**STRATEGIC TENANT AND RESIDENT PANEL MEETING**

Wednesday 12 January 2022

6.30pm-8.30pm

Microsoft Teams

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| MINUTES | ACTION |
| Present:  **STAR Panel Members**  Cllr Louise Mitchell (Chair) (LM)  Bert Morris (Vice Chair) (BM)  William Wood (WW)  Lesley Cartwright (LC)  Arsalan Tariq (AT)  Josie Lewis (JL)  Heather Gardiner (HG)  Juli Ozer (JO)  Iraah Wehner (IW)  **Officers**  Rob Farnham – Stock Condition Programme Manager (RF)  Julie Curtis – Strategic Finance Advisor (JC)  Rumana Akthair – Housing Engagement Officer (RA)  Charlene Santos – Housing Engagement Manager (CS)  Dennis Panter – Compliance and Assurance Manager (DP)  Jane Martin - Division Director of Housing Operations (JM)  Richard Tomkinson – Independent Mentor (Observer) (RT)  **Apologies**  Su Gomer – Divisional Director of Housing Assets  Stephen Jeffery |  |
| 1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES |  |
| LM welcomed everyone to first meeting of 2022.  RT advised he will only be attending in an observational capacity. Apologies given by Stephen Jeffery and Su Gomer. |  |
| 2. REVIEW OF LAST MEETINGS MINUTES |  |
| All actions completed and minutes agreed with no changes. |  |
| 3. DECENT HOMES STANDARD |  |
| DP advised Su Gomer was due to present but unable to attend. DP provided presentation on Decent Homes Standard to Panel. DP covered:   * + Governments current Decent Homes Standard – definitions.   + LBWF Decent Homes Standard / Sheltered   + Current Decent Homes Stats / Targets   + Current Climate   + 30 Year Investment   + SAM Surveys / Next Steps   DP offered a visit to refurbished sheltered schemes to Panel. RA to arrange.  DP advised team are working towards integrating different projects such as kitchens and bathrooms to reduce costs and improve resident experience.  DP advised SAM stands for Strategic Asset Management surveys. Team have identified the need for better data on our stock and due to begin a large programme of surveys. The surveys will look at all aspects of the property not just stock condition.  LM requested clarity for panel on EPC acronym. DP confirmed EPC stands for Energy Performance Certificate. LM advised EPCs are a way of measuring energy efficiency of a property and that all properties are required to have an EPC. LM reminded members that the ecoshow home they visited initially had a rating of C and the extra measures installed had brought this up to an A, the highest standard.  DP advised scope of new building safety legislations could be extended to include 11m+ or complex buildings.  DP also advised that the team did not yet have an update from Government on what the new Decent Homes Standard would entail.  JL asked who would be carrying out the SAM surveys and will residents have input into the survey. DP advised MSPS are delivering it. Surveyor will be inside homes and will take into consideration residents views. However, the feedback will need to be evaluated.  AT asked when SAMS TMO will have surveys carried out considering Friday Hill TMO properties are being done. RF advised that WF has always managed the repairs service for SAMS TMO so have a better understanding of the stock conditions. Friday Hill used to manage their own properties but this service has now come back in house. CG advised some of our work programmes are based on historical information we already have on record. There will be some properties from SAMS TMO which will be due for new kitchens or bathrooms. Voids are also used as an opportunity to update the properties if needed.  WW asked how decent homes works are being combined with climate action. LM asked if there is scope to encompass environmental issues such as cooling homes when carrying out decent homes works.  DP advised that a new set of building regulations are being tabled which address climate issues. Major works will need to take these into consideration. CG gave an example of John Walsh and Fred Wigg Towers where the roof needs replacing. The replacement roof will be of the highest grade to provide maximum insulation. Loft spaces are also being upgraded where we are carrying out works on a property.  CG advised that new builds which would be managed by Waltham Forest Council are also addressing climate issues at the time of build.  RF advised that if even one aspect of the decent homes requirements is not up to standard, the whole property fails until it is rectified.  HG asked what definition of warm was being used. LM asked if this was specified in legislation. DP advised the requirements are flexible as there are different needs for each room. The complex calculations used provide a temperature ranges from 18-22°C.  WW asked if leasehold properties are included where LBWF are responsible for certain features. DP confirmed leasehold properties are excluded from the figures. LM asked if the decision to exclude leasehold properties was made by LBWF or across the board. RF confirmed all providers exclude leasehold properties as they are not responsible for making them decent.  IW asked for clarity on areas where there is a shared responsibility. i.e. where leaseholders are responsible for the window glass and LBWF for the frame. Where are the stats captured and how is this funded?  RA to follow up and provide further detail.  IW suggested more detail needs to be provided in leaseholder packs and on the website.  AT asked what the cut off point for leaseholders was for residents going through the right to buy process.  RF advised that when a tenant puts in a right to buy application, the property is removed from the workplan. If the application is withdrawn, the property will go back on the programme.  RA to follow up with leaseholder services and provide further clarification.  AT requested a schedule of work for SAMS TMO. RF to provide.  