



# Housing Engagement Board

Quarterly Meeting

12 December 2024 – 2pm to 4pm

Agenda Pack

# Housing Engagement Board Agenda

Date: **Thursday, 12 December 2024**

Time: **2pm – 4pm**

Venue: **Monkfield Meeting Room, SCDC Offices, Cambourne**

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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 – 26 September 2024**

The minutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2024 are included for approval.

**Housing Engagement Board**  
**Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting**  
**held on Thursday, 26 September 2024**  
**from 2pm to 4pm via Zoom**

- Attendees:** Cllr John Batchelor – Chair  
Cllr Eileen Wilson  
Cllr Heather Williams  
Diane Hale (Co-opted Tenant Representative)  
Jim Watson (Co-opted Tenant Representative)  
Oana Sutherland (Co-opted Tenant Representative)
- By Invitation:** Brian Burton (Tenant Volunteer)  
Julie Fletcher (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Strategy)  
Geoff Clark (SCDC – Service Manager – Tenancy and Estates)  
Eddie Spicer (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Assets)  
Dave Armitage (SCDC – Resident Involvement Team Leader)  
Bronwen Taylor (SCDC – Resident Involvement Officer) – Minute taker  
Gina Manderson (SCDC – Resident Involvement Communications Officer) –  
Admin Support
- Apologies:** Peter Campbell (SCDC – Head of Housing)  
Dave Kelleway (Elected Tenant Representative) – Vice Chair  
Margaret Wilson (Elected Tenant Representative)  
Bob Buss (Co-opted Tenant Representative)  
Patti Hall (Tenant Volunteer)

**1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2.08pm. He especially welcomed the newly co-opted tenant representative, Diane Hale, and Councillors Eileen Wilson and Heather Williams. He asked Diane Hale to introduce herself to the board.

Diane Hale said that she had lived in Bassingbourn as a leaseholder for two and a half years.

The Chair thanked Les Rolfe, who had recently resigned as a tenant representative, for his invaluable time and contribution to the board and to estate inspections.

## 2. Quorum

The meeting was quorate.

## 3. Minutes of previous Meeting – 8 July 2024

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2024.

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

### 3.1 Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 8 July 2024

The matters arising from the previous meeting are below.

#### 3.1.1 Item 3.1 – Matters Arising from the Meeting held on 28 March 2024

##### Income and Expenditure Statements in Communal Halls

Margaret Wilson raised the issue of Income and Expenditure statements and said that they still did not have them in the communal halls.

Geoff Clark said that a meeting with the Housing Accountant and Margaret Wilson had been arranged for 8 October 2024.

**Action:** Geoff Clark

#### 3.1.2 Item 4.2 – Resident Involvement Framework Review Update

Dave Armitage arranged for the Chair to sign the framework document.

#### 3.1.3 Item 6.3 – Grass Cuttings

Bronwen Taylor emailed Margaret Wilson's photographs of grass cuttings to the Board on 9 July 2024. She said that Margaret Wilson had asked if any comments had been made on the photographs and there had not been.

The Chair asked if this was the issue about the landscape contractors not clearing grass cuttings.

Geoff Clark explained that the landscape contractors were not contracted to collect grass cuttings. He said that the weather conditions this summer had encouraged grass growth whereas previous years, it had not been as bad.

## 4. Standing Items

### 4.1 Forward Plan 2024 / 2025

Julie Fletcher referred to the Forward Plan included in the pack and said that this was a standing item on the agenda. She said this was not only for officers, but was an opportunity for everyone to add items to be brought to the HEB.

Julie Fletcher referred to the items planned for the coming months, as follows:

- September 2024 – Annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) – to note the TSMs submitted to the Housing Regulator and feedback on the proposed targets.
- September 2024 – Ombudsman Code of Conduct Self-Assessment – to feedback any comments on the Ombudsman code of Conduct Self-Assessment.
- October 2024 – Empty Property Re-let Disposal and Standards – to consider the findings and recommendations following the outcome of the project working group
- December 2024 – Budget Update – to review the budget position for 2025 / 2026.
- TBC – Together with Tenants Charter – Review what actions were required to achieve the Together with Tenants Charter.
- TBC – Anti-Social Behaviour Policy – To approve the ASB policy following tenant consultation.
- TBC – Assignment and Succession Policy – Linked policy / procedure to Tenancy Policy.

Julie Fletcher said that as the budget papers would not be ready in time for the December 2024 quarterly meeting, a separate briefing session with tenant representatives would be held in January 2025 to review the budget position for 2025 / 2026. She added that the tenant representatives may want to add the Tenant Scrutiny Project, that they wanted to bring to the HEB, to either the December 2024 or March 2025 meeting.

The Chair asked for an update on the Empty Property Re-let Disposal and Standards review and asked if this was still on track.

Eddie Spicer said that they were still going through the data on the re-let times which would feed into the work they were going to do on the re-let standards. He said that it was a complex process and there was still a lot of work to do on this. He added that they should have an end date by April 2025.

The Chair said that this meant that they would have been looking at this review for more than a year.

Eddie Spicer explained that initially they were only looking at the standard, for example leaving carpets, furniture, etcetera, however now they were looking at the whole process from start to finish.

#### **4.2 Contracts Review Panel**

Bronwen Taylor advised that Patti Hall was the only panel member at the meeting held on 29 August 2024 and it was agreed that she would arrange a meeting with the other two members to discuss which contracts they wanted to look into and a structure of what they wanted to do at the next meeting.

#### **4.3 Policy and Procedure Panel**

Brian Burton advised that at the meeting held on 20 August 2024 a discussion on which policies were up for review was held. He said they were advised that the Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) policy was currently in draft form and that they had asked for a copy so that they could offer input. He added that they had asked for a list of review dates for all policies which had been sent to them today. He said that as soon as they received the ASB policy, a date for their next meeting would be set.

Julie Fletcher said that the ASB policy was in draft and being reviewed by officers and would be sent to the panel for their input before being approved.

Brian Burton said they understood that procedures needed to be followed, however, their concern was that this panel would be sidestepped and ignored. He added that it would be useful if they received a copy before it was ratified as it would confirm that they were being listened to.

Julie Fletcher confirmed that they would receive a copy of the policy before it was ratified.

#### **4.4 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) Review Panel**

As Margaret Wilson was unable to attend this meeting, Dave Armitage reported on her behalf. He advised that the discussion on the repairs service took up most of the meeting. He referred to the notes Margaret Wilson had sent him and said that the panel members were not happy that they had received the reports the day before the meeting, however,

we did explain that they would not be in future. He said the following issues were raised and discussed:

- Repairs / maintenance (Mears' satisfaction data)
- MEL data results
- Council acronyms / jargon
- Complaints definition
- Contract management (especially SP Landscapes)
- SCDC Website

Dave Armitage said that the panel had asked for a scrutiny of the Mears KPIs as they felt the need for an in-depth investigation of the audit trail of data collection that was used to compile the Mears KPI and TSM report. He said they want to investigate that the data was accurate and was a true reflection of their performance, and that the performance matches up to the promises agreed in the contract offering.

Julie Fletcher said that there was a process to follow and that the panel needs to submit a formal proposal advising what that project would be and what specific issues they wanted to look at. She said they need to advise what the evidence was behind the issue in terms of why they wanted to look at it. She added that as we know, our satisfaction performance with Mears was high therefore we need to understand the reasons for the scrutiny. She said it would then come back to the HEB with a proposal who would decide if this were the scrutiny task and finish group they would want for this year. She added that only one or two scrutiny exercises, depending on the size of the project and capacity available, should be held per year.

The Chair said that if this was a long process and if approval was needed, to bear in mind that we only met four times a year.

Julie Fletcher advised that the proposal and task and finish scrutiny group could be given approval by the Head of Housing.

Eddie Spicer said that it would appear that this was turning into a vendetta against the repairs service and to bear in mind that the tenant representatives had been closely involved throughout the whole tender process of the repairs contract, including the first 15 months of the actual contract. He added that external third-party customer satisfaction surveys were being conducted, with good levels of service. He said that some members of the panels had reported that the service had improved over time, however, they were still unhappy. He said that they would get to a point where the level of involvement of his team in the scrutiny could be detrimental to the actual service.



The Chair said this called into question the purpose of these panels and that there needed to be some independence on what they wanted to look at and within reason.

Julie Fletcher said that in respect of the panels, we also have a Contracts Panel and that we need to understand that what was requested from this panel, could be done by the Contracts Panel. She added that without knowing the scope of what it was in terms of what they wanted to achieve, it was difficult to understand how it fitted with the contracts panel.

The Chair said that with all these panels, it would appear that we were still in a learning process.

Eddie Spicer said that the scrutiny should be balanced across the whole housing service as it appeared that there was a lot of concentration on the repair's element and nothing on other services in housing.

The Chair said that the repairs was the front-line and this was what people saw, however, it had always been an issue with this board.

