

## Tenant Scrutiny Meeting

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> December 2023, 10:30am at Springwell Gardens Community Centre

### Attendees

David Ramsden, Winnie Billups, Keith Stringer, Barry Dealey, Ann Hitchens, Mary Jacques, Donna Draper, Julie Sharp, Sam Sharp, Wendy Birch, James Smith, Phil Hayes, Rebecca Morrison, Callie Lamb, Andy Lumb, Laura Swift

<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, introductions and apologies</b>  David welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no declarations of interest.  Apologies have been received from Jo Workman.  Panel members should complete a declaration of interest form for this investigation.  Phil said thank you to the panel for the work carried out over the last year.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes and actions from last meeting</b>  The minutes were read through.  The Communications with Tenants 'you said, the Council did' document was agreed on by the panel. Phil will do a final cross reference to ensure all the information is still correct.	
<b>3</b>	<b>New tenant support</b>  28 surveys have been returned – 18 online and 11 paper copies. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 71% of viewings took place via video.</li><li>• Most people used their own device. The majority of those that did go to Council offices, found it easy to arrange.</li><li>• 74% of people who viewed their property via video, would have preferred to have visited in person and 41% was disappointed when they saw the property in person.</li><li>• Most of the people who viewed the property in person found it easy to arrange an appointment. The majority viewed the property with family or alone.</li><li>• 64% of people were happy with how long it took for the house to be sorted, with 2 people commenting that it only took 2 weeks.</li></ul>	

- 72% said they had a meeting with the finance team to talk about rent, bills and other costs. Of those who had attended 64% found this to be very useful. 1 person didn't find it useful and 3 people was unsure.
- A suggestion was 'They should include a piece of paper with all the costs on it so you can peruse it at your own leisure instead of having it force fed inside 15 minutes and then forgetting it all because of information overload' the panel agreed that it was a good suggestion.
- The majority of people said they didn't or wasn't sure whether they attended the 'A Place of Yor Own' course. Only 2 people attended. The panel wondered if there was confusion as the question says, 'did you attend' and it was an online course.
- 4 people said that they would have liked more information on how to pay rent. James added Jackie's team should have covered this.
- Only 35% joined the furniture scheme, of these 82% said the scheme was explained in full.
- Most people did not receive a leaflet for the furniture scheme or are unsure whether they received a leaflet. Those who did receive a leaflet were 50-50 on whether the leaflet made sense.
- Those who did not join the furniture scheme when asked all but one said they would not have been interested in joining with one comment that they do not think it is good value for money paying for the lifetime of the tenancy.
- This is the tenants first home with the Council for most people completing the survey.
- Before moving 55% knew the area they were moving to and 38% didn't.
- The majority of people overall are satisfied with their new home and the majority plan to stay in their new home long-term.
- Negative comments are mainly surrounding bins, repairs and decorating.
- The one tenant who only plans to stay a few months rated it the lowest on satisfaction.

The panel feels that people should be given the option of whether they want an in-person or video viewing.

It should also be made clear that decorating isn't carried out by the Council, Julie said on the key choices website it will say a property is unfurnished and suggested they add 'and undecorated' to help manage expectations.

It should also be made clear that the furniture package isn't a life-time commitment. The tenant can cancel the panel, return items, switch

items etc. as well as the items being updated/replaced when necessary.

Julie said learning disability organisations are discouraging people from signing up to a furniture scheme and instead encouraging people to buy the items second-hand.

Phil said there could be information overload in the tenancy workshops. Barry said his meeting took 2 hours and felt even that wasn't long enough, Barry also brought home a lot of paperwork that filled a drawer. One of the comments on the survey said their meeting was 15 minutes.

Barry said the cost of the furniture pack comes out in the housing benefit, which needs to be made clear that it isn't a separate payment out.

Winnie suggested those with learning disabilities, who have a support worker present should have the same support worker throughout the process to ensure no information is being missed when passed to the tenant.

Julie suggested that the comments surrounding how to pay could be the paper rent card, the large print version doesn't have a barcode.

### **Finance team**

In 2018/19 the number of tenancies ended was 97 and in 2021/22 the number of tenancies ended was 13, sustainability measures are working. The number of tenancies sustained is being measured and monitored.

