**STRATEGIC TENANT AND RESIDENTS’ PANEL MEETING**

Wednesday 18th October 2023

6.30pm - 8.30pm

Walthamstow Town Hall (Innovation Room) – Hybrid

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| MINUTES | ACTION |
| Present:  **STAR Panel Members**  Bert Morris (Chair) (BM)  Arsalan Tariq (AT)  Josie Lewis (JL)  Heather Gardiner (HG)  Linda Cambridge (LC)  **Officers**  Shahid Mallam – Head of Insight and Engagement (SM)  Yasmin White – Housing Engagement Manager (YW)  Masuma Begum – Housing Engagement Officer (MB)  Richard Tomkinson – Independent Mentor (RT)  Eoin Quiery ­ – Head of Housing Strategy (EQ)  Natali McPherson – Senior Finance Manager (NMcP)  Natalie Gasper – Strategic Finance Advisor (NG)  Apologies:  Cllr Ahsan Khan, Jane Martin, John Lowe,  William Wood, Hajah Fofanah,  Lesley Cartwright, Juli Ozer |  |
| 1. **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS** |  |
| BM opened meeting and invited everyone to introduce themselves.  Apologies were noted as above.  Change of rooms due to last minute IT issues at WAH Green Room. |  |
| 1. **MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING** |  |
| SM: Encouraged all members to review and provide comments on the new Consumer Standards consultation, details are on Basecamp. Ground Maintenance Service Schedules are uploaded on Basecamp for members to review.  YW: Tenant Training Programme also shared on Basecamp.  RT: ‘Holding your landlord to account’ could not take place due to low numbers. |  |
| **3.** **STAR PANEL ELECTION OF CHAIR** |  |
| RT advised there were not enough members present to achieve a quorum for decisions and the Chair election today. 6 members of STAR Panel are required to be present - 1 member short.  Members interested in the Chair position, to write a statement ‘what I can bring to the Chair’s position ’ and then run it via Basecamp.  AT stated he would like more decision making to take place on STAR meetings. | Members interested in standing for Chair to provide short para. on reasons why they wish to be Chair. |
| 1. **HOUSING SERVICE PERFORMANCE – STAR/TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES.**   **NEW REPAIRS SERVICE STANDARD** |  |
| EQ opened his agenda item by reporting that LBWF welcome the new housing regulation to enhance tenants’ voices.  Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) have been introduced and all social landlords must use the same set of questions.  TSM data was presented using a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) measure to show our own performance, and benchmark our performance against other London Boroughs where data was available.  Performance is obtained via surveys from residents. Surveys are sent to a representative sample and are independently collated through a company called K-West. Overall satisfaction with WF as a landlord was 64%. It was noted that online surveys always score lower. Telephone surveys score better as residents can ask questions or raise queries. 74% of residents said they felt their home was safe and well maintained.  HG (Question): Does quarter equal Quartile?  RT (Answer): No. It’s easier to interpret the figures as three main quartiles – lower, middle (or median) and upper. A quartile is the position that our satisfaction levels are at based on the data set. The lower quartile for a dataset is the value such that 25%. The upper quartile for a dataset is the value such that 75%.  AT (Question): Why don’t K-West send findings directly to Housemark or Regulator? Is the data compiled by K-West or WF?  RT The requirement and responsibility is for local authorities/housing providers to collect the data and then submit their returns to the regulator.  K-West independently undertake the surveys and then present the findings back to WF.  AT Do you have the raw data, and can it be shared with residents?    Eoin agreed that he would look at this and let STAR know if raw data was in a format that could be shared.  AT Better to get primary source of data.  EQ Approx. 200 residents are surveyed each quarter.  AT: Comparison with other councils is not always helpful, we want to focus on our own performance. Just because performance in a particular area is poor for everyone does not make it ok. We want to see true reflection of WF data.  HG: Is benchmarking voluntary?  EQ: No but it can be useful to identify learning/best practice.  RT: The value of benchmarking is to see what others are doing to improve. For example, building safety checks have gone from 5 years to 1 year, impacting performance,  AT: Is there anything on Damp and mould?  EQ: Not in the TSMs  It was commented that complaints from residents are low as reporting on the website is difficult.  TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURE  There is a new Service Standards for repairs. New service standards must be user friendly. This covers emergency repairs, critical repairs and responsive repairs.  AT (Question): Regarding TMOs:     1. How is information on the website going to direct residents of the TMOs (for example telephone numbers on website)? 2. What if there’s multi departments responsible for a repair, how will they distinguish?     The new Service Standard will be in the Residents’ newsletter and will go live on the website.  To address this issue it is proposed that a line be added to the service standard saying ‘What if my home is managed by a TMO?’  A link will then take the resident to a dedicated TMO page with the following info:  Tenant Management Organisations (TMOs) are responsible for most routine repairs carried out within the properties they manage. Should you wish to report a repair, in the first instance please contact:  *FHTMO –* [*info@fridayhilltmo.org.uk*](mailto:info@fridayhilltmo.org.uk) *or 020 8523 9433*  *SAMS -* [*sams.tmo.assistant@gmail.com*](mailto:sams.tmo.assistant@gmail.com) *or 0208 926 8944*  *For out of hours repairs, residents should call:*  *Friday Hill TMO - 07920 475287*  *SAMS TMO – (awaiting confirmation)*  If a repair relates to gas, such as gas central heating, this should be referred to Aston Group. You can contact Astons by calling 020 8496 4197 option 4 for housing then 1 for repairs then 2 for heating and gas.  Larger repairs including Door Entry Systems, Parking improvements, Roof Renewals and similar are classed as Major Works and are the responsibility of Waltham Forest Council. The TMOs can make recommendations to Waltham Forest of suggested works and so residents can present their suggestions to the TMO to share.  Once agreed with TMOs website will be updated. | Upload definition of quartile on Basecamp.  EQ  EQ |
