

Housing Performance Panel
Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting
held on Thursday, 1 December 2022
from 1pm to 4pm via Zoom

Attendees: Peter Campbell (Head of Housing) – Chair
Cllr John Batchelor
Brian Burton
Les Rolfe
Patricia Hall

By Invitation: Elaine Phillips (Mears)
Geoff Clark (SCDC – Service Manager – Tenancy and Estates)
Eddie Spicer (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Assets)
Bronwen Taylor (SCDC – Resident Involvement Officer) – Minute taker
Gina Manderson (SCDC – Communications Officer) – Admin support

Apologies: Eleni Koutso
Paul Bowman
Grace Andrews (SCDC – Data Quality and Improvement Team Leader)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at 1.03pm.

Apologies were received from Eleni Koutso, Paul Bowman and Grace Andrews.

2. Quorum

The meeting was quorate.

3. Minutes of previous meeting – 8 September 2022

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 8 September 2022 which were approved by the panel.

4. Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 8 September 2022

4.1 Estate Inspections (item 5.4)

Geoff Clark advised that the tenant volunteers had requested for the meeting scheduled on 29 November 2022 be postponed to January 2023.

Les Rolfe explained that as there were a lot of gaps in the Records and Actions worksheet and before meeting with Geoff Clark, the tenant volunteers wanted to check that some of the issues raised had been actioned and resolved.

Bronwen Taylor said that she would re-schedule a meeting for the middle of January 2023.

Action: Bronwen Taylor

5. Standing Items

5.1 Mears Group – Review of Quarter 2

Elaine Phillips, from Mears, referred to the report in the pack and advised that there had been an increase in the number of repairs before the implementation of the new contract and that there had been a hard drive to get the aged jobs completed. She added there was a lot of plastering and extensive roofing works that were outstanding and that a new roofing company, CFR, had been contracted to take on a large portion of work in January 2023.

5.2 SCDC – Review of Quarter 2 Performance Data

As Grace Andrews was not at the meeting, Geoff Clark went through a presentation on the Performance Data for Quarter 2, highlighting the key indicators that had either improved or declined, as follows:

- Housing Options and Advice – declined
- Empty Homes – improved – although there was a knock on effect from COVID-19, the numbers had improved
- Satisfaction with response repairs – declined, however it was still in the top quartile

Eddie Spicer advised that since the implementation of the new contract, it had improved and should start to even out, and show signs of increasing.

- Non-emergency (routine) repairs – improved
- Rent Arrears – declined, however, the performance was good

- Proportion of homes with a valid Gas Safety Certificate – although there was a slight dip in July 2022 due to no access to properties, the performance was good

Eddie Spicer advised that although it was only one or two properties, the graph showed that it that it was in one month only and that the properties were accessed the following month.

Councillor Batchelor said that these figures were looking back and now that we were well into the new Mears contract with an increase in staff, there should be a significant improvement. He added that the key indicator would be the next quarter and that the new arrangement with Mears was working.

5.3 SCDC – Review of Quarter 2 Complaints Data

Geoff Clark went through the Complaints and Compliments Data for Quarter 2. He referred to the “Percentage of complaints resolved within timescale” and said that we had measured just below the median.

Eddie Spicer reported that they had received positive comments in relation to the new contract, however, the results should gradually increase over time. He added that the contract was still in the transition period, however, he had looked at some of the October 2022 figures which looked encouraging and they had also received a lot more positive comments.

5.4 Estate Inspections

Bronwen Taylor referred to the Estate Inspection Summaries for August, September and October 2022 for noting.

Geoff Clark asked the volunteer inspectors for feedback.

Brian Burton said that most of the issues raised did not create any problems for the Housing Services Officer (HSO) and that both estates were well kept and tidy.

Bronwen Taylor added that as there was sheltered accommodation in Arrington, the Sheltered Estate Officer (SEO) had joined the inspection as she would attend to any issues raised. She said that in future, SEOs would attend all estates with sheltered accommodation.

