

Minutes

Date: 18 October 2023

Meeting	:	Housing Operations Committee
Present	:	Pam Norton, Board Member Michael Payton, Board Member Annette Dunningham, Board Member Barbara Bransgrove, Board Member Jean Gardner Maureen Chapman-Towns
In attendance	:	Robin Roberts, Chief Executive Glynis Gatenby, Operations Director Michael Kilkelly, Asset Manager Celia Dawes, Executive Support
Observing:	:	Les Cox

Item:	Action:
1	Apologies for absence / declarations of interest
1.1	Apologies for absence were received from resident members Donna Edinboro and David Brigden.
1.2	There were no declarations of interest.
2	Minutes of the HOC meeting held 19 July 2023:
2.1	Pam Norton asked if anyone had any comments on the minutes from the meeting held on 19 July 2023. There were none.
2.2	The minutes were agreed to be an accurate record and were approved.
3	Actions from last meeting
3.1	All actions were reported as having been completed.
3.2	Pam Norton asked whether anyone had applied for the "helping hands" fund. Glynis Gatenby responded that an amount of £300 had been approved yesterday which was for a number of replacement household items. The housing officer had checked the resident's circumstances and carried out an income and expenditure exercise

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before authorising the application. The resident had originally requested £500 but was delighted with the £300.

- 3.3 Pam Norton asked if everyone was aware of the fund and said that she was part of another committee where grants are given and SHS residents had applied so she wondered if they may be embarrassed to apply to us. Glynis Gatenby said that residents are aware, and another article is in the winter newsletter. We also advise the Housing team to explore different avenues where money may be available to assist residents (e.g. Friends of the Elderly).

4 Performance indicators (quarter 2, 2023 / 2024)

- 4.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the report which reviews the performance measure results for quarter 2, July – September 2023.

- 4.2 The following were highlighted:

- 4.2.1 Our resources:

- there have been no vacancies in our general needs homes
- relet times for our older people homes is slightly outside our target but within tolerance and down slightly from the previous quarter
- rent arrears for quarter 2 are at 0.80%
- there is an increase in the number of cases of arrears over £1,000 up to six from three last quarter – details in appendix 2
- former tenant arrears performance is just outside of tolerance – two cases, one of which is a resident who died with a £2000 arrear as universal credit was not paid.

- 4.2.2 Our communities:

- 45 tablets are currently out on loan which is slightly down. The Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey showed that lots of residents have smart phones. Annette Dunningham commented that our residents app may not be compatible with some smart phones
- 30% of residents making some use of the resident app
- we have exceeded 1000 social media followers across all platforms
- 70 compliments have been received over the last six months with contractors and SHS service getting the most. This has been shared with the team
- two service request pre-complaints have been received regarding time taken to resolve a shower issue and the declutter in the communal lounge at Griffiths Close.

- 4.2.2.1 Michael Payton asked if the compliments for contractors are given to them direct or to staff to be passed on. Glynis Gatenby answered that we always pass compliments direct to the contractors and ask them to pass to their teams.

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- 4.2.3 Our homes:
- repairs, maintenance and compliance performance remain strong across all areas
 - a pre-meeting was held with residents on the contract performance and monitoring group, ahead of the main meeting with the contractor, and it was agreed that the cleaning, window cleaning and grounds maintenance contracts will be extended for a further five years as performance has remained good
 - condensation / damp / mould – two new cases since the last meeting, one at Tull Street and one at Peppermint Court. Both are in hand with work still to be carried out at one. The overcrowded flat on Wandle Valley is being managed with the resident and we are in contact with London Borough of Sutton
- 4.2.3.1 Michael Payton questioned that with Peppermint Court being a reasonably new building, was the damp due to the use of the property or the construction. Michael Kilkelly said it was due to the construction, a roof leak that may be a latent defect. We have logged the complaint with the NHBC. Robin Roberts added that there are legacy issues with the builder, and we have reported this to them. We will repair and sort it out with the builder after.
- 4.2.4 Our people:
358hours of training carried out by employees. We have a target of 500 hours so are on track.
- 4.2.5 Our residents:
There are three open cases of anti-social behaviour. Of the two active cases, one is in older people housing and one in general needs. The further case is the hate crime one previously reported, which is being kept open in case of any further incidents.
- 4.3 The report includes the tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs) perception survey results. There are 12 perception questions.
- 4.3.1 The TSMs are split into two parts – tenant perception and management data. The summary of results is shown at appendix 3. We are pleased with the (almost) 55% response rate which is higher than when we carried out the STAR survey and overall, the results are similar.
- 4.3.2 The Regulator advises a mix of response methods should preferably be used. The survey results were mainly postal with a reasonable, just under 30% of residents responding online via SurveyMonkey. A low number of survey responses were carried out over the telephone or face to face which was requested by some residents. This number was kept low as many are unwilling to be negative if being asked in person.

