

# FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Housing Scrutiny Panel (to be confirmed at the next meeting)

**Date:** Thursday, 9 February 2023

**Venue:** Collingwood Room - Civic Offices

**PRESENT:**

**Councillor** Mrs K Mandry (Chairman)

**Councillor** (Vice-Chairman)

**Councillors:** R Bird, F Birkett, H P Davis, D G Foot and Mrs K K Trott

**Also Present:** Councillor Mrs T L Ellis (for items 7 and 10)



**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence made at this meeting.

**2. MINUTES**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Panel held on 29 September 2022 be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

**3. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

There were no Chairman's announcements.

**4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISCLOSURES OF ADVICE OR DIRECTIONS**

There were declarations of interest made at this meeting.

**5. DEPUTATIONS**

There were no deputations made at this meeting.

**6. EXECUTIVE BUSINESS**

**(1) Appendix B to the Fareham Housing Regeneration Strategy (Fort Fareham Housing Estate Regeneration)**

There were no questions or comments for clarification in respect of this item.

**(2) Fareham Borough Council Social and Affordable Housing Adaptation Policy**

There were no questions or comments for clarification in respect of this item.

**(3) Fareham Housing Development of Ophelia Court, Montefiore Drive, Park Gate**

There were no questions or comments for clarification in respect of this item.

**7. DRAFT EMPTY HOMES STRATEGY**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mrs T L Ellis addressed the Panel on this item.

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Housing Delivery which provided members with an overview of the Draft Empty Homes Strategy.

A correction at page 12 of the draft Strategy was noted in respect of Empty Dwelling Management Orders in that an Order can be applied for after 6 months of the property being empty not 2 years as stated in the draft Strategy.

A query was raised regarding the accuracy of the empty homes data provided at paragraph 7 of the report. The Head of Housing Delivery explained that this data has been taken directly from an external source and undertook to validate it.

Councillor Bird raised concern that the draft Strategy sets low expectations of outcomes and proposed that additions could be made to the Strategy to include a point based system to determine when action is needed, as undertaken by Rushmoor Borough Council. There was no seconder to this proposal and a vote was therefore not taken. Members did, however, request that officers investigate the possibility of incorporating something similar within the Strategy, in discussion with the Executive Member for Housing, to make it clearer how the characteristics of each empty property would be used to determine whether action is warranted.

The Panel discussed the Council's resource allocation for dealing with empty homes and noted that the Council does not have a dedicated resource for this purpose. It was suggested that there could be an opportunity to work collaboratively with other local authorities to maximise resourcing and expertise. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer agreed that this could be taken forward for further investigation.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the report and has no changes to recommend to the Executive when the Draft Empty Homes Strategy is considered for adoption.

## **8. AFFORDABLE HOUSING UPDATE**

The Panel received a presentation by the Head of Housing Delivery which informed Members of the progress with Fareham Housing Sites and other relevant strategic housing matters. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes as Appendix A.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the presentation.

## **9. TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES**

The Panel received a presentation by the Head of Housing & Benefits which outlined the new way of measuring tenant satisfaction with services the Council provides. A copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes as Appendix B.

It was agreed that, going forward, the current report on Tenancy Management Services that is presented to the Panel twice a year be replaced with an annual report and presentation based on the results of the Council's Tenant Satisfaction Measures, along with any further local measures that members wish to consider.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel:

- (a) notes the content of the presentation; and

- (b) agrees that, as outlined above, the Tenancy Management Services report be replaced with an annual report and presentation on the Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

**10. GREENER MEASURES & INSTALLATIONS ON COUNCIL OWNED HOMES**

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor Mrs T L Ellis addressed the Panel on this item.

The Panel considered a report by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer which provided members with an update on the greener measures undertaken on Council owned housing. This included work carried out as part of Government funding as well future initiatives.

Members were advised that the findings from the Capacity funding provided by South West Energy Hub will hopefully be more fully understood following further investigation on one of the Council's properties. It is anticipated that an update will be available later in the spring.

RESOLVED that the Housing Scrutiny Panel notes the content of the report.

