

<b>Present:</b>	Councillor Gary Hewson ( <i>in the Chair</i> )
<b>Councillors:</b>	Pat Vaughan, Thomas Dyer, Jane Loffhagen, Mark Storer and Loraine Woolley
<b>External Representatives:</b>	Mick Barber (Chair of LTP), Caroline Coyle-Fox (Vice-Chair of LTP) and Mike Asher (LTP Member)
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	Councillor Alan Briggs, Steven Bearder and Debbie Rousseau (LTP Members)
<b>Also in Attendance:</b>	Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing

**19. Confirmation of Minutes - 11 August 2022**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 August 2022 be confirmed.

**20. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**21. Lincoln Tenants Panel Project Update**

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel, provided a written report on the panel's continued work with tenancy services, fire safety assurance, maintenance, business management and resident involvement on a variety of projects, covering the following areas:

- Within tenancy services LTP was working with the Voids Team Leader inspecting one property a week. We had also adapted the way we reported our findings moving from paper to digital format to speed up the process to ensure information could be shared immediately with officers.
- During the summer months, LTP attended estate inspections at Hartsholme, Birchwood & Moorland in the south; Ermine East & West and St Giles in the north and West End, Burton Road/Newport, Tower, Stamp End, City Centre, High Street and Manse in the city centre. Follow up inspections were due to take place in November/December.
- We held our first meeting with Business Management on 17<sup>th</sup> July – our recommendations have been shared with relevant officers together with a request for further feedback relating to some complaints.
- At a recent LTP meeting the Panel assessed the Tenant Involvement Strategy Action Plan and he was pleased to confirm there were no red flags. Actions had been awarded based on one of the following:
  - Bronze – Process has started – early stages
  - Silver – Making good progress
  - Gold - Full implementation and maintained
- LTP was working closely with the Interim Maintenance Manager on the schedule of repairs project, attending monthly meetings to review

performance, focused on creating a marketing programme to deliver a consistent message and information to tenants on the benefits of the project. Councillor Hewson, Chair of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee attended a meeting in August when the group discussed how we could enhance tenant experience – as a result, series of Face Book posts had been created by the working group scheduled to go out on a six-week cycle to promote and encourage tenants to make an appointment.

- We continued to hold our monthly LTP meetings. The Director of Housing attended our last meeting in September to discuss the proposed rent cap. Our AGM would take place on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> November with face book posts on both City of Lincoln Council sites together with LTP members sharing the posts on other community-based pages. We were thrilled to confirm we would be hosting a celebration event on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> November acknowledging all the hard work over the last couple of years in creating the LTP Constitution. The event would be held at the Guildhall and the Mayor had accepted our invitation.
- All LTP 1-2-1's had been completed by The Resident Involvement Manager and Vice Chair of LTP, which had provided us with valuable feedback, knowledge and panel aspirations, to be used to help us expand LTP and move forward.
- LTP had volunteered to assist the Resident Involvement Manager at the Jarvis and Shuttleworth House fire safety exercises and engagement events. We attended the recent fire safety exercise at Trent View which provided Lincoln Fire and Rescue with valuable information – Over thirty fire fighters carried out the training exercise with six fire engines in attendance from across Lincolnshire providing fire fighters with the knowledge, skills and agreed implementational procedures in the event of a major fire.
- We were currently working with The Tenancy Services Manager on the Incentive to Downsize Project and had provided a list of recommendations.
- Five LTP members would be attending a free ARCH Conference – The conference offered two workshops on decarbonisation and fuel poverty/cost of living and in addition to this, three guest speakers; Kate Dodsworth – Director of Consumer Regulation and Fleur Priest-Stephens - Tenant Engagement Manager for the regulator of social housing, would be presenting information on the proposed tenant satisfaction measures and regulatory changes. Caritas Charles – Policy and Insight Manager would be addressing the conference on resident engagement in building safety.
- Further to Jo Crookes presentation at the LTP in July, the Panel asked to shadow Customer Services operatives and one LTP member had been the first to shadow. Jo had agreed to duplicate these sessions with other LTP members.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

Councillor Dyer thanked LTP members for their support on ward works. He asked for further detail of the work on the Incentive to Downsize Project.

Daren Turner, Director of Housing confirmed that a piece of work had been carried out a while ago with input from members to help tenants wishing to downsize with moving costs etc. It had been reviewed by our legal colleagues and LTP members, prior to being presented to the Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing. The Draft Policy would be brought to the next meeting of Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee for comments.

Councillor Loffhagen received confirmation that any changes to the Tenancy Involvement Strategy following the Action Plan in place would be reviewed in due course by this Committee.

