

<b>Present:</b>	Councillors Councillor Gary Hewson ( <i>in the Chair</i> ), Alan Briggs, Liz Bushell, Natasha Chapman, Pat Vaughan and Loraine Woolley
<b>Apologies for Absence:</b>	Caroline Coyle-Fox (Vice-Chair of LTP)
<b>Lincoln Tenants Panel Members:</b>	Mick Barber (Chair of LTP), Mike Asher (Member of LTP), Sean Newton (Member of LTP) and Debbie Rousseau (Member of LTP)
<b>Also in Attendance:</b>	Councillor Donald Nannestad, Portfolio Holder for Quality Housing  Councillor Rebecca Longbottom, Portfolio Holder for Customer Experience, Review and Resources

**24. Confirmation of Minutes - 05 September 2024**

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 September 2024 be confirmed and signed by the Chair as a true record, subject to a typographical amendment being corrected as agreed, and relevant additional information being circulated to members as requested.

**25. Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were received.

**26. Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) Project Update**

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP), provided a written report which highlighted the Panel's continued work on a variety of projects with Housing tenancy services, fire safety assurance, maintenance, business management and resident involvement teams. It held monthly meetings, weekly void inspections, quarterly complaints and Anti-Social Behaviour complaint reviews. The briefing note, designed as a regular update to members of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee, covered the following areas:

- Mick Barber continued to attend Social Housing Quality Network Panel and ARCH committee meetings
- LTP had attended all the following training seminars hosted by Four Million Homes and engaged with Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) national involvement week:
  - Service Influencers Day - session highlighted tenant reviews, scrutinises, and mystery shopping to improve housing service.
  - Community Do-ers Day – These sessions highlighted tenants associations, block and community champions who make a difference in their communities.
  - Decision Makers Day – session highlighted techniques used by tenant board members and tenants when making their voices heard as part of their Landlords Governance structure.

- LTP organised a joint training workshop with North Kesteven District Council tenants' panel delivered by TPAS focusing on consumer standards and impact of Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's). LTP also attended the ARCH conference in September.
- LTP were working with the Resident Involvement Team to co-create a digital newsletter/magazine – HOME covering important updates, how to stay connected in communities, tips and advice, updates from LTP and more.
- LTP had attended their first session on the future of resident involvement and would be co-creating the new menu of involvement.

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

**27. Agenda Request from Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee: Reasons for Performance Downturn and Targets being Missed, Action Plans and Activity to Redress**

Joanne Crookes, Customer Services Manager had given her apologies for being unable to attend tonight's meeting due to planned leave.

She provided a written report on reasons for performance downturn and targets being missed, action plans and activity to redress, requested by Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee at its meeting held on 5 September 2024.

Emily Holmes, Assistant Director, Transformation and Strategic Development, presented the report on behalf of Joanne Crookes, which covered the following main topic areas:

- Customer Services Performance
- Service Purpose and Call Quality
- Call Waiting Times
- Mitigation for the Delay in Call Response
  - Call-Backs
  - Action Plan to Redress

She emphasised that officers welcomed feedback from customers if they had a complaint in order to put things right. She was happy for members if they wished to sit alongside Customer Services staff to help them gain an understanding of the way the team operated.

She welcomed members questions and comments.

Question: Reference was made to the older IT systems mentioned within the officer's report. When were the systems last updated?

Response: There were plans in place for improvements with the introduction of new IT systems. These were in the pipeline, however, they took time to develop.

Comment: Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenant's Panel welcomed the invitation for further observation of Customer Services staff in action. This was a fantastic team. He had seen the Customer Call-Back system in operation. He accepted there were issues, however, he appreciated how hard the staff worked.

Question: As performance levels were currently low had officers considered reducing the performance indicator for customer call waiting times?

Response by Chair: Performance indicators were set following discussion between Portfolio Holders and officers. As members, it was our responsibility to ensure performance matched these targets. This was a long running issue. Perhaps consideration could be given to lengthening the performance measures for call waiting times in future years.

RESOLVED that the content of the report, mitigation measures for the delay in call responses and action to redress issues be noted with thanks.