**11. HOUSING SCRUTINY PANEL PRIORITIES**

RESOLVED that members considered the future scrutiny priorities for the Panel and agreed that there were no changes to be made at the present time.

(The meeting started at 6.00 pm  
and ended at 7.34 pm).



# Affordable Housing Update (*Item 8*)

February 2023



1. Site updates
2. Homes England Grant
3. Disrepair Claims (inc. condensation & mould)
4. Help to Buy South changes



# Site Updates – Construction

## *Under Construction*

### **Queens Rd**

- 2No. family houses
- Due to complete in March/April

### **Capella Close**

- 11No. Shared ownership homes
- Due to complete by early April

### **Sir Randal Cremer House**

- 16No. Sheltered flats
- Due to compete late spring



Queens Road (rear)



Capella Close



Sir Randal Cremer House



# Site Updates – What's next?

## Ophelia Court 9No. Shared ownership flats

- Tender process complete
- FE Chase & Sons build contractor
- Start on site anticipated in early spring 2023
- Grant application submission to Homes England



## Assheton Court 60No. Sheltered flats

- Planning permission issued in January '23
- Employers Agent appointed
- Grant discussions have started
- Technical drawing stage (time consuming)
- Likely to look at early demolition





# Homes England Grant

- Fareham Housing have received £2.15M grant received since 2019
- Supported the delivery of 38 new affordable homes by Fareham Housing
- Our 'pipeline' schemes are identified with Homes England
- Grant monies are subject to various conditions and contractual requirements
- Grant claims are subject to random external audit
- Last year part of our Capella Close claim was selected for full external audit
- In November 2022 we were graded 'green – meets requirements'.



Homes  
England

# Disrepair Claims

“Legal action taken against Landlords for failing to maintain their property that has fallen into disrepair, leading to poor living conditions for the occupants”.

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New Legislation from 2018

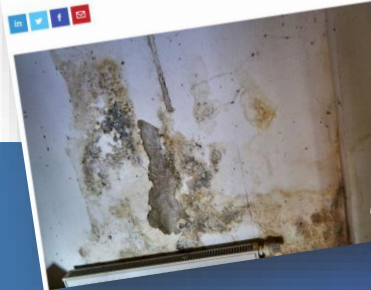
End of PPI claims

- Grenfell (raised awareness of social housing upkeep/issues)
- More media coverage of poor quality housing

Council makes disrepair action plan after claims increase by 600%

NEWS 11.11.21 7:00 AM GMT BY GRAINNE CUFFE

The number of disrepair claims against Lambeth Council is six times higher than it was four years ago, prompting the local authority to create an action plan to deal with the surge in cases.



Landlords see rise in 'fitness for human habitation' claims from 'PPI-style' legal firms

NEWS 17.06.21 9:00 AM GMT BY DOMINIC BRADY

Social landlords are seeing a rise in the number of costly housing condition claims linked to new legislation that is costing the sector millions of pounds, legal experts have said.



# Disrepair Claims – Claim Chasers

- Speculative no-win, no-fee type firms target affordable housing areas
  - ❖ Door to door visits
  - ❖ Telephone calls / social media
- Solicitors tend to charge extortionate success fees
- Often taking advantage of more vulnerable customers
- If customers aren't happy, then we have a complaint procedure and there is also the Housing Ombudsman.



I'm calling from  
the Council.

Do you have any  
repair issues?

# Disrepair Claims – Compensation



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- Compensation for 'disrepair' applies from when we were on 'notice' of repair...
  - A reported repair; and/or
  - If an officer could/would have seen repair issue
- If we make repairs in a 'reasonable' period of time, then risk of disrepair claims reduces
- Legal advice indicates the onus is on us to prove we were not on 'notice'
- Mould can be an aspect of 'disrepair'

# Condensation / Mould

- Cold weather/energy costs/cost of living = rise in mould cases.
- Some cases are caused (or exacerbated) by structure/building issues
- Some cases can be caused (or exacerbated) by how the home is being lived in
- 'Working together' to solve the issue