RESOLVED that:

1. A report on the Draft Incentive to Downsize Initiative be presented to the next meeting of Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee.
2. The content of the written update from the Chair of LTP be noted with thanks, to be continued as a regular agenda item.

## **22. Planned Works Programme Update 2022-23**

Kevin Bowring, Investment Manager, presented a verbal update on the schedule of planned works for the current year 2022/23, as requested for members information by the Chair, covering the following main points:

- A 6-year onsite contract had been awarded to fit replacement windows.
- Installation of doors/windows:
  - 357 front entrance doors had been installed to date.
  - 304 front entrance doors were currently on order
  - 112 windows had been installed.
  - 324 windows were currently on order
- Expenditure of £1.5m was planned for door and window installation this year.
- Work by our heating contractors involved:
  - Installation of 317 replacement boilers to date.
  - A further 378 replacement boiler installations in progress.
- Under the annual electrical inspection programme, just under 2,000 properties had been tested this year and relevant works required as a result of these inspections were programmed for completion.
- A new contract had been procured for installation of communal/access doors and control systems, to be delivered in Feb/March 2023 at a cost of £400,000.
- Letting standards were being improved through work being carried out by housing staff and void relets.
- There were 15 procurement exercises currently underway.
- A new 5 year electrical services contract was due to be signed off tomorrow to install new electrics in flat blocks.
- Tenders for property improvements such as kitchen/bathroom upgrades had recently been re-tendered following a lack of take-up in the summer.
- Tenders were also out for landscaping boundaries, tarmac, hard standing works etc.
- A tender to procure timber doors was also underway.

Councillor Hewson, Chair, thanked the Investment Manager for this update and requested that a general breakdown of planned works be prepared for members of Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee ahead of each financial year. He referred to current expenditure against capital programme targets at under 20%, although he fully accepted the problems experienced with supply of materials and labour.

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel asked whether it was possible for electrical safety inspections to be carried out annually across our whole stock of Council house properties in line with that of gas inspections.

Kevin Bowring, Investment Manager, advised that gas inspections must be carried out annually by statute. Electrical safety inspections were carried out over a 5 year programme; however, the outcome of the previous inspection was used to define any properties requiring a further inspection in advance of this timescale. The Housing Authority also had a responsibility to re-check properties each time they became void. He agreed to discuss this further at the Lincoln Tenants Panel meeting later that month.

Mick Barber congratulated officers on the work carried out by the gas contractor. He questioned the ratio of safety against quality and cost effectiveness with the number of smaller contracts being tendered in general.

Kevin Bowring, Investment Manager confirmed that post inspections were conducted on a percentage of works completed, to ensure the same quality of tradesmanship across different contracts.

Councillor Hewson suggested in setting a standard it would be beneficial for each job to be checked once completed.

Kevin Bowring, Investment Manager, highlighted that a lower volume of work was being carried out on site as stock condition was currently in a good state of repair. Following the 15 year anniversary of boiler and kitchen installations this may change in future years. The Housing Authority did not have the resources to check every job, however, if future sampling showed errors then the frequency of inspections would be increased.

Mike Asher, LTP Member, queried why the allocation of new door systems in council owned flats was not done in blocks, rather than at specific properties.

Kevin Bowring, Investment Manager, confirmed that the door replacement programme was based on age and condition. The introduction of our Compliance Team had resulted in an increase in referrals. Unfortunately, financial resources did not stretch to replacement of doors block by block.

RESOLVED that:

1. A schedule of planned works be presented to Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee members for information at the beginning of each financial year.
2. The content of the verbal update be noted with thanks.

## **23. De Wint Court Update**

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director, Housing Management, presented a verbal update on De Wint Court, new purpose-built residential accommodation open now to support residents to live more independently, yet together and more inclusively with the local surrounding community. She highlighted the following key points:

- As of today, the scheme was fully allocated.

- A waiting list contained 24 active applications and 74 awaiting assessment by the Allocation Panel.
- This new sheltered housing scheme was a great flagship facility for people to live.
- The beautiful apartments had built-in security and lifestyle features that helped make the practicalities of day-to-day life easier for residents.
- Key benefits of De Wint Court centred on flexible on-site care and support packages built around people's needs, a restaurant serving the local community on the doorstep and a hair and beauty salon without going outside the complex.

Mick Barber, Chair of LTP commended the scheme as a jewel in our crown, and he hoped there would be similar projects in the City.

