

Council Housing Management Board Thursday 21 March 2024.

Meeting summary

Attendees:

(CW) Councillor Christine Warner – Chair and Cabinet Member for Homes, Planning and Safer Communities.

(AS) Antony Spurway – Vice Chair – tenant board member

(BMC) Brian McGaw – tenant board member

(VG) Victoria Gabriela – tenant board member

(NH) Nigel Hickmott – tenant board member

(KM) Councillor Keith Miller

(KL) Councillor Katie Kendrick

(JW) Jo Worthington – independent board member (attended virtually)

(AB) Allan Batty – Cheshire West and Chester Council

(AA) Alison Amesbury – Cheshire West and Chester Council

(RC) Ria Carey – Cheshire West and Chester Council

(PD) Paul Doherty – independent board member

Apologies:

(JL) Janet Lawton – ForHousing

(ML) Councillor Martin Loftus – Shadow Member for Homes, Planning and Safer Communities

(JM) Jane Murray – tenant board member

1. Welcome

The third Council Housing Management Board took place with Board members being welcomed by the Chair Councillor Christine Warner, Cabinet Member for Homes, Planning and Safer Communities.

2. Matters arising from last meeting.

A number of matters arose from the last Council Housing Management Board as follows.

2.1 Development of a new webpage depicting capital works for 2024-25

Further to the December Board, RC confirmed that she was still waiting for addresses to receive works to be confirmed by ForHousing, once this is provided this information will be available on the website. RC said she was hopeful that the information would be available on the council website by 1 April.

Action: New webpage depicting capital works for 2024-25 to go live early April 2024.

2.2 Analysis of tenant satisfaction

KC reported that Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) are being reviewed regularly with tenants being contacted to follow up any further actions required. In addition to the above, staff are also looking at any themes to get more insight into issues. AB confirmed that the performance for quarter 1 TSMs would be published in July 2024. KC confirmed that she would provide more insight at next meeting on 22 June.

Action: KC to provide more insight about the TSMs at the June Board.

2.3 Ways to improve communication with tenants on compliance in flats.

Further to the December Board, KC explained that the issuing of communication on compliance in flats only covers high rise blocks under the Building Safety Act. However, ForHousing corporate properties is trialling the use of QR codes to provide compliance data in sheltered housing. KC explained that there are around 900 low rise blocks so it would be difficult to keep things up to date on a notice board. KC confirmed that this data would be included in an annual leaflet and the annual report. KK asked whether there was a timeline for the QR pilot completion to which KC agreed to provide an update on timescales for the next meeting.

Action: KC to provide an update to the next Board on a completion date for the QR pilot for sheltered housing schemes.

2.4 Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

At the December Board council officers confirmed that a Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund grant application had been made which if successful would see around 600 properties receiving retrofit works to bring their EPC rating to a C rating. CW informed members that the SHDF bid for £3m had been successful with all members agreeing this is fantastic news.

3. Performance update

KC provided an update on quarter 3 performance and confirmed that of the 12 KPIs, eight are within target, three within tolerance and one had missed target and would remain the case for the rest of the current financial year.

The following questions were received with answers provided as follows:

Q1. How many pre-termination visits was inspected this quarter?

During this quarter (Oct-Dec) 100% (16 out of 16) were inspected that were due an inspection.

	2019 Weeks 1-39	2020 Weeks 1-39	2021	2022 Weeks 1-39	2023 Weeks 1-39
Voids IN	271	242	257	222	244
Of which, require(d) Major Works	24	28	16	16	42
% requiring Major Works	8.86%	11.57%	6.23%	7.21%	17.21%

Q2. In terms of PMF06 Re-let time (calendar days) all voids, has the administrative error been investigated and has been learnt to improve moving forward?

KC confirmed that a full investigation had taken place with the issue being identified due to an officer being on a performance improvement plan. KC explained that the process is tightly managed, and this is the first one we have failed since July 2017. RC confirmed that for financial year 2024-25, this target would be split between major and standard voids.

Q3. How many extra properties have required major works to the void process and what is causing the delay to complete the works to each property?

There has been a 17.21% increase in the number of voids requiring major works, compared to previous years. As a result of this significant increase there is a backlog with resources being allocated to remedy the same as resources permit.

Q4. How is monitoring taking place to bring performance back within target?

Weekly operational meetings take place to discuss performance, works required, time taken and priorities. Although tolerance and target have not been achieved, it is worth noting that performance is good when compared to peer Registered Providers. KC explained that this year's target was set based on last year's performance which had been excellent, but it is the increase in the volume of voids and type of works required which is impacting performance this year.

Q5. Is there an extra cost for not having the properties ready in time?

KC confirmed that there is rental loss however, this is covered in the management fee and is therefore bourn by ForHousing. KC said that there could be an option in that extra resources could be brought in to reduce the void days however, this introduces higher costs that may not cover the rent loss for the extra days rent is collected.

Q6. In terms of PMF-10 Percentage of all appointed jobs where appointment was kept, why were 23 appointments not attended for this quarter?

