseholders of SCDC or their recognised spouse / partner (as per SCDC). Tenants in breach of their tenancy conditions will not be eligible to be or remain as a Board Member.

4.4 The Resident Involvement Team will provide secretariat support for the HEB.

4.5 The Head of Housing and the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing at SCDC will be a permanent member of the HEB.

- 4.6 The normal term of office for tenant representatives will be 4 years; however, should an elected member leave office before the end of term, a co-opted member will serve until the next election.
- 4.7 If a tenant representative leaves before the end of term, a new tenant representative co-opted from the same area will be seconded until the end of the term. Resident Involvement will advertise the board opening and accept applications for suitable replacements to be co-opted onto the board and present them to the HEB who will select which candidate should be appointed. See the Co-option Policy document for the procedure to follow.
- 4.8 HEB members, except for the Head of Housing and the Lead Member for Housing, who fail to attend two meetings and fail to provide any apologies will forfeit their membership of the Board.
- 4.9 HEB members agree to use digital communications including video conference, shared facilities which may include MS Teams or a central document library. Meetings will be held either online or face to face.
- 4.10 HEB members agree to make available contact details with colleagues to facilitate work between meetings.
- 4.11 HEB members will attend training sessions where appropriate and where possible.
- 4.12 HEB members will read any material provided prior to attending the meeting
- 4.13 HEB members will be compliant with SCDC's equality and GDPR policies.
- 4.14 All members agree to abide by the code of conduct.
- 5. Quorum**
- 5.1 A quorum will be at least 50% of the board, for example, if membership is 7, a minimum of members 4 would be required and must include either the Head of Housing or a Councillor,
- 5.2 Inquorate meetings should be noted, and recommendations ratified at the next quorate meeting.
- 6. Chairing Meetings**
- 6.1 SCDC will provide an experienced person to chair the meetings for the first year. Afterwards the HEB members will nominate and vote for a chair

- 6.2 HEB will elect a Vice-Chair. Any HEB member, willing to undertake relevant training, may put their name forward.
- 6.3 Terms of office for the Vice-Chair will be 12 months. The Vice-Chair may stand for re-election at the end of their term of office but will be considered alongside other suitably trained HEB members wishing to be considered for office.
- 6.4 The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected every 12 months.
- 6.5 Maximum term of office for Vice-Chair will be 4 years in total.
- 6.6 The Vice-Chair will deputise for the Chair in their absence.
- 6.7 The Chair will liaise with officers and relevant others as necessary to plan for forthcoming meetings. Any member can request to add additional items to the agenda. These should be submitted at least 4 weeks before the meeting.
7. **Frequency of HEB Meetings**
  - 7.1 The HEB will normally meet quarterly with a minimum of four quarterly meetings per year.
  - 7.2 To meet the demands of projects and reviews, the frequency of meetings may be increased.
  - 7.3 Board members are expected to attend every meeting, however, they must attend a minimum of three Board meetings per annum unless there are extenuating circumstances that have been agreed to by the Board.
  - 7.4 The HEB may establish Task and Finish Groups to lead on specific activities.
    - 7.4.1 Task and Finish Groups could be internal tenant groups or external groups
    - 7.4.2 Task and Finish Groups must report to the HEB at an agreed frequency
8. **Code of Conduct**
  - 8.1 HEB members will be required to sign a Code of Conduct, they will follow SCDC policy on GDPR and equalities.
9. **HEB Elections**
  - 9.1 Elections will be held every four years
  - 9.2 Elections will be administered by an independent organisation
  - 9.3 Any current tenant or leaseholder, meeting candidate criteria, can run for election

## 10. HEB Support

- 10.1 Administrative support for the HEB will be provided by the Resident Involvement Team.
- 10.2 Minutes of the HEB meetings will be made available within four weeks of the meeting.
- 10.3 All new members will be provided with a handbook of key documents and undertake an induction programme and training.
- 10.4 Training requirements will be assessed, and a training programme will be developed, delivered, and regularly reviewed.
- 10.5 All tenant and leaseholder representatives will be eligible for an annual allowance of £400 for sundries, plus an additional amount for expenses such as travelling costs and additional support for baby-sitting / carers costs. The allowance can be claimed twice a year six months in arrears. The other expenses should be claimed monthly.

## 11. Access to Information

- 11.1 The HEB will be provided with supporting documents a minimum of one week prior to each meeting.
- 11.2 HEB can request additional data, reports and information to carry out their activities.
- 11.3 Where appropriate information is not readily available, the HEB may request information reports (appropriate in scale and content of the performance review and subject to available resources) and / or invite officers or managers to meet with the HEB to provide additional information or insight.
- 11.4 All requests for information and evidence must be made via the Resident Involvement Team.

## 12. Accountability

- 12.1 The HEB meetings will be publicised on the website.
- 12.2 Minutes, meeting papers will be made available to the public on the SCDC website
- 12.3 The HEB will provide an annual report for tenants
- 12.4 Tenants will be able to ask questions to their tenant representatives via the SCDC website

### 13. Reviewing the Terms of Reference

13.1 These Terms of Reference were approved by John Batchelor, Lead Member for Housing, and Peter Campbell, Head of Housing for SCDC, and ratified at a meeting of the HEB held on the:

Approved: 23 June 2021

Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ 2023

13.2 The Board will review the terms of reference regularly to ensure they reflect the duties and responsibilities of the Board.

Next review: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Item 4.1 – Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 23 March 2023**

#### **Item 5.3 – Sheltered Housing Schemes Audit Accounts**

**Actions:** Dave Armitage, together with Marianne Crozier, Sheltered Estate Team Leader, to arrange for Income and Expenditure statements to be displayed at all communal halls.

**Report back:** Dave Armitage to report back.

#### **Item 5.5 – Estate Inspections Report**

**Action:** Bronwen Taylor to send the Gradings document to the Board.

**Report back:** The Estate Inspections Standards – Gradings document and Estate Inspections Standards Questionnaire document were sent to the Board on 18 July 2023.

For noting.

#### **Item 6.1 – Co-option of New Member (West Area)**

**Action:** Peter Campbell asked for a letter of thanks to be sent to Peter Tye.

**Report back:** A letter, signed by Cllr John Batchelor, was emailed to Peter Tye on 27 July 2023 and a copy posted on 9 August 2023.

For noting.

#### **Item 6.3 – Policy Review**

##### **Mutual Exchange Policy**

**Action:** Julie Fletcher to send details on how to make a written statement to Cabinet and how to attend the Cabinet meeting to make a statement.

**Report back:** Julie Fletcher emailed the details on 2 August 2023.

For noting.

## **Item 6.4 – Service Plan and Resourcing**

### **Actions:**

- 1.) Dave Kelleway referred to the third item (data analysis of reasons for refusal) in the table on page 56 of the agenda pack and asked if the reports could be shared with the HEB.
- 2.) Julie Fletcher asked the board to send her feedback on the Service Plan and asked if they would like a separate session.
- 3.) Julie Fletcher asked for a few volunteers to assist with working on the Aids and Adaptations policy.

### **Report back:**

- 1.) A report on the Reasons for Refusal is included.
- 2.) No feedback on the Service Plan was received.
- 3.) The following tenant volunteers gave input on the Aids and Adaptations policy:
  - Les Rolfe
  - Patti Hall
  - Paul Bowman

For noting.

## Home-Link – Summary of refusal reasons in South Cambridgeshire

The Housing Engagement Board requested information on the reasons that Home-Link properties were refused by applicants. The following table is taken from the Locata software used to manage the Home-Link scheme. The table shows how many properties were refused by applicants in the 12 weeks leading up to the date of the report (29<sup>th</sup> August 2023).

The table breaks down the applicant's refusal reasons by property type. Approximately three quarters of all refusals are made by applicants applying for bungalows. In the majority of these cases the refusal is linked to the location of the property (although sometimes other factors such as cost and property size are the cause).

The Allocations Manager, Charles Clay, has advised that this is often because people have bid for bungalows from outside of the area (for example, via a cross-partner let). Applicants do not always appreciate how rural parts of the district are and sometimes reconsider once they have viewed the property and taken into account whether there are any local amenities or shops in the vicinity.

<b>Refusal Reasons By Property Type</b>						
<b>Reason</b>	<b>Bungalow</b>	<b>Flat</b>	<b>House</b>	<b>Maisonette</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
Applicant changed mind after accepting	0	0	1	0	0	1
Area unsuitable	2	0	2	0	0	4
Bid in error	1	0	0	0	0	1
Can't afford to move	1	1	0	0	0	2
Change of circumstances	2	0	0	0	0	2
Dislikes neighbourhood/estate	1	0	0	0	0	1
Does not want to move	3	0	0	0	0	3
Garden unsuitable/No garden	0	0	1	0	0	1
Health reasons	2	0	2	0	0	4
No response from the applicant	1	0	0	0	0	1
Property cannot be adapted to meet their needs	2	0	2	0	0	4
Property too far from amenities	5	0	0	0	0	5
Property too far from family/friends	6	0	2	0	0	8
Property too far from schools	0	0	1	0	0	1
Property too large	1	0	0	0	0	1
Property too small	5	0	0	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>44</b>

To help alleviate this and ensure that applicants are as fully informed as possible, property adverts contain a lot of information and photographs about the property and about its location. For example, property adverts contain information about local amenities, bus service, etcetera. In addition, when Allocations staff make a property offer, they explain to applicants about the location and area.

## Sub-Regional Home-Link work relating to affordability

During the 2022-2023 period, all six Local Authority Sub-Regional Home-Link partners had a particular focus on monitoring the affordability of properties across the Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk area. This was a separate piece of work to the above report which sets out the reasons applicants refuse properties in South Cambridgeshire. The affordability work focussed on whether landlords were refusing applicants due to concerns about the affordability of properties. An audit of Home-Link landlord practices was undertaken and good practice was shared with landlords. Some agreed minimum standards and practices were written into the Home-Link partner guide in an attempt to ensure that practices such as asking for Rent In Advance was kept to a minimum.