BM raised queries regarding flammable cladding. BM asked what our current position is in relation to flammable cladding in comparison to other boroughs. LM advised legislation is still going through parliament. It currently encompasses buildings over 18m but is likely to bring more buildings into scope. There are 14 buildings owned by LBWF above 18m and approximately the same number are owned by Housing Associations. There are also 12 privately owned blocks in the borough. None of the blocks have the same type of ACM cladding as Grenfell Tower. In comparison, Camden, has over 200 blocks that meet the 18m definition. There has been significant pressure from the public around fire safety issues which are not just about cladding and new standards are being set. For example, sprinkler systems in tower blocks were not previously a requirement. Approximately £40m will be spent over the next 4-5 years to bring tower blocks up to the new standard. Fire risk assessments have been carried out in conjunction with the London Fire Brigade and all necessary works are scheduled and planned for.  AT was pleased to hear about the small number of buildings compared to other boroughs. AT asked what LBWF is doing to resolve repair issues involving leaseholders who wont give access e.g. when there is a leak caused by a leasehold property above. CG advised that a flexible approach is taken. We are not responsible for repairs when damage is caused by the resident. Forced entry is avoided as much as possible and we do not have the same legal rights as with gas safety.  RT suggested that STAR could potentially look at engagement/comms on helping staff gain access to properties. | RA  RA  RA  RF |
| 4. HRA RENTS AND SERVICE CHARGES |  |
| JC provided presentation on WF proposals on HRA Rents and Service charges for the upcoming year. Housing Rent Accounts budget for the next financial year has been formed and approved by cabinet in December. There were no alternative proposals.  LM requested clarity on CPI acronym for members. JC advised CPI stands for Consumer Price Index. This is a measure of inflation set by the Government.  AT requested clarity on waking watch costs. JL advised waking watch is a fire warden service provided to our high rise blocks. LM advised waking watch are temporary measures on 14 high rise blocks providing 24/7 cover. These measures will be removed once works are carried out to bring blocks up to the new building safety standard. JC advised the amount budgeted is the maximum we will be expected to spend.  JC advised proposals will be introduced on 4 April 2022.  JC noted the pie chart in her presentation was incorrect and agreed to circulate updated report following morning.  BM stated that Universal Credit (UC) is creating difficulties for residents and asked what consideration has been taken when creating budgets. JC advised we are monitoring arrears on a quarterly basis and monitoring trends in arears. Currently we are not seeing the level of arears we were expecting which is positive.  LM advised the main issue we’ve found related to UC was on the initial 4 week delay. The rents team work with residents to slowly chip away at the debt and maximise their income.  HG queried whether the capital investment budget was only for existing properties. JC advised this is the total capital investment, approx. 50% for existing stock and the remaining for climate change, new builds and estate regeneration. JC advised priority goes to existing stock.  HG did not feel it was fair for tenants rent to pay for new builds. JC explained that rental income eventually covers the cost of building and creates additional fund. Rules on council tax also prevent us to build new homes with the funding. HG asked if leaseholder service charges are included in the HRA. JC advised service charges do come into the HRA but these are calculated at cost recovery by the homeownership team.  AT queried what bad debt is and how it is calculated. JC explained bad debt is rent arrears we are unlikely to get back. This is calculated using the level of arrears on each account and the risk associated with the debt. Risk factors such as age of arrears (older arrears are higher risk) and tenure (current tenants are lower risk than former tenants) are used to calculate bad debt. Since the beginning of the pandemic, these calculations have been carried out more often.  AT queried why rents are being increased to the maximum allowed. LM explained CPI happens to be quite high in September. Although the maximum rent increase has been portrayed as a choice, it is not reasonable to avoid the increase. Council rents are much lower than even the London Housing Allowance and particularly the market rent. The Council needs to maximise its income to continue investing in existing stock, build new homes and carry out necessary building safety work. JC explained that alongside the increased CPI, RPI (retail price index) has also increased significantly meaning the cost of materials etc has also increased. LBWF attracts funding from the GLA (Greater London Authority) to build new homes. If we are not maximising our income, they will question our need for the funding. JC also advised that if rent is not increased in one year, the increase is lost from the base in following years.  JC also asked members to note that LBWF only charges social rent on all properties whereas other councils do charge affordable rent on some new builds.  LM explained that LBWF needs to balance the cost of a small additional charge to residents against how much it would cost the Council in the long run because there is a deficit in funding for building new homes and maintaining existing stock. | JC |
| 5. AOB |  |
| LM requested non urgent AOB items be discussed via basecamp due to timing.  IW advised that members have requested increasing the number of STAR panel meetings previously and this has been raised again by new members. IW suggest that we need to look at the question and see if we can increase meetings or agree a better ways of sharing info.  CS advised she will be in touch with Panel to discuss how we can improve format the meetings and share info between meetings.  IW requested an update on legal position with Osbornes.  IW requested an update on the leaseholder forum.  IW requested a breakdown of impact to WF that the new measures of building safety legislation will have.  WW noted there were an increasing number of empty properties in the area including two near him and a few he had heard of on Valentin Road. | CS  RA  RA  RA  RA |
| 6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING |  |
| Next meeting scheduled for Wednesday 6 April 2022. |  |