#### **4.5 Estate Inspections**

Bronwen Taylor referred to the estate inspections held from June to August 2024, as follows:

- 20 June – Orwell – Lordship Close, Meadowcroft Way and Fisher Lane
- 25 June – Bourn – Hall Close
- 11 July – Balsham – Mays Avenue, Dolls Close, Princes Close and Paddock Close
- 18 July – Whittlesford – Lettice Martin Croft, The Lawn and Butts Green
- 25 July – Great Shelford – Chaston Road and Grain Close
- 22 August – Willingham – Osborn Close, Lordship Close and Haden Way
- 29 August – Litlington – New Close, Chapel Close, Abington Rad and Church Street

Bronwen Taylor said that the detailed Issues and Actions report was regularly sent to the Tenant Volunteer Inspectors for their information.

## 5. New Matters

### 5.1 Annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Julie Fletcher said that each year we were required to conduct an Annual Satisfaction survey, which formed part of the Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) reported to the Social Housing Regulator each year, and that the next one would be done in January 2025. She referred to the document included in the pack and said that the data shown from point 12 on page 27 sets out the information provided on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures for the year 2023 / 2024 and this had been submitted to the regulator. She added that going forward in terms of looking at performance against this benchmarking as our first one, we wanted to set some targets for those performance measures. She explained that to set those targets we look at benchmarking data which we get from HouseMark who collect information from all housing providers and we have looked at benchmarking against similar organisations.

Julie Fletcher went through the report and said that when setting targets, and where we were in the top quartile of performance, the focus was on maintaining that performance, however, we needed to be realistic and reasonable in setting targets where we did not meet the top quartile.

The Chair asked that when we compared the top quartile against our peer groups, was this on a national basis, to which Julie Fletcher said it was.

Geoff Clark said that where we used the word “maintenance” should that not read “maintain” and asked for clarity.

Julie Fletcher said that it although we put it under maintenance, it did mean that we were maintaining that top quartile performance.

The Chair said that the handling of complaints and the attitude of landlords was poor.

Julie Fletcher said that with complaints there were two measures and explained that one of the measures was satisfaction with complaints, which nationally was quite low, and the other was timescales of completing complaints which were monitored corporately.

Eileen Wilson said that she had picked up on the handling of complaints and asked if there was feedback when asking tenants what they were dissatisfied with and what the causes of the dissatisfaction were, otherwise, there was no way of improving.

Julie Fletcher advised the questions asked in the TSMs were standard questions and we could not deviate from them, however, what we could do was ask additional questions. She said we had a contractor who did the annual surveys and she had spoken to them about how we could extract the information needed to understand what the causes of dissatisfaction were.

The Chair said that the issue was that this was completed by all tenants and not those who had experienced complaints, therefore some of it was perception. He added that we needed to do something about our image.

Eddie Spicer said that this followed on from what was said earlier about wanting to scrutinise. He added that the results from the TSM on repairs were showing real results.

Jim Watson referred to the report and asked what the percentage split between “very” and “fairly” satisfied was.

Julie Fletcher said that the actual survey was split and this was how we had to report it to the regulator, however, she would send a link to the full survey which showed the split between “very” and “fairly”.

**Action:** Julie Fletcher

## 5.2 Ombudsman Code of Conduct Self-Assessment

Julie Fletcher referred to the document included in the pack for information and said that we were required to complete this annually in terms of how we were meeting the code of conduct for complaints from the Housing Ombudsman. She explained that the assessment was an explanation of how we were meeting the requirements. She added that the council had a corporate complaints policy which differed slightly to the Housing Ombudsman’s requirements for a housing complaints policy, which local authorities could have. She said that where we were slightly different, it was referred to in the self-assessment, however, we were compliant with the requirements of the housing code.

## 5.3 Tpas National Tenants Conference – Reports

The Chair referred to the reports from Margaret Wilson, Jim Watson and Paul Bowman who attended the Tpas National Tenants Conference in Coventry on 10 and 11 July 2024 and thanked them for the good reports.

Jim Watson said it was a good conference with a lot of information.

## 6. Any Other Business

### 6.1 Co-option for Leaseholder (West)

Dave Armitage referred to the recent co-option for the West and said that a proposal had been made to have six elected tenant representatives, two per area, plus one leaseholder representative on the board. He said although we were successful in co-opting a leaseholder from the West area, this would broaden the field in future, and we would always have a leaseholder present. He added that this meant a change in the policy.

The Chair said that as elections were due next year, the policy would need to be amended before the next meeting. He asked Dave Armitage if he would arrange the amendment.

Dave Armitage said that he would arrange for the necessary changes to be made to the policy.

**Action:** Dave Armitage

### 6.2 SP Landscapes Cyclical Work

Dave Armitage said that Margaret Wilson had asked for this to be raised and minuted.

Geoff Clark had responded by email and advised that this topic was being discussed as part of the project group, with Paul Bowman and Jim Watson, who were reviewing our grounds maintenance contract. He said that any grounds maintenance works that came forward as a result of an estate inspection would be outside of the cyclical work SP Landscapes were responsible for delivering, and they were essentially responsive works, that is, one off jobs. He added that what we were looking at were opportunities to turn some of those responsive works, particularly where there was repetition, into cyclical works and they would then be attended to on a regular basis. He reported that the project group were meeting with SP Landscapes in the next few weeks and they would talk this through with them.

### 6.3 Review of Heating Arrangements for Communal Halls

Dave Armitage said that Margaret Wilson had asked for Eddie Spicer to report on this issue.

Eddie Spicer said they were in the process of reviewing all the communal rooms in terms of energy efficiency of heating systems and tenants were aware of this.

The Chair asked if a report would be available in due course, to which Eddie Spicer said that there would be.

#### **6.4 Internal Call Log**

Dave Armitage said that Margaret Wilson had asked for an update on the internal call log. Julie Fletcher said that this came back to the conversations that were had on the Communications Charter in terms of logging and tracking calls. She said that we had advised that a system would be looked at, however, at the moment our priority was reviewing our tenant and property data and making sure it was accurate. She added that the internal call log was part of a much larger systems review project and the process would take at least one to two years to complete.

#### **7. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2024 / 2025**

The Chair referred to the proposed meeting dates for 2024 / 2025 as follows:

- 12 December 2024 (Monkfield Room, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor, SCDC, Cambourne)
- 27 March 2025 (Zoom)

#### **8. Closing**

There being no further business to discuss, the Chair thanked everyone and the meeting ended at 2.48pm.

### **3.1 Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 26 September 2024**

#### **3.1.1 Item 3 1– Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 8 July 2024**

##### **Item 3.1.1 – Matter Arising from meeting held on 28 March 2024**

##### **Income and Expenditure Statements in Communal Halls**

**Action:** Geoff Clark said that a meeting to discuss the Income and Expenditure Statements in Communal Halls with the Housing Accountant and Margaret Wilson had been arranged for 8 October 2024.

**Report back:** Geoff Clark to report back on the meeting.

#### **3.1.2 Item 5.1 – Annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)**

**Action:** Julie Fletcher to send a link of the full Tenant Satisfaction survey results, which showed the percentage split between “very” and “fairly”, to the board.

**Report back:** The link was emailed to the board on 27 September 2024.

For noting.

#### **3.1.3 Item 6.1 – Co-option for Leaseholder (West)**

**Action:** Dave Armitage to amend the Terms of Reference document to increase the number of elected tenant representatives to six elected tenant representatives, two per area, plus one leaseholder representative.

**Report back:** The Terms of Reference document has been amended and is included in the pack for approval.

## South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC)

### Terms of Reference for Housing Engagement Board (HEB)

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

#### 1. Purpose

The purpose of the HEB is to represent tenant and leaseholders’ interest in relationship to the development and performance of the Housing Services (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

- 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)
- Seven elected tenant representatives made up of two from the North Area, two from the East Area, two from the West Area and one leaseholder

### 4.2 Tenant Representatives to the HEB will be elected every four 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 Head of Housing and the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing at SCDC will be a permanent member of the HEB.

### 4.5 The normal term of office for tenant representatives will be four years; however, should a tenant representative leave 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.

### 4.6 HEB members, except for the Head of Housing and the Lead Member for Housing, who fail to attend two consecutive meetings and fail to provide any apologies will forfeit their membership of the Board.

### 4.7 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.



4.8 HEB members agree to make available contact details with colleagues to facilitate work between meetings.

4.9 HEB members will be compliant with SCDC's Equality and GDPR policies.

## 5. Quorum

5.1 A quorum will be at least 50% of the board, for example, if membership is seven, a minimum of four members 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 The Chair will normally be the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing.

6.2 The Vice-Chair will be an elected tenant representative unless none are available. 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 four years in total.