Alongside the promotion of good practice to landlords, Home-Link staff have also actively promoted improved links to budgeting and financial information via the Home-Link webpage in order to reduce refusals linked to affordability. In addition, South Cambridgeshire District Council's Housing Advice team are in the process of developing some training and support for Home-Link applicants which focuses on managing finances and tenancy responsibilities. This is currently in a pilot stage but it may be possible to share further information with the Housing Engagement Board once the training is more established.

The summary of refusal reasons and the accompanying text were provided by Charles Clay, Home-Link Manager and Heather Wood, Service Manager for Housing Advice and Options, and Chair of the Sub-Regional Home-Link Management Board.

September 2023

### **Item 7.1 – Stock Condition Survey**

**Action:** Eddie Spicer to investigate the complaint from a tenant which Les Rolfe raised.

**Report back:** Eddie Spicer confirmed that he received the details of the complaint and that he was happy with the service provided by the contractor.

For noting.

## **4. Standing Items**

### **4.1 New Repairs Contract – Performance Review Joint Working Group**

Eddie Spicer to report.

### **4.2 Forward Plan**

Julie Fletcher to provide an update on the Forward Plan which is included in the pack.

## Housing Engagement Board – Forward Plan – 2023 / 2024

Date of Meeting	Topic	Description	Lead Officer	Decision Route
June 2023	Complaints	Review of yearly complaints handling statistics 2022 / 2023	Grace Andrews	For Information / Scrutiny
June 2023	Housing Service Plan	To approve the Housing Service Plan for 2023 / 2024	Julie Fletcher	For final sign off by the Lead Member for Housing
June 2023 Carried forward Project delayed. Appointment of temporary Policy Officer November 2022	Policy Review	To provide an overview of current policies – identify gaps and programme for reviews  Verbal update on priority programme for policy reviews	Julie Fletcher	For Information
Briefing session to be arranged outside of HEB for tenant representatives March Summer 2023	Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy	Review of the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy	Julie Fletcher	Consultation
September 2023	Damp and Mould Policy	To approve a damp and mould policy	Eddie Spicer	Lead Member for Housing or Cabinet – to be confirmed
September 2023	Grounds Maintenance	Re-tender of grounds maintenance contract. Tenant engagement to be part of the process to help shape KPs	Geoff Clark	For Information
September / December 2023 [New]	Aids & Adaptations Policy	To consider the Aids & Adaptations Policy and make recommendations following wider tenant involvement	Policy Officer	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Decision Route</b>
<del>June 2023</del> December 2023	Tenancy Policy	To approve the Tenancy Policy following the ending of fixed term tenancies	Policy Officer	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
<del>June 2023</del> <del>September 2023</del> December 2023	Homelessness Review	Review of Homelessness & Homeless Strategy	Heather Wood / Sue Carter	Consultation
<del>September 2023</del> December 2023 Deferred	Improvement Plan	Update on the progress of the actions contained in the Improvement Plan	Julie Fletcher	For Information
December 2023	Resident Involvement Framework Review	Proposals for new framework to be brought to Housing Engagement Board	Dave Armitage	Dependent on outcome of review
December 2023 <b>[New]</b>	Introductory Tenancy Policy / Procedure	Linked policy / procedure to Tenancy Policy	Policy Officer	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
December 2023 <b>[New]</b>	Assignment & Succession Policy	Linked policy / procedure to Tenancy Policy	Policy Officer	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing

Date of Meeting	Topic	Description	Lead Officer	Decision Route
January 2024 <b>Carried forward</b> <b>The mobilisation of the Mears Contract has taken more time than expected. Currently working on some preliminary works around this but won't be progressing with residents until at least October 2023.</b>	Empty Property Re-let Disposal and Standards	Consider findings and recommendations following the outcome of the project working group – Empty Property Re-let Disposal and Standards.  <b>Currently undertaking some internal process mapping to feed into the project working group</b>	Eddie Spicer	Housing Engagement Board
December 2023 / March 2024 <b>[New]</b>	Tenant Satisfaction Survey	Outcome of the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Julie Fletcher	For Information
March 2024 <b>[New]</b>	Communications Standard	To consider the Communications Standard and make recommendations following wider tenant involvement	Julie Fletcher	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
June 2024	Council Stock Condition Survey	Outcome of the Stock Condition Survey	Eddie Spicer	For Information
TBC	Together with Tenants Charter	Review what actions are required to achieve the Together with Tenants Charter	Resident Involvement Team Leader	Cabinet

### **4.3 Estate Inspections Report**

Reports on the Estate Inspections held in July and August 2023 are enclosed for noting.

## Estate Inspections – Summary – July 2023

### Impington – 20 July 2023

#### St Andrews Way and Hereward Close (part)

9 issues raised, which are as follows:

##### St Andrews Way – 7 issues

- 1 issue is the missing numbers from all garages. Requested the surveyor to re-instate the numbers so that they are easily identified.
- 1 issue is that 8 bungalows are keeping their bins on the public footpaths and they should be in their gardens. Letters have been sent to the tenants asking them to move them.
- 3 issues are landscaping issues and quote requests have been sent to SP Landscapes to clear.
- 1 issue is fly tipping in the garage areas on both sides of the road. A request has been sent to Mears to clear.
- 1 issue is that number 30 has a pile of bricks stored in his front garden. He is hoping to lay them in his front garden and has also offered to make "bin store" flooring around the communal lawned area for himself and neighbours as they have difficulty getting their bins out. HSO to check if this is allowed.

##### Hereward Close (part) – 2 issues

- 1 issue is a dead tree at the front of the property of number 153. A quote request has been sent SP Landscapes to remove the tree.
- A request to the owner of number 115 (non SCDC property) has been sent to cut back overgrown hedgerow from footpath.

### Guilden Morden – 27 July 2023

#### Fox Hill, Fox Corner and Cannons Close

9 issues raised, which are as follows:

##### Fox Hill – 2 issues

- 1 issue is that the land to the side of number 11 needs cutting back, as well as the plants and shrubs. A quote request has been sent to SP Landscapes for the work to be done.
- 1 issue is that a car has been parked on ramps in front of a parking. A letter has been sent to the tenant.

### Fox Corner – 3 issues

- The front gardens of 3 properties are overgrown and need weeding. Letters have been sent to the tenants.

### Cannons Close – 4 issues

- SP Landscapes have been asked to quote on 2 issues which are for the footpath behind numbers 5 and 6 which is full of moss and the shrub bed around the parking area needs cutting back.
- 1 issue is an old trailer, with a missing wheel, has been left behind number 3. A letter has been sent to the tenant asking them to dispose of it.
- There are minor weeds around the kerbs in the parking area. The HSO has said that he will remove them when he is next in the area.

## Ratings

The ratings are as follows:

Date	Village	Street / Area	Litter	Weeds	Regular grass cutting	Roughly cut grass	Communal area shrubs	Tenant's gardens
20 July	Impington	St Andrews Way	4	1	4	N / A	4	3
		Hereward Close (part)	2	2	4	N / A	3	4
27 July	Guilden	Fox Corner	4	4	3	N / A	N / A	2
	Morden	Fox Hill	4	3	3	N / A	N / A	3
		Cannons Close	4	3	3	N / A	2	2

## Estate Inspection – Summary – August 2023

17 August 2023

### Little Abington

Church Close and Church Lane

8 issues raised, which are as follows:

#### Church Close – 3 issues

- Quote requests have been sent to SP Landscapes for work to be done on 2 landscaping issues which are an overgrown shrub bed outside number 20 and the path behind number 14 is overgrown with weeds.
- 1 issue is the trees behind numbers 20 to 24 need cutting back but they do not belong to SCDC. The HSO will write to the owners asking them to cut back.

#### Church Lane – 3 issues

- Quote requests have been sent to SP Landscapes for work to be done on 2 landscaping issues which are the path behind the garage numbered 21 to 25 is overgrown with weeds and nettles, and the shrub bed on the corner with Church Close is overgrown.
- Number 7 has repairs issues. The operations team will contact the tenant to discuss the issue.

### Great Abington

#### Larkfield – 2 issues

- 1 issue is that the shrubs are slightly overgrown. A quote request to cut them back has been sent SP Landscapes.
- The HSO to check the accuracy of the grounds maintenance map.

24 August 2023

### Great Shelford – de Freville Road

8 issues raised, which are as follows:

- Quote requests have been sent to SP Landscapes for work to be done on 5 landscaping issues which are overgrown shrub beds, trees obscuring lamp post, bushes growing up to window height at block of flats and overgrown weeds and foliage.
- The hedge outside number 27 is overgrown. A letter will be sent to the tenant requesting it to be cut back.

- The gardens of numbers 67 to 72 are overgrown. Letters will be sent to the tenants to clear.
- The ownership of land is to be established as land has been fenced off by the owner of the property near the East parking area. This has been referred to the surveyor to investigate.

### Little Shelford – Beech Close

5 issues raised, which are as follows:

- Quote requests have been sent to SP Landscapes for work to be done on 2 landscaping issues. 1 being trees on the green need cutting back around the bases and both sides of the road leading to the garages need a cut back to get rid of the weeds and overgrowth.
- There is hedge covering the whole pavement outside number 5 and needs cutting back. As the property is empty, and not covered by the empty property process, an email was sent to SP for a quote.
- Tenants at number 6 are parking on a parking space in their garden but there is no dropped kerb. A letter has been sent to the tenants.
- The hardstanding area near the green is cracked and uneven. Asked the surveyor who is responsible for this area.

