

SOUTH LAKES HOUSING TENANTS' COMMITTEE MINUTES

1:30pm 14th January 2021 via Go-To-Meeting

Present: Stephen Bolton (Chair)
Sue Layfield
Jim Layfield
Loraine Birchall
Charles Howarth

Guests N/A

Staff in attendance: John Mansergh – Director of Business Assurance
Lyn Richardson – Tenant Engagement Officer
Kim Doran – Head of Repairs operations
Emma Wilson – Governance Support Assistant (minutes)

Apologies: Dorothy Dixon
John Short
Paul Athersmith
June Peckston

Circulation: As above

ACTION

1. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING 12TH NOVEMBER 2020- MATTERS ARISING

1.1 The Chair wished everyone Happy New Year and welcomed them to the virtual meeting during what is now the third national lockdown.

1.2 Matters Arising

6.2 – Charles asked if there was any feedback from RH following the discussion around condensation and not making properties too hot. JM responded that this is being considered alongside a 'No Regrets Policy' as part of our Greening Strategy.

1.3 Jim asked if the Board had approved the rent increase for 2021/22 – the Chair responded yes.

2. REPAIRS UPDATE

2.1 The Chair welcomed Kim Doran to the meeting – Kim introduced herself as head of repairs and provided a brief overview of what is currently happening. We are going through transformation process and wish to seek the views of Tenants' Committee members. There is lots of work on-going around performance Improvement.

- 2.2 **What type of information would you like available to help you report a repair?** The Chair responded there needs to be more information in the drop-down boxes on the website when reporting the repair, currently not enough options to make it easy. You need to add lots of detail in the free text box. There is no option to add communal areas or specify if the repair is inside or outside. Also when accessing the My Account and logging a repair it doesn't show when the repair was completed it shows status on-going or cancelled, this can cause confusion.
- 2.3 **Should there be other ways of reporting repairs.** The Chair responded Text, Email and the website seem to be the main ones. Sue added some tenants still need to phone as they don't always have the knowledge or access to report online. Charles echoed what the Chair and Sue had said.
- 2.4 **When Reporting a repair what do you consider to be a good customer experience? Once a repair has been reported how do you want to be reminded/track the appointment or repair status?** The Chair added SLH need to acknowledge the repair has been received and when the work will be carried out. If the operative, then can't make the date a new date and time should be scheduled. The Chair was aware of a situation where a tenant had requested an afternoon appointment due to shielding, the operative had turned up at 8am and the tenant was not ready for them. We should keep appointment promises and send text message reminders 24hrs before they are due to attend. Jim and Sue echoed this they had reported a leak and did not hear anything more until the operative arrived to fix it. Lorraine added when reporting a repair it would be nice to be taken seriously, there has been an incident when she was laughed at and had to resort to fixing the issue herself.
- 2.5 **What do you value as a good experience while the repair is being completed in your property?** The Chair responded personally I have no issues or concerns with our SLH trade operatives, they clean up after themselves, they are polite and take the time to explain new systems. Tenants Committee members echoed what the Chair had said. Charles added it is not always the same experience with contractors. There have been several occasions where either the workmanship has been poor quality or needed to be redone. This is poor value for money and there is no means of feedback to SLH when contractors are used. John thanked Charles for his feedback as did Kim and highlighted when using contractors there needs to be a way of feeding back to SLH. Charles added jobs should be checked before payment is made to contractors. Lyn suggested a small working group to review contractors used and how better communication and feedback can be established. Kim asked if there was a survey sent out Tenants Committee members felt not, Kim will investigate further. Lyn to obtain a list of external contractors this can then form part of the scrutiny panel and actions needed.
- 2.6 **How do you feel if the repair cannot be completed? What would you like to happen?** Charles added it would be good if when the operative came to do a repair another repair could be reported to them or better still be fixed when they are already at the property. Kim suggested like a reminder is there anything else we can help you with today such as rent or any other repairs to be logged.

2.7 **Overall is there anything else we can do better?** Use favoured means of communication. Loraine asked are there any plans for an app in the future to add reminders, can we do pop ups on phones and instructions for entry specific requirements such as please leave access to front and back of the property. Kim added I'm not sure about the Intelligence of reminders, but this can be explored. Personalise texts from the system. Some external routines don't have appointments should they have a specific appointment. Possibility to forget waiting time reminders if they are not 24hrs before the scheduled appointment.

2.8 Kim thanked everyone for their time and input and reassured Tenants Committee members that there will be feedback. Lyn is happy to follow up any emails and feedback with Kim.

