

Tenants' Voice

23rd January 2025, 6pm - 8pm, hybrid meeting

Present:

TV Members:

In person –

Pawla Cottage (PC) (Chair)	Tenant
Garry Harper (GH)	Tenant
Gibran Afzal (GA)	Tenant
Syed Uddin (SU)	Tenant
Terry McGreenera (TM)	Tenant
Saleha Jafrin (SJ)	Leaseholder
Daniele Lamarche (DL)	Leaseholder

Online -

Luigi Candela (LC)	Leaseholder
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Staff:

In person -

Darren Reynolds (DR)	Interim Head of Regulatory Assurance
Gulam Hussain (GH)	Acting Director of Neighbourhoods & Customer Service
Lesley Owen (LO)	Business Development & Improvement Manager
Nojmul Hussain (NH)	Senior Resident Scrutiny Officer
Jenny Fisher (JF)	Policy Analyst

Online -

John Dakin (JD)	Head of Neighbourhoods & Income
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Members (Councillor):

Kabir Ahmed (KA)	Lead Cabinet Member for Housing
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Observers:

Iain Springate (IS)	Regulator of Social Housing Inspector
Rebecca Sweeton (RS)	Regulator of Social Housing Inspector

Summary of actions

1. Arrange for the resident, which DL forwarded details of, to get involved in the leaks review process.
2. NH to request if GHa can be kept updated around the leak issue he reported on behalf of a resident.
3. Add ToR review on the March 2025 agenda.
4. We will consider arranging for the belongings of deceased residents, where the family have not claimed them, e.g. furniture, to be donated to a charity organisation.
5. Provide breakdown on safeguarding referrals made to services such as adult social care. Including information on tenancy sustainability.
6. DL to provide details of the specific concern she has in relation to the way the council responded to a vulnerability.
7. Share hoarding scale/matrix form.
8. JD to share data on performance around identifying and offering support to vulnerable residents.
9. All to pencil in 24th February 2025 Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny sub – committee meeting.
10. Explore performance indicator around cost efficiency for time spent on the call.
11. Include review of the call centre in the March 2025 agenda.
12. Tenants' Voice to revisit the number and frequency of performance indicators being received.
13. Share the housing management service insert which is included within My East End paper at the next meeting.
14. Circulate 'Your Voice, Our Action' presentation slides.
15. All to email NH if they want to register for a training course.
16. Arrange members to experience and observe housing management operational delivery as part of training.
17. NH to ensure future guest presenters are reminded to avoid acronyms. And DR to explain the acronyms from his presentation.
18. Consider a review on council's communications strategy.
19. Share details of the scrutiny review in commercial units on housing estates

1 Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 PC opened the meeting and welcomed members.

2 Minutes and matters arising

- 2.1 Minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.
- 2.2 DL highlighted that in addition to point 10 from the action tracker sheet, she had not received an update regarding a leak enquiry she made. As this was communicated outside the business meeting, NH said this was not captured as an action. This was about arranging for a resident to get involved in the leak process review.

ACTION: Arrange for the resident whose details DL forwarded, to be involved in the leaks review process.

- 2.3 GHa requested if he could be kept informed of the progress of the leak report he made on behalf of a resident. NH said he would try and arrange this with the Repairs Service.

ACTION: NH to request if GHa can be kept updated on the leak issue he reported on behalf of a resident.

- 2.4 DL asked if her feedback on the Terms of Reference (ToR) was considered. LO explained the ToR include provision for an annual review, and the review will be on the March 2025 agenda. It will include the new governance arrangements within the council and how they interact with *Tenants' Voice* as well as resident feedback.

ACTION: Add ToR review to the March 2025 agenda.

3.0 Vulnerable resident policy

- 3.1 GH and JD presented the draft Vulnerable Tenants' and Leaseholders' policy. The scope and purpose of the policy was explained. The purpose is to assist vulnerable secure/ probationary tenants and leaseholders to access services in order to sustain their tenancy/lease. GH explained that it acts as a guiding principle and works alongside supporting policies. The aim is to:

- ensure a consistent approach in identifying, assessing and recording vulnerability
- provide, where possible, a service that best fits the need of our customers
- set out a clear framework for the management of vulnerable customers

- 3.2 Members' feedback

- Communication/ interventions

DL raised the importance of providing face to face communication and how new residents, who may have vulnerabilities, are identified. DL also enquired about the mechanism in place should a resident seek intervention on behalf of another person who is not next of kin. DL emphasised the importance of having intervention in place before a situation escalates to a higher risk level, resulting in several negative implications.