- Issue is taken seriously
- Children particularly vulnerable
- Mould/damp features on nearly every disrepair case



# Disrepair – Claims to FBC

## Active/Current Cases

- Pelican Close – issues linked with suspected subsidence and insurance involved
- Endofield Close – no settlement as yet
- Menin House – no settlement as yet

## Settled Cases

- Coldeast Close
- St. Michaels House
- Northways

## Closed Cases

- Fairfield Avenue
- Flanders House

## How do we compare?

- Cambridge City Council (7,000 homes; 29 active disrepair cases (0.41%))
- 3 active cases at FBC (0.12%)
- From Mar to Nov 2021, across 70 authorities there were 4,875 new cases logged (average 69 cases each)

# Disrepair - Our Steps

- Training/workshops for wider housing team
  - awareness
  - responsibilities
  - preventative measures
- Improved record keeping
- Improved recording and actions around mould/damp cases
- Proactive approach to mould cases (whatever the cause)
- More communication with tenants (damp prevention, caution around speculative law firms, etc.)



# Help to Buy South

Help to Buy South will cease to exist after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023

- This changes the process around Shared Ownership
  - for us, when selling homes
  - for buyers, when buying homes
- Eligibility criteria unchanged
- Delivery of Shared Ownership properties unaffected
- The change *may* make our Affordable Home Ownership Register more important
- The change will likely need a review of our Shared Ownership Policy
- The change may have more resource implications for Councils.





# Any Questions







# Tenant Satisfaction Measures (*Item 9*)

February 2023



# What and Why?

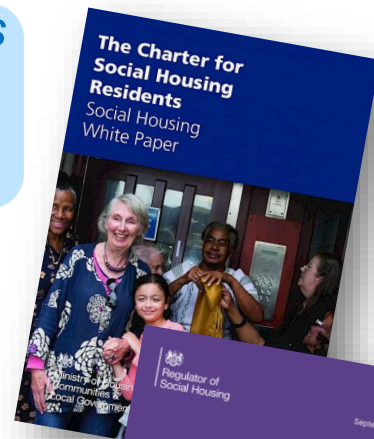
- Introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing (September 2022)

*“New system for assessing how well social housing landlords in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services”.*

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Follows the Social Housing White Paper and 2020 Charter for Social Housing Residents

- Aimed at: -
  - Letting tenants see how well their landlord is doing
  - Providing the Regulator with an idea of which landlords might need to improve things for their tenants.



# The Charter for Social Housing Tenants

- ✓ To be safe in your home
- ✓ To know how your landlord is performing
- ✓ To have complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- ✓ To be treated with respect
- ✓ To have your voice heard
- ✓ To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- ✓ To be supported to take your first step to ownership

# Ensuring the Charter is met

## Regulator of Social Housing

*“Create a strong, proactive consumer regulatory regime, strengthening the formal standards against which social landlords are regulated”*

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### **Safety:**

Landlords must provide homes and services that are safe

### **Quality:**

Landlords must provide good quality homes

### **Neighbourhood:**

Landlords should play their role in contributing to the upkeep and safety of shared spaces

### **Transparency:**

Landlords must be transparent with their tenants and provide the information tenants need to hold them to account effectively

### **Engagement & Accountability:**

Landlords that listen to tenants and take their views will deliver better outcomes for tenants

### **Tenancy:**

Landlords must have a fair and transparent allocations process

# How Tenant Satisfaction Measures will work

- New national 'measures' introduced
- Five headline measures (each with own reporting elements)
- First reporting year will be 2023/24
- Our first results will be submitted to the Regulator in summer 2024