### Ratings

The ratings are as follows:

Date of inspection	Village	Street / Area	Litter	Weeds	Regular grass cutting	Roughly cut grass	Communal area shrubs	Tenant's gardens
17 August	Little Abington	Church Close & Church Lane	3	3	4	3	3	4
		Larkfield	3	3	4	3	4	N / A
24 August	Great Shelford	de Freville Road						
	Little Shelford	Beech Close						

The gradings for 24 August 2023 are to be updated by the HSO.

## **5. New Matters**

### **5.1 Aids and Adaptations Policy**

Included in the pack are the following documents:

- Recommendations report
- Draft report to Cabinet
- Draft Aids and Adaptations Policy

Julie Fletcher to report.

<b>Report to:</b>	Housing Engagement Board (HEB) 28 September 2023
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Julie Fletcher : Service Manager – Housing Strategy

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## Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Policy

### Recommendations

1. That the Housing Engagement Board (HEB) note the Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Report to Cabinet at Appendix A and the Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Policy, set out at Appendix B, and provide any further comments prior to consideration at Cabinet.

### Reasons for Recommendations

2. The Policy has been developed in line with legal requirements, recommendations made by the Housing Ombudsman and has been reviewed by tenant representatives.

### Details

3. A workshop made up of tenant representatives and officers was held on 14 August 2023. The tenant representatives that had put themselves forward to attend included: Les Rolfe, Patti Hall and Paul Bowman. Eleni Koutso also commented on the draft policy and Brian Burton reviewed the policy but had no further comments.
4. The workshop and subsequent tenant representative comments were constructive in helping to influence and shape the policy. In particular, the policy has been strengthened in terms of clarification and the setting of timescales.

### Background Papers

#### Appendices

Appendix A: Draft Report to Cabinet 7 November 2023

Appendix B: Draft Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Policy

Report Author: Julie Fletcher : Service Manager – Housing Strategy

Telephone: (01954) 713352

## Appendix A – Draft Report to Cabinet

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet	7 November 2023
<b>Lead Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Cabinet Member for Housing	
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Peter Campbell, Head of Housing	

## Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Policy

### Executive Summary

1. In line with the implementation of the Social Housing Regulation Act and the proposed revised Consumer Standards, the Council has reviewed its policy and processes for providing disabled adaptations in our council homes. This sets out the legal requirements, as well as managing the expectations of our tenants in terms of timescales and the types of works provided.
2. The Policy also takes into account a recent Ombudsman determination which requires the Council to publish a policy that includes target timescales for the overall aids and adaptations process, as well as for works completed under it
3. In developing the policy, officers have looked at good practice and listened to the views of tenant representatives by way of a small working group with officers.
4. The dialogue with the tenant representatives has been constructive and has strengthened the draft policy in terms of clarification. Taking on board tenants' concerns, the timescales provided are considered to be reasonable and achievable.

### Key Decision

5. Yes. This is a key decision as it is significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards or electoral divisions in the area of the relevant local authority.

The Key Decision was first published in August 2023 Forward Plan.

### Recommendations

6. It is recommended that Cabinet approve the final version of the Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Policy at Appendix B. And that the Lead Member for Housing is given delegated authority to approve minor amendments, including the financial thresholds that differentiate types of adaptation.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

7. To provide direction on the delivery of aids & adaptations to council tenants. The policy will demonstrate that the Council has a robust and transparent process in place that meets legislative requirements and has taken into account tenants' views.

## **Details**

8. The Council has a duty to make reasonable adjustment to policies, practices and procedures and to provide auxiliary aids and services to enable a disabled person to rent a property and facilitate a disabled person's enjoyment of the premises.
9. To ensure compliance with statutory duties, the Council, in consultation with social care, must determine whether the works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and to determine whether the works are reasonable and practicable.
10. In summary, the policy set outs:
  - a. The legal context and links to specific legislation
  - b. Appendix 1 includes the purposes for which adaptations will be considered
  - c. The different classifications of adaptations and their procedure
  - d. How to request an adaptation
  - e. General principles to be considered and limitations
  - f. Reasons an adaptation may be refused
  - g. Timescales and how we will monitor performance

## **Options**

11. The Council must have a policy in place as to how it will deliver disabled adaptations to its council tenants. Without such a policy, the Council would be open to challenge and would be non-compliant with the recommendations of the Housing Ombudsman. Therefore, no other option is provided, other than amendments to the draft policy presented.
12. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk, equality and diversity, climate change, and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

## **Financial**

13. There are no additional financial burdens placed on the Council with the implementation of this policy.

## **Equality and Diversity**

14. An Equality Impact Assessment will be carried out prior to the report being considered by Cabinet.

## **Consultation responses**

15. Tenant representatives have participated in the development of the policy and their views have been taken into account where possible. The policy will also be presented to the Housing Engagement Board on 27 September 2023.

## **Alignment with Council Priority Areas**

### **Housing that is truly affordable for everyone to live in**

16. Ensuring that those with a disability can live independently through the provision of disabled adaptations in a council home that is affordable.

## **Appendices**

Appendix B: Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Policy

### **Report Author:**

Julie Fletcher – Service Manager – Housing Strategy



## Appendix B

# South Cambridgeshire District Council

## Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Policy

Ownership	Eddie Spicer, Service Manager - Housing Assets
Approved by	xx
Policy Contact	Julie Fletcher – Service Manager – Housing Strategy
Approval date	[insert date/month] 2023
Publication date	[insert date/month] 2023
Date of next review	[insert month] 2025



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## COUNCIL TENANT DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY

### 1) Background

The purpose of a disabled adaptation is to modify existing homes to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence, safety and dignity for individuals and their families.

This policy sets out the Council's approach to adaptations in Council owned homes.

### 2) Scope

This policy only applies to tenants of South Cambridgeshire District Council and their households who live with them. This does not include council owned companies Ermine Street Housing or Shire Homes or those living in a council shared ownership/leasehold property who would apply in line with other private sector housing via the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency for assistance under the Cambridgeshire Adaptations & Repairs Policy 2019.

### 3) Legal Context

The Council has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to policies, practices, and procedures and to provide auxiliary aids and services to enable a disabled person to rent a property and facilitate a disabled person's enjoyment of the premises.

There is a range of legislation relating to the necessity for and delivery of aids and adaptations, the main ones being:

- [Equality Act 2010](#)



- [Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996](#)
- [The Care Act 2010](#)
- [Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970](#)
- [The Regulatory Reform Order 2022](#)
- [The Housing Act 1985](#)

The Council as a landlord of residential properties needs to consider the housing conditions and housing needs of the district (S8 Housing Act 1985) and has a responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled tenants.

To ensure compliance with the statutory duties set out within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, the Council, in consultation with Social Care, will:

- a. Determine whether the works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and.
- b. Determine whether the works are reasonable and practicable.

The purposes for which adaptations will be considered are contained within the above Act and set out at Appendix 1 to this policy.

#### **4) Working with others**

We will work with Social Care in relation to both minor and major adaptations (as appropriate) to assess and identify the adaptations to be provided. This is a consequence of Section 24 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 which places a duty on housing authorities who are not themselves a social services authority to consult the relevant social services authority.



Therefore, assessments for Major and Significant adaptations will be carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council Social Care and a referral submitted to the Council to carry out works. Within this document any reference to Social Care means the Occupational Therapy Service of Cambridgeshire County Council.

When making a referral, Social Care will classify adaptations as either minor or major. The Council will make a further distinction and regard referrals for major adaptations as significant when the costs exceed £5,000 (see paragraph 5 below for further detail on the classifications). At this level the adaptation may impact on the long-term future of the home, and this ensures that the tenant is aware of the implications on any future Right to Buy, mutual exchange and the security of tenure (see paragraph 7 below).

## 5) Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations are works costing less than £900 AND where no specialised skills are required to specify the works. These include:

- Lever taps
- Grab rails
- Half Steps
- Additional banister rails

Note – because Housing Officers are not qualified to assess where a tenant needs a grab rail, if there is any doubt or a possibility a greater need may be present (for example, a need for a shower or bathing equipment such as a bath lift), then a referral should be made to Social Care for assessment,



Minor adaptation work can be carried out without the need for a recommendation from Social Care following a tenant request or referral, subject to the works required. The budget for all adaptations comes from the Housing Revenue Account (a ringfenced budget that can only be spent on council housing), and in most cases will be ordered from the Council's repairs and maintenance contractor.

## 6) Major Adaptations

Other adaptation work costing £900 or more (but less than £5000) or when specialised skills are needed to specify works are classed as a major adaptation and will only be considered once a recommendation has been received from Social Care. Examples of major adaptations include:

- Level access shower
- Ramps
- Stair lifts
- Adapted kitchens.

These adaptations may be carried out by the Council's main repairs contractors, or an alternative external contractor appointed by the Council via a tendering process.

## 7) Significant Adaptations

Any adaptation work costing £5000 or more, or when additional permission such as planning are required, are classed as significant adaptations, and will only be considered once a recommendation has been received from Social Care. Examples of Significant Adaptations are:

- Extensions
- Door widening



- The need for more than one type of major adaptation

These may be carried out by the Council's main repairs contractors, or an alternative external contractor appointed by the Council.

Where significant adaptations are being considered the tenant will be informed, in writing, of the impact that this may have on any future Right to Buy (RTB) application, mutual exchange or security of tenure.

