

Tenants' Voice

11th December 2024, 6pm - 8pm, hybrid meeting

Present:

TV Members:

In person –

Pawla Cottage (PC) (Chair)	Tenant
Garry Harper (GH)	Tenant
Gibran Afzal (GA)	Tenant
Saleha Jafrin (SJ)	Leaseholder

Online -

Luigi Candela (LC)	Leaseholder
Syed Uddin (SU)	Tenant

Staff:

In person -

Darren Reynolds (DR)	Head of Regulatory Assurance
Lesley Owen (LO)	Business Improvement and Development Manager
Nojmul Hussain (NH)	Senior Resident Scrutiny Officer
Abidah Kamali (AK)	Strategy and Improvement lead

Apologies:

Kabir Ahmed (KA)	Lead Member for Housing
Daniele Lamarche (DL)	Leaseholder

Summary of actions

1. Amend minutes as per DL's comments
2. Confirm end-to-end repair session with lead officer, scheduled for 15th January 2025
3. Send HQN investigation finding report to TV members
4. Provide a service for leaseholder where they are reminded about their due diligence checks and signposted to relevant services, e.g gas inspections
5. All to pencil in 29th January 2025 for the workshop with Resolve and attend if available. NH to check if a meeting with TV members can be scheduled in February 2025
6. Provide members a list of upcoming events in the new year
7. Invite relevant team developing the portal to a future meeting
8. Provide figure for number of repair orders raised via the portal
9. To investigate the leak issue which GH tried to report
10. Share positive outcomes in resolving leaks
11. To include data showing correlation between Council's stage 2 not upheld decision against Ombudsman's determination findings
12. Provide information on what the Council plans to put in place to improve the contact process, e.g. telephony system
13. Circulate training video from September 2024 to help refresh knowledge around the Regulations
14. All to email NH if they have any particular training needs
15. Investigate if vacant rooms within blocks can be used for storage and if not, find out why and share details
16. Members to inform NH via email if they want to stand as Deputy Chair of the group

1 Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 PC opened the meeting and welcomed members.

2 Minutes and matters arising

- 2.1 PC noted amendments to the minutes as provided by DL. NH agreed to update previous minutes. Subject to the amendments all agreed accuracy of the minutes.

ACTION: Amend minutes as per DL's comments.

- 2.2 NH informed members that the end-to-end repairs review session which was planned for December has been re-scheduled to early January 2025. The lead officer is available either on the 8th or 15th January 2025. All agreed to hold the session on 15th January 2025.

ACTION: Confirm end-to-end repair session with lead officer, scheduled for 15th January 2025.

3.0 Consumer standards update

- 3.1 DR reminded members that the Council made a self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and an inspection has commenced. The areas which the Council self-referred against relate to the Safety & Quality and Transparency, Accountability & Influence consumer standards.

As part of the inspection, the RSH would like to observe a TV meeting and interview residents. This is scheduled for 23rd January meeting. They will also observe wider Council meetings such as the Cabinet.

- 3.2 DR explained that we self-referred following an earlier investigation carried out on our behalf by Housing Quality Network (HQN) which identified gaps and areas for improvement. Subsequently, an improvement plan was developed, and the self-referral was welcomed by the RSH.

The assessment gradings (C1 – C4) were outlined. Any grading below C1 would require working alongside RSH to make improvements, especially C4.

DR mentioned that LBTH has met with other councils who received a range of different gradings. This has helped us prepare for inspection and to identify areas to strengthen.

- 3.3 GA requested to see HQN's findings. NH agreed to provide this to members.

ACTION: Send HQN investigation finding report to TV members.

- 3.4 Discussion ensued around quality assurance of stock in relation to fire and gas safety, overall decent homes standard and what the expectations were of the inspectors. This includes evidencing that adequate checks on homes have been undertaken.

Regarding Decent Homes, DR explained the Council is required to report annually on failure to meet Decent Homes Standard.

- 3.5 Some discussion took place around sub-lets and House in Multiple Occupation (HMOs). Whilst the RSH inspection is not focusing on this, it is an area HQN identified which needs to be looked at. As such, an improvement plan is in place to strengthen work around this.