Members raised questions as follows:

- How did the resident's service charge apply to those resident's on means tested housing benefit?
- Officer Response: The service charge was made up of a number of elements to ensure the effective management of the scheme. It was charged over and above normal council house rent offering care and support built around individual needs. Residents on benefits did get help, however, those not on benefits must pay the full service charge. New residents were made aware of the charges at the application stage. Although costs were more than council rents due to the care package provided, it was still an affordable rent. There were also alternative sheltered housing schemes available in the City. Rent charges would be constantly reviewed to ensure they were reasonable and affordable.
- Was the application process split 50/50 between the City and County Council or were City residents given priority?
- Officer Response: Lincoln residents were given priority as part of the allocation assessment. All the current residents were from the City.

Daren Turner, Strategic Director, Housing and Investment, highlighted that there were a few teething problems to be addressed by the build contractors, which were being followed up for final resolution.

Councillor Tom Dyer sought reassurance from the Director of Housing and Investment that he was confident with the detail of the full contract agreement for the complex which had been managed by a former staff member.

Daren Turner, Director of Housing and Investment confirmed that the overall delivery of the project was covered under the contract agreement, there were just a few snagging issues which were being chased to avoid penalties being applied. Under the retention policy, a legal view had been sought to the effect that a reasonable period of time should be given for the contractor to respond to snagging issues, in order to follow due process.

RESOLVED that:

1. A Post-Implementation Report of De Wint Court be added to the work programme to be presented to Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee after April 2023.
2. The content of the verbal report be noted with special thanks to all the officers involved in the creation of this unique venture.

**24. Performance Monitoring Report - Quarter 2 - 2022/23**

Yvonne Fox, Assistant Director, Housing Management:

- a) presented Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee with a quarter 2 report on Performance Indicators for the 2022/23 financial year (April 2022- September 2022), as detailed at Appendix A
- b) explained that over the last 12 years the Council had been working with the Lincoln Tenants Panel to improve external scrutiny and to meet the standards implemented by the Tenant Services Authority.
- c) highlighted that in total there were 21 measures and of those, against agreed targets, 7 were on or exceeding targets for the year (year-end), and 13 had not met the normal targets set
- d) reported that of the 13 measures that did not meet target, 8 of these were within 5% tolerance of their respective targets (amber rating), and one measure didn't have a target (complaints replied to in line with corporate policy)
- e) referred to Appendix A of the report which attempted to simplify the overall analysis by listing performance on a service functional basis (rents, repairs etc) and then showing the source of the indicator (reason)
- f) provided the committee with some key figures in relation to performance targets as follows:
  - Rent collection was ahead of the 96.5% target. Tenancy Services continued to prioritise the collection of rent to maintain the income stream. The financial pressures tenants were facing were increasingly apparent, and the new Sustainment Team were working with tenants who were struggling financially.
  - The percentage of all priority repairs carried out within the time limit of 1 day was slightly below the target of 99.5%. Since April there were 10 priority repairs completed outside the 24-hour window. Housing Repairs Service (HRS) were continually monitoring the volume of priority repairs and ensuring tickets were closed down when repairs were made safe. The repairs service was experiencing issues with repairs booked in on the Dynamic Resource Scheduling System (DRS) and its links to the Universal Housing IT system (UH) which was being logged manually until the replacement system was in place

- arrears as a % of the rent debit was currently marginally above target in the month of August with 4.76% achieved. Arrears were normally at their highest at this time of the year with a reduction due at the end of Q3 and Q4 due to the rent-free weeks. Increased numbers of tenants were migrating over to Universal Credit (UC) which increased arrears. The heightened costs of living had also put pressure on households. The national period of mourning almost meant a hiatus in arrears collection which impacted on collection.
- There was a dip in performance for repairs completed right on first visit in the month of August. Further codes were being added to the system to determine the need for further visits i.e., the need for a secondary trade, insufficient time to complete on the first visit.
- In terms of % of non-decent homes, at the end of the quarter we had 125 non decent properties which excluded refusals. We had seen a reduction in non-decent properties from the previous month, this was mainly as a result of doors and windows installed in September and all previous failures for chimneys now being resolved
- The average re-let time for standard dwellings was behind target but had improved compared to the same point last financial year. The voids team had faced an increase in the number of properties post pandemic. Properties had been found in poor condition needing a considerable amount of works and some contractors had struggled to meet this demand due to current market conditions regarding labour shortages in the construction sector. This affected many local authorities. There had also been some delays with asbestos and sign ups trying to accommodate tenants who were struggling to move. The teams were working to bring this closer to target for Q3.
- There had been a slight reduction in overall re-let times for dwellings including major works from 50.71 days in Quarter 1, although this was still behind target. There had been a high number of transfers this quarter due to the De Wint sign-ups. The team was working to reduce the overall number of days and contractors had placed additional labour into properties where necessary.
- The complaints tracker continued to be presented at the Director of Housing and Investment's Extended Departmental Management Team (EDMT) on a monthly basis and any overdue/close to deadline complaints were highlighted to Service Managers on a weekly basis.

g) welcomed members questions and comments.