**28. Tenant Satisfaction Measures - Quarter 2 2024/25**

Michelle Hoyles, Housing Strategy Manager:

- a. presented a report to Members on the performance of the Council's landlord services against the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (tenant perception) for Quarter 2 of 2024/25 and summarised the actions being taken by the Directorate of Housing and Investment to continue to improve tenant satisfaction
- b. confirmed that following consultation with Lincoln Tenant's Panel it had no comments on the content of the report
- c. advised that the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) came into force in April 2023, TSM's were an integral part of the regulator's recently introduced Consumer Standards, most notably the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard
- d. highlighted the purpose of TSM's to ensure openness and transparency among social housing providers; specifically, how they treated tenants with fairness and respect so that they could access services, raise complaints, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account
- e. added that landlords were also required to understand the diverse needs of their tenants; engage with them, take their views into account when making decisions; communicate with their tenants, provide information and encourage effective scrutiny
- f. explained that the TSM's were in two parts:
  - 12 'tenant perception measures', obtained by surveying tenants for their views; and
  - 10 'management information measures', derived from data held by the landlord as part of their housing management and asset management activities
- g. referred to Appendix A of the report which gave a detailed analysis of the results of the tenant perception measures surveys completed during the second quarter of 2024/25
- h. reported that the ten management information measures had been incorporated into the quarterly performance reporting process, and

therefore would be presented to the Sub-Committee at its next meeting on 25 November 2024; an annual report on the Council's overall TSM performance would be reported to the Sub-Committee during the first quarter of the next reporting year

- i. highlighted that at the Sub-Committee meeting of 8 August 2024, committee members indicated their support for the following areas of focus for the current year, related to tenant satisfaction:
  - Improving how the Council responded to complaints;
  - Further analysis of tenants' perceptions around ASB and what the Council could do to improve this; and
  - Improved approaches to tenant participation and keeping tenants informed
- j. further outlined the background to the results of the tenant perception measures survey completed during the second quarter of 2024/25, covering the following areas:
  - Summary of Approach
  - Survey Findings
- k. invited members comments and review on the content and presentation of the report.

Members discussed the content of the report and key findings from the quarter 2 tenant perception survey in further detail.

The following questions and comments emerged:

Question: Could further clarification be given to the meaning of the TSM metric measure - 'Safe Home'?

Response: The question asked of tenants was how satisfied they were that their home was safe.

Question: Was it possible to change the graph at paragraph 5.1 of the report into two parts and in a bar chart format. This would make it easier to view and understand improvements and decline in survey results.

Response: Yes. These adjustments would be actioned in future reports. A piece of work would also be ongoing over the next year to share information with tenants to keep them informed of the projects we were doing.

Comment: Our satisfaction measure in respect of 'Listen and Act' had declined which was disappointing. The tenants' perception of how likely they would be to recommend City of Lincoln Council's Housing Service to other people had also declined.

Response: This issue correlated to reduced performance in customer call waiting times, which impacted on tenant satisfaction within the tenant perception survey

Comment: The best way to be approachable was to be seen as a face in the community.

Response: Yes. Further exploration was required on processes for the way we worked as a Council collaboratively as a whole, also to take the pressure off Customer Services staff/Housing Officers in answering queries.

Comment: Whilst Lincoln Tenant Panel members were observing Customer Services in action, each call had taken 20 minutes to deal with. This was indeed a difficult issue to address. It was important to get the message across to residents how our system operated and that other officers apart from Housing staff could help in relevant service area.

Response: Officers were currently in the process of visiting all tenants asking if they wished to be included in greater resident involvement. Perhaps this could also be achieved via e mail and/or online surveys although there was no quick fix here. The new service areas/contact details covering Tenancy/Anti-Social Behaviour and Rents may help.

Comment: Education was needed on effective action in response to telephone calls received. A system to seek permission to hold contact details for tenants was being looked at to enable us to act on feedback submitted. Compared to other local authorities, our tenant perception figures were quite good.

Comment: Telephone calls about repairs should be directed to Hamilton House.

Response by Daren Turner, Director of Housing and Investment: Wherever the calls were received from would not change the issues. A data collection study was required on calls received/what type of call/how long the call lasted and how many calls related to housing issues. We needed to ask these questions to allow us to make changes to services based on fact. This level of scrutiny was required first to inform future provision.

Question: Could telephone callers choose from a list of options of where they needed to be transferred to?

Response: When the calls came through, they were queued and triaged. Giving too many contact connection options was difficult as there were so many services. However, this could be looked at. Officers gave an assurance that the areas of data searching work mentioned above were being investigated, however it took time engaging with the various services. It was important to include the nature of calls as some service areas such as Housing Solutions took more time to deal with than others.

Question: At busy times e.g. Council Tax Bills being despatched, did Customer Services hold the capacity to deal with additional pressure?