- RTB ground for refusal: that the property is adapted for Special Use - Schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985
- Mutual Exchange ground for refusal: where the property has been substantially adapted for occupation by a physically disabled person and if the assignment went ahead a physically disabled person would not be living there - Ground 7 of the Housing Act 1985 and Ground 11 of the Localism Act 2011
- Security of tenure ground for possession: where a property is specially adapted for the disabled and there is no longer a disabled person living there and the property is needed for someone who is disabled) – Ground 13 of the Housing Act 1985

## 8) How to request an adaptation

Tenants wishing to request a minor adaptation should contact the Council directly. For major or significant adaptations, an Occupational Therapy recommendation is needed, and the tenant is required to contact Social Care for an assessment:

### **Minor Adaptations**

South Cambridgeshire District Council  
Tel: 01954 713000



Email: [duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk)

### **Major/Significant Adaptations**

Social Care – Cambridgeshire County Council

Self-Referral Form: [https://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Adult\\_Services\\_contact\\_form](https://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Adult_Services_contact_form)

Tel: 03450 455202

Email: [careinfo@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:careinfo@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

## **9) General Principles**

The Council does not require tenants who are applying for adaptations to their home to undergo a means test. The agreed adaptation and, if needed, any maintenance costs will be covered by the Council for tenants.

Any adaptation that is specified by Social Care will be fitted in line with that specification unless variations have been agreed. For example, a particular type of handrail may be specified, and this will be the only type fitted.

The Council will not carry out work that is more extensive than the work proposed by Social Care.

If a tenant wishes to carry out other work to their home, they will need permission from the Council to do so, and the cost of such works will not be paid by the Council. For example, the Council will not provide storage for a mobility scooter as an adaptation but would consider a request from a tenant who wanted to provide their own storage. Each case would be considered on its own merits and in accordance with the council's policy or procedure for tenant alterations.



We recognise the importance of maintaining good communication with the tenant and their families. Tenants who are waiting for Major or Significant Adaptations will be allocated a named officer to support and progress their adaptation once the referral from Social Care is received. All applicants will be provided with clear timescales.

In determining requests for major and significant adaptations, the Council will consider whether the adaptations requested are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, in consultation with Social Care, and reasonable and practicable having regard to the age and condition of the property. Steps will be taken to consider, at an early stage, and in liaison with the tenant, whether moving to alternative accommodation might be a better option. In these circumstances, the Council will work with the tenant to identify alternative council accommodation and will offer financial support to help cover the costs of moving, such as removal costs, re-connection of white goods, relaying of carpets, etc. The maximum cost payable will be £2,500 and will be payable direct to the tenant upon receipts received.

Similarly, if a tenant leaves a property that has significant adaptation, as they no longer require the adaption and move to an un-adapted property, a grant of up to £500 may be offered. Each case will be assessed on its merits and will take account of the demand for the adapted property, and the age and condition of the adaptation. Any payment will be paid on top of any other downsizing incentive offered by the Council.

In deciding whether adaptations are reasonable, and practicable, and whether they are likely to meet the person's needs, an assessment of the internal layout of the existing property will be carried out. Consideration will only be given to providing additional sleeping and/or bathing accommodation by way of an extension to the existing dwelling where an internal reconfiguration is not reasonably possible and/or moving to an alternative property is not feasible.



If an adaptation is carried out which results in the installation of a piece of equipment that requires ongoing servicing beyond the period of the initial warranty the cost will be met by the Council. If equipment is damaged, beyond normal wear and tear, the Council will charge the tenant for repairs, for example where a stair lift has been misused by moving heavy goods.

Major and significant adaptations will not usually be removed at the end of a tenancy providing they are in good condition. When reletting these properties, the adverts will include a description of the adaptations. In some cases, properties will be offered to people with a need for such adaptations as a Direct Let.

## 10) Special Limitations

The Council will not provide adaptations to facilitate the use of mobility scooters, nor provide storage or charging facilities for scooters, as this sits outside of the purposes specified within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (see Appendix 1). Tenants who are considering purchasing scooters should be aware that they will be responsible for the safe storage of the scooters, and that not all properties are suitable for storage of scooters. Mobility scooters present a fire hazard and as such any inappropriately stored scooters will ultimately be removed. Under no circumstances will the Council allow mobility scooters to be stored or charged in communal areas. Should a tenant wish to undertake their own alterations they will need to seek written permission from the Council's [Housing Services](#).

Work to fence gardens will be limited to 10 linear metres and hardstanding will be limited to 3 square metres.

We cannot commit to adaptations which are reliant on external permissions, for example where planning permission is required to provide structural



changes/extension to the property. The relevant permissions will need to be approved prior to the Council being able to commit to the work.

## 11) Refusal of Adaptation

There are some circumstances where an adaptation will be refused. The list below includes examples but is not an exhaustive list. The Council will consider each request on its merits, and this may include asking Social Care to consider alternative proposals.

- Where a resident or their family is deemed to be under occupying by one or more bedrooms. And where suitable alternative accommodation will likely become available within 12 months.
- Where a resident or their family are overcrowding and there is every likelihood that they would be rehoused in a suitable alternative property within 12 months.
- Where the adaptation is unreasonable (for example, structural alterations which are not possible due to the condition or age of the property).
- Where the residents' needs can be met through amendment of the original proposal/recommendation, such as using a ground floor second reception room as a bedroom.
- Where the adaptation would require alteration to common areas, and this would have fire, health and safety implications or it would impact upon the use of the common area by other residents.



- Where there is suitable alternative adapted, or part adapted accommodation or where it is considered likely that a suitable property will become available within 12 months of the request being made.
- Where an adaptation would adversely affect the council's ability to make the best use of the stock and to relet the property in the future without removing or altering the adaptation(s).
- Where the residents' requirements are such that further adaptations will be required within 12 months and during that time it is considered likely that alternative suitable accommodation will be available.
- Where an adaptation would place others at risk (e.g., communal stair lifts with no alternative access for other first floor residents).
- Where a tenant has previously moved from a council property (through their own choice or a mutual exchange) that had previously been adapted for their needs within the last 8 years and is requesting similar adaptations in another council property.

If an application is made for adaptations for a child with disabilities, adaptation works will only be completed at the property of principal residence. An assessment will be made by the Council in the line with the Council's Lettings Policy as to the principal residence.

- When a tenant moves to a council property (through an allocation or exchange) when the property is not suitable for their needs, and the tenant has knowingly not made us aware of their needs during the allocation or exchange process.



- Where the property is unsuitable for adaptation due to its construction form or type.
- Where the property is used for temporary housing and the tenant requires major/significant adaptations.
- Where the Council intends to dispose of the property within the next 36 months, or the property forms part of a redevelopment proposal.
- Where the Council is taking legal action to end the tenancy. For avoidance of doubt this will be when a NOSP (Notice of Seeking Possession), or NOPP (Notice of Proceedings for Possession) for introductory tenancies, has been served on the tenant, and the breach identified in the NOSP/NOPP has not been rectified. This will include notices issued for rent arrears.
- Where the tenant has a 'live' Right to Buy application

## 12) Timescales

Where the Council receives a direct request for adaptations, we will acknowledge the request within 10 working days, setting out the process, likely timescales and the dedicated officer where applicable.

The timescales for receipt of a referral from Social Care is not within the Council's control. You will be notified within 10 working days following the Social Care referral, setting out their recommendations and next steps.

**Minor Adaptations** – Where no referral from Social Care is required, an order will be placed within 10 working days of request received, with works starting within 20 working days from the date of the order.



Where a referral is required from Social Care, upon receipt the Council will place an order within 10 working days, with works starting within 20 working days from the date of the order.

**Major Adaptations** – Works to be started within 4 months from the date of the completed referral from Social Care.

**Significant Adaptations** – Works to be started within 6 months of the date of the completed referral from Social Care There are exceptions to this:

- when planning permission is required
- when specialist equipment or contractors are required, and they have a long lead time.

In these cases, no absolute timescales are set, but we aim to start work within 6 months from the later date of the granting of planning permission, or completion of tenders. We will ensure the customer is kept informed of progress and start dates.

**Note:** The Council will be flexible with start dates for work to meet the need of customers. The above targets will not apply if a date has been moved at the request of the tenant to start later. In these cases, we will work with the tenant to agree timescales. Once contractors make a start on site, customers must provide daily access until the work is completed.

### 13) Complaints

If a tenant is not happy with any aspect relating to how their adaptation has been handled , they should follow the Council's [Complaints policy](#).



Any complaint can be reported via My South Cambs online, or by using any of the following methods:

- ▶ Email at [feedback@scams.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@scams.gov.uk);
- ▶ Letter to South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA; and
- ▶ Over the telephone - Contact Centre on 01954 713 000

#### 14) Data Protection

Personal information collected as part of an aids & adaptation request will be used and stored in line with SCDC Customer Privacy Notice, which can be found [here](#).

#### 15) Monitoring Performance

Delivery of aids and adaptations will be reported on a quarterly basis as part of the Housing Service performance management meetings, detailing delivery timescales and customer satisfaction against the Operational Performance Indicators detailed below:

Performance Measure
Minor Adaptations – order placed within 10 workings of referral/request
Minor Adaptations – works started within 20 days of order
Major Adaptations – works to be started within 4 months from the date of referral
Significant Adaptations – works to be started within 6 months of the date of the referral
Customer satisfaction with minor adaptations
Customer satisfaction with major adaptations



## 16) Reviewing this Policy

This policy will be reviewed no later than 5 years after the date of publication and may be reviewed earlier. Minor amendments, including the financial thresholds that differentiate types of adaptation, may be agreed by the Lead Member for the Service, without a formal review of the policy. (Note: The Lead Member for Housing is the Councillor who is responsible for Housing and is a member of Cabinet and has been given delegated authority to approve minor amendments).

DRAFT



## APPENDIX 1 - Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

### Section 23 - Disabled facilities grants: purposes for which grant must or may be given.

a) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling, or the building in which the dwelling or, as the case may be, flat is situated;
b) making the dwelling, or the building, safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him;
c) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
d) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room used or usable for sleeping;
e) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
f) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
g) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
h) facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
i) improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or, if there is no existing heating system or any such system is unsuitable for use by the disabled occupant, providing a heating system suitable to meet his needs;
j) facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
k) facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling in order to enable him to care for a person who is normally resident there and is in need of such care;
l) such other purposes as may be specified by order of the Secretary of State.

