**Tenant & Leaseholder Scrutiny Group**

**Saturday 22nd June 2024, 9:00am-1.30pm**

**Sandwell Council House**

**Chair – Phillippe Brown**

**Draft Minutes**

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| **Circulation:**  **Scrutiny Members** |  |  |
| Ahmed Abdulrahman  Phillippe Brown  **Sandwell MBC** | Alison Allen  Sue Smith  Anne-Marie Docker – TAG Chair  Gerry - TAG Member | Aynols Reid  Shenalee Brown |
| Marianne Monro  Christine Davis  Manny Sehmbi  Nigel Collumbell | Sarah Ager  Tom Hogan | Jim Brennan |
| **Apologies:**  Delroy Thomas  Stembile Mhlanga | Anthony Averis |  |

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| **Items for Discussion** | | |
| 1. | **Introduction to Formal Meeting**  Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Formal introductions were made.  Apologies from as above  Chair ran through the agenda.  The minutes and Action log from meeting 16th March 2024 had previously been circulated. No amendments were requested, and the minutes were agreed.  SS and SA – raised that was not noted as attending the meeting on the 16th March, minutes to be amended and circulated. Minutes with agreed changes were agreed.  Action Log – Chair ran through the actions  Discussed action relating to TLSG Business and SNAC update – agreed to remove action. Group felt that TLSG work programme has been developed.  Discussed SNAC and feedback and chair offered group to have opportunities to attend the SNAC meeting should they want to.  Action log review council services outside normal hours, NC suggested TLSG discuss whether they would like to keep it on the action going forward.  Leaseholder event is being discussed in the background, but the Tenant Conference has evolved into one of Tenant and Leaseholder Conference.  Declaration of Interest – none declared | Chair |
| 2. | **Asset Management and Repairs Budget Update**  SA discussed provided an overview of the budget to date.  Repairs & maintenance budget is being managed however, the Capital investment programme is where some of the challenges have been, there have been several cabinet reports that have agreed a series of capital/improvement works, however what has been highlighted as part of the review that the budget is currently facing a number of pressures, and not enough funds to cover all of what was approved.  Continuing to work with finance, split funds to support new build but also looking at borrowing Gathering data on stock condition to help understand our priorities, what we ned to do to make homes decent standard and raise EPC rating. Some budget to deliver some areas of work but not at a big level. Grant from government to invest in 625 properties but will need to match fund the grant.  Projects in flight, has identified that further funds are needed due to increase in building costs, hence main areas of investment are to complete the 4 schemes and bring up to EPC standard. Will also be looking to retain a pot of funds to support where repairing is no longer an option and more in need of replacement.  SA above is to support current issues and pressures but going forward will be looking to work in a different way.  Planning to go to Cabinet in July 24.  PB requested additional updates as this work progresses  SA suggested in 6 months’ time to provide an update on the stock conditions programme and what the forward plan may look like  AR stock condition survey is this on track, SA advised some 5000 are to be undertaken, currently tendering process and looking to complete 50% of stock by end of 2025, will look to run a 5yr rolling programme so all stock is visited every 5 yrs.  AR outcome of election will this have any effect on the future project, SA projects in flight will continue, cannot say about what may happen but teal will continue with work as currently planned.  AA how do you measure quality of repair, try to be completed repairs so can be done timely and at the time? SA – There will be an analysis about any repeat repairs and will then be an audit to understand and if it is due to the quality of the work or materials are they right, or could it be item is end of life expectancy  AA repairs do they start with view to repair or replace, SA advised usually starts with position of repair and if needs replacement goes on the programme. Mostly the repair operative will make the decision but are looking to make a consistent service, so decisions are more fit for purpose and taking a more holistic approach. | SA |
| 3. | **TSM Returns**  TSM measures deadline is 30th June, date that feedback needs to go to Regulator regarding our performance statistical side and tenant satisfaction.  Returns for perception survey have been completed.  Ran through slides TSM measures and statistics.  SA discussed asbestos management surveys and advised that a plan is in place to use current resources or a Third party to explore which property need a reinspection. Asbestos aware inspectors will need to re-assess. With proposed plan in place, then next year will show a significant change/improvement. SA has been consulting with the Regulator, and reassurance that a plan is in place to address the issue.  PB requested a further update on this matter as this work develops  Homes that do not meet Decent Home Standards 1.9%, SA advised that we do not have all our stock data, however there is no one clear definition as to what is a Decent Home, so have included Cat 1 Hazards. This has been discussed with the Regulator.  SA discussed - Emergency responsive repairs completed within the landlord target timescales, the figures have increased due to changes recently implemented, showing an improvement and will continue to build on this going forward.  