6.6 The Vice-Chair will deputise for the Chair in their absence.

## 7. Frequency of HEB Meetings

7.1 The HEB will meet quarterly with a minimum of four quarterly meetings per year.

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

7.3 The Resident Involvement Team 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 four weeks before the meeting.

7.4 The HEB will be provided with supporting documents a minimum of one week prior to each meeting.

7.5 HEB members will be required to read any material provided prior to attending the meeting.

7.6 Minutes of the HEB meetings will be made available within four weeks of the meeting.

7.7 To meet the demands of projects and reviews, one off meetings may be called at short notice if deemed necessary.

- 7.8 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.
- 7.9 The HEB may establish Task and Finish Groups to lead on specific activities.
- 7.9.1 Task and Finish Groups could be internal tenant groups or external groups
- 7.9.2 Task and Finish Groups must report to the HEB at an agreed frequency
8. Code of Conduct
- 8.1 HEB members agree to abide by the Code of Conduct.
- 8.2 HEB members will be required to sign the Code of Conduct.
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 All new members will be provided with a handbook of key documents and undertake an induction programme and training.
- 10.3 Training requirements will be assessed, and a training programme will be developed, delivered, and regularly reviewed.
- 10.4 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 can request additional data, reports and information to carry out their activities.
- 11.2 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.
- 11.3 All requests for information and evidence must be made via the Resident Involvement Team.

## 12. Accountability

- 12.1 The HEB meeting dates will be publicised on the SCDC website.
- 12.2 Minutes and meeting papers will be made available to the public on the SCDC website.
- 12.3 The HEB will provide an annual report for tenants.

## 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: \_\_\_\_\_ 20 December 2021 \_\_\_\_\_

Reviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ 2024 \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

## **4. Standing Items**

### **4.1 Forward Plan**

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

## Housing Engagement Board – Forward Plan – 2024 / 2025

Date of Meeting	Topic	Description	Lead Officer	Decision Route
<del>March 2024</del> Defer until June 2024	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	Mutual Exchange Policy	Monitoring report of mutual exchange policy – 6 months following implementation	Julie Fletcher	For Information
June 2024	Resident Involvement Framework	Approve updated document following changes agreed to the framework	Dave Armitage	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
June 2024	Council Stock Condition Survey	Outcome of the Stock Condition Survey	Eddie Spicer	For Information
September 2024	Annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM)	To note the TSMs submitted to the Housing Regulator and feedback on the proposed targets	Julie Fletcher	Cabinet – to agree targets
September 2024	Ombudsman Code of Conduct Self-Assessment	To feedback any comments on the Ombudsman Code of Conduct Self-Assessment	Julie Fletcher	Cabinet to approve Self-Assessment
2 December 2024 <b>[new]</b> Separate briefing session outside of HEB for tenant representatives	Consultation on the Future Social Housing Rent Policy	Opportunity for tenant reps to discuss the Future Social Housing Rent Policy and the Council's proposed response.	Julie Fletcher	Lead Member for Housing
2 December 2024 <b>[new]</b> Separate session outside of HEB for tenant representatives	Consultation on the Right to Buy	Opportunity for tenant reps to discuss the Right to Buy Consultation and the Council's proposed response.	Julie Fletcher	Lead Member for Housing

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Decision Route</b>
12 December 2024 <b>[new]</b>	Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023 / 2024	To note the complaints performance for 2023 / 2024 and any lessons learnt.	Julie Fletcher	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
12 December 2024 <b>[new]</b>	National Policy Changes	Briefing note outlining the national policy changes affecting the Housing Service following the Autumn Budget 2024	Julie Fletcher	Housing Engagement Board – to note
January 2025 <b>[new]</b> Separate session outside of HEB for tenant representatives	Budget Update	To review the budget position for 2025 / 2026	Peter Campbell	Cabinet – 4 February 2025
27 March 2025	Anti-social behaviour Policy (new policy)	To note/provide further comments on the ASB policy following tenant consultation through the policy panel	Julie Fletcher	Cabinet – May 2025
27 March 2025 <b>[new]</b>	Communal Room Charging Policy (new policy)	To note / provide further comments on the Communal Room Charging Policy following tenant consultation through the policy panel	Geoff Clark	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
27 March 2025 <b>[new]</b>	Service Plan	To review the service plan for 2025 / 2026	Julie Fletcher	To be agreed at Corporate Management Team which feeds into Council's Business Plan
27 March 2025 <b>[new]</b>	Relets Process Analysis	To note the findings and actions as a result of an internal process mapping review of our relets process	Peter Campbell	Housing Engagement Board

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Lead Officer</b>	<b>Decision Route</b>
June 2025 <b>[revised]</b>	Empty Property Re-let Standards	Project group to be set up to look at the Empty Property Re-let Standards which will be taken forward by the Voids & Operations Manager once in post.  Housing Engagement Board to consider findings and recommendations from the project group.  A separate piece of work is currently underway looking at internal process mapping to help improve our relet times.	Eddie Spicer	Housing Engagement Board
June 2025	Assignment and Succession Policy (existing)	To note / provide further comments on the Assignment and Succession Policy following tenant consultation through the policy panel Linked policy / procedure to Tenancy Policy	Julie Fletcher	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
June 2025 <b>[new]</b>	Communal Areas Policy (new policy)	To note / provide further comments on the Communal Areas Policy following tenant consultation through the policy panel	Geoff Clark	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
September 2025 <b>[new]</b>	Asset Management Strategy (existing)	Review and update of the existing Asset Management Strategy	Eddie Spicer	Cabinet – October 2025
TBC	Together with Tenants Charter	Review what actions are required to achieve the Together with Tenants Charter	Resident Involvement Team Leader	Cabinet

#### **4.2 Contracts Review Panel**

The Emergency Lifeline Call Service (for sheltered housing tenants) contract is up for review on 31 January 2025.

Geoff Clark to report.

#### **4.3 Policy and Procedure Panel**

A meeting to discuss the Anti-social Behaviour Policy was held on 13 November 2024. The minutes from the meeting are included for noting.

A second meeting was held on 28 November 2024.

Brian Burton to provide feedback.



## Anti-Social Behaviour Policy Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> November 2024, held at SCAMBS Cambourne

### Present:

DA – David Armitage – SCAMBS  
PB – Paul Bowman – Tenant Representative  
BB – Brian Burton – Tenant Representative (Chair)  
ZC – Zoe Cox – SCAMBS  
IG – Ivor Grant – Tenant Representative  
MH – Martyn Hilliam – SCAMBS  
MW – Margaret Wilson – Tenant Representative  
OS – Oana Sutherland – Tenant Representative

### Apologies:

Patti Hall – Tenant Representative  
Claire Gilbey – SCAMBS  
David Kellaway – Tenant Representative  
Bronwen Taylor – SCAMBS

### **1. Introductions**

1.1 Zoe Cox explained that Claire Gilbey (SCAMBS) was currently on sick.

### **2. Matters arising**

- 2.1 Brian Burton opened the meeting by introducing Martyn Hilliam who thanked members for their feedback on the Policy.
- 2.2 Various email comments had been forwarded to MH prior to the meeting. BB said that he had noted while reading through the documents that in the Policy Document, 5.2, it specifies dealing or taking drugs. However, this is not referred to as a specific in the Service Standards document. Item 4, What is anti-social behaviour. I feel it would be useful to add: the taking of drugs or dealing as a specific item to mirror what is written in the Policy Document.
- 2.3 Discussion took place on the content and PB suggested that the documents could be merged, which would condense into one or maybe two main documents as much of the content was duplicated. MH explained that whilst three were useful, internally it was possible, especially for the purpose of external access, MH agreed this could be looked at.
- 2.4 MW made comment that the documents were particularly long-winded and didn't make sense in parts, especially the service standards document. MW further made the point by describing her personal experiences at Girton, further making the point that a lot of the content does not make sense. MW and IG's experiences appeared to confirm that regardless of what Policy was in place, it was meaningless if the procedures in that Policy were not being followed.