## **5.2 Damp and Mould Policy Update**

Peter Campbell to report.

## **5.3 Grounds Maintenance Contract**

Geoff Clark to report.

## **5.4 Proposed revised Consumer Standards and Fees payable to the Regulator**

Julie Fletcher to report.

## 5.5 Access to Reports and Confidential Matters

Margaret Wilson requested this item to be included on the agenda as concern arose following the Ombudsman's draft report of a matter involving SCDC which could not be shared with the HEB due to data protection issues. She has referred to page 16, item 19 in the table, in the attached Taroe Trust Spotlight Report – Tenant Scrutiny.

Below is an extract from Margaret Wilson's email.

This particular concern arose after Julie sent round the Ombudsman's draft report of a matter involving SCDC. I think it was Dave Kelleway who asked for more details but Julie said that there were some data protection issues that prevented us having sight of it. I think she subsequently sent something but, as I was preparing to go away and have only just come back, I haven't read it yet.

However, it is the issue of 'data protection' and 'data sharing' not whatever that matter was that we are interested in.

The report that Paul sent round is attached and I would draw everyone's attention to Page 16, item 19 in the table.

We do not have a dedicated (or titled) scrutiny committee involving tenants despite the involvement we have so far and I certainly don't think the HEB is one, maybe the HPP could be described as one but I doubt it – they can say if they do.

My view is that, as elected representatives we can, and should, be entrusted with being able to have sight of most documents. The award of the grounds maintenance contract is another item that comes to mind when we were totally excluded on the grounds of 'data protection'.

I do not suggest it necessarily applies to all reps but that is exactly why I think it needs to be on the agenda for the next HEB meeting. I'm sure SCDC staff / officers sign something and there is the suggestion in the attached document that such an arrangement can be made for a tenant. I think we are all grown-ups and would take such matters extremely seriously.

Other than that, I have no report to make, merely what I read from the Taroe Trust.

# Spotlight Report

## Tenant Scrutiny



By Nic Bliss & Darren Hartley



July 2023



## Spotlight Report - tenant scrutiny

Tenant scrutiny has been a popular method of involving tenants in decision making in local authorities, ALMOs and housing associations for over a decade. Its popularity as a method with both tenants and landlords can be attributed to its potential to be a constructive and positive way for tenants to influence change.

This spotlight report seeks to review how tenant scrutiny is done and make some suggestions of key issues that need to be considered. The report is primarily aimed at tenants, but it will also hopefully be useful to landlord staff and decision-makers who support tenants in carrying out tenant scrutiny.

However, the report is not a “how to” guide. There are other publications available that fulfil this objective and all guidance about tenant scrutiny makes it clear that there is not one single way for tenants to scrutinise, just as there is not one single way that tenants should be involved in their housing. Nothing in this report is intended to imply any prescription about how tenant scrutiny should be done.

This report is divided into three sections, which are summarised as follows:

### Section One - Background

Section 1 of the spotlight report summarises the background to tenant scrutiny – what tenant scrutiny is; how tenant scrutiny fits into tenant involvement generally; how tenant scrutiny is seen in regulatory terms; and what features have been previously identified as being important to make tenant scrutiny successful.

### Section Two - Taroe Trust learning from Scrutiny Research Webinar

Section 2 of the spotlight report outlines the key issues raised in a TAROE Trust Learning from Scrutiny Research webinar held in March 2023. The event was attended by tenants from local authorities, ALMOs and housing associations – most of them actively involved in some form of tenant scrutiny (either currently or in the past) – and by representatives from landlords who support tenant scrutiny activity.

### Section Three - tenant scrutiny - key issues to consider

Section 3 of the spotlight report is intended as a helpful checklist of the key issues to consider for tenants who are or want to be involved in tenant scrutiny and for those supporting them.

## Section One:

### Tenant scrutiny - an investment not a cost

Consideration of tenant scrutiny – and indeed any form of tenant involvement – should start from considering what its purpose is and what outcomes it seeks to deliver.

Research carried out by the National Tenant Organisations working with the University of Birmingham<sup>1</sup> has shown that tenant involvement generally is an “investment not a cost” in that it can lead to “financial, service, social and community benefits” as well as “improved tenant satisfaction”. The research particularly highlights tenant scrutiny as a method of achieving a range of service and financial benefits.

Tenant scrutiny is therefore generally seen as a positive and constructive way that tenants can input into how a landlord carries out its business. The ways that tenant scrutiny is established, as well as the way that it fits into other methods of tenant involvement, need to be fashioned in such a way as to maximise the potential benefits for tenants as well as for the landlord.

### What is tenant scrutiny?

TAROE Trust’s pre-webinar briefing referred to “a broad range of approaches to what is generally understood in the sector to constitute tenant scrutiny”. For purposes of the webinar, TAROE Trust suggested that tenant scrutiny is part of the default current “co-regulatory approach” to service delivery, where tenants are enabled to carry out “independent, tenant focused reviews of landlord performance in identified priority areas, making recommendations for change and improvement” – with an overarching aim to “hold the landlord to account where service levels fall below expected standards”.

CIH Scotland and HouseMark Scotland<sup>2</sup> identified three foundational principles for tenant scrutiny:

- **Independence:** Scrutiny activities should be separate from governance, management and mainstream tenant participation structures, but have a formal recognised status with support from the organisation at the outset.
- **Formality:** Scrutiny activities should include clear roles, remit, terms of reference and lines of reporting for those taking part.
- **Power:** Tenants and other customers involved in scrutiny activities should be able to examine services and standards and recommend how services can be improved. Landlords should respond by saying which recommendations they will implement and – with a full explanation – which they will not.

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<sup>1</sup> - Bliss et al (2015). “An investment not a cost: the business benefits of tenant involvement” Published by the National Tenant Organisations and the University of Birmingham with the support of the Department for Communities and Local Government at: <https://nationaltenants.files.wordpress.com/2015/03/tlc-an-investment-not-a-cost.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> - Scotland, C. I. H. (2017). “Developing effective tenant scrutiny: A practice guide for landlords and tenants”. Edinburgh: The Scottish Government. Published at <https://www.cih.org/media/1v5g3d11/scrutiny-guide-complete-final.pdf>



The report goes on to say that “Scrutiny is a critical examination of services, underpinned by good quality, up-to-date performance data and information that is made available to those involved in scrutiny activities.

Scrutiny is about being able to ask landlords questions based on clear information and data, such as: why is a service delivered in a particular way; why are particular time scales in place; how much is this costing; can costs be reduced while still providing a good level of service; could we do this better or differently? The answers to these and similar questions should lead to recommendations that result in change and improvement.”

Tenant scrutiny, alongside other tenant involvement activities, plays various significant roles within some of the best landlords. Its purposes, can include:

- ensuring accountability to tenants and transparency, thereby building trust, respect and partnership between tenants and staff
- involvement of tenants in governance through co regulation
- making recommendations for service improvements
- enabling tenants to monitor and review performance
- ensuring compliance with national and locally defined standards
- enabling regular dialogue between tenants, staff and those involved in governance
- ensuring value for money with regards to services and improvements
- enabling a voice for tenants and constructive challenge.

All of these purposes are intended to deliver real benefits and outcomes – both for the landlord business and in relation to improvements to services – both of which are intended to be of benefit to tenants and other service users. Tenant scrutiny, alongside other methods of tenant involvement, can produce these benefits because of some or all the following features:

- **tenant and community intelligence** – knowledge of what’s happening on the ground and knowledge of tenants and other service users – their needs, aspirations, perspectives and desires about services. This “grass roots” knowledge complements and acts as an important reality check for customer insight data.
- **the common sense of tenants** – important sitting alongside the more formal, sometimes “autopilot” approaches landlords may be prone to otherwise take
- **identity, pride and a sense of ownership** – vital in establishing a culture of trust, respect and partnership. In the best landlords, tenants, staff and those responsible for governance work seamlessly alongside each other to develop and improve services and make decisions. Where all parties work together in this way, it is not uncommon for it to be difficult to distinguish tenants, staff and those involved in governance at events that bring them together.

- **quality that cannot be bought** - effective tenant scrutiny and other methods of tenant involvement, potentially equal quality that cannot be bought through staff or consultants. It can generate ideas, voluntary activity and community knowledge that it would not be possible for the landlord to obtain from other sources.

In Options for Accountability<sup>3</sup>, the National Tenant Organisations described the following principles for an effective tenant scrutiny system:

- tenant-led and independent
- clearly defined and real power
- clear roles and responsibilities with capacity to deliver
- decisions based on freely available and commissioned information
- embedding scrutiny in performance management arrangements
- equality and access.

Options for Accountability particularly lists making choices about scrutiny areas; how the scrutiny panel is recruited; how conflicts of interest are dealt with; how evidence supports scrutiny processes; how those in governance consider scrutiny recommendations; and how outcomes of scrutiny are implemented and communicated as being important areas for consideration in developing an effective scrutiny system.



<sup>3</sup> - Bliss, N., and B. Lambert (2012). "Tenant Panels: Options for Accountability." The National Tenant Organisations developed with the support of the Department for Communities & Local Government. Published at: <https://nationaltenants.files.wordpress.com/2012/03/tenant-panels-options-for-accountability.pdf>

(Note: The criteria listed were drawn from work done by TPAS, Housemark and the Chartered Institute of Housing to define an effective tenant scrutiny system. The implication in Options for Accountability is that there could be and are different approaches to tenant scrutiny.)

