

Scrutiny Panel Meeting Minutes



Date of Meeting	Thursday 21 December 2023
Location	Bradbury Court, Papworth Everard, CB23
Present	Tenants: Linda Moss (chair), Alex Winters, Colin Hayward, Jenny Victor Staff: Tracey Croucher (minutes), Ian Cunningham, Damond Farguson
Apologies	Keith Green, Margaret Parker, Tim Bingham

	Meeting Notes	Action	Deadline Date
1	<p>Apologies & Welcome Keith Green and Margaret Parker have given apologies for this meeting.</p> <p>Tim Bingham has decided to step down from the panel. Unfortunately, he cannot give the panel the time and commitment it requires and is not able to fully contribute at this time.</p>		
2	<p>Confidentiality Panel members were reminded about confidentiality of meeting discussions and information circulated to them. Policies / proposals etc must not be shared with tenants until finalised and published. The chair asked panel members to dispose of papers in a confidential manner. Panel members can give papers to TC to dispose of if they are not able to.</p>		
	<p>Previous meeting The last meeting was held on 21 September 2023 and minutes from this meeting have been circulated to panel members prior to this meeting.</p>		
3	<p>Actions from last meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda items 5 & 6 – policy reviews & new policies – changes recommended by the panel made - completed • Agenda item 8 – housing customer service standards to be sent to panel for feedback outside of the meeting – document sent by email to panel members 		

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	<p>on 24 October, feedback received and given to IC - IC to provide an update at this meeting, agenda item 7</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agenda item 9 – scrutiny review action plan – updated at the September meeting to be added to Scrutiny Panel page on the website – completed • Agenda item 13 – meeting to be arranged for panel members to review and refresh the terms of reference – meeting arranged for 17 October, feedback from the meeting and refreshed terms of reference to be agreed at this meeting under agenda item 12 AOB • Agenda item 13 – draft tenant annual report to be shared by email to panel members. IC emailed the document to panel members on 23 November, feedback requested by 8 December – completed • Agenda item 13 – suggestion from tenant – feedback from panel given by email – the panel’s feedback has been given to the tenant who has now requested further scrutiny of the panel’s web page to make this area more visible and accessible – to discuss under agenda item 12 AOB 		
4	<p>Updates for Information</p> <p>Net Zero Strategy (verbal update by DF) The Net Zero Strategy went to the Board of Trustees in October and was agreed. A meeting took place in January to work through the action plan and to assign owners to the relevant actions. The Strategy covers the whole organisation not just housing and will be a 10-year strategy up to 2035. The Government has set a target of 2030 for housing.</p> <p>Decarbonisation fund – DF met with Townsend Turner to find out and assess the Trust to see how far forward we are and to see if we can bid. We anticipated them saying that we wouldn’t be and they have confirmed this is the case.</p>		

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The Board will receive actions for year 1 of the strategy at the February meeting. This will mainly cover communications to staff and surveys for housing stock to identify those with EPC level C or below. These surveys will put us in a better position to bid for funds.

DF has been speaking to Warmfront who deliver a Government scheme called ECO 4. We provide them with data on our housing properties, they will then complete a desktop review to see if ECO 4 can support those properties with loft or cavity wall insulation and there could be funding for potentially new boilers and windows. This project runs to 2026 and focusses on those homes with EPC C or below. Over the course of the next 6 – 12 months they will identify properties, visit the property, conduct a more intrusive survey and identify if work can be done which will be funded such as insulation or other work that could be part funded. This would be a good way of improving the housing stock. CH asked how many properties do we have with a C or below rating, DF informed the panel there are 204 properties in this category.