It was noted that, the lead officer for managing HMOs is scheduled to attend a meeting in the new year to provide an update.

- 3.6 SJ asked, as leaseholders pay towards service and maintenance charge, whether they can be offered signposting to relevant services to do their due diligence, e.g. gas safety check. This would be beneficial as often leaseholders can lose oversight of when due diligence, such as gas safety checks, are required. DR supported this idea and agreed to look at this option further.

ACTION: Provide a service for leaseholder where they are reminded about their due diligence checks and signposted to relevant services, e.g gas inspections.

3.7 GA enquired around the distinction between RSH and the Housing Ombudsman. DR explained that the respective role of Ombudsman complaints, potential outcomes which include determinations and fines; this also consists of publishing names of social landlords that have received severe maladministration. The RSH consists of a wider area of compliance requirements which is outlined within its consumer standards.

3.8 DR notified members that the inspectors would like to observe the TV pre-meeting and asked whether anyone has objections. All agreed to permit observation.

It was felt that attendance of inspectors may offer an opportunity to have a dialogue with them. Furthermore, members proposed that if there are other opportunities to attend meetings observed by inspectors, outside of TV remit, this would be welcomed.

3.9 On behalf of the ASB service, NH informed members that the Council has commissioned a nationally recognised body, Resolve, to undertake a peer review. Resolve has developed a standard framework for reducing ASB and strengthening community safety which is aligned to the RSH's consumer standards. Social landlords that can show it meets the standards can be given a 'Resolve Award'.

As part of the peer review, Resolve would like to hear from residents of their experience and is holding a Teams meeting scheduled for the 29th January 2025.

LC stated that given they are already committed to two meetings in January 2025, 29th January 2025 may be difficult to commit to. But members agreed to pencil this in their diaries.

LC also requested a schedule of upcoming events is emailed to them.

ACTION: All to pencil in 29th January 2025 for the meeting with Resolve and attend if available. NH to check if a meeting with TV members can be scheduled in February 2025.

ACTION: Provide members a list of upcoming events in the new year.

4.0 Council's Strategic Vision 2035

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4.1 AK presented the background, aims and objective of the Council's Strategic Vision 2035. A key part of the development of the strategy entails co - producing it alongside residents. Therefore, TV members were given an opportunity to feed into its development. AK outlined key questions for members to discuss and provide feedback on.

4.2 **Group discussion and feedback – key points**

- NH identified the provisions available within the borough such as parks, gyms, entertainment etc is a positive aspect of the borough
- SJ proposed having a specific landmark where diversity can be celebrated. Mother tongue language courses should be re-introduced
- GH felt the development of luxury apartments has changed the landscape and various social problems have occurred. GH felt the borough needs to be more business friendly
- GA felt residents are being pushed into moving outside the borough due to lack of affordable housing
- LC we need to develop a cleaner borough as some parts have bulk rubbish and more litter. Also, living in good quality homes
- PC felt the borough needs to be more disabled friendly and having more non NHS mental health services
- SJ felt businesses, like in Canary Wharf, should be encouraged to provide local apprenticeships for young people

5.0 **Q2 Complaints update**

5.1 NH and DR provided an update on Q2 complaints performance.

5.2 NH reported that whilst the volume of complaints has declined, responding to stage 2 responses has not been within the required timeframes. The key driver for this has been largely due to repairs, particularly due to inadequate stage 1 responses.

Staff, including contractors, received joint training on complaints from HQN. This focused on improving the quality of our responses. Subsequently, the stage 1 letter template has been revised. NH also outlined further measures in place to improve standards and meeting timescales.

GA mentioned that he has seen a shift in the quality of stage 1 response.

5.3 Stage 2 overdue cases were at 118 when the housing management service took ownership of stage 2 cases. In November, this dropped to 15 and on the date of the meeting there was only 1 overdue case. DR notified members, that the performance is likely to see a significant improvement in quarter 3.

5.4 Further discussion ensued around the need for a culture change so that staff engagement with residents improves, including the process for managing complaints and ensuring quality assurance.

5.5 Further discussion took place around the TV members' experience. These included:

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- SU shared his experience in reporting one emergency and non-emergency repair issue, he found that latter was easier to report. SU enquired about the user friendliness of the existing portal. DR reported that the portal is being developed and advised inviting the relevant team to a future meeting to provide further information and take feedback.