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4.3.3 Pam Norton asked what information was asked for on the hard copy form. Glynis Gatenby confirmed that name and address was requested so that we could follow up any comments although not all gave consent for contact. Only she and Celia Dawes had seen the full responses and summary reports were given to the team. All feedback was split into repairs and housing management and where consent was given, we have responded to all. All feedback is being proactively worked on. Pam Norton agreed it was good to use different methods to gain feedback.

4.3.4 Michael Payton queried the anomaly to investigate noted against TP09, complaint made within the last 12 months. Glynis Gatenby responded that she is still to investigate but there were a higher number of people who said they were satisfied with our complaints handling, than had said they had made a complaint; this needs to be looked into.

4.4 There were no further comments or questions.

4.5 The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:

- i) note the contents of the report**
- ii) note the arrears cases exceeding £1,000**
- iii) note the TSM results for the residents' perception survey**

5 Operational update

5.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the report on the key issues over the last three months. She highlighted the following from the report:

- community engagement – line dancing sessions have increased, and the men's club celebrated their one-year anniversary with a BBQ at Norman House. Various schemes held MacMillan coffee mornings and over £700 was raised with some being donated to MacMillan and the rest to The Royal Marsden
- there were 76 events / activities held in quarter 2 with 475 residents attending (although some attend several events)
- the gardening competition had been held and prizes awarded at the AGM
- a resident from Dorothy Pettingell House won the Pat Shaw award and was overwhelmed with the win
- Sally Sinclair has started her two-year fixed term trainee property role with a personal development plan in place
- Kelly Steers has started her role as housing officer (replacement for Lauren Durand). Kelly has come to us from a large provider and has a wealth of experience. She is finding her feet, meeting residents, and visiting schemes
- Steve Smith is due to retire on 21 December and we are recruiting to his role

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5.2

Development update:

- gardening works at Norman House are progressing
- Norman House was shortlisted for a national award at the Inside Housing development awards (best supported housing development – urban). We did not win but are proud to have been shortlisted
- Ronald House development is progressing although the works are unlikely to be completed by December due to a hold up with the lift tower and residents will be updated this week
- The new bungalow at Bridges Court will probably go ahead early next year; there are some legal issues involving a vehicle at the scheme
- Due to the scale of the development at Trickett House, this development will probably be carried out in two phases, front and rear blocks. Grant is to be negotiated and works are due to commence late Spring / early Summer 2024
- Some money will be included in the budget to smarten up some communal areas at Griffiths Close, prior to the development works being carried out as this development has been delayed
- The proposed development plans at Cloverdale Court may be scaled back due to the disruption for residents, some of whom are extremely vulnerable.

5.3

Planned maintenance programme:

The programme is progressing well with lots of work currently underway at Old Brewery House which is expected to be completed in November 2023. The lounge will be starting next week.

5.4

Single equalities scheme:

We have not looked at the make-up of residents since 2017; we included an optional equalities form in with the TSM. A total of 267 completed part or all of the form with 18.5% identifying as black and / or minority ethnic and 6% identifying as bi-sexual, gay or lesbian.

5.4.1

In 2017, no residents declared themselves to be anything other than heterosexual. We have now started to promote awareness / inclusivity days and events on our digital notice boards and with the team.

5.4.2

We are also carrying out an equalities survey with Board Members and the internal team and will update the Board in due course.