DF has also spoken with Resolve Net Zero, a solar energy company. They provide a new scheme where they fit solar panels with batteries. The scheme includes fitting and maintenance for their lifespan. Fitting would be free of charge to us and the tenant, benefit to tenant would be to get money off energy bills, benefit to the company to meet their green obligations and a benefit to us is to increase the EPC / SAP ratings. This scheme would be useful for those items that have lower level electricity supply but not suitable for higher level items such as tumble dryers or kettles. DF will be putting together a paper that can go to committee over next 3 months to consider this scheme. Should we want to dispose of a property that have had these fitted, we can as they are included as part of the fabric of the building. Maintenance is also included for life (25yr life span), inverters which generally break after 10 years are included for renewal.

LM asked if there was any intention to upgrade properties that already have panels with these. DF said no as properties already with panels have a lease until 2036.

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5	<p>Existing Policy / Procedure Review</p> <p>Pet Policy The pet policy is due for review. The panel have been provided with the policy and gave the following feedback and recommendation for changes. IC to make changes to the policy as per the recommendations.</p> <p>AW Section 2, bullet point 3: This sentence doesn't read properly "Strike a balance between that ensures pet ownership" amend. Section 2, bullet point 4: the sentence about providing tenants with guidance on pet ownership, reads as if you have to apply for guidance, then apply for pet permission, amend. Reptiles are not a domesticated or tamed but are referred to in the policy. Section 4, Application & guidance: this section doesn't mention about having a pet before moving in but does later in the policy. It sounds like you are only referring to people already living in the home rather than new tenants moving in. Reference to assistance dogs in the policy, can the trust not give permission? IC said if evidence is provided then there would be no issues, deemed as a reasonable adjustment. Section 4, Number of Pets section: does the Trust have legal challenge to prevent overcrowding of pets, IC said yes, we do where there is a genuine concern for the tenant or the pet in terms of welfare. The Housing Officer would potentially identify these at home visits. Section 6: Cats must be spayed or neutered and provide evidence they have been regularly treated by a vet if asked, can the Trust challenge this? IC said yes, same as above in terms of welfare concerns. Section 7, Prohibited behaviour: trying to manage Cats under this is going to be impossible due to their nature, take this out as not able to manage.</p>	IC	As soon as possible
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	<p>AW said that his experience was being given a bunch of loose sheets of paper and having to sign various documents for different things which he found excessive. One signature should be sufficient.</p> <p>IC said we have explored options such as paperless sign ups however some people like/want paper.</p>		
6	<p>New Policies There are no new policies for review and recommendation at this meeting.</p>		
7	<p>Housing Customer Service Standards The service standards were emailed out to panel members for feedback and recommendations. The panel members provided a number of changes which IC thanked them for and went through where the changes have been made and gave an explanation as to the ones he did not include.</p> <p>CH commented that contractors were not contacting tenants to make or give notice for appointments and gave a recent example of when Aaron Services attended. DF has emailed Aaron Services to check why this was not done as it should have been. TC said that unless tenants tell us that contractors are cold calling then we can't challenge the contractor. We need to know if appointments are not being made.</p> <p>AW identified some acronyms in the standards and asked for these not to be used, for example KPI (key performance indicator), IC to amend.</p> <p>CH asked about if the Trust would be looking to bring in an online account where you can raise repairs, look at repair logs etc. IC explained that the housing system we use is due to be upgraded in May. This upgrade will provide some kind of customer portal and something to start with but it won't be as advanced as what larger housing providers have.</p>	IC	ASAP