ACTION: Invite relevant team developing the portal to a future meeting.

- GH enquired about the figure for repair orders raised via the portal. DR agreed to find out and share.

ACTION: Provide figure for number of repair orders raised via the portal.

- GH explained the difficulty he experienced when helping a shop report a leak occurring from a Council property above. DR said this would be noted for investigation.

ACTION: To investigate the leak issue which GH tried to report.

- SJ reported the difficulty she experienced when she was dealing with her complaint case which led her to give up on pursuing the compensation.

5.6 SU advised sharing case studies of positive outcomes in relation to resolving leaks.

ACTION: Share positive outcomes in resolving leaks.

6.0 Performance indicators

6.1 LO highlighted the performance measures which were selected by members and highlighted the data in the performance report. The data includes an update on 22 of the performance measures. LO is still exploring how leaks should best be reported as a performance measure.

6.2 The targets for the Tenant Satisfaction Measures will need to be determined and this is something to develop in the new year.

6.3 Discussion took place around managing issues that are raised by residents more efficiently. GA enquired whether LBTH prefers residents to correspond via emails to raise issues. LO explained that emails can get lost in the system whereas enquiry forms provide better structured data. DR also said, the Council is looking at introducing a new telephony system which includes an email management channel and a livechat.

6.4 PC proposed we show correlation between stage 2 complaints which are rejected by the Council but upheld by the Ombudsman within the data. This would provide

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some understanding around the efficiency of our complaint handling process. DR agreed that this can be taken forward. DR also added that we could also include data where the Ombudsman has been in the favour of the Council's stage 2 findings to provide a balanced view of the service.

ACTION: To include data showing correlation between the Council's stage 2 'not upheld' decision against Ombudsman's determination findings.

6.5 Two areas which PC and SJ advised scrutinising were the complaints management process and how emails from residents are handled, including exploring factors causing mismanagement of emails. DR recognised that the current system in place to monitor emails requires improvement and handling data is in our improvement plan to address.

6.6 Discussion ensued around what other options are available which external other organisations adopt; DR cited an example of GP services where they have a ticketing system. This provides an acknowledged receipt, processes your emails and allocates you to a case worker.

DR agreed to provide further information on what the Council's plans to put in place with regard to improving the contact process.

ACTION: Provide information on what the Council plans to put in place to improve the contact process, e.g. telephony system.

7.0 Terms of Reference

7.1 DL's draft changes to the ToR were circulated.

LO explained that the current ToR includes a clause for annual review. Furthermore, when deciding to self-refer to the RSH, Cabinet also agreed a new housing sub-committee of Cabinet. This would require amendments to the current ToR.

7.2 DR provided further context of the sub-committee which would be chaired by the Mayor and the work of the *Tenants' Voice* will be shared with this group.

8.0 AOB

- NH said further training will be offered to members and if anyone has any area they want to focus on to inform NH.

PC said that a refresh of the consumer standards and regulations would be helpful. NH proposed circulating the video from the September training.

ACTION: NH to circulate training video from September 2024 to help refresh knowledge around regulations and consumer standards.

ACTION: All to email NH if they have any particular training needs.

- GA enquired whether an update from the shed and garages audit will be provided, NH confirmed that this is scheduled for March 2025.
- GA also mentioned that there are unused rooms within buildings and whether they can be converted to storage rooms. GH explained that he has enquired about this, however was informed this is not feasible without any explanation. GA would like a reason as to why these rooms can not be used as a storage room. NH said he will try and find out and update GA.

ACTION: NH to investigate if vacant rooms within blocks can be used for storage and if not, find out why and share details.

- Vacancies exist for the two Deputy Chair roles. All to consider role and inform NH if they would like to stand as Deputy Chair of the group.

ACTION: Members to inform NH via email if they want to stand as Deputy Chair of the group.

- Depending on budgetary approval to hold an end of year Christmas meal, members will be invited for a celebratory dinner.

9. Date of next meeting

23rd January 2025, 6pm – 8pm.

5.30pm – 6pm members only (no staff).