



**MINUTES OF OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - QUALITY OF HOUSING PROVIDED BY SOCIAL LANDLORDS**

**MEETING DATE** Thursday, 13 September 2018

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Councillor Matthew Lynch (Chair), and Councillors Yvonne Hargreaves, June Molyneaux, Alistair Morwood, Steve Murfitt and Kim Snape

**OFFICERS:** Fiona Hepburn (Housing Options and Support Manager) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic and Member Services Team Leader)

**18.16 Welcome**

The Chair welcomed Councillor Yvonne Hargreaves as a new Member of the Task Group.

**18.17 Declarations of Any Interests**

Councillors Matthew Lynch and Steve Murfitt declared a non-pecuniary interest in all items on the agenda.

**18.18 Minutes**

Members considered the minutes from the interviews with Jayne Hurley (Places for People) and Richard Houghton (Chorley Community Housing).

The comments are summarised below:

The Council has no powers to enforce change, but the Group has looked at working practices of RP's to gauge best practice and issues which need to be addressed on behalf of Chorley residents.

The Task Group has undertaken a survey and one RP has done their own survey and undertaken a survey of all their properties. The Group has taken this as a positive step and notes that it is up to RPs to achieve an acceptable standard for their properties.

One of the recommendations is to create Chorley Good Homes Charter - a charter that RPs are encouraged to sign up to.

**Customer Service**

- There should be provision for Councillors to use online portals on behalf of their residents.

- Customers should be involved in the complaints procedure. Councillors expressed concern where there is no customer input and no peer support.
- Complaints should be dealt with quickly; Members felt a quarterly meeting is too long for tenants to have to wait.
- There is a need to have clear standards that all tenants are made aware of. This manages expectations and should reduce complaints.
- There should be a clear complaints procedure, including customer services and engagement.
- It would be helpful to have a nominated person to deal with each complaint.
- To have an agreed timescale by which the telephone is answered by a person.
- To undertake and publish independent satisfaction surveys.
- To target support for problem tenants.

### **Communication and engagement**

- There is need for clear communication in relation to changes for tenants.
- Residents should be informed about planned maintenance.
- To make use of existing noticeboards.
- Tenants should have input into the decision-making process for large and small scale investment. This offers a voice for the local community.
- Provision must be made for tenants who don't go online, with the use of the telephone and where possible face to face.
- A regular forum for customers would be beneficial. Potentially the Council could facilitate this with the use of Community Centres.
- The Council could facilitate a regular meeting between the Council and Registered Providers.
- Councillors would welcome an increase in communication about planned maintenance and events etc. For example, a quarterly newsletter.
- Ward walks with ward Councillors are helpful.

### **Property maintenance and standards**

- Is it reasonable to expect a kitchen to last 30 years?
- Consideration should be given to energy efficiency.
- It makes sense to undertake work when a property is void, such as replacing the boiler, windows and insulation. This ensures the property is of an agreed standard when the tenant takes on the property.
- There should be a standard for emergency repairs, from point of report to fully completed repair should be completed within 2 days and guaranteed for a year. Examples like tape round a tap is not considered a permanent repair.
- Health and Safety should feature in the charter with reference to fire safety standards and carbon monoxide monitors. The exterior of the properties, including paths should be included.
- The Lettings and DLO team should work together to decorate and undertake large scale maintenance when a property is void where possible.

### **Neighbourhood issues**

- There is a need for transparency on service charges and charges should be relevant to services residents are receiving, the number of grass cuts etc.
- For £150 RMG provide a community centre, play areas and landscaping, compared with a service charge of £350.

- Valuing community safety and working with residents to resolve issues is paramount and working with partners, such as the Police, to ensure that the community lives in a safe environment.
- The importance of assisting tenants all aspects of their tenancy agreements.
- To be proactive in organising community tidy up sessions and encourage residents to take ownership of their properties. The Council can support this.

#### **18.19 Chorley Tenant Survey - draft report**

Members considered the results of the survey and noted that there will be a presentation from in:fusion (who undertook the survey) at the next meeting.

#### **18.20 Member Survey results**

Members considered the results of the survey and noted variations in the responses received.

#### **18.21 Consideration of the scoping document**

Members considered the scoping document and noted that the MP, Citizens Advice Bureaux and Help the Homeless have been contacted for their views. These will be presented to a future meeting.

The survey will be presented to the Task Group and the Registered Providers RP's on 18 October. RP's will be invited to provide their feedback either at the meeting, or following it.

The draft final report will be considered at the following meeting on 8 November.

#### **18.22 Date of next meeting**

18 October at 6.30pm.

Chair

Date