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	<p>Contractor code of conduct is on the website under policies and information. DF explained there is a wider review of working with contractors going on at the moment, it will be updated in due course.</p> <p>CH felt that monitoring satisfaction should be 6 months instead of annually. IC explained that the Regulator requires us to do it every two years, therefore we are going above the requirements by conducting it annually. If we were to do 6 monthly this would not give sufficient time to implement changes. IC informed the panel that we collect satisfaction in other ways, for example repairs satisfaction. The team take 35% of repairs completed during a month and call the tenants to find out more about their experience. This is called a transactional survey. We are also looking at a way to find out if tenants are happy with their home, aimed at new tenants moving in. DF informed the panel that a new customer support assistant role has recently been recruited to and they will pick up the transactional repairs surveys when established in post.</p> <p>IC informed the panel that all service standards for each area of the organisation will be going to the Executive Team for sign off with the aim to launch them in January.</p> <p>IC also showed the panel members the easy read version and TC gave a brief summary of the work that has been undertaken regarding the production of these documents.</p> <p>AW said that he felt that the new standards were much clearer and flow well. He appreciates that it has taken a lot of work to get to this point but it is worth it.</p>		
8	<p>Scrutiny Reviews Update to action plan.</p> <p>Recommendation 2: Panel agreed to leave as amber until the next meeting. A new role of customer support assistant has been recruited to and they will be responsible for ensuring that delayed timescales are communicated to tenants. This work is currently</p>		

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	<p>being undertaken by a temporary member of staff so is being action. However, by leaving it amber will enable the panel to monitor the impact of the permanent staff member.</p> <p>Recommendation 3 & 4: The customer promise and service standards will be replaced with the new customer service standards across the whole organisation. When launched they will be centrally placed on the website. The panel agreed to keep this as amber until the next meeting to ensure that action has taken place.</p> <p>Recommendation 14: Pyramid (housing management system) is due to be upgraded in May 2024. The panel agreed to leave this as amber in order to monitor if the upgrade will enable for staff to have access to the system when in tenant's homes.</p> <p>Action plan to be updated and added to website on the Scrutiny Panel page.</p>	TC	January 2024
9	<p>Tenders / Procurement</p> <p>DF gave the panel a verbal update on this agenda item and agenda item 10, therefore the content below is regarding tenders, procurement and planned works programme.</p> <p>DF explained that procurement for contracts goes through the Housing National Framework. This makes it easier to manage tenders and procurement as we are a small provider.</p> <p>The approval for the bathroom programme has been given and this will be going out for tender. The kitchen programme is currently with the Board for approval. Other programmes awaiting approval or acceptance of quotes are electrical rewires,</p>		

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	<p>canopies to some properties in Papworth, the exterior decoration programme and window replacements. The team aim to hold consultation events between January and March for pending programmes of work.</p> <p>AW asked about the status of the window replacement programme for Southbrook Field. DF informed the panel that this is included in the quote that has not been received yet. AW recommend that some communication be sent out to the tenants as the delays to works are not down to the Trust. DF agreed this would be done.</p> <p>AW asked if the kitchen / bathroom replacements were being done as they were due. DF said yes, they are identified from stock condition surveys. The Decent Homes standard sets kitchens at being replaced after 30 years and bathrooms at 40 years. However, through the surveys the Trust can identify if they need replacing sooner due to the level of wear and tear. DF said the Decent Home Standard is due to change in 2024.</p> <p>There are other contracts are being reviewed over the next 3 months; the heating contract is due to expire end of April, we have extended the lifting equipment contract for 1 year, the passenger lift contract for 1 year, we are reviewing the legionella contract, the fire contract is due for review in February and we are mostly rolling other contracts over.</p>		
10	<p>Capital & Planned Works Programme 2023 / 2024 Refer to item 9.</p>		
11	<p>KPI The panel have been provided with Quarter 2 data for review. IC went through data.</p> <p>CH asked what a pre-complaint is. IC said this is something that is not a formal complaint, where we have been able to resolve something quickly for the tenant. The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code requires us to track and monitor these.</p>		