5.5

Pam Norton asked if carrying out the development works at Trickett House and Griffiths Close in phases would mean less decanting of residents. Robin Roberts replied that that would not necessarily be the case. There are 49 flats at Trickett House and we are trying to minimise disruption to the residents as much as possible. There will be decants and each phase will be looked at separately. We are adding two floors to the rear block so it might be easier to move all

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residents out during the works but nothing has yet been decided. Griffiths Close will also be complicated due to the heating system from front block to back block – the design will need to be considered and there may have to be a larger number of decants, temporary boilers etc.

5.6 Pam Norton felt that what we had learnt from the Norman and Ronald House developments will be a great help. Glynis Gatenby agreed and said that some residents from Trickett House had been asking so it may be beneficial for them to see previous developments and what they can expect so we will possibly arrange visits. Pam Norton thought this would be a very good idea. Les Cox commented that he had been to Norman House and had been blown away by what could and had been done – it was “out of this world” . Les felt residents would benefit from seeing this scheme.

5.7 Pam Norton asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

5.8 The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:
i) note the contents of the report

6 Pets policy

6.1 Glynis Gatenby introduced the report which covers the outcome of the pilot survey carried out at Nairn Court.

6.2 The new renters reform bill does include a requirement on private landlords to consider requests to keep a pet (such as a dog or a cat) but this does not include social housing, including housing associations.

6.3 Nairn Court was chosen deliberately because a number of people there wanted to keep pets and were disappointed not to be allowed to keep them following the last survey. The pilot survey covered 24 homes and all residents responded. The result shows just under two thirds were not in favour of allowing pets. Other residents wanted to keep pets and some who did not want a pet of their own, felt that others should be able to keep them if they wanted.

6.4 The housing team will progress with other consultations at other sites, starting in the new calendar year.

6.5 Annette Dunningham said there would be financial implications if pets were allowed, would service charges increase? Glynis Gatenby said potentially they would (e.g. costs for emptying dog bins etc) but all this advice is given in the survey.

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- 6.6 Barbara Bransgrove asked if, under equality, diversity and inclusion guidance, is the consultation document available in other languages – how many of our residents don't speak English? Glynis Gatenby responded that there is one resident she is aware of where we regularly translate documents, plus some others, using a translation service (Clearvoice) or Google Translate. Barbara Bransgrove asked if these people have the ability to learn English. Glynis Gatenby replied not through us, but it is a requirement that people do – all people we house have to have the right to reside in the UK, so this should be available to them though other agencies.
- 6.7 Pam Norton commented that Nairn Court is a very small percentage of our residents, and the further consultations will be a larger amount of people. Glynis Gatenby said that quite a few schemes have under 25 properties so we may look at the larger schemes for responses. All schemes will be included except perhaps those subject to development.
- 6.8 Michael Payton asked what would have happened if more than 50% had said yes, would this have been approved? What is the threshold? Glynis Gatenby said that 100% of residents were given the opportunity to state their view, if more than 50% vote, the majority would win and if they voted yes, we would allow them – all the information accompanying the survey was set out for residents if they were allowed to keep pets.
- 6.9 Pam Norton stated that we could therefore have some schemes that allowed pets and some that did not. Annette Dunningham asked if the tenancy agreement would have to change. Glynis Gatenby said this would have to be looked into as she was not sure. Robin Roberts added that this position could change over time as people move in.
- 6.10 Les Cox stated that he has a fear of dogs so if their vote went in the way of allowing pets, he could not live at the scheme – would he be able to move? This is another consideration.
- 6.11 Michael Payton asked if this policy is extended to the general needs homes. Glynis Gatenby said that there are few communal areas in these properties and there are different rules for residents in our general needs homes.
- 6.12 There being no further comments, it was agreed that the current policy would remain in place until 2025 unless there was a change in legislation or following further consultations.

6.13 The Housing Operations Committee agreed to:

- i) **approve the pets policy (pending any changes to legislation or following further consultations)**

GG / cd

Item:

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7 Any other business

7.1 Jean Gardener asked about the heating in communal areas – is this thermostatically controlled? There is a radiator on the top floor at Old Brewery House that is boiling hot but the control is set at 1. Michael Kilkelly said he would arrange for a contractor to come and take a look.

MK

Date of next meeting: To be advised (subject to approval by Board on 9 November 2023)