## Tenant scrutiny - regulatory requirements

- 1.12 Tenant scrutiny is also currently a part of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment regulatory requirement standard<sup>4</sup> which states that “Registered Providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the formulation of their landlord’s housing related policies and strategic priorities, the making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards and the scrutiny of their landlord’s performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved”.
- 1.13 The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard is to be reviewed in the near future, but the Government has recently confirmed in June 2023 in its revised Directions on the Regulatory Standards relating to tenant involvement and mutual exchange 2023 that regulated landlords will continue to be expected to give “tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise landlord strategies, policies and services”<sup>5</sup>.
- 1.14 The Government has further indicated that its revised directions will “assist tenants in being influential voices in the conversations and decisions taken about the strategies, service delivery, management of their homes and about the behaviours and values of their landlord”<sup>6</sup>. The Government, through the regulator, is also planning to introduce a new Competence and Conduct regulatory standard aimed at improving the quality of housing staff and their conduct in respect of how they work and engage with tenants.

## Effective tenant scrutiny doesn’t just happen

- 1.15 Effective tenant scrutiny doesn’t just happen. It can take years to build appropriate frameworks and relationships that will deliver the outcomes set out above. It relies on the qualities of the individuals involved – the tenant leadership, service managers and other delivery staff, senior management and governing body members – and the nature and culture of the relationships between them.

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<sup>4</sup> -Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) (2017). “Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard” London: HCA Published at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/914637/Tenant\\_Involvement\\_and\\_Empowerment\\_Standard.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/914637/Tenant_Involvement_and_Empowerment_Standard.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> -Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023). “Directions on the Regulatory Standards relating to tenant involvement and mutual exchange 2023” London: DLUHC Published at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1164406/Revised\\_TIME\\_directions.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1164406/Revised_TIME_directions.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> -Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023). “Consultation outcome - Directions to the Regulator of Social Housing on tenant involvement and mutual exchange: Government response to the consultation” London: DLUHC Published at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/revised-directions-to-regulator-of-social-housing-tenant-involvement-and-mutual-exchange/outcome/directions-to-the-regulator-of-social-housing-on-tenant-involvement-and-mutual-exchange-government-response-to-the-consultation>

## Section Two:



### Taroe Trust learning from Scrutiny Research Webinar

The TAROE Trust Learning from Scrutiny Webinar was held online on 18th March 2023. Most attendees were tenants involved in tenant scrutiny (either currently or in the past) but there were also landlord staff attendees who support tenant scrutiny. Attendees were from both local authority housing (including some tenants with services provided by ALMOs) and housing associations.

TAROE Trust had circulated a pre-webinar briefing that had highlighted several questions relating to scrutiny to enable discussion in the webinar. The headings used included recruitment, retention and renewal, operations and focus, links with other tenant involvement groups and activities, report writing, use of independent chairs, rights of audience, recording and reporting impact, and positive and negative effects of scrutiny activity. In the webinar itself, there was not sufficient time to cover each of these topics in detail, but the discussion broadly followed the headings. A recording of the webinar was made, and this is available to access on TAROE Trust's YouTube channel<sup>7</sup>.

The general perception given by most tenants in attendance was that tenant scrutiny was a useful and important tool to improve services, but one attendee referred to “lip service, tick boxing” and whether tenants can make change happen through tenant scrutiny. Another attendee referred to the “landlord talking to the people they want to – they cherry pick tenants who won’t challenge them”. Some attendees referred to landlords not listening to tenants and there is an expectation that new regulation will change this.

#### Recruitment and retention

Attendees discussed how most tenants get involved initially with scrutiny because of disgruntlement with a particular service (particularly repairs). One attendee referred to the landlord's statistics not “gelling” with tenants' lived experience - for example, a particular contractor that tenants had a poor view of achieving 97.8% satisfaction.

Attendees considered that retention was dependent on whether tenants felt that their involvement is having an impact. One attendee spoke of the need for those involved in tenant scrutiny to feel “valued”. Some referred to tenants and landlords working together on an annual impact statement setting out what had been achieved through scrutiny – “**You Said We Did**” type reports that raise the profile of the scrutiny panel.



<sup>7</sup> - TAROE Trust (2023). “TAROE Trust – Learning from Scrutiny” webinar. Published at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-2XpSjk>



There was not the time to discuss detailed outcomes of scrutiny activity, but one attendee highlighted that a recommendation made by their scrutiny panel had resulted in a handyman service that all their tenants are able to use.

One attendee referred to a 60 second video that their landlord uses to recruit tenants to tenant involvement and to promote the importance of tenant voice. Other concerns expressed that impact on recruitment and retention included the time commitment, the amount of material to read and the demography of tenant scrutiny.

Concerns were expressed that “no one under 40 gets involved” but it was noted that “over 55s tend to have more time available” and the Covid pandemic had enabled a better demographic. It was also pointed out that daytime meetings tend to make it difficult for those in work to participate, but another attendee suggested that there is a need for both face-to-face and digital events to involve tenants.

There was also a reference to the “attitudes of some local housing staff towards tenants” and there is a need for tenants to be “obstinate” and show “grit and determination” and that where this is the case, this would be off putting for some potential tenant scrutiny panel members.

### **Clarion Housing tenant scrutiny committees - an example of tenant scrutiny in operation:**

A staff member from Clarion Housing reported that Clarion has five scrutiny committees covering different regions. They scrutinise different areas and between them they do about six or seven scrutiny exercises in a year.

Their recruitment process, which includes an interview, brings in people from different backgrounds, some of whom are new to tenant involvement. They also have some tenants on scrutiny committees who have a professional background (some who previously worked in housing).

Bespoke training has been provided to the committees by Housing Quality Network and this helps tenants to analyse and scrutinise. It is also helpful that the five committees get together on occasions and learn from each other.



## Size of tenant scrutiny panel

Opinions were divided regarding how many tenants need to participate in tenant scrutiny. One attendee considered that 12 is a good number, but others said that lower than that (8 to 10 tenants) was better because “with too many, it can be difficult to get things done”. Another commented that too many people can result in people arguing.

## Independent chairs and advisors

There was a brief discussion about how some tenant scrutiny panels had positively used independent chairs (possibly just for a period of time) which had helped because it meant that the scrutiny process was not steered by staff and helped in reporting to the governing body. Attendees also broadly supported the principle of access to independent advice more generally. One attendee spoke about the importance of training and advice enabling those on tenant scrutiny panels to “speak the same language” as housing and repairs professionals.

## Remuneration

There was a discussion about whether tenants are or should be remunerated for their involvement in scrutiny panels. Concerns were particularly expressed regarding how payments affect tenants on benefits, but one attendee said that their core group of elected tenants are remunerated to the level where it does not affect those on benefits.

It was also noted that Salix Customer Committee members are remunerated to the same level as the Salix board members.

## Choice of subject matter

Attendees referred to various factors that had led to scrutiny exercises, including information from complaints and satisfaction surveys; looking at the lowest performing areas in Key Performance Indicators and Tenant Satisfaction Measures; hearing “things from the ground” – i.e. local knowledge of services from tenants.

It was also suggested that new scrutiny topics had been suggested because of issues arising in previous scrutiny reviews. It was considered by some that scrutiny topics should be planned well in advance.

One attendee referred to the need to ensure that the topic chosen was sufficiently tight and focussed to enable the scrutiny panel to make specific recommendations. One attendee referred to topic choices being informed by the activities of the Housing Ombudsman Service – in that matters raised by the Ombudsman had prompted scrutiny reviews. There was not discussion regarding whether it should be tenants or the landlord (or both) who should choose scrutiny topics, but one attendee particularly stated that they hadn’t “seen us choose a subject”.

## Recommendations

There was not sufficient time to discuss how recommendations are taken forward, but one attendee referred to a quarterly progress update that goes to their Board, and another said that “everything is usually accepted before the report comes out”.



## The relationship between tenant scrutiny and other tenant involvement

The webinar concluded with a discussion about how tenant scrutiny fits in with other forms of tenant involvement. Concern had been expressed before the webinar that tenant scrutiny panels becoming more prevalent over the last decade had resulted in other tenant groups/associations and other forms of tenant involvement declining with potentially the loss of independent tenant voices.

Tenant scrutiny panels are usually formed as part of governance arrangements in landlords, which affords them some power to make change happen, but they are not independent of the landlord.

These concerns were shared by some attendees. One attendee referred to a case study of where a local tenant group had been formed in conjunction with the Police to tackle issues of anti-social behaviour. This group had success in tackling the ASB, but then the landlord ceased to fund it and the ASB returned.

## Section Three:

### Tenant scrutiny - key issues to consider

Based on the webinar and other experience of TAROE Trust in supporting tenants with scrutiny activities, the spotlight report concludes with a set of “key issues to consider”.

The table below sets out key issues, alongside what excellent might look like and what dysfunctional might look like. They are intended to be extremes. If your system of tenant scrutiny does not have all the features listed under excellence, it’s not a disaster and we are hoping that no landlord is exhibiting all the features listed under dysfunctional.

Whilst there is no intention to be prescriptive about how tenant scrutiny is done, that the remit, purpose and methodology of scrutiny is consulted, debated and agreed by tenants generally would seem to be essential.