JD explained that there are several referral channels for assessing individuals. This includes informal and formal visits, tenancy audits on new and existing residents. Staff can also make referrals if they identify risks during interactions. Furthermore, DR reported that contractors can pick up any concerns and flag them up as part of safeguarding. GH also re-assured members that the Council has a 'resident at risk' process whereby it is everyone's business to report a safeguarding concern. This includes both statutory services and members of the local community.

GH reported that since April 2024, 173 'resident at risk' referrals were raised by a range of agencies. This is reported on a monthly basis. In addition, tenancy audits are undertaken which provide an opportunity to pick up safeguarding risks.

- **Leaseholders**
It was noted that audits are not carried out for leaseholders. However, when risks are identified such as electrical issues, the council has resolved these issues although not legally required to do so for leaseholders. These were not re-charged via the leasehold service charge.
Support also includes referring leaseholders for intervention if they suffer from mental health issues.
- **Funding support** – PC enquired what financial support is available for vulnerable residents who cannot afford to clear their home or pay for storage when required due to repair works. Also, people that cannot afford home care, subsequently putting them at risk. GH explained that the council is issuing a new contract to help with removals and storage. For priority repair work such as damp and mould, the council will work around the household composition so that a resident unable to move furniture is not affected. Work is being done with the Housing Options service on a wider procurement exercise around removal storage. This may be required when decanting residents to temporary accommodation during works.
- **TM expressed concerns around the way in which belongings of a deceased resident are thrown away by the council.** GH explained the process the council follows upon formal notification of death. This involves providing an opportunity for family to get in touch with the council should they want to claim belongings or if there are rights to a succession of tenancy. There is a 4-week timeframe to contact the council. However, extensions can and have been granted under extenuating circumstances.

GHa advised that the council should consider donating to a charity where belongings are left behind.

ACTION: We will consider arranging for the belongings of deceased residents, where the family have not claimed them, e.g. furniture, to be donated to a charity organisation.

3.3 Councillor KA provided the following feedback

- Cllr KA emphasised the wide range of vulnerabilities from poverty, mental health, child abuse to domestic violence and explained the housing management service does have a safeguarding responsibility around identifying all forms of risk. Cllr KA is interested in how the council's risk register is managed, knowing the number of people in the system and the efficacy of joined up working. For example, working alongside adult social care and other professionals. The housing service has a significant role in helping residents to access the right service.
- There is often difficulty in aligning joint work between public health and the NHS. Supporting statements from the housing management service can be offered to ensure a higher quality of overall assessment of residents.
- Cllr KA advised safeguarding leads, within housing management, should attend external wider safeguarding conferences and network meetings.
- Both residents and wider council services should be able to make referrals if a vulnerable resident at risk is identified
- An update on the funds to support residents facing financial difficulties was provided, such as the help with winter fuel allowance and free home care.

DR said that the housing management can provide a breakdown of the number of referrals made and tenancy sustainment services.

ACTION: Provide breakdown on safeguarding referrals made to services such as adult social care. Including information on tenancy sustainability.

- Caretakers reporting and identifying issues - SJ enquired around training offered to caretakers and operators to help them identify risks or issues that need to be reported and the process in which this is done. GH explained that caretakers should be conducting regular block inspections and if there are issues, it is expected they make a report. This includes identifying risks during their regular cleaning programme. GH also outlined the training that they receive.
- Hoarding - SJ also enquired how hoarding is managed, GH reported the council is working on a hoarding policy and there are legal nuances between the way you deal with leaseholders from tenants. GH advised hoarding is assessed on a set scale and a standardised matrix system. PC requested this to be shared.

ACTION: Share hoarding scale/matrix form.

- SU recommended that the council could explore joint working with utility companies as they have intelligence around vulnerable residents. SU also suggested offering bespoke training when required.

- DL shared an anecdote from her block where there was a lack of action from the council to address a vulnerability, DR advised DL to share details outside of the business meeting.

ACTION: DL to provide details of the specific concern she has in relation to the way the council responded to a vulnerability.

- LC asked whether data on how well the council has performed around identifying and supporting vulnerable residents can be shared. JD agreed to share this data.

ACTION: JD to share data on performance on identifying and offering support to vulnerable residents.

- JF advised that residents can contact Adult Social Care which provides support for vulnerable people needing assistance after leaving the hospital.

4.0 Selection of Vice – Chair

- 4.1 DL and GA volunteered to take the position of Vice Chair. All then agreed DL and GA to act as co-vice chairs.