Members discussed the report in full, commented/asked questions, and received relevant responses from officers as follows:

- Comment: There was a need to monitor re-let properties. Lincoln Tenants Panel members had a few suggestions to put on the table.
- Response: Thank you. The average re-let period was impacted by the number of voids occurring due to death being as high as 50%. There was a

legal process to be carried out in these sad circumstances and officers were unable to access the properties to carry out pre-inspections.

- Question: Why was the customer contact target for % calls answered within 90 seconds so low at 8.18%?
- Response: This indicator came within the remit of the Customer Services function. The Customer Services Manager had attended the last meeting of this Committee to explain the reasons for the target. The Customer Services Manager would be asked to add more detail to the next quarterly performance report to help members' understanding of the issues involved.
- Comment: The % calls answered within 90 seconds was low, however, local residents needed to get through to officers who knew the answer to their query.
- Response: The Duty Housing Manager or Housing Solutions Manager were always available to offer assistance and support. Officers urged the public to let them know if they were dissatisfied with the customer service provided.
- Comment by Mike Asher, LTP Member: He wished to defend the work of Customer Services staff having spent half a day with them. Operatives showed vast knowledge in responding to customer enquiries, and spent valuable time with each client to establish their issues.
- Question: Were the tenants who left properties in a poor condition without understandable reasons (e.g., frail/elderly clients), expected to offer pay back to the Authority for repairs to be carried out?
- Response: Each property was inspected and a recharge made if repairs were needed and access to the property was possible. In the case of abandoned properties, a recharge would be made to the former tenant which would remain as a debt to the Council for 7 years. Officers were currently looking at recharge prices conducting a piece of work alongside the Accountancy Team.
- Question: It was not possible to chase repairs on our on line system. Why was it not updated to reflect repairs still awaited?
- Response: An appointment was offered to tenants at the time the repair was reported. Clients would know when the work would be scheduled unless in specific cases a longer timescale was involved.

Mick Barber, Chair of LTP, highlighted that performance had improved on complaints responded to on-line. He fully understood the issues being experienced in the Customer Services Team; we needed to secure improved IT systems to see increases to call response times.

Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing, advised that problems with customer call time responses was also a problem also in other areas of the country/other organisations. The digital repairs system was a trial initiative, it would take out a certain number of calls but was not intended to take out all of them. This area was not within the remit of his portfolio

Mick Barber, Chair of LTP, highlighted the main concern here was not call time, but redirection of calls to achieve a satisfactory response. Modernisation of the system was required to enable a good service to be provided. Hopefully suggestions offered by LTP would be implemented to ease the situation.

Councillor Hewson, Chair, asked whether it was necessary to review the target.

Daren Turner, Strategic Director of Housing and Investment, acknowledged there was an issue with call time responses, and that we needed to find a way to improve the system.

Councillor Hewson, Chair suggested that the Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience and Review, responsible for Customer Services, be invited to attend the next meeting of Lincoln Tenants Panel to give an update, a comment acknowledged by the Chair of LTP.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Customer Services Manager be requested to add extra detail to the next quarterly performance report to help members' understanding of the issues involved with performance on the percentage number of calls answered within 90 seconds.
2. The current performance outcomes during the financial year 2022/23 be noted.

## **25. Tenant Involvement Strategy 2022/2025 - Action Plan**

Donna Lyons, Resident Involvement Manager, presented the Tenant Involvement Strategy 2022-25 for information, together with the Action Plan for the strategy which included a Lincoln Tenants Panel Assessment of progress to date.

She reported that LTP would continue to assess progress on the strategy and Action Plan using a gold, silver, bronze star/red flag rating system. There were currently no red flags against any of the objectives within the agreed Action Plan.

Councillor Hewson, Chair, received confirmation that the Panel was represented by a LTP member with disabilities.

Mick Barber, Chair of LTP, confirmed that he was actively attempting to recruit a lease holder to coordinate the marketing of the strategy to get more people involved.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted with thanks.

## **26. Work Programme 2022/23**

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the work programme for Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee for 2022/23 as detailed at Appendix A of the officer's report
- b. advised that this was an opportunity for committee to suggest other items to be included on the work programme.

RESOLVED that:

1. Additional items be added to the work programme as follows:
  - PIR De Wint Court- post April 2023

- Planned Scheduled Investment Programme Update- beginning of next Municipal Year
- Draft Downsizing Initiative – next scheduled meeting – 2 February 2023.

2. The work programme be noted.