Response: Yes, holidays were restricted during busy periods and shifts reallocated accordingly.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the report and the Tenant Satisfaction Measures data contained within be noted.
2. Given the Quarter 2 survey findings highlighted in this report, the Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee continued to support the priorities/focus listed in section 3.5. of the officer's report, also detailed above.

## **29. Anti-Social Behaviour Update**

Marianne Upton, Tenancy Services Manager and Ben Jackson, Public Protection, Anti-Social Behaviour and Licensing Manager:

- a. presented a report to update Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on the work done by the Tenancy Services Team and Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour (PPASB) Team to manage Anti-Social Behaviour in the city
- b. reported that Lincoln Tenant Panel (LTP) had not been formally consulted about this report but had the opportunity to comment on its contents at this meeting
- c. highlighted that an LTP working group had been set up to work with Debbie Savage, Area Housing Manager (ASB), on our processes and procedures and further improvements to the service for tenants reporting issues
- d. advised that both the Tenancy Services Team and the PPASB Team responded to, and case managed reports of Anti-Social Behaviour across the city
- e. highlighted the distinction between the Housing ASB team and PPASB team legislation which they relied on:
  - PPASB worked mainly with the Crime and Policing Act
  - The Tenancy Services Team in Housing used landlord and tenant law based in the Housing Acts
- f. outlined the work of the Tenancy Services Team which dealt with nuisance and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) relating to tenants, anyone who lived with them and visitors to their homes, covering the following main topic areas:
  - What is Nuisance and ASB?
  - Managing ASB
  - Tenancy Services Data for Q 1 and Q2 2024/25
- g. further outlined the work of the Public Protection and Anti-Social Behaviour Team to protect individuals, the community and the amenity of the city over a broad range of areas, providing both proactive and reactive activities, covering the following main topic areas:
  - Anti-Social Behaviour
  - Noise
  - Animals
  - Pests / Conditions of Gardens
  - Accumulations of Waste
  - Fly-Tipping Investigations
  - Management of the Safety Warden Service
  - Representation at the Community Safety Partnership
- h. provided service request figures and details of housing referrals to PPASB
- i. reported on the wider role of the PPASB Team and future focus for work going forward
- j. invited members comments on the content of the report.

Members discussed the content of the report in further detail.

The following questions and comments emerged:

Question: Lincolnshire Police did not address young people on scooters creating nuisance on the city streets and simply recorded incidents. Were we going back to tenants as parents to take responsibility for their children's behaviour?

Response: PPASB and housing officers held regular meetings to work alongside Lincolnshire Police and other agencies to issue warnings.

Question: Were there any funds to deal with waste bins being left on the streets?

Response: The process had been reviewed approximately a year ago and future policy was being looked at moving forward.

Question: Could Lincoln Tenants Panel be kept up to date with any progress on the policy relating to bins on the street?

Response: Yes, members would be kept informed as the policy went through the Committee process.

Question: Were officers dealing with the need for motorised scooters to be controlled sensibly by their operators?

Response: This area of work was something only Lincolnshire Police could deal with.

Question: Were officers still dealing with soft Anti-Social Behaviour within the banner of 'nuisance'?

Response: This was dealt with based on the level of impact it had in the community and the level of intent to the behaviour.

Members received clarification on the relevance of the service request figures at paragraph 9.3 and housing referrals to PPASB at paragraph 10.2 of the officer's report.

Paula Burton, Assistant Director, Housing Management confirmed that the increase in Tenancy cases registered within the report as received in Quarter two compared to that of Quarter 1 was due to improved record taking rather than being a negative result.

RESOLVED that the content of the report be noted.

### **30. Estate Inspections**

Maranne Upton, Tenancy Services Manager:

- a. presented a report to provide feedback on the issues identified during the 2024 Estate Inspections
- b. advised that five members of Lincoln Tenants Panel (LTP) attended the Estate Inspections this year, and had now formed a working group to meet early in November to review the issues raised; and as needed, re-visit certain areas to check progress with particular issues, together with looking at longer term work identified during the inspections
- c. highlighted that the number of issues raised for the whole of our estate areas in Lincoln was relatively low; this reflected better management on the estates by the Housing Officers and Caretakers, the improved repairs

processes and ongoing investment in our stock over the past couple of years

d. gave further detail to the key themes identified from the estate inspections in 2024 covering the following main areas:

- Bins
- Enhancements
- Fly Tipping
- General Maintenance
- Graffiti
- Grounds Maintenance/Gardens/Trees
- Parking
- Redundant Fixtures
- Repairs

e. invited members comments on the content of the report.