- 2.5 MW further brought up the matter of suitability as Tenants and the mixing of households in certain communities, it was felt that more attention should be placed on this subject. (WOKE)
- 2.6 PB further added that the documents must use the Housing Regulator's and Ombudsman's definitions and standards as templates and must ensure that the procedures described in the Policy statements are being followed. PB further commented that Reporting, Call logging and named handler standards and procedures should be similar to those set by the Housing Regulator and referenced by the Housing Ombudsman.
- 2.7 The consensus was that the Tenant Representatives should have been consulted on the draft policy as a first respondent, before being put out to other parties. It was agreed that in future this procedure would be adopted. ZC also confirmed that in future, tenants would be involved at the start of the Policy Review Process.
- 2.8 Further concerns were raised that no feedback seems to ever be given on the outcomes of ASB reporting and this promotes the feeling of nothing is ever done. All agreed that communication was paramount and that this seriously needs to be improved, especially on outcomes.
- 2.9 Some frustration expressed by the six Tenant Reps that the three Council Officers who were most able to offer guidance were not present. Zoe explained that all were ill, and their apologies were only received on the day of the meeting. Further was made that the SCAMBS officers must surely have deputies who could have attended.
- 2.10 Further discussion took place on the subject of call logging and PB suggested that inclusion of training for first line call handlers/officers who handle calls on ASB should be undertaken. It was also discussed that named offices/handlers and their deputies should be published for better clarity and especially in view of the 4-day week policy that SCAMBS have adopted. Furthermore, the definition of ASB should be part of the document and be more explicit as in "Cuckoos". MH made the comment that this should be included on the central contact hub.
- 2.11 PB commented on mediation, mentioned in 10.2 (the end) But not in 10.1 (the beginning). PB also mentioned that no goal was published in the policy to work toward keeping all tenants in their homes.
- 2.12 PB suggested that all local and national legislation, policies and web pages for relevant web sites should be hyperlinked.
- 2.13 A further feedback deadline of 20th November was mentioned to enable MH to progress the draft document.
- 2.14 MW and IG brought up the issues relating to their own ASB issues. DA suggested he would arrange a further separate meeting between MW, IG and the respective SCAMBS officers to address their individual concerns relating to ongoing ASB in their areas.

2.15 BB asked that on issue of the next draft, tenant reps must be given the opportunity to discuss and review once the next draft had been read and scrutinised. PB reiterated that the Policy must be in keeping with the regulator and Ombudsman guidelines.

2.16 Policy Review List requested from Martyn Hillam.

**Next meeting 28<sup>th</sup> November 2024**

**Zoom meeting** <https://scambsgovuk.zoom.us/j/84549529173?pwd=hRkoV3CxAlYMcjxGTygu2id8VyEi6k.1>

Meeting ID: 845 4952 9173

Passcode: 224516

#### **4.4 Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Key Performance Indicators Panel – Quarter 2 Reports**

Margaret Wilson to provide feedback from the meeting held on 5 December 2024.

#### **4.5 Estate Inspections Report**

The following Estate Inspections were held in September and October 2024.

- 19 September – Swavesey – Home Close and Whitton Close
- 24 September – Barrington – Malthouse Way
- 17 October – Waterbeach – Harvey Way, Coronation Close and Chapel Close
- 24 October – Sawston – Lynton Way, Vicarage Avenue, Martindale Way and Uffen Way
- 31 October – Linton – Tower View and Chalklands

For noting.

## **5. New Matters**

### **5.1 Tenant Scrutiny Project**

Dave Armitage to report. Included in the pack are the following documents:

- Scrutiny Guidance Checklist
- Scrutiny Proposal Form

## Scrutiny Review – Guidance Checklist

### Preparing for the Review

#### Establish

Please add a cross to each box as you complete each task relevant to the review.

Who will be on the scrutiny panel

How long the review will take

The officers that you require to assist you

When was the service last reviewed

### Data Review

Find out if performance is improving, declining or remaining the same.

Key Performance Indicators

Customer Satisfaction

Number of complaints made

Number of complaints to the Ombudsman

The results of the last survey on the service

Anti-social Behaviour (if relevant)

Bench Marking Information

### Policy and Procedure

Review the existing policies and procedures and the operation of the service.

Review current policies and procedures

Establish if current policies and procedures meet current statutory requirements

Find out if all information available on the service is clear, easy to understand and is available in different formats and languages

Is tenant access to the service satisfactory

Consider which staff you may want to interview

## Customers Views

Find out customers views by:

- Looking at customer satisfaction surveys
- Holding a focus group
- Undertaking a mystery shopper / customer journey exercise

## Visits and Other Interviews

Consider if any of the below would be helpful.

- Good practice visits
- Estate visits
- Meeting with partners to deliver the service
- Meeting with Councillors
- Meeting with senior staff / Head of Service / Chief executive

## Scrutiny Review – Request Form

This form is to be used for submitting a topic for possible consideration by the Housing Engagement Board.

The completed form should be sent to:

[Resident.involvement@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:Resident.involvement@scambs.gov.uk)

To be completed by the Chair of the relevant panel

<b>Chair's Name</b>
<b>Who will be on the Scrutiny Panel</b>
<b>Which Service area, Council activity or topic would you like to review?</b>
<b>What are the objectives of the Scrutiny project?</b>
<b>Timescale for Scrutiny Project</b>
<b>When was the service last reviewed?</b>
<b>Why do you think a scrutiny review is merited for this topic?</b>



**How would you measure the review's success? What outcomes are you hoping for?**

**What are the key questions to be explored?**

**What visits and interviews are to be included within the Scrutiny Project?**

**What other officer input will be required?**

**What documentation will you require to assist with the Scrutiny Project?  
(that is, key performance indicators, customer satisfaction, number of complaints,  
Ombudsman complaints, benchmarking information, etcetera)**

**Please set out a brief work programme for the Scrutiny Project**

**In terms of timescales, do you consider this review to be urgent, or could it be carried out in three, six or nine-months' time?**

**Have you been involved in any other correspondence or meetings about this issue that may be relevant to inform your request to Scrutiny?**

In the first instance, your request will be considered by the Housing Engagement Board who will decide on what action to take and, should the issue be accepted for review, you will be advised accordingly on next steps.

Thank you for your time.

## **5.2 Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023 / 2024**

Julie Fletcher to report. Included in the pack are the following documents:

- Report to the HEB – Housing Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023 / 2024
- Appendix A – Housing Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023 / 2024

<b>Report to:</b>	Housing Engagement Board – 12 December 2024
<b>Lead Officer:</b>	Julie Fletcher – Service Manager – Housing Strategy

## **Housing Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023 / 2024**

### **Recommendations**

1. That the Housing Engagement Board (HEB) notes the Annual Complaints Report for 2023 / 2024 at Appendix A and provides a response to the report through the Lead Member of Housing for submission to the Housing Ombudsman.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

2. The publication of an Annual Complaints Report complies with the requirements within the new Complaint Handling Code introduced from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024. The report demonstrates that the Council is transparent in terms of the complaints received and actions taken.

### **Details**

3. The Housing Ombudsman's new Complaint Handling Code became a statutory requirement from 1st April 2024 and sets out the expectation placed on social landlords of how they deal with and manage complaints within their service areas.
4. The Complaints Handling Code requires social landlords to produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report which must be reported to its governing body as well as published to residents, along with a response from the governing body, and submitted to the Housing Ombudsman.
5. The report must include:
  - a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the landlord's complaint handling performance
  - a summary of the types of complaints the landlord has refused to accept
  - any findings of non-compliance with the Housing Ombudsman's Code
  - improvements made as a result of the learning from complaints
  - its actions following any reports and publication from the Ombudsman in relation to the work of the landlord
6. Performance monitoring is reviewed quarterly at the Housing Services Performance Management meetings. Prior to the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman, overall performance of the housing service was monitored as a whole service and therefore the Annual Report includes both landlord and non-landlord functions. For 2024 / 2025 onwards, the reports will be separated out into the two functions.

## Housing Annual Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report 2023 / 2024

### Complaint Handling Performance

The Regulator of Social Housing requires Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) to be published. Three of these measures relate to Landlord related complaints and complaint handling performance. The Housing Ombudsman’s complaint handling code sets out that these three measures should be included within this annual report, as well as reported to the Regulator of Social Housing.

Our full published data can be found here – [Housing performance and tenant satisfaction measures - South Cambs District Council](#)

These complaints performance figures will be published by the Social Housing Regulator later in the year for all landlords.

#### 2023 / 2024

TSM ref.	Tenant Satisfaction Measure	Our result
TP09	Satisfaction with the landlord’s approach to handling complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>29%</b> very or fairly satisfied</li> <li>• <b>21%</b> neither satisfied nor dissatisfied</li> <li>• <b>51%</b> very or fairly dissatisfied</li> </ul>
CH01	Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>18.9</b> – Number of stage one complaints received per 1,000 homes</li> <li>• <b>3.8</b> – Number of stage 2 complaints received per 1,000 homes</li> </ul>
CH02	Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>73%</b> – Proportion of stage one complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code timescales</li> <li>• <b>80.9%</b> – Proportion of stage two complaints responded to within the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code timescales</li> </ul>

#### Housing Ombudsman’s new Complaint Handling Code Self-Assessment

- Published link [Housing complaints and compliments - South Cambs District Council](#)
- Sign off link [2024.09.26 - HEB Agenda Pack](#)

## Volume of Complaints

Below is our complaint handling performance for our whole Housing Department which includes both landlord and non-landlord related complaints. For future reporting for 2024 / 2025, the reports will be separated for the two functions.

## Volume Looking back at previous years

We have seen an increase in Stage 1 complaints received from the previous year 2022 / 2023. The Housing Ombudsman has stated that high volumes of complaints must not be seen as negative as they can be indicative of a well-publicised and accessible complaints process. Low complaint volumes are potentially a sign that individuals are unable to complain.