	Issue to consider	What might excellent look like?	What might dysfunctional look like?
1	How is the remit, purpose and methodology behind the scrutiny panel consulted on, agreed and reviewed with tenants?	<p>There is an effective consultation and discussion programme with a broad cross section of tenants on the remit, purpose and methodology behind the scrutiny panel.</p> <p>This is periodically reviewed with tenants and the consultation and review sits alongside consultation and review regarding how tenant involvement is done generally with the landlord.</p>	The landlord does not operate any form of tenant scrutiny activities, or it decides on the remit, purpose and methodology behind the scrutiny panel without reference to tenants.
2	What are the purposes and intended outcomes of the scrutiny panel?	<p>The purposes, intended outcomes and business /community benefits of tenant scrutiny are clearly set out in terms of reference and other documentation.</p> <p>The landlord and tenants are broadly in support of the purpose, outcomes and benefits.</p>	<p>There is no clarity about the purpose, intended outcomes and benefits.</p> <p>Tenant scrutiny is a tick box exercise with very few planned outcomes. Tenant scrutiny is not taken seriously in the organisation.</p>



	<b>Issue to consider</b>	<b>What might excellent look like?</b>	<b>What might dysfunctional look like?</b>
<b>3</b>	How does the scrutiny panel link to tenants?	The scrutiny panel regularly reports to all tenants (at least annually) such as in an Annual Report – setting out a You Said We Did type approach – reporting how scrutiny activity has led to changes that benefit tenants. The panel welcomes and encourages input from other tenants and tenant groups.	The scrutiny panel is not enabled to communicate with other tenants and is completely isolated from them. There are no reports to tenants on the work of the scrutiny panel and therefore no form of wider communication or accountability to tenants.
<b>4</b>	How does the scrutiny panel link to other areas of tenant involvement?	There are a wide range of methods for tenants to be involved – including some sort of core tenant body, various tenant teams and activities, various consultation and surveying activity, and support for local and other tenant groups/associations. The scrutiny panel has links with all of them and values input from them.	The scrutiny panel has supplanted all other methods of tenant involvement in the landlord. The landlord does not see the need for any other tenant activity. There are very limited other methods for tenants to be involved.
<b>5</b>	How is the scrutiny panel recruited or elected?	A method of recruiting or electing the scrutiny panel has been consulted on and agreed by tenants generally and this is periodically reviewed. Tenants have agreed a methodology that results in the best tenants for the job being chosen to be scrutiny panel members. Tenants are clear about how they can become scrutiny panel members if they wish to.	Scrutiny panel members are chosen by the landlord with no reference to tenant views on how the scrutiny panel should be recruited or elected. Potential panel members who would be the best at constructive challenge are not picked for the role.
<b>6</b>	What is the demography of the panel?	A cross section of tenants have been recruited/elected to the scrutiny panel that demographically reflect the tenant population and that has the skills and capacity to carry out effective tenant scrutiny.	All of the scrutiny panel members come from one demographic, and they lack the skills and capacity to carry out effective scrutiny.
<b>7</b>	What is the turnover of the panel?	A sensible turnover target is agreed with tenants and is achieved that balances the need for fresh ideas with the continuity needed to sustain effective tenant scrutiny. Ideally, this will include a total maximum term which tenants can serve on the scrutiny panel continuously which is enshrined in the scrutiny panel's constitution.	There is no target for turnover. There either is no turnover and no new scrutiny panel members. Or panel membership fluctuates wildly enabling nothing to be achieved.

	Issue to consider	What might excellent look like?	What might dysfunctional look like?
8	Should the scrutiny panel be remunerated?	Tenants generally are comfortable that scrutiny panel members are remunerated or not, and in either case, enough scrutiny panel members can be recruited with sufficient ability to carry out effective scrutiny.	There is no agreement with tenants about remuneration. Trust in the landlord is lacking to the extent that if it were proposed to remunerate panel members, it would not be well received by tenants.
9	Is there an independent Chair?	Tenants have agreed that an independent chair would assist in effective scrutiny and if so, have chosen an independent chair who has the right skills, knowledge and experience to facilitate effective tenant scrutiny.	Either an “independent” chair has been imposed by the landlord on the scrutiny panel or there is no independent chair and there is a need for one.
10	Is there access to independent advice and/or training?	The tenant scrutiny panel has access to sufficient independent advice and/or training to enable it to carry out effective tenant scrutiny. The scrutiny panel can link up with other tenant scrutiny panels elsewhere to compare approaches to scrutiny.	The scrutiny panel is isolated in the landlord and is only able to communicate with the landlord. The panel does not know what should be expected of the landlord due to the lack of any peer contact or information.
11	How independent does the scrutiny panel feel? (Tenant scrutiny panels are usually set up as a part of a landlord’s governance with powers to make change happen. But this also means they are formally not independent of the landlord).	Tenants recognise that the tenant scrutiny panel can make choices, can engage with people independent of the landlord, and can choose the recommendations it makes without undue interference from the landlord (and that these recommendations lead to change). The tenant scrutiny panel “feels” independent.	Tenants perceive the tenant scrutiny panel to be a tool of the landlord.  They do not trust its activities and do not think it reflects what tenants want. They perceive that the landlord chooses who is on the scrutiny panel and what is scrutinised and that they weed out any recommendations that would be overly controversial.



	Issue to consider	What might excellent look like?	What might dysfunctional look like?
12	What budget and resources are available to the scrutiny panel?	A specific identified budget has been agreed with tenants to develop tenant scrutiny. The resources available enable the panel to develop the skills it needs to effectively scrutinise – through training; participation in conferences and events; through engagement with other tenant scrutiny panels and through other means. Resources are also available to enable the panel to gather additional evidence in each review (such as holding events with tenants).	It is not clear what resources are available to support tenant scrutiny. There has been limited or no training for tenant scrutiny panel members and they are not encouraged or supported to engage with anyone outside the landlord to develop their capacity and skills. They are also not enabled to have dialogue with other tenants.
13	What is the modus operandi for the scrutiny panel?	The tenant scrutiny panel arranges its meetings in such a way that all panel members can participate, with meetings held at appropriate times, with digital access where necessary, with reasonable facilities and expenses to cover panel members to attend.	The landlord holds meetings when it suits them and does not consider tenant availability or needs.
14	Who chooses scrutiny panel topics?	Tenants choose the topics that the tenant scrutiny panel considers.	The landlord chooses the topics that the tenant scrutiny panel considers.
15	How are scrutiny panel topics chosen?	When tenants consider the topics the tenant scrutiny panel considers, they consider various service and satisfaction data; information given to them by other tenants; information from previous scrutiny reviews; and the views of staff and governing body members. The panel can always give a clear and evidence-based explanation regarding topic choices.	The landlord may have reasons for its choices for tenant scrutiny reviews, but these are not clearly explained to tenants.
16	Is there an ongoing programme of scrutiny panel topics?	The tenant scrutiny panel plans out its programme of scrutiny reviews for the next year and beyond so that tenants and staff know when an area will be considered. The panel adjusts their ongoing programme as necessary to meet shifting priorities within the overall long-term review programme.	There is no ongoing programme for tenant scrutiny reviews.

	Issue to consider	What might excellent look like?	What might dysfunctional look like?
17	Are scrutiny panel topics sufficiently succinct to enable useful recommendations?	<p>They are.</p> <p>An example of a succinct subject matter might be how and whether gas contractors keep to their appointments for annual gas servicing.</p>	<p>They are not. An example of a broad subject matter might be scrutiny of the whole repairs service.</p>
18	How does the scrutiny panel scope each review?	<p>The tenant scrutiny panel plans and scopes each review. It plans:</p> <p>(a) what data, policies, procedures, statistical information and other written information are required</p> <p>(b) how it will get the views of tenants on the subject matter and any events that may need to be held to bring in additional or detailed tenant views</p> <p>(c) what staff, contractors and others need to be interviewed as part of the scrutiny review</p> <p>(d) how it will get knowledge of best practice from elsewhere</p> <p>(e) how the panel will consider the evidence it gathers</p> <p>(f) how the report will be produced</p> <p>(g) how the draft report will be shared with relevant staff and amended dependent on comments received</p> <p>(h) how the report will be presented to the governing body or equivalent.</p> <p>Other stakeholders are asked for their views on the plan/scoping document.</p>	<p>There is no plan.</p>





	Issue to consider	What might excellent look like?	What might dysfunctional look like?
19	What information and data is available to the scrutiny panel when it is carrying out a review?	<p>The tenant scrutiny panel has access to relevant policies and procedures; to satisfaction data; to subject specific statistical performance and other data (as well as objective analyses of data). The panel has access to specific case study information as necessary.</p> <p>The panel (or at least its chair) may need access to personal data as part of the review and any panel members who have access to personal data have signed and comply with appropriate agreements. The panel has access to well prepared and succinct best practice information and can bring in appropriate comparative information from other landlords.</p>	The tenant scrutiny panel only has access to statistical performance data that has been analysed solely by landlord staff.
20	Does the scrutiny panel have access to staff relevant to the scrutiny topic being considered?	The tenant scrutiny panel can choose which staff in the landlord it wishes to interview as part of each review (provided it sets out the reasons for any interviews). Staff involved welcome and look forward to being interviewed by the scrutiny panel.	The tenant scrutiny panel is not allowed to interview staff relevant to the subject matter. Staff see no reason for them to participate in tenant scrutiny reviews.
21	What is the attitude of senior staff towards tenant scrutiny exercises?	Senior staff particularly welcome and look forward to being interviewed by the scrutiny panel and champion that the panel should have access to any staff relevant to each scrutiny review.	Senior staff support tenant scrutiny because it ticks a box. They are reluctant to be interviewed and see no purpose for tenant scrutiny exercises.