We are unsure of how much it costs for the video viewings, the contract for the videos is currently up for tender, so this information is currently sensitive.

Julie queried how much the video viewing would cost the tenant if they don't have access to wi-fi. This will likely get the response that tenants can go to council offices and view the video.

The furniture scheme has had 606 new tenancies and 946 new orders, there are 30-50 (closer to 30) voids per week. We need more clarification on this as we are unsure on the figures provided.

### **Benchmarking**

Rotherham is performing well on relet times. James has a meeting with Louise Robinson, where James will get access to the portal for benchmarking.

	<p>Phil said a suggestion could be that the Council does a wider survey to ask people whether they would prefer an option of an in-person or video viewing.</p> <p>Wendy queried whether local ward councillors' details should be given to new tenants.</p>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Communications</b></p> <p><b>Recommendation G – Complaints and compliments</b>  The panel recommended providing a direct link from the housing webpage to the complaints page. Phil Rushton has come back to James with a reason why this will not be done. Phil R feels the search engine on the website is good. If it were to be added onto the housing page then it would need to be added to every service page.  The panel would like to discuss this further, James will speak to Stuart and go back to Phil T.</p> <p><b>Recommendation H – Newsletter circulation</b>  The panel recommended conducting a consultation for the newsletter. this hasn't been done but is in process.</p> <p>Phil thanked James and Callie for the action plan.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Repairs and maintenance policy update</b></p> <p>Andy will bring an updated policy in February 2024 prior to it going to cabinet in June 2024.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<p><b>Council repairs guide for tenants leaflet</b></p> <p>If there are further comments on the leaflet, please send feedback to James. James will send them through to Andy.</p>	JS
<b>7</b>	<p><b>Repairs and maintenance policy update</b></p> <p><b>Records and vulnerabilities</b>  Ann queried whether vulnerabilities are flagged up on the system when the customer's account is opened. Someone with vulnerabilities when calling about a light was told to change the bulb themselves, but this wasn't possible due to their vulnerabilities. Andy said it is on the system, but it doesn't flag up. There is a script for vulnerabilities.</p> <p>Damp and black spot mould is attended to within 10 days.</p> <p><b>Contact details</b>  Details are refreshed at first point of contact.</p>	

	<p>It has been publicised that an account is needed to report repairs online. some members of the panel have had difficulty in reporting repairs online (waiting for account password resets and unable to report online)</p> <p>Whether the panel could access a test/dummy account to look at reporting repairs was discussed. James has spoken to the customer services team recently and has been told this is not possible.</p> <p><b>Emergency repairs</b> Ann said on the recorded message when calling into the call centre, states emergency repairs are chargeable. Andy will look into the wording of the message, the only time a customer would be charged for an emergency repair is if the council has been called out incorrectly and the repair had been exaggerated by the tenant in order to trigger it into being classed as an emergency, an example would be only one radiator in the house is not working and the tenant says the entire heating system isn't working.</p> <p><b>Right first time</b> It has been built into the repairs contacts that if a repair isn't right first time the contractors will go back to do the work at no cost to the Council. Andy will share the KPI (key performance indicators) with Rebecca.</p> <p><b>Customer feedback</b> Engaging with tenants and tenant scrutiny is built into the contract. Feedback is currently gathered by SMS (text message) if someone is dissatisfied then the tenant is phoned.</p> <p>Different questions in the text survey were being asked by Mears. Andy will update these, so they are the same.</p> <p><b>Customer Sub-group</b> This is ongoing, Andy is working on sharing information especially on damp and mould.</p> <p><b>Publicising learning</b> Andy said the council needs to make sure documents have 'you said, we did'.</p> <p><b>Staff behaviours</b> Safeguarding takes place. There has been a culture built in the council on how to treat customers. Customers are being kept informed. Keeping customers informed was a weakness and Andy is working with contractors to strengthen.</p>	<p>AL</p> <p>AL</p>
8	<b>Planning for next meeting</b>	

	none	
<b>9</b>	<b>Any other business</b> Dates of 2024 meetings will be circulated to the panel.	LS
	<b>Next meeting date</b> The next meeting will be on Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> January 2024, 10.30am at Springwell Gardens Community Centre.	