Financial year	Total Number of Stage 1 Complaints	Total Number of Stage 2 Complaints	Total Number of Stage 3 Complaints (Housing Ombudsman)
<b>2023 / 2024</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>2</b>
2022 / 2023	112	23	1
2021 / 2022	145	16	3
2020 / 2021	100	11	1
2019 / 2020	61	8	4
2018 / 2019	81	7	4
2017 / 2018	77	3	2
2016 / 2017	64	2	0
2015 / 2016	79	3	0
2014 / 2015	91	7	1
2013 / 2014	89	5	0

## 2023 / 2024 Volumes

Complaints received during quarter, broken down by stage	Q1 April – June	Q2 July – September	Q3 October – December	Q4 January – March	Year-end Totals
<b>Stage 1</b> = Expression of dissatisfaction that is not able to be resolved at first contact so requires investigation and response from Service Manager	27	35	23	43	126 (*2)
*Number that had an extension of time	(3)	(2)	(1)	(6)	(12)

<b>Complaints received during quarter, broken down by stage</b>	<b>Q1 April – June</b>	<b>Q2 July – September</b>	<b>Q3 October – December</b>	<b>Q4 January – March</b>	<b>Year-end Totals</b>
<b>Stage 2 = Unresolved at stage 1 so investigation required by Head of Service</b>	4	3	5	11	23 (*2)
*Number of complaints that had an extension of time	(0)	(0)	(2)	(2)	(4)
<b>Stage 3 = Housing Ombudsman</b>	0	0	0	2	2
<b>*Complaints logged but later withdrawn by the complainant</b>	0	*1	*3	0	*4
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>151</b>

\*Extensions of time for the following reasons:

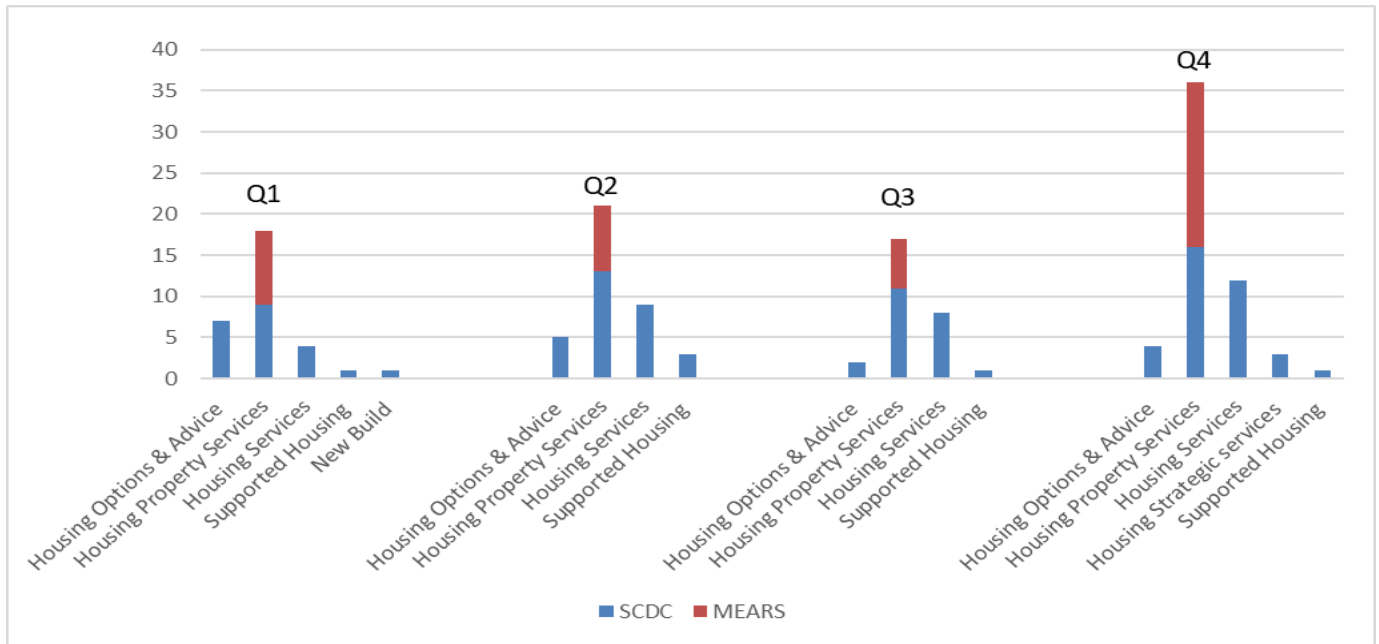
- Further investigation or communication needed to fully respond
- Lack or no contact from complainant to be able to access property or discuss further etcetera

Within the complaints breakdown above, this includes 21 complaints that relate to non-landlord services, such as housing advice and homelessness or disabled facility grants. For complaints relating to our landlord services it should be noted that the number of complaints correlates to around 2% of our tenants overall.

No complaints were refused, but we do also receive feedback via our complaints system which were recorded and followed through but were not treated as a complaint for the following reason:

- Service Requests – feedback received that was not related to the Housing Service or its contractor’s actions.
  - These also include any enquires that were received in error and required redirecting to another Landlord or Support Services
- Report of nuisance or ASB about another resident, where it was not related to the way we have handled their case
- MP and Councillor enquires

## Volume by service area



- Housing Property Services, which deals with repairs and maintenance, received the most complaints with 59%
- The second highest was Housing Services, which deals with tenancy related issues with 23%.

The above volume's per service area is consistent with previous year's performance.

## Complaints received falling within the SCDC Theme

Theme	Q1 Total	%	Q2 Total	%	Q3 Total	%	Q4 Total	%
Lack of communication	1	3%	5	13%	8	29%	4	7%
Failure to act	10	32%	4	11%	9	32%	18	32%
Service Delivery	10	32%	12	32%	4	14%	6	11%
Not understanding processes	1	3%	2	5%	1	4%	6	11%
Staff Conduct	4	13%	4	11%	3	11%	6	11%
Misinformation	2	7%	1	1%	1	4%	0	0
Charges	2	7%	1	1%	1	4%	1	2%
Other	1	3%	9	24%	1	4%	15	27%

- The top two themes are Failure to act and Service Delivery

The above themes are consistent with previous year's performance results



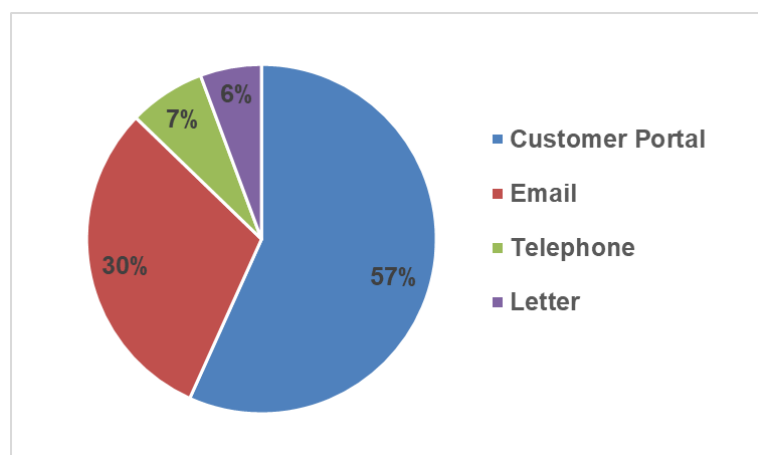
## Breakdown of complaints based on HouseMark classifications

Theme	Q1 Total	%	Q2 Total	%	Q3 Total	%	Q4 Total	%
Allocations	5	16%	3	8%	0	0	1	2%
ASB	0	0	0	0	2	7%	1	2%
Estate Services	0	0	3	8%	0	0	0	0
Rent & Services	1	3%	0	0	0	0	1	2%
Repair & Maintenance	20	65%	18	47%	15	54%	36	64%
Staff & Customer Service	5	16%	6	16%	5	18%	6	11%
Tenancy Management	0	0	0	0	4	14%	3	5%
Other	0	0	8	21%	2	7%	8	14%

- The top two themes are Repair & Maintenance and Staff & Customer Service

The above themes are consistent with previous year's performance results

## Method for Complaints Received



## Complaints response times / targets

Response times / targets	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
<b>Number of complaint responses sent within quarter</b> (Includes roll-over from previous quarters)	27	32	30	49
<b>Number of complaint responses that were sent within target timescale</b> (Includes stage 1 & stage2)	21	23	17	44
<b>% Of complaints responded within deadline</b> (Non – YTD includes stages 1 & 2) (SX121)	78%	72%	57%	90%
<b>How many upheld</b> = closed in favour of complainant	9	16	16	27
<b>Not upheld</b> = closed not in favour of complainant	12	10	9	14
<b>Partly upheld</b> = closed partly in favour of complainant	6	6	5	8

- There was a decline in performance with regards to response times during the middle of the year. Complaints are monitored through the Housing Service Manager Performance meetings and as a result improvements were sought through regular team meetings with the Complaints Co-ordinator and training with staff. This resulted in improved performance during Q4.