TH discussed ASB and how we have recorded these and it being different to that of Regulator, which has meant our figures appear higher than other areas. Currently working on how this can be addressed as to how the measure is collated.  PB suggested that be good to look at this data going forward, however was noted that TAG is to look at this and was agreed would be helpful as part of the wider work on this measure.  NC suggested it may be useful to TAG to discuss with JB and the recently appointed Community Safety Manager.  PB discussed perception and understanding legislation, but also consistency in understanding.  TH advised will be shared on the website, also advised of a local benchmarking exercise on the 24th June. PB asked if this could be shared to help group know outcome of discussions.  TH advised will be looking to promote information further after 4th July.  AR asked if we a private tenant is affecting SMBC tenant and vice-versa is this recorded, TH advised that it is still recorded.  AR shared a well done, and agreement that data showed being open and transparent. | SA & TH |
| 4 | **Consumer Standards Update**  TH are currently gathering evidence to demonstrate how we are delivering to these standards and asked how the group what they would like to see and how.  PB advised that a concise version of the report would be welcomed, this would then give the group context and insight.  NC confirmed happy to share with the group what the “inspectors” are feeding back in the review of evidence gathered.  CD suggested showing areas where we are confident on and any gaps. NC also suggested that as well as addressing Regulator asks to also be keeping an eye on what our tenants also want and continue to develop and maintain the engagement and involvement.  PB reiterated importance of standards but also how the group can work in partnership with SMBC. | TH |
| 5 | **Tenancy and Estate Management Update (including Good Neighbourhood Management draft policy)**  JB discussed the Good Neighbourhood Management Policy, which was instigated by the Housing Ombudsman in relation to noise nuisance. The Housing Ombudsman provided guideline for landlords to develop our approach on this area, but also how it should be consulted upon.  Part of the work was to develop a Good Neighbourhood agreement.  AR asked what is the outcome if people do not sign it? JB felt the policy was more about guidance and support, what it means to be a good neighbour and how the council could support. JB advised there has been debate about the signing of the document, which is ongoing and is part of the consultation.  PB felt that an education work be undertaken alongside policy which would support people signing up to this.  NC agreed needed to be educational approach, helping to understand good etiquette, more how we can support, prevent and less enforcement.  SS felt was in plain English and is a guide, which felt was good reading.  PB didn’t feel needed more adding to it but add more around the education side.  **Action:** JB agreed to bring back a final draft when ready.  Tenancy & Estate Management – JB provided an overview of his teams and the structure.  Slides provided an overview of the role of the teams, discussed estate services and this also include building safety measures.  Cleaning is undertaken 5 days a week, teamwork 7 days a week.  Estate services are currently reviewing SERCO contract and considering value for money as part of the process.  JB discussed tenancy management, and overview of the roles within the team and range of key tasks undertaken.  JB gave an update on Home Checks and how this is being delivered, rationale and impact. The process has supported referrals to different services internal and external. JB gave an example of how the team supported a home with a damp and mould issue.  JB provided update on progress and tenant satisfaction to date has been over 95%.  JB the team are continuing to focus on delivering further Home Checks, recognise need to further develop staff case management and learning and development is key for staff. Number of policies still need to be developed.  PB asked if residents leave a copy of the Home Check, JB advised if it is asked for then is provided upon request.  SS asked about access issue, JB advised staff would continue to pursue. NC also advised the No Access policy is currently being finalised. NC advised is a process of escalation which would lead to requiring a warrant through the courts. However, are also looking at other approaches and other practice amongst landlords, and should we consider taking risks to force entry, but is being further discussed and explored.  SB asked when undertaking Home Checks when is the follow up undertaken. JB advised that the officer agree with the resident when the follow up would be undertaken. Generally, if no issue would likely be 3 yrs. time, but f an issue has been identified then would be sooner.  SS asked regarding care takers and not being able to access one, how can this be done, are there any contact details available? JB advised numbers are not issued.  SS would be useful to know where caretaker should be, can tenants contact them directly. JB caretaker needs to undertake role, cleaning, and inspections but not necessarily a responsive service with customers. JB advised any issues being reported need to come through agreed channels which allows SMBC to record and manage actions.  PB asked if could be updated as to caretaker schedules/reporting. JB suggested supervisors could potentially be a source to contact if an issue. JB offered for Bryan Low and supervisor to attend next Hamstead TRA meeting. | JB |