Les Rolfe advised that he and Paul Bowman would be visiting those estates, who scored low on the report, to see if issues had been actioned, as when they were reported, it would appear that there was no follow up.

Bronwen Taylor explained that some of the issues reported had not been recorded properly on the worksheet, that is, from the date of reporting the issue to the date of completion, including any actions in between, and she gave some examples.

Les Rolfe said that he did not expect HSOs to be chasing all parties all the time, but to include notes or give updates on the worksheet after four weeks. He added that if nothing was being done, they would have to assume that they were wasting their time reporting issues.

Geoff Clark said that we need to keep on top of issues, however, some issues were not always straightforward although they appeared to be.

Les Rolfe said that if there was a problem, it should be noted on the worksheet.

Patti Hall said that when she called about her estate being inspected, she was told that they were not done.

Bronwen Taylor advised that Sheltered Housing Officers were now attending the inspections where there was sheltered accommodation in order to attend to any issues and that these were also being reported on.

Patti Hall referred to an issue at the communal hall on her estate, that had been there for five years, and said that every time she called to report it, she was told that the council did not attend to sheltered housing.

Geoff Clark asked Patti Hall to email the details to Eddie Spicer who would look into the issue.

Action by: Patti Hall

5.5 Update on Repairs Contract

Eddie Spicer referred to the updated report included in the pack and said that there had been delays with the online repairs portal, however, this was now active and the KPIs were showing encouraging results. He reported that the shared gas contract that we had with Cambridge City Council, where Mears were doing gas servicing for both, ceased on 24 November 2022 and had gone over to a new contractor, which had improved the call handling capacity at Mears. He said the biggest improvement was with communication and reminded the panel that the new Heating contract telephone number was 0800 085 1313.

6. New Matters

6.1 New Repairs Contract – Performance Review Joint Working Group

Eddie Spicer referred to the updated report included in the pack. He reported that a meeting with Mears and SCDC officers was held the previous week, and a second meeting with the group, which included Les Rolfe, Paul Bowman and Patti Hall and SCDC officers, was scheduled for the next day. He added that they were still monitoring works on the old contract and were down to 200 outstanding jobs, which had reduced from an initial figure of approximately 750.

6.2 New Resident Involvement Team Leader

The Chair advised that interviews for the new Resident Involvement Team Leader role were held on 3 November 2022 and that the interview panel consisted of Julie Fletcher, Margaret Wilson, Les Rolfe, Paul Bowman and himself. He said that the position had been offered to David Armitage who had accepted pending all HR checks, and he would be joining the team early in January 2023. He thanked Jennifer Perry for her work during her time with the council.

Patti Hall asked if the tenant volunteers would meet David Armitage in person as she thought it was more polite to meet him face to face.

The Chair said that his induction programme had not been planned, however, there would be an opportunity to meet him.

7. Any Other Business (AOB)

7.1 Essential winter items for vulnerable tenants

Eddie Spicer said that together with Mears, they had some warm packs which included items such as blankets and flasks for vulnerable tenants to help them through the cold winter. He added that SCDC were also offering electric blankets and slow cookers for people who were referred and if the panel knew of any vulnerable tenant who would benefit from any of these items, to let their Sheltered Officer know.

7.2 Damp and mould

The Chair referred to the case of the young boy who passed away due to damp and mould, and said that the council was taking this issue very seriously. He said that tenants needed to report any issues to us through Mears and should they get no response, to contact either Eddie Spicer or himself to investigate further.

Eddie Spicer said that specialist contractors were used and currently they were struggling with appointments as there were a large number of cases being reported. He added that if there were urgent cases, the council would send out one of our surveyors.

8. Meeting Date

The Chair referred to the next meeting date as follows:

- 2 March 2023

9. Closing

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting ended at 1.54pm. The Chair wished everyone a happy Christmas.