## Housing Ombudsman

We received two Housing Ombudsman determinations in 2023 / 2024 which contained five findings of maladministration. The maladministration determinations related to:

### **Complaint 1 – Handling of repairs, mutual exchange / HomeLink application and request for reasonable adjustments through disabled adaptations**

#### **Key findings:**

- Maladministration in respect to the landlord's handling of the resident's application for a mutual exchange.
- Service failure in respect to the landlord's handling of the resident's application for reasonable adjustments.
- Service failure in respect to the landlord's complaint management.

### **Complaint 2 – Relating to the landlord's response to repairs reported during the defect period and the way the complaint was handled**

#### **Key findings:**

- Service failure by the landlord in its response to repairs reported during the defect period.
- Service failure in respect to the landlord's complaint management.

The Housing Ombudsman individual landlord performance reports for 2023/24 were received / published as of November 2024 [Landlords Archive - Housing Ombudsman](#)

## Continuous improvement and learning from Complaints

**Disabled Adaptations** – following a complaint regarding how a disabled adaptation was handled, the Council has reviewed its [Disabled Adaptations Policy](#) which includes target timescales and improved record keeping and clearer communication.

**Mutual Exchange** – following a complaint regarding how we processed an application, the Council has reviewed its processes and published a revised [Mutual Exchange policy](#). This included subscription to 'Homeswapper' which is a national web-based portal that allows tenants to find suitable 'swaps' and investment in a back-office system, 'SwapTracker' which tracks the progress of mutual exchanges and enables tenants to access and provide documentation. The Mutual Exchange policy also gives greater flexibility to allow tenants to swap to a property with an additional bedroom than would be permitted under its Lettings Policy and also includes financial incentives to downsize.

**Defects on new-build properties** – Following a complaint relating to outstanding repairs on a new property, the Council have reviewed its defects reporting process to ensure that any defects are reported to the correct person and not confused with our normal repairs reporting

system. A bespoke monitoring system has been implemented and additional training held for frontline staff so that they are aware of which properties are within the defects period, to ensure the correct process is used where applicable.

**Damp and mould** – the Council has strengthened its processes in relation to damp and mould. This included working with ‘experts’ to introduce a [Damp, Mould & Condensation Policy](#), that reflected the guidance from the Ombudsman, adopting a zero tolerance approach to damp, mould and condensation, awareness training for all housing staff and the recruitment of a specialist Damp & Mould Surveyor. We have also improved our record keeping and oversight through the introduction of a new corporate key performance indicator that ensures we have raised awareness across the Council.

**Repairs** – as would be expected, the majority of our complaints relate to repairs as this is the area that we have most interaction with our tenants. Over the past year we have continued to improve our repairs service by offering tenants the ability to report their repairs online and we are looking to release a dedicated housing repairs app ‘M&Me’ to allow repairs to be reported, tracked and changed by tenants at a time that suits them. We are looking to roll this out during January / February 2025.

**Complaints** – many of the complaints that we receive relate to poor communication. To improve how the Council communicates with its tenants and leaseholders, a [Communications Charter](#) was developed with tenant representatives. This sets out our standards in terms of timescales and we are currently in the process of developing a set of guidelines for staff to ensure we have a consistent approach in how we communicate.

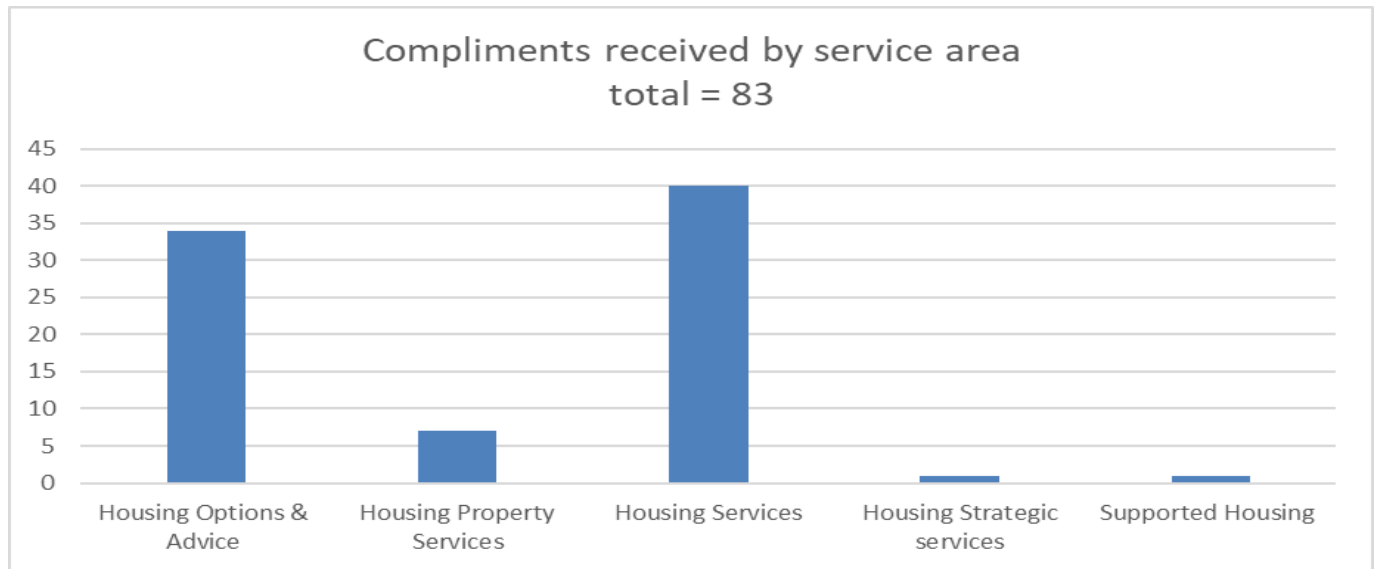
**Complaint Handling** – Throughout the course of the year we have carried out extensive training with teams to improve both the process and the content of our responses when we receive a complaint.

In reviewing the above policies and the Communications Charter, we have worked closely with tenant representatives on these issues, of which they have influenced and contributed to the outcome. [Tenant involvement opportunities - South Cambs District Council](#)



## Compliments

A selection of compliments received by the Housing Service during 2023/24 are set out below



- *SCDC has been amazing. The contractors have been amazing*
- *Thank you for keeping my morale up these last few weeks. I 100% could NOT have got here without you.*
- *Thanks to your expertise, patience and knowledge*
- *The loveliest most professional \*\*\*\*\* put us right at ease, totally stress free. Nothing was too much trouble thanks again.*
- *Thank you for being so friendly and helpful, it's so nice to deal with someone who is as pleasant as you when dealing with stressful times such as moving*
- *Thank you for all your help I know I definitely couldn't have done this without all your help*
- *Thank you very much for all your help and advice over the last couple of months.*
- *I would like to thank you for everything you have done for us. Thank you very much!*
- *I'm just so happy and grateful beyond words!! Thank you so much!! I've actually got a forever home!*
- *I wanted to share a thank you for all of \*\*\*\* assistance \*\*\*\*\* is always willing to assist whenever I ask for any help.*
- *The locksmith who attended \*\*\*\* was superb in what was a very uncertain situation. their skills and attitude really helped the team*
- *I would also like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your help. I have been given a lifeline and I really appreciate your efforts*
- *Just wanted to thank you again for helping with \*\*\*\*\* and your help with making this process a smooth transition.*

### **5.3 National Housing Policy – Update**

Julie Fletcher to provide an update on the National Housing Policy. A briefing note is included in the pack.

## Briefing Note – National Policy Changes affecting the Housing Service following the Autumn Budget 2024

Rent stability for housing providers – proposals for a longer-term social housing settlement of CPI+1 (proposed for 5 years)

What this means for SCDC: Government have recently release a consultation on the [Future Social Housing Rent Policy](#) which we are in the process of drafting a response. Meeting arranged for 5 December 2024 to discuss with tenant reps. Overall this is a positive step but feel more could be done to give the Council greater stability for long-term planning and recognition of the impact of the previous rent decrease and rent freeze over the last 10 years and additional requirements introduced through the Social Housing Regulation Act.

Right to buy discounts to be reduced and councils to retain full receipts from sale of homes to reinvest in new stock

What this means for SCDC: Maximum discounts of £102,400 reduced to £34,000 from 21 November 2024. We have seen a flurry of applications since the announcement but moving forwards the predictions are that nationally local authorities are expected to save nearly £1.2bn collectively by 2029 – 2030 with an estimated reduction in sales by 25,000 homes over five years. For SCDC, over the last five years (April 2019 – March 2024) 71 homes have been sold through the right to buy. Government released the [Right to Buy Consultation](#) on

21 November with further proposals to exempt newly built social homes and homes improved through council investment to a high standard, as well as some other changes to the criteria. We will be drafting a response in due course.