5.0 Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee – Resident experience

- 5.1 DR reported that the Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub-Committee had requested an update on the work of the *Tenants' Voice* at its 24th February 2025 meeting. PC has been invited to present and other members are welcome to participate too.

The headline questions the sub- committee would like feedback on are:

- The work *Tenants' Voice* is doing
- Are their voices being heard?
- Has engagement with tenants and leaseholders improved?

- 5.2 Members provided the following feedback

- Emails often going into 'black holes'
- Suggestion that *Tenants' Voice* members visit services and experience/witness service operation
- Provide mystery shopping opportunity to assess quality of service
- More details around how *Tenants' Voice* fits into the council's governance structure, e.g. housing sub-committee
- Have seen a positive change in attitude towards listening to tenants' feedback as a result of change of staff and regulatory requirements
- It is felt that it is still 'early days' for the tenants' voice and end outcomes will determine how effective their feedback has been

- 5.3 DR confirmed that all members are invited to and can observe the housing scrutiny sub – committee meeting.

ACTION: All to pencil in 24th February 2025 Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny sub-committee meeting.

6.0 Performance Q3

- 6.1 LO highlighted the performance report for Q3.

Table 1: Status December 2024 – all indicators

STATUS	Red	Amber	Green	N/A	All
No. of indicators: Dec 24	9 41%	4 18%	1 5%	8 36%	22 100%

Table 2 below shows the direction of travel compared to the previous month/quarter.

Table 2: Direction of Travel from *November 2024* – monthly indicators - & *September 2024* – quarterly indicators

TREND	Weakened	No change	Improved	All
No. of indicators: Dec 24	7 32%	2 9%	13 59%	22 100%

- 6.2 SU proposed an indicator around the total time spent on an HSC call, its cost implication and whether it was reasonable.

ACTION: Explore performance indicator around cost efficiency for time spent on the call.

- 6.3 GHa expressed concern that some staff within the call centre appeared to be inadequately trained. DR proposed having a discussion in future on the review of the call centre.

ACTION: Include review of the call centre in the March 2025 agenda.

- 6.4 SU suggested 17 indicators was too many.

ACTION: *Tenants' Voice* to revisit the number and frequency of performance indicators being received.

7.0 Improvement programme

7.1 DR presented areas of work being undertaken to make improvements to the housing management service. The presentation, 'Your Voice, Our Action', highlighted why improvements are needed, i.e. meeting consumer standards, areas to improve and areas of strength.

7.2 DR provided further context on the new housing sub- committee of the Cabinet which would be chaired by the Mayor. The work of the *Tenants' Voice* will be shared with this committee.

7.3 TM felt communication with tenants following the insourcing of THH has been weak. DR informed members that a housing service special insert will be included within *Our East End* paper which will include key information. This can be brought to the next meeting.

ACTION: Share the housing management service insert which is included within *Our East End* paper at the next meeting.

7.4 SU requested a copy of the presentation, DR agreed to circulate this to members.

ACTION: Circulate 'Your Voice, Our Action' presentation slides.

8.0 Training schedule 2025

8.1 NH outlined a menu of training options available which are led by TPAS. These training opportunities are available throughout the year. In addition, NH proposed to show the recording from the September 2024 training which covered consumer standards and regulation throughout the year and upon request.

Members were requested to email NH should they want to register on any of the highlighted training courses.

ACTION: All to email NH if they want to register for a training course.

8.2 DL/SJ proposed to visit the council's housing management service and experience operational delivery.

ACTION: Arrange for members to experience and observe housing management operational delivery as part of training.

9. AOB

- GA asked for an update on larger panel systems. GH said only Maltings & Brewster Houses have this and they are undergoing structural strengthening works already
- Members requested that acronyms are avoided in future presentations or explain what is means. DR said he would provide the meaning of acronyms from his presentation.

ACTION: NH to ensure future guest presenters are reminded to avoid acronyms. DR to explain the acronyms from his presentation.

- SU requested to review communication strategy, i.e around how information is communicated to residents

ACTION: Consider a review on council's communications strategy.

- LO reported an upcoming scrutiny review on commercial units on housing estates spotlight due to take place in February. LO to share details once finalised.

ACTION: Share details of the scrutiny review in commercial units on housing estates.

- GHa expressed concern around operatives/staff that make home visits and mistakenly classify belongings as 'hoarding'.

10. Date of next meeting

19th March 2025, 6pm – 8pm.

5.30pm – 6pm members only (no staff).