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	<p>DF informed the panel that the team meet with contractors once a quarter and deal with issues such as turning up with no appointments. There were some complaints with regards staff, the Trust are looking into lone worker systems to support staff in this area. IC also talked about having more office-based staff get out to see tenants, this helps with tenants feeling more comfortable when speaking to staff.</p> <p>For the data on repairs and maintenance DF informed the panel there are still issues obtaining some parts therefore this has caused a decline in the target for repairs. DF also explained that due the housing system used some jobs remain open however they have been completed but they can't be closed until an invoice for the work from the contractor has been received. Work is being done by the team to identify the jobs that can be closed.</p> <p>The panel were given data with regards the incoming telephone calls to the repairs team and for the last quarter tenants were not holding in the queue for a particular amount of time. This could be a number of reasons for example care staff not able to remain in the queue and call back later.</p> <p>IC informed the panel that the Trust do have empty homes in the village but these are of aging and inefficient stock therefore will cost a significant amount to bring up to standard. AW asked if you have to let homes through the council exclusively and IC explained the letting system from both a local authority and social services perspective. With the supported homes there is more work needed from partners to ensure that the property is suitable for tenants needs.</p>		
12	Any Other Business Scrutiny Panel Web Page		

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<p>The panel were asked to review the website and make recommendations to make the tenant involvement and scrutiny panel pages move visible. LM said that the “get involved” tab appears to have been changed to “work with us”.</p> <p>CH suggested on the housing page the tiles are moved further up so that you see them first, you have to scroll down through quite a lot of text to get to them.</p> <p>All panel members recommended that the tenant involvement page have a tile added to link to the scrutiny page as the link is currently squashed in the middle of the page and you can't see it. TC will liaise with the Communications Team to make changes.</p>	TC	January 2024
<p>Scrutiny Panel Terms of Reference & Code of Conduct</p> <p>Panel members met outside of a scrutiny meeting to review and refresh the terms of reference for the group. The document has been sent out to all panel members for any further feedback. TC has not received any other changes. TC has added, on page 2, a sentence regarding the code of conduct and acceptable behaviour. The panel agreed this sentence and have approved the new terms of reference today.</p> <p>TC sent the panel a draft code of conduct to review. IC/TC felt that the panel should have this to sit alongside the terms of reference to support both panel members and staff. There is one change to be made to the sentence “members to remember the purpose of the meeting & not bring individual issues to the meeting” the panel wanted to recognise that discussion about individual experiences could allow for changes and recommendations to be made to a service that would have a positive impact for all tenants. This was agreed and TC will make the change and send by email to panel members for final approval.</p> <p>Online Report a Repair Form</p> <p>The panel were provided with a recent experience of a tenant with regards repairs required to a through lift in their home. TC asked the panel to consider two things using the narrative provided by the tenant. Firstly, to look at the online report a repair form</p>	TC	January 2024

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<p>and make recommendations for changes. Secondly, to make recommendations as to how the Trust could have communicated with the tenant in this situation and to ensure that other tenants do not have a similar experience.</p> <p>Suggestions for the form were to add date of submission and to find out if its possible for a PDF of the completed form to be sent to the tenant via email. TC will liaise with the IT team to see if these recommendations can be added.</p> <p>Overall the panel members felt that the tenant should not have been chasing the contractor, this was the responsibility of Papworth Trust. Also, the panel felt that the tenant should have received a call from the Repairs Team on the first business day after the issue was reported, to find if the tenant was okay and what needed to be done further to rectify the issue. A recommendation from the panel to add that this would be completed in 2 working days be added to the customer service standard has been actioned. TC to feedback to the Repairs Team to ensure that this doesn't happen again.</p> <p>Also, a question was raised regarding the out of hours service not knowing who the contractor was for the lift issue. DF said that this particular lift had been fitted as part of DFG works and this would sit with the tenant, however the tenant has since moved out. IC said this should have been picked up at void works and recorded on the void form to ensure that the out of hours service had the correct details. TC to feed this back to the Repairs Team.</p>	<p>TC</p> <p>TC</p> <p>TC</p>	<p>January 2024</p> <p>January 2024</p> <p>January 2024</p>
<p>Date of next meeting</p>	<p>Thursday 14 March, 10am start, Bradbury Court, Papworth Everard</p>	