

Tenants' Voice

25th September 2024, 6pm - 8pm, hybrid meeting

Present:

TV Members:

In person –

Pawla Cottage (PC) (Chair)	Tenant
Garry Harper (GHa)	Tenant
Daniele Lamarche (DL)	Leaseholder
Luigi Candela (LC)	Leaseholder

Online -

Gibran Afzal (GA)	Tenant
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Staff:

In person -

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

Online -

Elsa Baxter (EB)	Senior Communications Officer
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Apologies:

Kabir Ahmed (KA)	Lead Member for Housing
Syed Uddin (SU)	Tenant
Saleha Jafrin (SJ)	Leaseholder

1. **EB to revise the animation and awareness posters as per the feedback and share revised version with members**
2. **Provide safeguarding training for front line staff so that referrals from residents are handled effectively**
3. **NH to raise issue around short appointment notice for gas inspections with the Repairs Service**
4. **Provide members figure of HMOs within the Council's housing stock**
5. **Invite Julie Liu to a future meeting to provide information on HMO work and how this is reported**
6. **Find an alternative term for Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) and to make other measures more easily understandable.**
7. **Members to confirm attendance for 28th September training**
8. **Invite the lead officer undertaking the end to end review of the repair service at the next meeting to present findings/recommendations**
9. **Add update on garages/sheds as an agenda item for a future meeting**
10. **Add ToR as an agenda item on the November 2024 agenda.**

1 Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 PC opened the meeting and welcomed members.

PC outlined the revised agenda which allowed EB to present first followed by DR/ GH's presentation around Safeguarding & Tenancy Sustainment.

2 Minutes and matters arising

- 2.1 Members agreed minutes from the July 2024 meeting.

2.2 Communication channels

Whilst the variety of communication channels to reach residents was acknowledged, DL emphasised the importance of providing translations.

3.0 Damp and mould animation

- 3.1 EB showed an animation video, aimed at residents, to raise awareness around preventing damp and mould. Members were asked for their feedback as part of co-producing the animation.

- 3.2 Feedback included the following:

- PC advised pace and speed of the orator in the animation needs to be slower
- DL advised including the risk associated with clutter and GHa emphasised use of excessive bleach can be harmful to health. White wine vinegar is a safer alternative.

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- Members were unsure why the video advises closure of doors where drying clothes leaving window open. EB said she would look into this to clarify reason
- Amend and simplify language on the poster to include -

'it can damage your health'

'it will damage your property'

'protect your family from mould'

3.3 EB noted the recommendations and will share changes made with members.

ACTION: EB to revise the animation and awareness posters as per feedback and share revised version with members.

4.0 Safeguarding and Tenancy Sustainment

4.1 GH/DR presented Housing Management's approach to safeguarding residents, including regulatory objectives aimed to keep residents safe and support them to sustain their tenancy.

4.2 GH outlined legislation which underpins the above work streams and highlighted external statutory and non-statutory stakeholders who work collaboratively with the Council in identifying and referring residents that may require safeguarding support.

Partners include the Police, London Fire Brigade as well as local community-based organisations.

4.3 Discussion ensued around reporting lines, how cases are handled by HSC staff and how residents would know where to report concerns.

4.4 Summary of discussion:

Reporting lines - GH explained that in the first instance residents should go through HSC, staff should then escalate concern to the housing officer. For immediate threat or risk, emergency services should be contacted.

Staff referral handling - In relation to concerns about a neighbour, DL stated on one occasion HSC staff said non-family members cannot make referrals as they are not next of kin. GH explained that this highlights the need for staff training so corrective course of action is followed and ensuring consistency in the standard.

Next of kin - GH clarified that residents/neighbours can make referrals, but the progression of the case cannot be fed back to the person reporting it without the consent of the tenant.

Some concerns were raised in relation to residents who do not have next of kin and how their vulnerability is identified. GH said that tenancy checks are carried out when the Council has no contact from a resident for a substantial period of time.

Staff training - In addition to GH's above point regarding training, DR emphasised contractors, i.e. Mears staff, should also be trained in risk assessments in relation to safeguarding as they are having regular interaction with tenants.

DR proposed we raise awareness and offer training to front line staff.

ACTION: Provide safeguarding training to front line staff including contractors so that referrals are handled effectively. The training will be delivered by end of January 25.

Buddying up – It was proposed arranging a buddy system to support residents who may not have next of kin. GH stated that the Council does have a process in place and that consent with the vulnerable resident would be required.

4.5 Partnership working – GH highlighted organisations the Council works collaboratively with. PC enquired whether the Council engages with the LGBT-based organisations, GH stated that the Council engages with Solace which serves the LGBT community.

4.6 Tenancy checks – DL enquired how often tenancy checks are undertaken and whether this includes checks on leaseholders. GH stated around 2,000 checks are carried out annually. The Council is restricted from doing checks on leaseholders; but where risks are identified, e.g. electrical faults, and a leaseholder is unable to undertake repairs, the Council intervenes to put safety measures in place.

4.7 GHa expressed concerns around gas safety check inspection appointment being given with short notice.

ACTION: NH to raise issue around short appointment notice for gas inspections with the Repairs Service.

5.0 Performance indicators – workshop discussion

5.1 LO presented some indicators, against key themes, for members to select from.

A report comprising indicators selected by the former Residents' Panel members was also presented to help members consider the reporting format.

DR advised in addition to the statutory satisfaction measures, members can think about other areas which are important to them.