Members discussed the report in further detail. Comments and questions emerged and were responded to by officers as follows:

Comment: It would be useful to increase promotion on social media regarding fly-tipping to explain to the public its impact in terms of cost to the Council and on the community as a whole.

Question: The circulation of this report with issues identified was much appreciated. Was there a mechanism in place to update members on progress in order actions could be monitored?

Response: This would be monitored through the working group established with the LTP.

Question: Was our contractor informed about the issues following on from the inspections?

Response: Yes instructions were given to our contractor to clear any issues.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the report be noted.
2. The establishment of an LTP working group to evaluate the issues raised in the inspections be noted.

### **31. Estate Regeneration Investment Programme**

Maranne Upton, Tenancy Services Manager and Kevin Bowring, Investment Manager:

- a. presented a report to give information on how we were going to work together to deliver the Estate Regeneration Programme
- b. advised that the Lincoln Tenants Panel working group looking at the outcomes of the estate inspections would be feeding directly into this programme

- c. highlighted that this report related to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business plan strand of estate regeneration and the new Neighbourhood Management Policy; it looked at our vision for Clean, Green and Safe estates and what we aimed for the estates to be like in the next 10 years
- d. gave further detail in the context of housing management to "Clean, Green, and Safe", a guiding principle or framework used to ensure that residential environments were well-maintained, environmentally friendly, and secure as detailed at paragraph 4 of the officer's report
- e. outlined a strategy for the action we would be taking for investment through the business plan with a new process being agreed for referring work to be carried out as detailed at paragraph 5 of the officer's report
- f. invited members comments on the content of the report.

Members discussed the report in further detail. Comments and questions emerged and were responded to by officers as follows:

Question: Would this be a 30-year plan?

Response: Yes this was correct as part of the Housing Management Business Plan.

Question: In terms of keeping the streets clean and tidy, there had been an influx of fridges freezers left outside of properties for lengthy periods apparently for scrap collection.

Response: If members of the community would kindly report incidents to the Council of appliances being left for a long time at kerbside, this could be addressed.

Question: Were we still considering offering a free collection service for used/unwanted items to tenants on a Wednesday?

Response: The Investment Team were looking at the possibility of collecting items periodically in a caged van, or placing a skip for short periods of time. The Housing Service had purchased a HIAB vehicle for heavy lifting and had larger cage vehicles to increase capacity for larger items.

Question: Was it possible to erect bollards in green areas to stop residents parking on the grass?

Response: Any requests submitted by the relevant housing manager would be referred for evaluation by the relevant team.

Comment: It would be useful to increase promotion to residents on reporting issues of fly-tipping so the perpetrators could be prosecuted.

Response: The cost to the Council of fly -tipping removal was huge. We were always looking for potential solutions through social media measures so that tenants did not have to bear the cost of the bill.

RESOLVED that:

1. The content of the report be noted.
2. The requirement for Housing Scrutiny Sub Committee to receive a 6-monthly update on progress with any projects be noted.

### **32. Unacceptable Customer Actions Policy**

Emily Holmes, Assistant Director, Transformation and Strategic Development:

- a. presented a report to seek comments on the new Unacceptable Customer Actions Policy as detailed at Appendix 1, prior to its referral to Executive for approval
- b. reported that the Council now had a statutory duty to handle customer complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code. (The Code)
- c. referred to Section 5.14 of the Code self- assessment which stated that:
  - Landlords must have policies and procedures in place for managing unacceptable behaviour from residents and/or their representatives. Landlords must be able to evidence reasons for putting any restrictions in place and must keep restrictions under regular review.
- d. advised that whilst we had existing procedures for reporting incidents and handling reports of unacceptable behaviour it was not a formal policy document and therefore, we needed to develop and agree one to ensure that we were compliant with The Code
- e. highlighted that the new policy had been developed with the assistance of Lincoln Tenant's Panel who were keen to help ensure that while protecting staff the policy was also proportionate in terms of the action taken
- f. welcomed members feedback on the content of the report and draft policy.

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenant's Panel asked where the policy would be referred to following this meeting.

The Director of Housing and Investment confirmed that due to publication timelines stipulated by the Housing Ombudsman Service, the Chair of Policy Scrutiny Committee had agreed that it could be referred back to Policy Scrutiny Committee for their consideration after it was received by Executive, with the caveat that authority for any amendments suggested by Policy Scrutiny Committee be delegated by the Executive to the Director of Housing and Investment or the City Solicitor for action.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Draft Unacceptable Customer Actions Policy be referred to Executive for approval.
2. The assistance given by the Lincoln Tenant's Panel in developing this policy be noted.

