



Notes of Meeting			
Subject:	Tenant and Leaseholder Committee		
Date:	31st March 2022	Time: 6:30pm	7:55pm
Location:	MS Teams		
Attendees:	<p>Chair – Cllr Isy Imarni</p> <p>Staff – Jenny Dickerson (JD Improvement & Engagement Officer), Daniel French (DF Improvement & Engagement Co-ordinator), Cllr Margaret Griffiths (Portfolio Holder), Cllr Gbola Adeleke (Vice chair Overview and Scrutiny Committee), Ada Terry (Improvement & Engagement Team Leader), Oliver Jackson (Group Manager – Tenants & Leaseholders)</p> <p>Committee members – Andrea Maloney (AM), Paulette Reed (PR), Max Sengul (MS), Mavis Cook (MCoo), Tracey Halls (TH), Mutsa Cornish (MCor), Charlotte Palmer (CP), Michelle Mitchell (MM)</p> <p>Apologies – Andy Forbes</p>		

Item	Subject	Actionee
1	Welcome, introductions, resignations and apologies.	Chair
	<p>Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Chair – Unfortunately Nicola Skidmore has resigned from the TLC. We have apologies from Andy Forbes.</p> <p>There were no outstanding actions on the minutes from the last meeting.</p>	
2	Outcomes of the Housing Service Review	OJ
	<p>OJ – I am here today in place of Fiona Williamson, to speak about our Housing Service Action Plan. In response to some key legislation that is coming into the housing sector, it was felt that a review of our housing service was needed. We need to make sure we are efficient enough, that we can respond to key challenges, we have got the right approach with tenants and leaseholders, and that our teams are fit for purpose. We should always ensure that we provide the high level of service that we strive to provide.</p> <p>The review was carried out by a consultant that worked very closely with all teams within housing. The review was very thorough and it involved a lot of engagement with managers, officers and residents so that he could understand how we were</p>	

