

Tenant Scrutiny Meeting

Monday 11th September 2023, 10:30am at Springwell Gardens Community Centre

Attendees

David Ramsden, Winnie Billups, Ann Hitchens, Mary Jacques, Julie Sharp, Sam Sharp, Keith Stringer, Barry Dealey, Donna Draper, James Smith, Callie Lamb, Phil Hamilton, Sandra Tolley, Danielle Smith, Phil Hayes, Rebecca Morrison, Laura Swift

1	Welcome, introductions and apologies David welcomed everyone to the meeting, introductions were made. There were no declarations of interest. No apologies were made. Panel members should complete a declaration of interest form for this investigation.	
2	Minutes and actions from last meeting The minutes were read through. Rebecca got in touch with Claire, the training will be taken to head of service and is waiting for feedback, it might also be rolled out to customer service teams.	
3	Support for new tenants A meeting takes place when someone is on the housing register. They meet with the income team to ensure they can afford the property. When they are ready the potential tenant will be able to look at what properties are advertised with Key Choices. Virtual viewings now take place, these are filmed by Crucible Homes. The videos start outside and go room by room around the property. Very few people request an in-person viewing (few every month). The videos include answers to questions that were previously asked in viewings. Applicants are shortlisted. The computer system does the shortlisting, the shortlist is then sent to an officer. Phil said that when speaking with young people, they were told that they couldn't have an in-person viewing. Room dimensions are on the property description which is available on the Key Choices website.	

	<p>Applicants are banded and an allocation policy is applied. Those in band 1 are in the most urgent need.</p> <p>It is compulsory to meet with the income team, this is Paul Elliott's team.</p> <p>Applicants are asked whether they have an email address.</p> <p>Officers go through the tenancy agreement with the applicant. Some people also receive a meeting which takes place with their area housing officer. Information is sent to tenants prior to sign up.</p> <p>A lot of customers cannot afford to furnish their new home, so a furniture pack is offered to new tenants. There are different levels (bronze, silver, gold and platinum) the furniture pack is leasing furniture including white goods, sofas, beds and wardrobes. A review is currently taking place on the scheme to see if it can be expanded further. Details of the furniture pack is available on the website and there are leaflets. Phil Hamilton will send these through to the panel.</p> <p>Sandra said they do not have a welcome pack for new tenants when they get their keys. The area housing officer does a welcome visit.</p> <p>A welcome visit also takes place for the furniture pack.</p> <p>The re-let time has gone down. The target is 42 days, and the team are currently at 38.61 days.</p> <p>Officers said it would be good to see what other authorities do.</p> <p>The panel queried whether it would be worth asking how the tenant found the service. The council could cost out how much sustainable tenancies save them. Sandra is not sure if everyone needs a meeting with income and expenditure prior to their tenancies.</p> <p>Rent and Ready is ran by Rush House. It is an online course; it covers 6 main topics. Some of the things covered within the 6 topics are gas and water safety, utility bills and savings. Danielle will email the panel the course. If a tenant cannot access the course, they could use the library at Riverside.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>Support for new tenants</p> <p>The panel would like to look more into the communication including online courses and how these are accessed.</p> <p>The panel feels virtual viewings are a good addition, but it is an issue if everything is moving to being virtual/online.</p>	

	<p>James added it isn't necessarily easy for someone to ask for support and in-person viewings and it should be Rotherham Council asking tenants these things.</p> <p>Julie queried whether volunteers and charities could take on the role of property viewings.</p> <p>Questions will be asked to tenants who had an experience with virtual viewings. Phil and Rebecca will put some questions together.</p> <p>The panel could watch and go through the training course together.</p>	PH, RM
5	<p>Voids report</p> <p>The report has been sent to James.</p> <p>James went through the process of where the report will be presented.</p> <p>James will initially send the report to the head of service and then arrange a meeting with key staff and the tenant scrutiny panel.</p> <p>An action plan will be developed.</p>	
6	<p>Communications investigation</p> <p>The training is ready to be rolled out and the communications group (screen team) has been set up, their next session is tomorrow and the group will be looking at Home Matters.</p> <p>The communications investigation will be on the next agenda with revised dates.</p> <p>Some of the panel would like to get involved in the communications group but cannot access online meetings, James will speak with Gemma who is leading on a letter role out.</p> <p>James will speak to Claire about attending the training ourselves.</p>	JS JS
7	<p>Planning for next meeting</p> <p>Andy will be attending the next meeting. We will plan the survey for tenants. An officer involved with virtual viewings will be invited to the meeting. Callie will invite them.</p>	CL
8	<p>Any other business</p> <p>David said when looking for a contact number online through the search engine 'Bing' a number for a solicitor came up. James will look into that and bring it to the relevant officers' attention.</p>	JS

	<p>The tenant open day is on Tuesday 31st October.</p> <p>Dates for next years meetings will be booked in. these will remain on the second Monday of the month unless a bank holiday.</p>	
	<p>Next meeting date</p> <p>The next meeting will be on Monday 9th October 2023, 10.30am at Springwell Gardens Community Centre.</p>	