### **33. Remedies Policy**

Emily Holmes, Assistant Director, Transformation and Strategic Development:

- a. presented a report to seek comments on the Department of Housing Draft Remedies Policy as detailed at Appendix 1, prior to referral to Executive for approval
- b. reported that the Council now had a statutory duty to handle customer complaints in line with the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) Complaint Handling Code (The Code)
- c. detailed the main statutory requirements expected of the Council as follows:
  - Section 7.1: Where something has gone wrong a landlord must acknowledge this and set out the actions it has already taken, or intends to take, to put things right.
  - Section 7.2: Any remedy offered must reflect the impact on the resident as a result of any fault identified.
  - Section 7.3: The remedy offer must clearly set out what will happen and by when, in agreement with the resident where appropriate. Any remedy proposed must be followed through to completion.
  - Section 7.5: Landlords must take account of the guidance issued by the Ombudsman when deciding on appropriate remedies.
- d. highlighted that whilst we had existing procedures for offering small sums to compensate loss, we did not have a formal policy document which was in line with the HOS Guidance on Remedies and therefore, we needed to develop and agree one to ensure that we were compliant with The Code
- e. advised that Lincoln Tenants Panel had made the following comments when consulted on this report:
  - Recommend the remedies policy be reviewed annually.
  - LTP request that they be provided with an annual report on the volume of compensation administered and areas of service related to.
  - Agree with the proposed compensation amounts and increments system relating to qualifying improvements, gesture of goodwill and payment of compensation to customers.
  - Recommend rent refund for disturbance allowance amount be reduced.
- f. invited members comments on the content of the report and Remedies Policy.

RESOLVED that:

1. The Draft Remedies Policy be referred to Executive for approval.
2. The assistance given by the Lincoln Tenant's Panel in developing this policy be noted.

#### **34. Housing Management Structure Update**

Paula Burton, Assistant Director, Housing Management provided a verbal update on the Housing Management Structure, covering the following main points:

**Training Coordinator** - would be starting with us on 2 December, coming into the office a few afternoons prior to meet people and get used to the place before starting. Dates to be confirmed.

**Housing Systems Officer** - An internal member of staff from Customer Services was successful at interview and test yesterday. The appointment was going through the motions with HR, to finalise a start date.

**Business Support Assistant** Interviews being conducted on 30 October and 1 November.

**Apprentice** - An update was awaited for a start date to be confirmed for the successful candidate. Expected to be November now, members would be updated shortly.

**Changes to Tenancy Services** - Still working through legacy cases with a pressure on the officers but working well to take the appropriate actions.

**Housing Officers** - We had interviewed and were just going through the offer stage for Housing Officers to carry out the tenant census.

**Supported Housing** - Now reporting to Marianne Upton, Tenancy Services Manager on a pilot basis. Clive Thomasson, Supported Housing Manager would be starting to work part time from January as flexible retirement.

**Housing Solutions Manager** - To start in mid-December.

**Rough Sleeping Programme Lead** – To start on 18 November.

Mick Barber, Chair of Lincoln Tenant's Panel asked to be updated by Work Base Learning on apprentices recruited.

RESOLVED that the verbal update be noted with thanks.

### **35. Work Programme 2024/25**

The Senior Democratic Services Officer:

- a. presented the work programme for Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee for 2024/25 as detailed at Appendix A of the report
- b. highlighted that the work programme could be further populated in accordance with Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committees requests for topics of discussion and areas of preferred scrutiny to be used as a working document, added to or amended at members discretion at any time during the 2024/25 Municipal Year
- c. confirmed that the work programme included those areas for scrutiny linked to the strategic priorities of the Council and themed housing matters, to ensure that the work of the committee was relevant and proportionate.

RESOLVED that the content of the Work Programme for 2024/25 be noted, subject to the following additions:

- An update on the Downsizing Policy be presented to the next meeting of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee to be held on 26 November 2024.
- The Assistant Director, Housing Management to liaise with Democratic Services, to reinstate the following agenda items on the work programme for future meetings (TBC) in lieu of holding Member Development sessions:
  - Tenancy Agreement
  - Allocations Policy Review
  - Caretaking Review
- An update be provided at the next meeting of Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee on 26 November 2024 in relation to Garage 'Rents/Empty/Vacant/Unused/Repairs/Lost Revenue and Future Planning'.
- A six-monthly update on the Estate Regeneration Investment Programme be added to the work programme for the first meeting of the 2025/26 Municipal Year.