

MINUTES OF	OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - QUALITY OF HOUSING PROVIDED BY SOCIAL LANDLORDS
MEETING DATE	Thursday, 18 October 2018
MEMBERS PRESENT:	Councillor Matthew Lynch (Chair), and Councillors Yvonne Hargreaves, Margaret Lees, June Molyneaux, Alistair Morwood and Kim Snape
OFFICERS:	Fiona Hepburn (Housing Options and Support Manager) and Ruth Rimmington (Democratic and Member Services Team Leader)
APOLOGIES:	Councillor Steve Murfitt
OTHER MEMBERS:	Councillor Richard Houghton (Director of Operations, Chorley Community Housing), Jayne Hurley (Operations Manager- West, Places for People), Joanne Danaher (Head of Neighbourhoods & Leasehold, Onward Homes) and Michelle Peart-Simpson (Neighbourhood Delivery Manager, Onward Homes)

18.23 Welcome and introductions

The Chair, Councillor Matthew Lynch, welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited attendees to introduce themselves.

Councillor Lynch explained that the purpose of the inquiry is to ensure that Chorley residents receive the best service and the highest standards.

18.24 Declarations of Any Interests

Councillor Matthew Lynch declared a non-pecuniary interest in all items on the agenda.

18.25 Presentation of the Tenant Survey results

The Chair introduced Scott Butterfield and James Mulvaney from in:fusion Research. in:fusion were commissioned to undertake the survey in April 2018 with the aim of reviewing feedback from social housing tenants around customer service, property maintenance and standards and engagement.

The survey was posted to 4,000 tenants, with an option to respond online. This represents around two thirds of the properties owned by Registered Providers. The

survey ran for a four week period commencing in May, with 731 responses in total (18.3%). This is considered a solid response rate for this type of survey.

- 20.5% Chorley Community Housing
- 15.9% Places for People
- 18.1% Accent
- 13.4% New Progress
- 12.1% Onward

Customer service

- 81.9% of tenants were satisfied with the initial speed of response with their HA.
- 72.1% of tenants were satisfied with the speed of progress/ resolution with their HA.
- 83.9% of tenants were satisfied with the helpfulness of staff at their HA.
- 79.5% of tenants were satisfied overall with how their contact is dealt with their HA.

Members noted that the majority of the comments relate to maintenance. *“Whenever I need to report a repair, I am met with politeness and helpful advice to deal with any emergency”, “When you ring up about a repair it takes so long it can take up to a month before they come out and look at it. Then a couple of weeks before they do the job”.*

Property standards and maintenance

- 72.9% of tenants were satisfied with the standard of their property when they moved in.
- 73.4% of tenants were satisfied with the general grounds maintenance and cleaning service for their communal areas.
- 77.8% of tenants were satisfied with the overall quality of their property.
- 75.8% of tenants were satisfied with the repairs and maintenance carried out on their property.

Members noted that the majority of the comments relate to issues with repairs. *“Nothing has been replaced in my property in 13 years. The standards have slipped a lot”, “Although the quality of the build of the property was excellent. There was however some confusion over the snagging that needed doing - any that took place - that was of poor quality & not in line with the standard of the property. Poor finish on numerous things”.*

Engagement and communication

- 72.7% of tenants agree that their HA keep them well informed about their services.
- 60.5% of tenants agree that their HA provides opportunities for them to have their say.
- 52.7% of tenants agree that their HA listens and acts on feedback.

The majority of comments relate to a lack of communication and complaints not having been dealt with. *“I would like our landlord to be more communicative and listen to tenants on what we need and improvements”, “They send out yearly information and I know I can contact them if I require any. I am happy with the service”.*

Members noted comments relating to possible improvements. *"It can sometimes hard to get hold of the housing association maybe text messaging service where you can text a concern or need would be better", "Many elderly are not computer or tech savvy. They need old-fashioned personal contact or contact by letter", "Since we stopped having residents meetings I do not feel "in touch" with my landlord. Having lived here for so long my original agreement must be really outdate but I have never been offered an update", "We used to get a newsletter every 3-4 months which had lots of information on it. But sadly we don't receive them anymore. I feel very strongly that communication within our housing association could be better much room for improvement".*

Neighbourhoods

- 85.0% of tenants agree that their neighbourhood is a good place to live.
- 88.6% of tenants agree that they feel safe in their neighbourhood during the day.
- 76.3% of tenants agree that they feel safe in their neighbourhood during the night.
- 66.0% of tenants agree that anti-social behaviour is dealt with in their neighbourhood.

The majority of comments relate to their area being a nice place to live. *"My neighbourhood is very good with the exception of just two sets of neighbours", "Until recently it was a nice, friendly quiet neighbourhood", "This neighbourhood is supposed to be for over 55 year old. Last year a person in her 40s got a flat and has become a nuisance with her attitude".*

Members noted the positive step some Registered Providers have taken in supporting the Youth Zone and the potential for this to reduce anti-social behaviour.

Satisfaction with Registered Providers

84.4% Chorley Community Housing
70.9% Accent
67.2% Places for People

The majority of comments relate to satisfaction with maintenance and repairs. *"Service is excellent. Properties are maintained to a high standard but allowed to make your property your own personal space", "Repairs are done but not within a reasonable timescale", "Basically paying for services which we don't get! And management fees for nothing!"*

Future property needs

81.1% of tenants agree that their property meets their needs overall.
83.5% Chorley Community Housing
77.1% Places for People
77.0% Accent

The majority of comments relate to looking for a new property elsewhere, in a quieter area or a different sized property. Elderly tenants have raised the issue of wanting a garden. *"Due to my age will probably need ground floor flat for my wife & I", "Although we are happy with our flat and neighbours we would like to move into a bungalow with a small garden", "I am content with my flat and hope to live here for many years".*

In conclusion, there are generally high levels of agreement throughout the survey results. Tenants would like to see maintenance and repairs completed quicker and older and disabled tenants were more likely to highlight requests to modifications to their properties or a change of property to meet their needs. Members noted the Disabled Facilities Grant service provided by the Council.

The Chair queried the demographic of respondents and noted that it is usual for older people to respond to a postal survey, with young people responding to an online survey.

It was noted that the survey was sent to a random sample across the whole Borough and that it is possible for further analysis to be undertaken to identify the geographical areas where respondents lived, and also by age and length of tenancy.

The Chair invited Registered Providers to make comments on the results of the survey and the presentation.

Richard Houghton, Chorley Community Housing, queried if it is possible for those tenants who raised issues with repairs to be identified to enable the issues to be resolved. As the survey is anonymous this is not appropriate. Richard Houghton highlighted the need to focus on those tenants who are not satisfied.

Members discussed the question relating to community safety and noted that it may be useful to undertake a further survey in a few years to enable benchmarking in this area.

Joanne Danaher, Onward Homes, explained that the survey had not produced any surprises and that there is planned maintenance for the Mendip Road area.

Councillor Lynch noted that it would be useful for the Task Group to cross reference the results with any surveys that the Registered Providers have undertaken, and requested that any surveys be shared.

Members noted the importance of the wording of surveys and the need to ask balanced questions. The order of questions is also important and the use of free text boxes encourages respondents to give further information.

Jayne Hurley, Places for People, thanked the Task Group for the opportunity to attend the meeting. Places for People were not surprised by the findings and have found the information useful. The feedback will be reviewed and a written submission will be sent to the Task Group for the next meeting.

The Chair advised that the next meeting, on 8 November, will consider the submissions from Registered Providers and partner organisations, and the draft final report. The final report will be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 24 January and the Executive Cabinet on 14 February.

Chair

Date