	<b>Issue to consider</b>	<b>What might excellent look like?</b>	<b>What might dysfunctional look like?</b>
<b>22</b>	Are scrutiny reports and recommendations clear, specific and concise?	Tenant scrutiny reports are clear and well argued. They set out what the review was about; why the topic was chosen; what was the process followed to review the topic; the evidence of tenant views; the views of staff involved in the service; any relevant good practice information; and clear recommendations and evidence- based reasons as to how they were arrived at. Where possible, recommendations also refer to potential cost, diversity and any other implications.	Tenant scrutiny reports and recommendations are unclear and unspecific.  They do not provide the evidence base for any recommendations made. They do not include anyone's views other than the authors!
<b>23</b>	Do senior staff have an opportunity to comment on scrutiny panel reports and recommendations?	Tenant scrutiny reports go in draft to senior staff who have an opportunity to comment. The scrutiny panel has considered any comments received from senior staff.	Senior staff are not given the opportunity to comment on scrutiny panel reports.
<b>24</b>	To whom is the final scrutiny report presented?	Tenant scrutiny reports are presented by the Chair of the scrutiny panel to a governance body in the landlord which has delegated authority to approve recommendations made.	Tenant scrutiny reports are presented to a part of the landlord that has no delegated authority to approve recommendations.
<b>25</b>	Are scrutiny recommendations approved or if not, are clear explanations given as to why they are not approved?	Having presented reports (or before), scrutiny recommendations are either approved or, if not approved, reasons are given for them not being approved (and alternative suggestions have been made if appropriate).	Scrutiny recommendations are not approved and no reasons are given for lack of approval.
<b>26</b>	Are scrutiny recommendations followed-up and monitored to ensure on-going implementation and accountability of the landlord to tenants?	There are arrangements in place to promote on-going monitoring and accountability of delivery against any agreed recommendations with regular progress reports being supplied by the landlord's governance bodies to the scrutiny panel, which in turn is empowered to query progress and hold the landlord to account on any areas of non-delivery.	There is no follow-up reporting on the progress or completion of agreed recommendations back to the scrutiny panel.  There is no way for the scrutiny panel to assess the impact of its actions.

	Issue to consider	What might excellent look like?	What might dysfunctional look like?
27	How much trust and confidence do tenants have in the scrutiny panel and in the landlord in general?	<p>Tenants consider that the scrutiny panel is effectively contributing to improving services and to the tenant involvement framework in general. Tenants have trust and confidence in the landlord and tenants involved in the landlord's governance.</p> <p>This will generally be demonstrated by the scrutiny panel regularly reviewing the effectiveness of its own activities and reporting on the outcome of these exercises alongside the reporting on the impact of their activities on improving landlord services to tenants more generally.</p>	<p>Tenants consider the tenant scrutiny panel to be a lip service tick box exercise and that the landlord does not listen to tenant views. Tenants do not have trust and confidence in the landlord.</p>



## **5.6 Tpas National Tenants Conference, Coventry – Feedback Reports**

Paul Bowman and Jim Watson attended the Tpas National Tenants Conference in Coventry on 12 and 13 July 2023.

Included in the pack are Paul Bowman and Jim Watson's feedback reports for noting.

# A Short Report on Tpas National Tenant Conference on 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> July 2023

Doubletree Hilton, Coventry

by Paul Bowman

With six workshops to choose from, twice a day for each day, we each attended different sessions in order to cover the subject matter of most interest to our fellow Tenant Volunteers.

The Keynote Speaker Richard Blakeway, the Housing Ombudsman, focused on the three 'R's' that Social Housing Providers will be under scrutiny for.

- Recognition of shortcomings in performance
- Reaction to changing and additional needs
- Record accurately and objectively

Two stats and one statement he quoted stood out.

- 80% staff find it difficult to respond effectively because records are poor
- An average 20% 'failure to keep an appointment' rate is not being treated as an event that warrants a complaint
- Categories such as 'Service requests' are no longer to be used to hide poor performance levels.

His recap referred to the Landlord Tenant Act which states that the Landlord is responsible for accurate repair logs and for the scrutiny of ineffective repairs.

*Takeaway: Many Landlords still have to revise their cultural viewpoint. Complaints are an opportunity to improve, not measure of failure.*

## Session A

### Practical Skills for Scrutiny

#### Wilful Blindness (Margaret Heffernan)

“You are responsible if you could have known, and should have known, something which instead you strove not to see”

- White Paper – Chapter 5: To have your voice heard by your landlord “We want to see landlords inform and engage tenants in an effective way... opportunities can range from involvement in surveys, focus groups and local events to membership of the organisation’s Board or scrutiny panel”
- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard “ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in ... the scrutiny of their landlord’s performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved”
- Committee – Scrutiny Panel • In depth inquiry • Task and Finish • Bootcamp (which to use?)

Good quality scrutiny needs effective communication skills, collaboration with each other and with landlord. Accurate and impartial analysis requires quality research information.

Takeaway:

*Cultural Conundrum: How can we be a Critical Friend without creating resentment and pushback?*

## Session B

### Debate: Are we making any progress on repairs?

An upbeat session that revealed SCDC is generally on the right path.

- Is there an over reliance on responsive repairs service?
- Are some works beyond the scope of the maintenance contractor?
- Age and suitability of stock is very relevant.
- Disrepair can be the result of poor repair standards

Build back knowledge of homes – *SCDC stock condition survey will provide this*

Use of every visit to check condition – *Feedback reports from Mears (and SCDC Officers) would be useful*

Data – what do we really know? – *Accurate data collection essential (see keynote speech above). Mears contact database construction and data collection methods may still warrant 'drill downs'*

Use remote sensors – *Switchee trial ongoing*

Must engage Tenants in design and procurement of service – *Ongoing- and yes!*

*Takeaway:*

*1. Is the data collected by contractors their property or those of the Landlord? This has ramifications for accuracy and credibility of performance measurement.*

*2. Find your silence! Look for data gaps*

## Session C

### Tenant Satisfaction Measures – How can we collect and use them to make a genuine difference to tenants?

A strong four speaker session including:

Fleur Priest – from the Regulator of Social Housing

From April '24 TSMs will be checked by the regulator. The data collected can be used by the Tenants to hold their landlord to account.

Nationwide, it is clear that many Social Housing Landlords will struggle to put the new systems in place. It is expected that next year will come as a shock to many.

Dr Nasir - Red Kite Housing

- Resident Representative Team (RRT) involvement from the outset.
- All data and information shared with RRT
- Tenants are part of the narrative to bring the changes required
- RRT members hold services leads and Exec Team to account

Ann-Marie Bancroft - Altair Housing

- Shared ownership satisfaction is lower than full tenants – why?
- There is only an improvement in satisfaction if the root cause is addressed.

Eamon McGoldrick – ALMOS

- Councils not used to being regulated and will have to publish data with potential political ramifications
- If TSMs reveal poor performance, the landlord must publish an improvement plan to be signed off by residents. This plan can subsequently be IMPOSED upon the landlord....

*Takeaway: Accurate data essential*

Memorable quote: 'Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning'

## Session D

### Making meetings work

When the session contains this line: “Tpas are an engagement organisation. Audience participation is a pre-requisite. Managed mayhem is what I’m looking for.....” you can expect something worthwhile.

Key points:

- Encourage diversity to ensure exploration of a wide range of views
- Challenge the point – never the person
- Deal with conflict using open questions
- Accurate and neutral records to be kept
- 6 P’s.... Proper Preparation Prevents Pretty Poor Performance

## Tpas Conference held at The Double Tree in Coventry – 12 and 13 July 2023

Report by Jim Watson

Consumer regulations was due for royal accent by the end of June.

Communication with tenants Landlords data on residents, I:E contact numbers phone and mobile if possible. Email for sending emails out do the council have a percentage of these on record to make contacts.

- (1) Residents get involved.
- (2) The cost and benefiting residents.
- (3) Culture needs changing.

### Local Authority Change

- (1) Get used to be challenged by tenants.
- (2) Get used to change this may take a few years for local authority.
- (3) Regular visits by local authority may take longer. Service charging lease holders and sheltered housing what happens to the money charged and collected?
- (4) Question to slido = came up about tenants do not trust the council so don't talk to them.
- (5) I have suggested that I am a tenant the residents find it easier to talk to me I then pass those details on to the council.

### Landlords Accreditations

Good practice workshop now happening at Stockport homes group.

7 themes 46 standards culture beats structures go beyond regulations and improve with wider community engagements by connecting communities together.

### Social Media Engagement

All the figures relate to Ofcom adults media literacy tracker 2021.

#### Percentage of households in 2021 had internet access

2021 smart phone = 88%	tablet = 43%
laptop = 53%	smartphone only = 21%

UK adult internet users spend 4 hours online a day in September 2021, with 3 of those hours spent on smartphones.

Average daily time spent online (hours mins) in September 2021

15+ = 3.59 hrs

15 – 17 = 5.04 hrs

18 – 24 = 5.06 hrs

25 – 34 = 4.36 hrs

35 – 44 = 4.32 hrs

45 – 54 = 3.51 hrs

55+ = 2.58 hrs

Average daily time spent online by adults in September 2021

Smartphone = 02.54 hrs

Tablet = 00.34 mins

Computer = 00.31 mins

**Total = 03.59 hours**

Proportion of adults with home internet access by age gender and seg

	18+	18 – 24	25 – 34	35 – 44	45 – 54	55 – 64	65+	Average
Do not have internet access at home	6%	1%	<1%	3%	2%	35%	20%	-
Have access at home and go online	92%	99%	99%	97%	97%	96%	73%	73%

	AB	C1	C2	DE	England
Do not have internet access at home	2%	3%	5%	14%	6%
Have access at home and go online	97%	96%	91%	82%	-
Have access at home but do not use it	1%	1%	4%	3%	2%

Average 82%

Facebook and Messenger

Media	Parent Company	Total Adult	Online Adult	Average Daily Adult
Messenger FB	Meta	46.7m	94%	34.3m
You Tube	Alphabet	45.6m	92%	20.9m
Instagram	Meta	36.3m	73%	17.6m
Twitter	Twitter	30.8m	62%	11.4m
LinkedIn	Microsoft	18.8m	38%	4.6m
Pinterest	Pinterest	16.6m	33%	2.7m
Tiktok	Bytedance	15.4m	31%	5.4m
Reddit	Reddit Inc	14.1m	28%	2.9m
Snapchat	Snap	11.8m	24%	6.9m
Nextdoor	Nextdoor	9.2m	18%	2.4m

## How can you use social media

Share what you are about

Reach new audiences

Generate a buzz around an activity or project

Get new ideas and suggestions

Generate feedback (include votes / polls)

Host discussions

## **6. Any other Business (AOB)**

Any additional issues to be raised.

## **7. Meeting Dates for 2023 / 2024**

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

## **8. Closing**