

Present: Councillor Gary Hewson (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Alan Briggs, Councillor Jane Loffhagen,
Councillor Loraine Woolley and Councillor Pat Vaughan

Apologies for Absence: Councillor Mark Storer

Also in Attendance: Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Housing.

11. Confirmation of Minutes - 22 June 2022

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2022 be confirmed.

12. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

13. Change to Order of Business

RESOLVED that the order of business be changed to allow the report entitled 'Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1 – 2022/23' to be considered prior to 'Lincoln Tenants Panel Matters'.

14. Performance Monitoring Report Quarter 1-2022/23

Andrew McNeil, Assistant Director Housing Investment & Strategy:

- a) 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.
- b) highlighted that in total there were 21 measures and of those, against agreed targets, 10 were on or exceeding targets for the year (year-end), 10 had not met the normal targets set. Of the 10 measures that did not meet target, 3 of these were within 5% tolerance of their respective targets (Amber rating), One measure didn't have a target (Complaints replied to in line with corporate policy).
- c) referred to Appendix A of the report and advised how it 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)
- d) provided the committee with some key figures in relation to performance targets which were as follows:
 - rent collection was ahead of the 96.5% target and 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

- arrears as a % of the debit was currently ahead of the target of 4.45%. Housing Officers and the Sustainment Team were working hard to collect the rent and work with tenants to prioritise sustaining tenancies and to control the number of evictions
- the average re-let time for all dwellings (excluding major works) was slightly ahead of the high target of 34 with 37.26 days being achieved at the end of Quarter 1; significant changes were being made to all aspects of the voids process
- including major works, there had been an improvement in performance compared to last quarter from 59.88 days to 50.71 days which demonstrated a positive trend.

e) welcomed members questions and comments.

Members discussed the report in full and presented officers with a range of questions, the following clarity was provided:

- The system had a set way in which figures were presented which made it difficult to provide performance figures in any other way than percentages.
- Tenants were refused a transfer if the property was left in a damaged state.
- Tenants signed a disclaimer to confirm they were happy with the state of the property before a mutual exchange took place. JUSTIFY
- Non council assigned contractors were able to carry out repairs to council properties and tenants were encouraged to carry out repairs themselves rather than being reliant on the Council to do. JUSTIFY
- A meeting took place with HRS to discuss the timetable for future works on Council Housing, it was confirmed that it would be brought before Lincoln Tenants Panel once ready to deliver.

Members suggested it would be beneficial for the Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) minutes be presented at future Housing Sub Committee meetings. This would give members an insight into the discussions that took place at LTP meetings and give the opportunity to ask questions.

Jo Crookes, Customer Services Manager provided members with an update on the current call time performance figures, she explained:

- The current call waiting time was at an all-time high, mainly down to a reduction in staffing of the team from 25 to 20. There had also been a huge turnover in staff recently resulting in a lot of well experienced staff leaving.
- There were currently 2.5 vacant posts which were proving difficult to fill. Of the 3 part time jobs that were currently being advertised, only 6 applications had been received and only 2 of the 3 people selected for interview had attended.
- More calls had been received in general due to the backlog from Covid-19 and the nature of the calls meant that it was taking longer to address the reason for the calls.

- The Council were administering the Council Tax Energy rebates and as a result of that, the volume of calls had increased and over the past 4 weeks an extra calls 5,905 were received.
- There were still a lot of customers with low level digital skills which meant that they would call about an issue rather than use the online platform.
- A customer satisfaction survey had been carried out and of the 160 people that took part, 5.4 customers were being put through to an advisor within the appropriate time.
- There had been issues with the old Contact Centre software which led to calls not being transferred to staff using Microsoft Teams.
- The council was in the process of securing a new phone system
- Discussions were taking place with HR regarding the period of notice given to people leaving their jobs. It was also being considered whether staff that had attained a new job internally could stay in their current role to train the new member of staff before moving on. This would allow the Customer Services team to be well staffed and equipped to continue providing an efficient service.

RESOLVED that:

- 1) Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel, to provide the Democratic Services Team with a copy of the LTP minutes prior to all future Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee meetings.
- 2) The content of the report be noted.