	<p>performing. They did identify some positive areas, but also some areas where we can develop.</p> <p>The action plan is varied in terms of some of the areas of improvement that have been highlighted. The review is pushing us as teams and challenging a lot of the practises that we have had in place for a number of years. We are starting to see the benefits of this review already, as there are some quick-wins in there, but there are also some longer-term complex areas in there.</p> <p>The action plan has been endorsed across the organisation from our Members and Senior Leadership Team. I am happy to take any questions that the committee has.</p> <p>PR – On the first page, it says that you will establish a council-owned Housing Development Company, including a social lettings arm. What are the reasons for setting up a housing development company, and what effect will that have on the way we do things now?</p> <p>CIlr MG – The Housing Development Company is a way for us to develop, rent or sell a property outside the social housing sphere. In other words, any money we make can be used to partially-fund council tax. We could build flats and houses and then rent them out at standard market rent. It will give more income to council tax and keep the council tax down. It will also enable us to stop cutting services, and start enhancing them.</p> <p>PR – One of the actions is to review the terms of reference for the Housing Review Panel. Are tenants represented on this review panel?</p> <p>OJ – The Housing Review Panel is an internal meeting that takes place every Thursday. It is to consider cases that sit outside of our Allocations Policy. Sometimes we have complex cases where a social and welfare aspect needs to be considered.</p> <p>There are representatives from across the housing team on the panel, and decisions are made at that stage as to what the outcome of the case is going to be. Tenants aren't involved in that, because we talk about a lot sensitive tenant-related case information. Quite often there can be safeguarding issues discussed there, or complex needs cases.</p> <p>PR – Natural England have put something in place, where there can be no new developments within 12.6km of the Ashridge Estate. If you want to build houses, or extensions then you are not allowed to do it. Their authority is higher than the council's authority. What effect is this going to have on our house building that we are very proud of?</p>	
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	<p>CIlr MG – Everything that you have just said is totally correct, Natural England have overriding power over everything. Planning permission is not allowed to be granted in Dacorum at the moment.</p> <p>The National Trust will be implementing a mitigation strategy in the next three months, but if Natural England are still not happy with it then we still cannot grant any planning permission. The £40million that we were planning to spend on social housing this year, is on hold because we can't get any planning permission. It's quite serious and has brought the whole thing to a grinding halt. We have now also got to incorporate more leisure land, to encourage people away from Ashridge.</p> <p>MCor – You said that the consultant engaged with residents when completing the review. What feedback did he get from the community?</p> <p>OJ – It was quite mixed to be fair. Focus groups were held with tenants, and there were comments made about how much time our officers were spending out in the community. They want our officers to be more visible on estates, and developing a closer relationship with our tenants. They want to know who to speak to when they have got a particular concern.</p> <p>There was also some feedback about the cleaning of our communal areas. There were some examples where people have received a great service, but also there were some comments that would not support that. Cleaning was highlighted as having a big impact on tenants. We know that our tenants and leaseholders take good care of our properties, and they want to live in an environment where they can welcome friends and family.</p> <p>Estate inspections are also key, as people want to see regular inspections carried out by us. They want us to look at grounds maintenance, fly-tipping and communal repairs more proactively.</p> <p>MCor – Thank you. I was just wondering because it sometimes feels as if the officers are out of touch with the tenants. If you try to call the council offices, everything is so automated and you can be on hold for fifteen minutes just to be directed to somebody else. Sometimes you don't speak to somebody at all. It feels like the distance between the officers and tenants is getting wider and wider.</p> <p>OJ – That's a really fair point, and it is something we are aware of. As an organisation, we have been looking at the customer journey to try and make it easier for tenants to speak to us. A lot of emphasis is going to be put onto customer services, so that we can improve the way we are talking to you.</p> <p>MM – I am a bit concerned we are doing lots of things like Block Champions but for general tenants to pick up the phone and get</p>	
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	<p>answers to questions, it is very difficult. Timescales are in place for officers to get back to tenants, but that doesn't happen. When you pick up the phone, you get through to an automated service. We need to start getting the basics right, before rolling out other initiatives like Block Champions.</p> <p>OJ – Thank you, that's really well put. Let's get the basics right first, I couldn't agree more. We are focusing on getting the basics right, we are not quite there yet but things are starting to improve.</p>	
3	Housing Service Standard	AT & OJ
	<p>AT – We are going to be reviewing and refreshing a document we have called 'Our House – Your Home'. This is our service standard and outlines what tenants can expect from us, as a housing service. It also goes into some of the things that tenants can do to help us, in terms of managing their tenancy.</p> <p>It sits alongside their tenancy agreement, with a bit more detail. We have aligned it with some of the recent legislation that has come out, such as the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer standard. 'Our House – Your Home' will also align with the white paper, the charter for social housing residents, the Tpas standards and the Chartered Institute of Housing professional standards.</p> <p>Many of you have been in touch with me to give feedback that you would like to see some alternative wording. You have come up with some good suggestions, so I'd like to run a poll to see which ones you like best.</p> <p>OJ – This ties into us looking at how we behave as an organisation. It is really critical that we aim for a level of professionalism that is recognised throughout the industry. Professional is not just about having members of staff and teams that are high performing and efficient, it's also about treating situations sensitively and treating our customers and tenants with empathy. We really want to see that engrained throughout our teams.</p> <p>This is a commitment and it's something you can hold us accountable too. It's a really important document and I like the work Ada and her team have done on it so far.</p> <p>AT shared the following poll:</p> <p>Which wording do you prefer?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In return we ask that you... (two votes) 2. What you can do to help is... (one vote) 3. We invite you to... (five votes) 4. We encourage you to... (one vote) <p>MS – I am personally delighted that you are taking a different approach towards engaging with tenants and leaseholders, to</p>	

	<p>improve some of the procedures and processes. For a long time, I have been critical of the processes. In my opinion a lot of the procedures are outdated, and I am pleased to see that this is being tackled in the way that it is by engaging with people.</p> <p>MCoo – Looking at the content, I feel that there is some repetition in some places. I think it may need streamlining so that it is not as long and just picks up the main points that you want to make.</p>	
4	Recommendation Register & Action Register	JD
	JD – There are no updates on the action register.	
5	Close / AOB	Chair
	Next meeting is on Thursday 26 th May 2022 in The Forum.	