Extension of the discounted lending rate that local authorities can borrow from the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) through their Housing Revenue Account (HRAs) until March 2026

What this means for SCDC: This is a positive step. Whilst SCDC are not currently having to borrow to support the delivery of new council homes this proposal would mean that any borrowing would be at a discounted rate. It is likely that we will see RTB receipts decrease, whilst our delivery programme increases and further financial implications through the revised decent homes programme.

Current affordable homes budget (2021-2026) boosted by £500 million to enable building of up to 5,000 additional affordable homes

What this means for SCDC: The Council are currently focused on increasing its housing stock through S.106 Agreements where we acquire properties directly from developers and therefore no grant is payable in these circumstances.

This may change in the future, with potential moves from government to make the Affordable Homes Programme administered by Homes England more attractive for local authorities. For affordable housing generally, this is a positive step for housing providers, although it is unlikely to deliver the significant increases in social housing that is required.

Warm Homes Plan – An initial £3.4bn over the next three years towards decarbonisation, including £1.8bn for fuel poverty schemes which includes the new Warm Homes: Social Housing Fund.

What this means for SCDC: It is currently unclear how this £3.4bn interfaces with the Warm Homes Social Housing Fund (SHF), previously known as the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF). The previous government set aside £1.2bn for Wave 3 of the SHDF, but the new government will confirm how much this will be as part of the Spring Spending Review. SCDC have previously been successful in securing £1.8m SHDF.

New decent homes standard

Government announced its intention to consult on a new decent homes standard which is likely to launch in the New Year.

Extension of household support fund and discretionary housing payments

What this means for SCDC: This is a positive step to support the most vulnerable in our district, predominantly those facing homelessness. However, we are still awaiting the details as to how this will be allocated following the announcement.

Extra £1.3 billion in revenue support for local authorities, an above-inflation settlement which will go some way to relieving pressures on budgets for temporary accommodation and adult social care.

What this means for SCDC: This is a positive step generally but details unknown as to how this will be allocated.

#### **5.4 Leasehold Properties Policy**

Margaret Wilson asked for this item to be included in the agenda.

#### **5.5 Climate and Nature Strategy**

Orla Gibbons to conduct a presentation on the Climate and Nature Strategy.

#### **5.6 ARCH Tenants Group Conference**

Margaret Wilson, Jim Watson and Paul Bowman attended the ARCH Tenants Group Conference in Rotherham on 3 October 2024.

Included in the pack are their feedback reports for noting.



## **ARCH<sup>1</sup> conference held in Rotherham**

### **Fleur Priest-Stephens, Head of Tenant Engagement for the Social Housing Regulator (SHR)**

Feedback report by Margaret Wilson – Elected Tenant Representative

Here again the emphasis was on the evidence that landlords are really engaging with their tenants in ways that are meaningful, transparent, and outcome-based. The Regulator is looking for “really good assurance” that landlords are meeting the standards required of them.

Landlords *must* take tenant views into account and provide *evidence* to prove it. Tenants should be able to hold their landlords to account and the Regulator will be looking at *outcomes* to assure themselves that this is happening. The SHR does not see itself as prescriptive, landlords know their tenants’ environment best, but having policy / processes in place is not where it will look because protocols are not outcomes and tenants are affected by outcomes.

In effect policy and procedure should be driven by tenant views, experience, scrutiny, and influence. Policies or protocols should be questioned as to how likely they are to produce a poor outcome. It is for landlords to prove that they are meeting the standards expected by legislation, tenants, and the SHR. This represents a radical change to the landlord/tenant relationship. In summary there are three tenets to this change; 1) landlords provide services, 2) tenants say how these could improve, 3) landlords listen and act.

In discussion of how the Regulators conduct their inspections the inevitable topic of communication was raised. The SHR have four new consumer standards one of which is that “Boards and councillors should have robust mechanisms in place to provide them with assurance that their organisation delivers the outcomes of the standards, including the TSM requirements”<sup>2</sup>. This was explained in terms of decision-makers and senior personnel satisfying themselves that their protocols and practices are working as intended rather than relying on information or data supplied by others no matter how sincere / competent they are believed to be. We were shown a short video clip of a senior officer giving evidence at the Grenfell Inquiry to illustrate the point. This person had relied on information he was given by a trusted colleague which, sadly, was wrong.

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<sup>1</sup> ARCH - Association of Retained Council Housing

<sup>2</sup> Priest-Stephens, F., (2024) Delivering for Tenants: The Consumer Standards and their Implications for Tenant Engagement, Regulator of Social Housing, p.4.

The SHR expects senior officials, Councillors, Board members (at Housing Associations or Arm's Length Management Organisations) to make themselves accessible to and engage personally with their tenants.

Although important and set by the SHR, Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are not the only source / indicator that will be used in inspections. For example, tenants can now contact the SHR directly, 'make a referral', rather than follow a complaints procedure as with the Housing Ombudsman (which option is still available). For the Regulator this provides an insight into how landlord's services and provision are received and whether they have the intended outcomes based on the SHR standards.

Tenants will also be consulted on their scrutiny activities and invited to participate in meetings, focus groups, or community or estate tours<sup>3</sup>.

Clearly the SHR has an unambiguous agenda of direct communication with tenants during their inspections.

We next heard about the inspections and gradings conducted so far – there have been 15. There are four grades from C1 to C4. All landlords are *expected* to achieve a grade C1 result and *anything* below that means "improvement is needed". Of the fifteen known results for Local.

Authorities five achieved grade C2 and ten C3. The speaker then emphasised – "This is really important" – that under C1 results should be regarded as a positive opportunity for a "kick start".

There were four common themes of 'failure';

1. TSM quality and collection were under par
2. Landlord did not understand who their tenants were, ie. their individual vulnerabilities and needs
3. Landlords did not learn from complaints
4. The tenant engagement mechanisms were not meaningful opportunities for landlords to hear and learn from their tenants

The final Question and Answer session provided further insight into the changes brought about by having a RSH. Overall, the former extremely high threshold for successful tenant referrals has been reduced by the ability to contact them directly. A past tendency for Local Authorities not to allow tenants' voices to be heard by keeping them at low levels of influence must disappear. Neighbourhood now features more in the consumer standards with an

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<sup>3</sup> Priest-Stephens, F., (2024) Delivering for Tenants: The Consumer Standards and their Implications for Tenant Engagement, Regulator of Social Housing, p.11.

expectation that landlords will assist tenants in difficult situations by things like ‘managed moves’.

One question concerned the activities of so-called ‘Claims Farmers’ who encourage tenants with difficult living conditions to delay reports so that they can increase compensation claims. The Regulator takes the view that better knowledge of their individual tenants and a “good grasp” of the condition of their homes leads to good practice in things like repairs and minimises the opportunities for claims. We were left with the advice that regardless of other standards, the Regulator’s standards must be met.

**Andy McGrory, policy Lead for Resident Engagement Building Safety Regulator (BSR)**

This talk was mainly concerned with high rise buildings but touched on communal buildings and, following the theme of the conference, had a focus on tenant engagement.

Of the 12,500 high rise buildings registered with the BSR 22% are Local Authority landlords. However, although SCDC has no buildings that fit the definition (5 storeys or more), there are some blocks of flats where the safety of residents could be compromised. A clear example of this is common stairways blocked with residents’ items. The Regulator’s view of solving this type of issue is to engage with residents with the goal of providing a solution rather than just forbidding the behaviour. He said,

“Residents give the best buy-ins when they’ve been involved.”

**Andy Lumb, Partnering Manager Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council**

This workshop comprised a thorough examination of the Local Authority’s response to some terrible floods in 2023. There had been previous flooding in 2007 but in 2023 there was a determined effort to engage with those affected in a more meaningful way. Mr Lumb made himself easily available and ensured that residents were given accurate (as opposed to aspiring) updates and kept regularly informed via an advice and support centre established in the local area. Thirty-three Council properties were affected and, having learned from the 2007 floods, a two phase approach was followed; people and property.

His summary was:

- [recognise the] Devastating impact
- [provide] Support and advice
- [accept and accommodate that] Everyone was at a different stage.
- [formulate] Communication Plan
- [across the board] Listening helped us strengthen the customer journey.

To facilitate the listening the Council organised and provided assistance with;

- Tenant choice event (people could choose new internal fittings and decoration)
- Redecoration
- Gardens
- Windows
- Welcome pack
- Advised customers of purchasing white goods, carpets
- Installed cookers
- Show house (what was being done)
- Community Fun Day (building relationships)
- Flood Resilience and Resistance Measures (advice for the future)

Council properties were completely stripped back to stud partitioning and bare bricks before they were dried out and refurbished. The flooding occurred on 21<sup>st</sup> October 2023 and the first home was returned on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

Tenants were consulted on all the new fittings and the opportunity was taken to completely upgrade and modernise the properties. Tenants were also involved in formulating the new 'Resilience Plan' to ensure that it did not become a 'corporate plan'. The whole experience, although shocking, became a valuable exercise in learning lessons from earlier events, engaging with affected tenants and the community, and using the valuable insights and skills residents could provide. Above all, Council tenants were treated with respect and their wishes granted where possible and, when not possible, explanations were given.

