



<b>Notes of Meeting</b>			
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Tenant and Leaseholder Committee</b>		
<b>Date:</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> September 2022	Time: 6:30pm	8:00pm
<b>Location:</b>	<b>MS Teams</b>		
<b>Attendees:</b>	<p><b>Chair</b> – Paul McMahon</p> <p><b>Staff</b> – Cllr Margaret Griffiths (Portfolio-Holder), Jenny Dickerson (Improvement &amp; Engagement Officer), Daniel French (Improvement &amp; Engagement Co-ordinator), Cllr Gbola Adeleke (Vice-Chair Overview &amp; Scrutiny Committee), Ada Terry (Improvement &amp; Engagement Team Leader), Oliver Jackson (Head of Housing Management)</p> <p><b>Committee members</b> – Mutsa Cornish, Tracey Halls, Max Sengul, Andrea Maloney</p> <p><b>Apologies</b> – Cllr Isy Imarni, Mavis Cook, Paulette Reed, Michelle Mitchell, Charlotte Palmer, Andy Forbes</p>		

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<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome, apologies and notes from the last meeting.</b>	<b>Chair</b>
	<p><b>Chair</b> welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>Apologies from Cllr Isy Imarni, Mavis Cook, Paulette Reed, Michelle Mitchell, Charlotte Palmer &amp; Andy Forbes.</p> <p>Everyone agreed that the minutes from the last meeting were an accurate record.</p> <p><b>OJ &amp; Chair</b> introduced themselves to the rest of the group.</p>	
<b>2</b>	<b>HTIP Update on Service Charges</b>	<b>OJ</b>
	<p><b>OJ</b> – Our tenants and leaseholders who live in blocks of flats or somewhere with communal areas receive service charges. For our tenants, this information is included within their tenancy agreement. For our leaseholders, the information is included within their lease agreement.</p> <p>We are at the very early stages of reviewing our approach to service charges. We will be reviewing which teams should be involved in the service charge process, how we accurately calculate service charges and we will also be looking at the standard of services provided to our blocks. Also, we will be reviewing the systems that we use and how we use the data that we have.</p>	

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	<p>We are at the very start of this process, and it is likely to be a lengthy process because we know we have a lot of work to do. We intend to work closely with the Tenant &amp; Leaseholder Committee and our other involved groups so we can look at any issues we identify as part of the process.</p> <p>We want our tenants and leaseholders to know exactly what they are paying for. I would like to know about your experiences with service charges, if you have had any. I would also like to know if you can identify any issues that we may come up against in relation to service charges.</p> <p><b>MS</b> – I noticed that the paperwork mentions a register of proposed works. As a leaseholder, I have had problems with section 20 notices where the correct procedures were not followed. I am keen to find out if you have a register of proposed works that includes information such as timeframes, not just for tenants but also for leaseholders.</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – We have a register of cyclical works that are carried out in communal areas, but that is definitely an area that we need to do some work on. We are in the process of carrying out stock condition surveys that will help to create a register of proposed works.</p> <p><b>MS</b> – Will that be shared publically so that people can track what is happening and when it is happening? I would like to know what work is coming my way, as a leaseholder.</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – We know that there have been some times when tenants and leaseholders have not been given enough notice, when we are carrying out work.</p> <p><b>AT</b> – This is also something that we have learned from the STAR survey. Many leaseholders have been asking for a forward plan, so you are not alone. It is definitely an aspiration of ours to have a forward plan that tenants and leaseholders can access.</p> <p><b>JD</b> – In previous meetings, Fiona spoke about getting that information onto the MyDacorum portal. Is this something that can be done?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> - That is certainly our aspiration because it is easy accessible and available to all, but we are not there yet.</p> <p><b>PM</b> – Is MyDacorum the only form of communication that can be used or can other forms be looked at?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – It is not the only form of communication that can be used. We recognise that logging onto MyDacorum works for a lot of</p>	