| 6. | **TLSG and TAG Joint Working - Update**  CD provided an update on the joint working meeting between TLSG and TAG to agree new ways of working going forward.  A reflection on the purpose of TLSG and TAG has taken place, and a mutually agreed work programme has been put in place.  TAG is currently starting to look at ASB, Voids and choice-based lettings.  TAG will share their reports with TLSG.  Currently revising Terms of Reference.  Teams channel will be live shortly.  PB felt that the groups have progressed and come a long way over time, and groups are here to make a difference. Feel have a plan as to how can move forward together in partnership. There has been learning along the way and is grateful for the support to date.  NC felt that progress has been positive, and how both groups have been working well and this is a positive step forward.  SS feels now going in the right direction.  PB expressed thanks to MM for her support throughout process from the start. Also, a thanks to CD for her support to the group, and all officers who have supported. | CD |
| 7. | **Complaints Audit**  AMD and GB gave an overview of TAG’s recent audit of the complaints process.  The focus has been on repairs complaints and included, desk top audit, mystery shopping on how to make a complaint, a survey of tenants who had made a stage 1 complaint. TAG members also attended the Ombudsman session and held a focus group. Through this came up with 30 recommendations.  AMD went through the Recommendations.  Better communication, more empathy came through as areas of development.  AR asked if TAG feel that complaints are looked at in the right manner. AMD confirmed that every tenant who responded said that their complaint had not been dealt with within the published timescales.  SS felt the report was a disappointing read, where does fault lay? AMD felt from their feedback was at all stages, sometimes complaints not recognised as a complaint, more an enquiry. Communication, failure to keep complainants updated was an issue as well as not knowing why a delay.  SS expressed how important communication is.  NC welcomed report and acknowledged the need for better communication, and suggested this is an opportunity for us to test our new approach with dealing with complaints following set up of the Head of Customer Service team.  G talked about an ongoing complaint, and experience was negative in terms of understanding why case closed and what was the outcome.  PB discussed how complaints can be used to understand the service, to influence further learning and development of staff and understand complaints and how they are being looked into/managed.  SS discussed how complaints can be looked upon as being critical but needs to be seen as way to highlight when something is not working, to improve service.  NC talked about looking at patterns, avoidable contacts and what have been resolved at first point of contact. Recognise we are creating a culture change, and how we are working with staff to respond and how we can resource effectively.  AR thanked AMD and G for presentation and felt response from SMBC was honest and feels moving forward to a positive resolution. AR reinforced to not take negatively, see as a gift to make improvements. Keen to see changes in the next 12 months.  PB keen to see further developments in this area.  NC discussed the perception survey due shortly. | AMD |
| 8. | **Damp and Mould Update**  SA provided overview of current position and progress to date.  In November 2022, the Regulator of Social Housing asked SMBC about our approach to damp and mould. Since then, teams have been developed and enhanced to support delivery.  Initial assessment of repairs regarding damp and mould and any CAT 1 hazards, this helps to hold a central record.  Had self-referred to the Regulator, and we had prepared an implementation plan.  Discussed issues with no access and the building in necessary actions, as per above the No Access policy.  Working in partnership with Tenancy Management and Home Checks, support to tenants but highlighting where any issues.  Discussed large number of inspections that were outstanding but have now been cleared, and now moved to undertaking any necessary actions/repairs and anticipate this being addressed by mid-September. Ready to deal with any new cases as we move into winter period. Repairs team has been restructured to support this work going forward.  Have been offered a Decency Grant from Government 2.1M to be spent by March ’24, and through WMCA and have negotiated to spend by the end of September 24. Will be used to support CAT 1 hazards and damp and mould cases. 625 properties have been identified. Proposal shared with WMCA who have agreed with proposal to spend the grant.  Discussed going forward to explore smart technology and innovative heating solutions and potential impact it could make, and to pilot whilst tracking learning of the impact/difference.  Tony Averis had sent a question prior to the meeting, asking if work will be completed by September, and would we expect a drop off in damp and mould. SA confirmed would be completed by September and yes would anticipate a drop off.  SA referred to Awaabs Law and working towards undertaking work within agreed timescales being on track.  SS asked if we would need to return any unspent funds, SA anticipates spending allocation.  PB advised any questions they may occur at later date can email SA. | SA |
| 9. | **Tenant Engagement Framework Update**  MS provided update on tenant engagement framework to date.  Congratulated SS on the nomination for the Housing Awards.  Discussed training for Housing Management staff and taking learning to build upon this going forward and roll out further. | MS |
|  | **Date of next formal meeting:** - 21 September 2024 |  |