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Inspections



Sharing findings



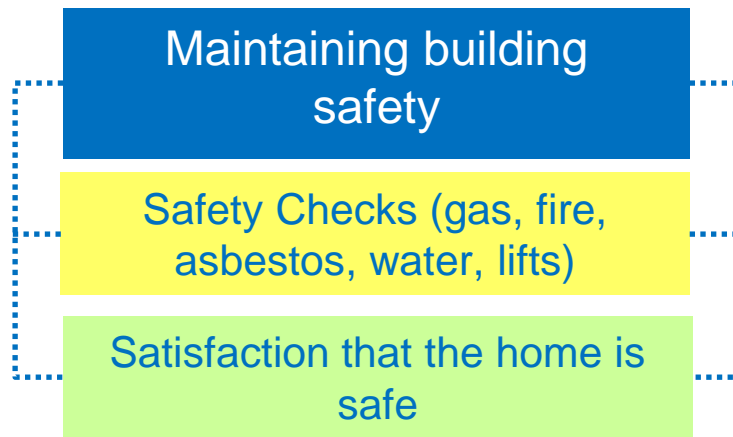
Sources of evidence



Putting things right

# The Five Measures (Measures 1 & 2)

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 = Our own data

 = Measured through a tenant survey



# The Five Measures (Measures 3 - 5)

## Respectful and helpful engagement

Listens to tenants views and acts upon them

Keeps tenants informed about things

Tenants treated fairly and with respect

## Effective handling of complaints

Number of complaints received

Complaints responded to within timescales

Satisfaction on approach to handling complaints

## Responsible neighbourhood management

Number of anti-social behaviour cases

Satisfaction communal areas clean/maintained

Satisfaction landlord makes positive contribution to neighbourhood

Satisfaction on approach to handling anti-social behaviour

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 = Our own data     = Measured through a tenant survey

# Gearing up for the new requirements



Existing and new data/management information



Recording and submitting data



Identify gaps in our knowledge and review our approach to service delivery



Annual tenant satisfaction survey

# Repair Targets

- A customer focused approach moved us away from targets, to an 'at the customers convenience' approach
  - This vanguard approach continues to work well
  - Traditional targets had remained in the background
- Targets now need to be refreshed ahead of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)
- Need to be operational by 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023
    - Published on our website
    - Systems ready (to allow categorisation, monitoring, & running reports)



# Repair Targets

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Repair Category	Target	Example
<b>Emergency</b>	Make safe within 24 hrs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Complete loss of lighting</li><li>• Blocked/leaking soil stack</li></ul>
<b>Priority</b>	7 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dripping/stuck tap</li><li>• Minor leaks on pipework</li><li>• Extractors fan issues</li></ul>
<b>Routine</b>	28 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Damaged fencing</li><li>• Gutter repairs</li></ul>
<b>Planned Routine</b>	6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Internal decoration</li><li>• Plaster repairs</li></ul>
<b>Complex Investigation</b>	Individual/bespoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Subsidence</li></ul>
<b>Planned Maintenance</b>	Individual/bespoke	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• External redecoration</li></ul>

# Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey

- There is no set way in how the survey should be done
- Must include the tenant perception measures (i.e. *the ones in green on previous 'measures' slides*)
- Survey participants should reflect our tenant mix (age, gender, ethnicity, etc.)
- We must publish results, how our survey was carried out, how many responses, etc.
- Need to consider any data protection considerations.



Work is already underway to engage with tenants, to refine what the future surveys are, and to determine the best process.

# Scrutiny Panel & TSMs

- TSMs potentially overlap and duplicate parts of the existing 'tenancy management report' provided annually to HSP
- Propose to instead annually report to HSP on our TSM outcomes – from summer 2024
- Following national results published annually, provide HSP with a presentation looking at our results in the context of the national picture – from autumn 2024
- When reporting to HSP, we could add further 'local' measures that HSP members might seek more information on.

# Housing Scrutiny Panel

Other matters HSP may want reporting on...

Waiting List /  
Allocations

Use of B&B

Number of Repairs

Key 'Planned'  
Projects

HO caseloads /  
outcomes

Voids Processed

EPCs

Number of  
Disrepair Claims

RS numbers

'Greener' installs

Ombudsman  
Complaints

Rent Arrears

Kitchen/bathroom  
upgrades

Disabled  
Adaptations

*Other?*

Affordable Home  
Ownership  
Register:  
Key statistics

RTB sales

# Any Questions?