KC explained that there are lots of different reasons, including staying longer on the previous job to achieve right first-time fix, unavoidable cancellation due to sickness, etc.

Q7. What actions have been put in place to monitor this more closely to ensure appointments are being met going forward?

KC confirmed that there are monthly meetings to review why appointments have 'not been met' to see if there are any emerging themes however, to date no specific themes have been identified.

Q8. In terms of PMF11 Percentage of properties achieving the decent homes standard, will all the 66 planned properties needed to achieve this target be completed by the end of this financial year?

KC confirmed that all but 14 properties would meet the decent homes required. The 14 properties that won't achieve decent homes standard required new windows and were in the conservation area in Neston which had delayed this programme. The installation of the windows which are currently being manufactured will not be completed by 31 March 2024 meaning these properties will remain 'non-decent' at year-end. It has been agreed to increase the year-end tolerance to 0.30% to account for this, ensuring the windows are installed and signed off no later than end of April 2024.

4. Regulatory Framework

AB and KC delivered a presentation on the new Consumer Standards which all social housing providers will be required to adhere to. AB explained that there are four new Consumer Standards as follows:

- **Safety & Quality standard** – requires landlords to provide safe and good quality homes and landlord services to tenants.
- **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** – to be open with tenants and treat with fairness and respect. (Incorporates Tenant Satisfaction Measure requirements).
- **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** – requires landlords to engage with relevant parties so tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.
- **Tenancy Standard** – requirement for fair allocation and letting of homes, and how tenancies are managed and ended.

AB confirmed that all social housing providers with stock over 1,000 units of accommodation would be inspected over the next four years by the Regulator of Social Housing. The inspection framework will look at how we perform against the above standards. A general discussion took place around the work being done in preparation for an inspection namely, HQN were currently working on the development of a new Council Housing Asset Management Strategy which would be launched in July. AB advised that TPAS are due to begin a three-month project to develop a new Tenant Engagement Strategy.

5. Complaints update

AS and NH gave an update on complaints namely that from 1 April – 31 December 2023, 518 complaints had been received from tenants with the top three service areas being: responsive repairs – 294, neighbourhoods – 130 and planned works 44. The top three reasons for a tenant wishing to make a complaint were: not keeping the customer informed - 126, quality of work – 56 and damage to personal belongings – 32. AS and NH also explained how the Complaints Panel worked and the process for reviewing complaint handling as well as examples of lessons learnt. KC said there is currently a backlog of stage 1 complaints but a new staff member is working through to clear. Tenants are kept informed of the timescales.

AB confirmed that there has been a large increase in the number of complaints across the sector. Ombudsman annual report says levels of maladministration has increased to 72%, compensation up to £3.7m and 14,000 failings found and put right by the ombudsman. AB confirmed that there would be new KPIs for complaints beginning April 2024.

6. Any other business

6.1 Further questions as follows:

Q1. How is the Grounds maintenance contract monitored?

AA explained that the grounds maintenance had been recently reviewed to include all HRA land and a new service specification put in place so it is in line with non-HRA land. AA said it's ForHousing who monitors whether the contract was performing correctly. RC agreed to provide a copy of the Service Level Agreement and the programme of works will go on the website. RC mentioned that were there any problems with the performance that her team would pick this up with Streetcare.

Action: RC to finalise the Service Level Agreement with Streetcare and provide to AB for publishing on the website.

Q2. How would tenants be informed about the service standards and the timescales by the grounds maintenance team?

AB confirmed that this would be published on the website once this has been confirmed. KM suggested rather than reinventing the wheel, could this be done via the existing arrangements for non-HRA land. RC said she would pick this up as part of her work in finalising the service level agreement with Streetcare.

Action: RC to arrange for the service standards and timescales to be added to the current area of the website covering non-HRA land once the service level agreement has been finalised with Streetcare.

Q3. When will the two sub-committees be set up that are referenced in both the Board Terms of Reference and ForHousing website?

AB confirmed that as per guidance issued by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) the setting up of both the Customer Experience and Governance, audit and scrutiny committees should be delayed for 12 months so to allow time for the establishment of the main Board. AB continued to explain that he has asked TPAS to review the above as part of the wider tenant engagement project they will be commencing in May 2024.

Q4. How would work in relation to the above sub-committees be picked up and reported to the Board?

AB explained that were a specific piece of work is required by the Board this work would be carried out by way of a specific focus group, workshop or tenant consultation with results being presented to the Board and action taken as required.

6.2 Next Board Meeting

Is to be held on Thursday 27 June 2024 with agenda items agreed as follows:

Proposed agenda as follows:

- Tenant Satisfaction Measure full breakdown and analysis of results.

Our council housing vision

“We aim to provide affordable homes of the right type and quality to meet the housing needs of those who are unable to meet their own needs in the housing market now and in the future. We will work in partnership to support our tenants to prosper and improve their wellbeing and ensure neighbourhoods and communities are sustainable, safe and pleasant”.