5.2 Summary of feedback and discussion

- Repairs – DL suggested to speed up the repair process, a process to submit photograph of the problem should be provided, e.g. showing source of flooding/leaks. This will help diagnose problems quicker and subsequently the repair completion.
- Select 'first time fix'
- Assess if call centre handled repair call effectively
- Customer satisfaction – DR recommended looking at speed to answer calls Members agreed this as an important indicator.
- Proposed new indicators - A new indicator around parking once the TMO is rolled out, (expected in 2025).

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- An indicator measuring correct signposting / length of time waiting or end to end completion.
- A measure of staff being accountable/taking responsibility. DR explained this is more around performance management of staff and overall culture within the organisation. Some of this is captured in our complaints and performance reports.
- GHa mentioned that during work operation, contractors often leave behind waste without clearing up mess. GH explained whilst we do have contractual agreements with our own contractors, we are limited in our enforcement towards telecommunication companies such as Community Fibre or Virgin.
- DR explained that the above is around compliance and proposed satisfaction around completion of work.
- Format – members had mixed views around the format and presentation of the data. Emphasis was made around keeping data visual and show whether direction of travel is positive or in decline.

5.3 The following measures were selected:

1. Overall satisfaction – tenants
2. Overall satisfaction – leaseholders
3. Satisfaction with being kept informed
4. HSC call wait time
5. HSC issue resolved/ease of getting resolved
6. Percentage of 48-hour call backs completed on time
7. Repairs completed right first time
8. Average End-to-end time for repairs
9. Satisfaction with repair
10. Active Leak Cases and compliance with process
11. Active damp & mould cases and compliance with process
12. Satisfaction with communal areas being kept clean & well-maintained
13. Complaints performance
14. Compliance measures (Big 6) Health and Safety issues

5.4 Discussion around use of management of stock through leasehold buy-backs, business use, i.e. AirBnB, empty properties and Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

Leasehold buy-backs - LC enquired whether a measure around leasehold buy-backs can be included. GH explained that we do not have a target around this and that the figure varies subject to funding availability and other factors.

HMO - GH explained that multiple occupation is permitted, subject to approval from the licensing team. The Council also has a dedicated team for managing HMOs.

DR said Julie Liu, who leads the HMO licensing team, can be invited to a future meeting to provide further information.

Members requested a figure on number of HMOs within the borough.

ACTION: Provide members figure of HMOs within the Council's housing stock.

ACTION: Invite Julie Liu to a future meeting on HMO work and how this is reported.

AirBnB – GH explained that sub-letting through AirBnB is not permitted and emphasised the challenges around enforcement as this requires substantial resources and intelligence. Therefore, this work requires further development alongside the legal team.

5.5 Furthermore, DR explained that as part of a wider Council strategy there are number of ways in which the Council is aiming to widen its housing stock. In addition to new build properties, leasehold buy-backs and knock-through incentives are some of the ways the Council aims to achieve this.

5.6 Formatting – It was requested to change the name Electrical Installation Condition Report, under landlord compliance, to make it more user friendly.

ACTION: LO to find an alternative term for Electrical Installation Condition Report (EICR) and to make other measures more easily understandable.

5.7 PC suggested further discussion for finalising selection of KPIs and format of the performance data can be done before the next meeting. DR proposed presenting a suggested data performance layout at the next meeting.

6. Engagement Strategy

6.1 LO provided an update from the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy consultation which took place between 5th July – 19th August 2024.

The final strategy is scheduled to go Cabinet in November 2024.

6.2 LO reported that the majority of residents are in favour of the strategy. Some of the feedback received was around improving staff accountability and in ensuring consistency in information given to residents.

7.0 Q1 Complaints update

7.1 DR reported that despite the volume of complaints reducing this year, performance for responding to both stage 1 and 2 have declined. Therefore, failing to meet the Ombudsman's code.

Whilst the decline in performance is not substantial, it demonstrates the importance of performance managing contractors and staff.

Ombudsman determinations:

Total of 15 determinations - 8 maladministration, 4 service failures and 3 under reasonable offer to redress.

7.2 DR highlighted the types of complaints received and its reasons, e.g. leaks and incorrect diagnosis of repairs.

7.3 Some improvements have already been made by putting additional resources in place for responding to stage 2 complaints. Furthermore, measures have been made to improve the overall efficiency of complaints handling.

The Council is aiming to clear its backlog of stage 2 complaints by end of this calendar year.

7.4 DR reported that the Council commissioned an end-to-end review of the repairs service and that the officer leading on this can be invited to a future meeting to present findings.

ACTION: Invite the lead officer undertaking review of the repair service at the next meeting to present recommendations.

8.0 AOB

8.1 NH informed members to confirm attendance for the 28th September 2024 training. A calendar invite for this has been sent.

ACTION: Members to confirm attendance for 28th September training.

8.2 GHa enquired about how the Council ensures work has been completed to the required standards. GH clarified that post inspections checks are undertaken as part of quality assurance.

8.3 GA requested that for the next meeting members get an update on the management of garages/sheds.

ACTION: Add update on garages/sheds at the next meeting.

8.4 GHa raised concerns around fire entrance for emergency services being blocked by illegal parking. GHa suggested that the Council put up signages to warn people not to park. However, GH explained this will be difficult to enforce before the Traffic Management Order is rolled out.

8.5 DL/PC requested to add ToR discussion at a future meeting to address some issues.

ACTION: Add ToR to the November 2024 agenda.

9. Date of next meeting

27th November, 6pm – 8pm.

5.30pm – 6pm members only (no staff).