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	<p>people, but not for everyone. We will also be looking at other ways to communicate this.</p> <p><b>TH</b> – What is currently on the cyclical list, and will you be looking to expand it?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – I am not sure if the cyclical list will be expanded, and what is on the cyclical list depends on the area and the block that you live in. We can definitely find that out for you.</p> <p><b>AT</b> – They are also waiting for the outcome of the stock condition survey, as the cyclical list will probably change because of this. What is on there now, could change depending on the outcome of the survey.</p> <p><b>TH</b> – Have they already started the stock condition survey?</p> <p><b>AT</b> – Yes, it is already in the process.</p> <p><b>MS</b> – What IT system are you currently using for this?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – Currently we use a housing management system called Orchard, which is run by a company called MRI. It has a module called Asset Pro which is where the stock condition survey results are entered.</p>	
<b>3</b>	<b>Estate Inspections</b>	<b>OJ</b>
	<p><b>OJ</b> – We are reintroducing estate inspections from our housing service. The estate inspections will consist of a schedule of visits to all areas of the borough. They will be carried out on either a monthly or quarterly basis depending on the area. They will start off as monthly visits, but some areas do not have many real issues so they may become quarterly. The estate inspections will look at the communal areas of our blocks, the outside areas, the recycling points, the bin areas and the grounds maintenance.</p> <p>They will be carried out by our Tenancy Management team who have been briefed on the remit of these estate inspections. This is not something new, and we have done them in the past but they will be different this time because they are reoccurring estate inspections that will be fairly frequent. We have already met with teams across the council who we will be in contact with quite a lot, such as Clean, Safe &amp; Green, Waste Services, Garages, Cleaning &amp; Tenancy Enforcement.</p> <p>Officers be wearing high-visibility jackets during these inspections, and they will be logging any jobs they find. They are starting next week because we feel there is an urgent need to start spending more time in our communities and building a better relationship with our residents. We don't want this to be a tick box exercise and we hope that it will offer real benefits to local people in terms of</p>	

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	<p>identifying any problems early on. We hope that this will generally improve the look and feel of the estates within our borough.</p> <p><b>TH</b> – Was it due to COVID-19 that the estate inspections stopped, or did they stop prior to that for some other reason?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – We have been carrying out estate inspections but it has been on an ad hoc basis when there has been a need to go out to an estate. It was more reactionary than proactive. The view is that by having the regular schedule, we can help to reduce the issues that some people are experiencing.</p> <p><b>MS</b> – I like the idea of Block Champions being involved in estate inspections. It might be useful to have the Block Champions liaising with the Tenancy Management Officer for that area who will be carrying out the estate inspections. This will create a direct channel of communication and they could work together.</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – I think that’s a really good suggestion. The Tenancy Management Officer will have a dedicated geographical patch and we hope they can build a relationship with any Block Champions.</p> <p><b>MC</b> – Are the inspections scheduled for residents or are they just randomly carried out?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – It is going to be cyclical on a monthly basis for most areas. In terms of communication, eventually we would like to advertise when the estate inspections will be happening. We don’t just want to be walking around with a clipboard, we want our residents to come out and talk to us because some issues they are experiencing may not always be visible.</p> <p><b>CIlr GA</b> – It would be good to have a timetable published for local councillors.</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – That is certainly a suggestion we can take forward.</p> <p><b>AM</b> – Are these inspections just going to look at the blocks, or all of housing?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – We will look at the whole of our housing stock. Originally, we were just going to look at our blocks but we have communities where there are no blocks of flats that experience very similar issues.</p> <p><b>AM</b> – If you can alert the residents that there will be an inspection, some of us will be able to help and let you know what the problems are to ensure that nothing is missed.</p>	