15. **Lincoln Tenants Panel Matters**

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel, updated members on the Panel's involvement in the following areas:

- LTP were currently working with tenancy services, fire safety assurance, maintenance, business management and resident involvement on a variety of projects.
- Within tenancy services LTP were working with Vicky Wilson, Voids Team Leader to relaunch the void inspections and had agreed to inspect 10% of void properties, with the first inspections commencing 8th August. They had also participated in estate inspections during July.
- Members were working with Lara Trickett from Business Management reviewing complaints and had agreed to increase the percentage of complaints reviewed on a quarterly basis. The first review meeting was in August and Lara would circulate feedback to officers with recommendations.
- Members attended a consultation and a fire safety exercise at Trent View Flats together with Councillor Nannestad, Councillor Longbottom, officers from City of Lincoln Council and Lincolnshire Fire & Rescue. The aim of the consultation exercise was to provide residents and tenants with an

opportunity to ask questions and/or raise any concerns they may have had with regards to the fire exercise drill.

- Members were also working with the Resident Involvement Manager on the Resident Involvement Strategy action plan to award it star rating.
- LTP were working closely with Phil Longhorn, Interim Maintenance Manager on the schedule of repairs project. We were attending monthly meetings to review performance focusing on creating a marketing programme to deliver a consistent message and information to tenants on the benefits of the schedule of repairs project.
- In addition to this, LTP had been holding monthly meetings, located at City Hall and through teams. At the meeting in June, Portfolio for Quality Housing, Councillor Nannestad attended and presented his annual report and in July, Jo Crookes, Customer Service Manager gave an overview of the service and updated LTP on the processes in place surrounding vulnerable tenants, repairs, and call times. Followed by, Caroline Hannah, Rough Sleeping Programme Manager, who gave an overview of the service and allocations policy.
- All LTP members agreed to attend a 1-2-1 review with Donna Lyons – Resident Involvement Manager and Caroline Coyle Fox, Vice Chair of LTP.
- Mike Asher, Debbie Rousseau, and Mandy Harley attended the “Opportunities for Empowerment” two-day residential course at Trafford Hall.
- In May , Donna Lyons, Resident Involvement Manager, applied to join a government led initiative - The Social Housing Quality Resident Panel. The aim of the initiative was to bring together social housing residents from across the country so they could directly share their views with the government and ministers on government’s approach to driving up the quality of social housing. Confirmation had been received last week that Donna had successfully been selected to join the panel.
- In addition to the Housing Social Quality Resident Panel, Mike Asher was currently working with Housing Ombudsmen Service and had joined as a resident panel member. The panel provided opportunities for residents to be involved in the development of the Housing Ombudsmen Service as well as giving direct feedback on experience of using this service.

16. Allocations Breakdown April-June 2022

Andrew McNeil, Assistant Director Housing Investment & Strategy advised the committee that at the end of Quarter 1 2022, the Council had allocated 148 council house properties. He presented the following information:

- a) 49.3% of lettings were successfully allocated to people who were classed as homeless and therefore were prioritised for accommodation.
- b) 25% of lettings were allocated to tenants that were on the property register
- c) 25.7% were allocated via a transfer which resulted in tenants being allocated a property that was more suitable for their needs.

He welcomed members comments and questions.

Members discussed the report in full and presented officers with a range of questions, the following clarity was provided:

- Officers always carried out a pre tenancy interview at the property if the tenant was unable to come to City Hall
- There was currently no time limit on how long people were given to downsize. Members were reassured that when the new scheme for downsizing was up and running, assistance would be offered to people who were unable to carry out the move themselves.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

17. **ASB Update**

Keeley Johnson, Tenancy Services Manager:

- a) provided the committee with an update on the current position with anti-social behaviour in housing properties
- b) explained that the Antisocial Behaviour Crime and Policing Act (2014) gave local authorities increased powers and tools to deal with anti-social behaviour (ASB).
- c) highlighted that as of the end of June, Tenancy Services had 22 ASB cases as outlined at 3.1 of the report
- d) identified some of the key cases which included the following:
 - A Closure Order was served on a property on 1 June 2022, the tenant then terminated the tenancy when faced with absolute grounds Notice of Seeking Possession (NOSP)
 - An ongoing injunction application against a tenant was in process due to threats against staff and abusive behaviour aimed at Housing Officers and Customer Services

She welcomed members questions and comments.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

18. **Work Programme 2022/23**

The Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the work programme for Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee for 202/23 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:

- a) LTP minutes be added to all future Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee meetings
- b) The work programme be noted.