3. TPAS MEMBERS BRIEFING ON THE SOCIAL HOUSING WHITE PAPER

3.1 This agenda item was deferred – A separate meeting has been scheduled for the **11th February 2021**.

4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW NATIONAL LOCKDOWN

4.1 John provided a brief overview of the current Implications of the Third National Lockdown following the government's announcement on the 4th Jan 2021. The main concern we have currently is tenants refusing access to their homes to carry out gas safety and electrical inspections due to shielding and concerns of the new variant and transmission risk. For most of our services, things will remain as normal operating remotely or from home with our office only now open for exceptional circumstances (where colleagues or work activity cannot be carried out safely from home).

4.2 Trades staff have mentioned that some tenants are not respecting safe distancing and we have asked them to ask tenants to respect this or, if this is refused, they can leave jobs. John asked for Tenants Committee views. Tenants' Committee discussed and agreed they would not want to put anyone at risk, Tenant, member of the public or employees. Tenants' Committee supported the guidance that trade operatives can leave homes if 2m distancing is not being respected. Lorraine added push those that won't socially distance to the back of the queue.

4.3 John also asked about reducing the service to essential and emergency repairs to help reduce the infection risk. Charles asked for further clarification around what an essential repair was as this could be open to interpretation. John added there will be some guidance for colleagues, but good judgement and a sensible approach will be needed, particularly additional support for vulnerable people. Jim and Sue added it should only be essential repairs are we able to put testing in place for operatives? John responded we are looking into the pro's and con's of this. We don't have all employees coming into contact in one place.

Tenants' Committee supported the change in approach. TC members are happy with the proposal following a discussion. No issues with operatives entering the properties if PPE is worn, and social distancing is maintained.

5. COVID 19 KPI'S

- 5.1 Performance has been a struggle throughout the year to ensure we maintain a decent repairs service. First lockdown work stopped completely, second lockdown not too much change, third lockdown again we aim to go to essential and emergency repairs only. This will cause a small back log but should be manageable to get back on track with the vaccination roll out programme.
- 5.2 Safety – all properties have an up to date Gas and fire inspection certificate. Asbestos –surveys recommenced in July. Electrical –48 inspections overdue under the 5-year policy (compared to 63 in October, 135 in September, 102 in August, 52 in July, 88 in June, 74 in May 28 in April). No accesses increased in 2ndlockdown so target of 0 by end of Dec moved to Jan.
- 5.3 Financial performance is good – some planned maintenance programmes will underspend and slip into next year. RBS loan has been approved by Board to meet development ambition.
- 5.4 Rent collection and voids – currently worst performance due to tenants struggling and claiming Universal Credit (UC) and taking longer to relet due to Covid and backlog. Covid is the common dominator. SLH compared well with other Housing associations. 3% arrears' other HA around 4%, 1.6% on voids in line with the rest of the sector. John concluded we were in a good place position. The current Situation is different due to the new variant rapidly transmitting throughout the Country.

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7. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 7.1 John informed Tenants' Committee Members that SLH have retained the top rating for Governance (G1) and Viability (V1) ratings from the Regulator of Social Housing. John explained the returns have been scrutinised much more than before due to the concerns following the Covid pandemic. Several Housing Associations have had their ratings dropped so this is excellent news particularly from a tenant's perspective to know you have a sound Landlord.
- 7.2 LR asked Tenants' Committee members if they would be happy to get involved in an Estates Improvements workshop to gather feedback and help support future planning and development. Sue, Jim, Charles, Loraine and the Chair are all happy to get involved. EW to set up meeting. **EW**
- 7.3 The Chair requested the meeting is started 15 mins prior to the meeting and agenda items to enable TC members to catch up and have an informal chat. **EW**
- 7.4 Sue asked if all special needs and sheltered tenants be informed of how their regular service is being run. Are the hub team doing visits to the most vulnerable of tenants? EW made sue aware that welfare calls have been **LR**

started again and Aimee was working with the ILO's on this. Lynn to liaise with AW and arrange comms for the sheltered tenants.

7.5 The Chair asked if Tenants' Committee members were happy to move the meeting from the 11th March to 18th March. All agreed. **EW**

7.6 Lynn asked if members of the Scrutiny Panel would be happy to meet in a couple of weeks? It was agreed the Panel would meet on the 28th January at 1.30pm. Lynn and Emma will arrange for the manager feedback to be sent out ahead of the meeting. **EW**

8. Date of Next Meeting – 18th March 2021