**Louise Holt, Head of Membership Services Tpas (Tenant Participation Advisory Service)**

The final workshop of the day concerned tenant engagement with examples of how the new era is different from the past. For example, tenants were not always treated fairly or with respect compared with now when there *must be evidence* of tenant influence in decision-making. This naturally implies that tenants cannot be ignored. In the past meetings were largely 'tick-box' exercises whereas now there must be transparent and meaningful engagement.

For Local Authorities this means a "big shift" because there was previously no Regulator relationship and there has been little understanding or thought given to consumer standards. Councils are now accountable to tenants and Tpas believes Councils will be at risk of Government intervention if they don't demonstrate good engagement for all the Consumer

Standards. They urge landlords to ensure that they are familiar with what is required and have produced a table.

<b>Governance &amp; Transparency</b>
Standard
There is a clearly defined and agreed role for residents in the decision-making arrangements of the organisation
<b>Scrutiny</b>
Standard
An appropriate and agreed scrutiny model and process is in place, with clear routes into the governance, business and service delivery operations of the organisation
<b>Business and Strategy</b>
Standard
There is a clear and consistent method for reporting back to residents how their views have been considered in all engagement activities
<b>Complaints</b>
Standard
There is a clear and accessible published complaints policy designed with residents, that shows the definition of a complaint, how to complain, key timescales, routes for redress, how to access help and support and who has responsibility for the complaints process.
<b>Information &amp; Communication</b>
Standard
All information provided to residents is clear and understandable with key points summarised, using an inclusive range of methods and in a format to suit the intended recipient place
<b>Resources for Engagement</b>
Standard
The organisation provides sufficient resources to deliver effective engagement and residents have the opportunity to influence the decision about the resources made available
<b>Community &amp; Wider Engagement</b>
Standard
There is an appropriate menu of engagement opportunities that; reflects the resident profile; responds to the different needs in relation to equality strands and any additional support, which can be evidenced in the delivery of their services, engagement activities and communications to promote widespread engagement

Source: National Tenant Engagement Standards 4<sup>th</sup> edition, (2021)

Tpas identified the culture of the landlord organisation as the key factor in facilitating all the required action. The 'ways of working' should extend throughout the whole body not just

those directly involved with housing. Examples of poor attitudes include making decisions that affect tenants without consulting them first or not including them in staff appraisals or recruitment. The organisation should ask itself whether tenant engagement is valued by all their staff or is there any kind of stigma or stereotyping that is not challenged.

National surveys among tenants identify language as a key indicator of attitudes. Landlord staff should remember that their tenants live in homes – not assets or units. Such attitudes and language should be combatted during staff training and there is an expectation of tenants being involved in the design of such training. Tpas suggest a very wide-ranging engagement with tenants among staff and give examples of senior managers and Councillors going out to meet their tenants at their own homes. This kind of activity should not be confined to Engagement or Housing Officers because there is no substitute for experiencing first-hand the neighbourhoods and estates that comprise the tenants' living environment. Data do not equal the real-life experience of the people who live in social housing.

Furthermore, tenants lead ordinary lives where they have school-runs, family activities, and jobs to go to. It is important that Councils tailor their services to the demographics of their residents such as asking how best to make contact or holding meetings at weekends or during the evening.

If there is no evidence showing real tenant involvement across the whole organisation Tpas states that there will be repercussions. A named individual should be responsible for ensuring that Councils meet Regulatory standards. Their view is that the days of ivory towers are gone.

Peter Apps of Prospect Magazine covered and reported on the Grenfell Inquiry, he stated, "Grenfell was blessed with diligent, highly intelligent & highly engaged residents, brave enough to stand up on behalf of their neighbours...The trouble was the system did not give these people power."

## **ARCH Tenants Conference – 3 October 2024 – Rotherham**

Feedback report by Jim Watson – Elected Tenant Representative

The opening speech was by Stella Parkin ( Arch tenants group chair)

Also in attendance was Sheila Cowen (Mayor of Rotherham metropolitan borough council)

**Fleur Priest Stephens** (tenants engagement manager regulator of social housing)

The conference was very interesting to attend people from England and Scotland attended.

Landlord's are responsible for delivery and putting things right

Drive improvements to landlords to improve things for tenants

What does that mean for tenant engagement

### Improvements

How many tenants have issues such as mental health disabled or elderly does South Cambridgeshire council have these numbers?

1. How many computers are there within South Cambridgeshire sheltered housing for residents to contact the council?

**Andy McCarry** (competence and residents engagement building safety regulator)

Gave a good speech there are 12,500 high rise buildings in Rotherham 22% per cent are still owned and managed

I know South Cambridgeshire council does not. but a point he brought up regarding flats South Cambs have with between two and six floors high should have self closers fitted following the glenfell report?

Resident engagement information to residents will be provided about decisions relating to management of bungalows and houses and flats within south Cambridgeshire.

Voids are transferred there in Rotherham to British gas does South Camb's do the same? yes residents once there allocated a property can choose there supplier

**Talk and Train** (Joshua Robinson coach in training and Hatton Boxing Club)

information given by assistant Joshua Robinson coach in training Hatton boxing club

This talk was given by Joshua himself suffering mental issues himself but by talking about his life and getting involved himself has helped him. Overcome issues he was very nervous this being his first public speaking in front of so many people

This is for men, boys, women and girls to talk and train in boxing

And I wondered if South Cambridgeshire district have anything like this set up here?

The object of this is for anybody to go to chat and train in boxing maybe if they have any health issues or just to meet up in a session to just talk about any issues with other people. I found the effort Joshua must have put into this was inspiring to maybe look into and maybe set up within in South Cambridgeshire

I'm told that Rotherham council do pay a grant to get these started.

And finally **Louise Holt** (Head of membership services TPAS)

1. Involve tenant in repairs and other contracts
2. A community skip day this is a good idea for engagement of Tenants
3. Talk meet listen to issues tenants may have because they wont go away



ARCH Tenants Conference 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2024

This is not a report of proceedings - Dr Margaret Wilson's report does that, as always, accurately and comprehensively – more 'a view from ARCH's perspective'.

I have been serving as a Tenant Representative on the ARCH Tenant's Group National Committee for over two years. I attended this annual event, once again, to help the other Committee Members ensure that it ran as smoothly as possible. Everyone mucks in, from meet-and-greeting (which was me, a 'softy southerner') outside in the draft, to reception duties ensuring all were welcomed and made comfortable. The planning that had gone into this started back in January and it says much about the standing of ARCH that lead representatives from both the Housing Regulator and the Housing Ombudsman are regular and committed speakers at ARCH events.

When I first joined ARCH it was obvious that there was a wealth of experience to be drawn upon. I soon learned that some members had been involved in Tenant Representation for decades, so I have often drawn upon their experience and passed on their knowledge to many of your South Cambs Tenant Reps and Officers.

This Conference was, once again, an opportunity for the Head of Tenant Engagement from the Regulator of Social Housing to update us all on the state of play regarding the new regulations and the lessons learned from the judgements made. It is clear that there is a huge emphasis on the four pillars or standards – Transparency, Influence and Accountability; Safety and Quality; Neighbourhood and Community; Tenancy.

Areas of major focus – where shortfalls are regularly reported on – are communicating how tenants' views have been taken into account and accurate record keeping. The message was clear; landlords must take the opportunity to learn from complaints. And, in doing so, make it known to their Tenants.

The building safety regulator's presentation had a similar message. Interestingly, many of their 'concern contacts' were not specifically within their remit, which perhaps points to a need for better communication with tenants regarding 'who does what'? Also, it was noted that a common issue related to poor record keeping – as per the Housing Regulator's findings.

The afternoon session focused on local issues to Rotherham and how they approached them. A fascinating insight to how a flooded area (Catcliffe) was affected by the October '23 floods and the steps the Council took to deal with the devastating upheaval experienced by their tenants.

The 'Talk n Train' presentation was the most heart-warming of the day. A young person spoke to a room full of strangers about his struggle with socialising and coming to terms with his anxieties. An open and honest presentation that showed how those from a disadvantaged community have come together to help each other – in a Boxing Gym!

I am standing down from the ARCH National Residents' Panel and hope that one of our Tenant Representatives will take my place. The knowledge and experience of those serving is a valuable resource to all Tenants in South Cambridgeshire.

Paul Bowman

## **6. Any other Business**

Any additional issues to be raised.

## **7. Meeting Date for 2024 / 2025**

- 27 March 2025 (Zoom / venue to be confirmed)

## **8. Closing**