| 1. **HRA (HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT) RENT AND SERVICE CHARGE SETTING (NATALIE MCPHERSON)** |  |
| This presentation gives a brief financial account of the Housing Revenue Account and its relationship with the overarching business plan.  LBWF is fully aware of and understands resident’s financial challenges. Other pressures include the extreme high costs in sector, of energy and repairs. All of which are adding pressure to HRA.  Bank of England interest rate increase has also led to increased borrowing costs.  New challenges coming up – rent policy due to end next year.  There is no certainty on future policy or if social rents will be capped.  Construction industry -contractors rephasing works due to rising costs. This has an impact on us investing in the stock and meeting residents’ priorities. An in-depth review of the HRA will be conducted in January 2024.  BM: Are we not in a safe position? e.g., Bankruptcy.  NG: WF have very good financial policies. This is why a thorough review of the business plan is taking place.  AT (Question): How does this differ from the Housing Strategy?  NG (answer): Last Business Plan was published in February. Housing Strategy is higher level. It’s about the organisation’s plans to tackle key priorities such as homelessness and the housing crisis. The Business Plan is about financial matters.  AT (Question): Are rents increasing?  NG (Answer): In 2023 it was capped at 7%. Yes, it is likely to increase with inflation.  AT: Normally with the Rent Policy, it is a 5-year review.  NG: Regulators set the review plan. The business plan looks at expenditure to finalise it.  RT: The reason for need to review because CPI was 10.1% last year and unless the Government is clear about rent policy, rents will increase significantly.  AT (Question): When is guidance (from the government regarding the rent policy for 2024/25) coming out?  NG: Probably in the next couple of weeks.  **Action**  Given your priorities, what do you want to see improved from the HRA. You can send any suggestions in later.  RT: The Asset Team can share the data on programme?  NG: Will provide that.  AT: We need accurate figures to scrutinise.  Where is the rents money is going, needs to be made clear. How is the relationship between income and expenditure?  BM (Question): When will the council publish guidance about rents?  NG (Answer): following the cabinet decision which is scheduled for 22nd February 2024. | All STAR Panel Members |
| 1. **HOUSING COMMISSION UPDATE** |  |
| EQ: WF can be proud due to delivery of the highest percentage of affordable homes.  Cllr Khan says, “A good home is the foundation for a good life”.  The Housing Commission produced 27 recommendations which are helping to develop and inform the new Housing Strategy. The Social Housing waiting list so long and what we can do to support people in the Private Rent Sector or are overcrowded will be covered.  Some recommendations were:   * Respond proactively. * Take action. * Prioritise vulnerable residents-prevent Homelessness. * Have a bold solution.     Approach to HS  We held focus groups engaging with around 300 residents.  Findings:   * We have audio recordings and need permission to share. However, there are clearly lots of challenges from across all tenures. * We are exploring the use of the term “affordable” as affordability is subjective. * It is clear that housing has an effect on mental health and wellbeing. * Some respondents reported feeling stigma due to living in Social Housing. Private Rent Sector treated differently. Residents in tower blocks feel they are not treated fairly or respectfully. * Trying to prevent rough sleeping was a priority.   Timeline:   * The Housing Strategy went to Scrutiny. * Cabinet in January will consider the full Housing Strategy.   HG: What about paying discretionary Housing Benefit? This provides some money to assist keeping someone in their home.  DHP is a finite amount of grant issued to LAs by Gov. Only certain cases qualify, and it may only be for a set period.  AT (Question): Thanks Eoin for presenting slides. What do STAR Panel regard as “Affordable Housing”?  LC: A fair percentage of your earnings/income.  BM: Is it for purchasing a house?  HG: It is not affordable in both rent or purchasing.  EQ: This is due to cost-of-living crisis.  HG: When schemes build part rent/part buy, local residents get priority but may not be able to afford to take up the offer.  AT: Actual Affordable housing means WF is no longer affordable.  HG:1/3 of rent for Housing  LC: Any engagement with families and children - Housing has impact. |  |
| 1. **A.O.B** |  |
| SM: Richard was wished well and thanked for all his hard work. RT signs off in November.  YW: We are recruiting for STAR Panel/Scrutiny and would appreciate if members can give a short testimonial about their personal experience of a being a member and what they get out of it.  **Action:**  MB to collect testimonials for members via email.  BM: Good Luck to the new Chair. Want to see STAR successful and more results from ‘Holding your Landlord Accountable’.  SM: Finalise timescale for Josie and the STAR Panel to receive the scrutiny report for Repairs.  AT: RT been helpful keeping us on track, reminding the ToR. Anyone in mind for new mentor?  SM: YW will have a think urgently.  AT: Independent mentor works better. | All STAR Panel Members  MB |
| 1. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING AND CLOSE** |  |
| Wednesday 7th February 2024 |  |