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	<p><b>OJ</b> – The people who live in those areas will have a better understanding of the issues that they are facing. We will definitely look at how we can work with local residents.</p> <p><b>Cllr MG</b> – I think this a great initiative and I have always valued estate inspections. I like the idea that they will be regular. I think it's important that you get councillors involved because they will have knowledge of their wards and be able to discuss the queries they are getting.</p> <p><b>JD</b> – I know that you mentioned having Clean, Safe &amp; Green on board and we have trouble with rubbish being dumped in the borough. Will we be dealing with the rubbish during the inspections? That may encourage more people to dump things, if they know the rubbish will get removed quickly.</p> <p><b>Cllr MG</b> – We also have Street Champions, who generally do litter picking in a given area. It is a growing band of people, and you don't need to be a tenant or a leaseholder. It would be great if we could get them involved somehow.</p> <p><b>PM</b> – In relation to fly-tipping, there are certain people in the borough who might work out your timetable, and will exploit it. They might fly-tip more, if they know that the rubbish will be removed on a certain date.</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – That is a really good point, if we keep going back to the same place each month and cleaning up rubbish on a certain date, we may have some issues.</p>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Community Alarm Monitoring Options</b>	<b>OJ</b>
	<p><b>OJ</b> – Community alarms are a range of alarms that individuals can have to help them call for assistance and reassurance whenever they need it. They are fitted throughout our supported housing stock and there are also some people who live outside of our supported housing properties who also use this service. When somebody activates their alarm, it goes through to a control centre which is operated 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.</p> <p>Currently, we contract this service out externally with Tunstall Healthcare who are one of the market leaders in community alarms. The original contract has expired but we have extended it to buy ourselves some time so that we can understand what the available options are.</p> <p>There are two clear options, and the first option is to look at whether it is feasible to bring that service back in-house and provide the service ourselves. The second option is to continue with our current approach and contract externally to a recognised provider of those specialist services.</p>	

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	<p>The supported housing team have carried out a number of exercises to understand the pros and cons of each option. They have carried out an extensive benchmarking exercise with other local authorities. They have also spoken with different contractors and private companies to understand what benefits are on offer from the market.</p> <p><b>TH</b> – I remember when it was in-house, and to me there isn't a lot of difference in the service. If you bring it in-house and you run it as well as you did in the past, then there shouldn't be any problems.</p> <p><b>MS</b> – I think you also need to look at the price element. What will the cost be if you run the service in-house, compared to using an external contractor?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – The current contract is based on the number of connections that we have on an annual basis. At the moment, the contract price is £75,000 per year, but that fluctuates depending on the amount of connections that we have. It's not a hugely expensive contract, but there is still a cost. To give some context on the amount of calls generated to them on a monthly basis, it can range from 2,500 to 4,500 calls. It is quite a high volume of traffic that goes to the current monitoring centre.</p> <p><b>MS</b> – I think you also need to weigh up the cost of employing members of staff internally, in comparison to the £75,000.</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – For the local authorities that do run it in-house, there are quite high initial setup costs because the equipment needs to be digital. This is partly why the decision was made to use a contractor previously, instead of running the service in-house.</p> <p><b>TH</b> – Do you charge the tenants for this service? I believe they pay a fee as part of their service charge that should cover the cost.</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – For people who don't live in supported housing, they pay a fee of around £3.30 per week. For people who live in supported housing, this is covered by the supporting people charge that comes with the property.</p> <p><b>MS</b> – What do the community alarm units cost?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – The new units are £200. The prices have increased because they are now digital.</p> <p><b>JD</b> – Do we own those units or are they rented from Tunstall?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – We have purchased them, and they are essentially rented out to the individual that needs them.</p>	

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	<p><b>CIlr GA</b> – When you receive out of hours calls, will staff go out in the night?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – DBC staff have not visited tenants out of hours for a number of years. The service will alert emergency services or their next of kin if they need help.</p> <p><b>MC</b> – It sounds like the current contract is working well, and sounds as if it is priced reasonably. Why change something that is working?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – We are in this position because the contract is coming to an end, so we just want to take a look at all of our available options.</p> <p><b>JD</b> – If we were to bring the service in-house, how many staff do you think we will need to operate the system efficiently?</p> <p><b>OJ</b> – This is being mapped out at the moment. It needs to be a 24 hour service that covers sickness and absence. There are particular times of the day where there are usually spikes in calls, so we will need more staff during those hours. We have this data from Tunstall, and they have been good in providing us with the information that we need to make an informed decision.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<b>Close / AOB</b>	<b>Chair</b>
	<p><b>AM</b> – What is the latest update on renewable energy? Is this something you are looking at as a council?</p> <p><b>DF</b> – If this is something you are interested in, then the Climate Action Network at DBC are running a conference and networking event on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022. For more information about this, you can visit the <a href="#">Dacorum Climate Action Network</a> webpage.</p> <p><b>CIlr MG</b> – I think it would be a great idea to have this on the agenda, and get Melanie Parr to attend a meeting.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<b>Next meeting is on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2022 via MS Teams.</b>	<b>Chair</b>