



Housing Engagement Board

Quarterly Meeting

14 December 2023 – 2pm to 4pm

Agenda Pack

Housing Engagement Board Agenda

Date: **Thursday, 14 December 2023**

Time: **2pm – 4pm**

Venue: **Zoom (Virtual Meeting)**

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1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair will welcome all present and apologies will be noted.

2. Quorum

A quorum shall consist of 50% of members.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting – 28 September 2023

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2023 are included for approval.

Housing Engagement Board
Minutes of the Quarterly Meeting
held on Thursday, 28 September 2023
from 2pm to 4pm via Zoom

- Attendees:** Cllr John Batchelor – Chair
Peter Campbell (SCDC – Head of Housing)
Dave Kelleway – Vice Chair
Bob Buss
Jim Watson
Les Rolfe
Margaret Wilson
Oana Sutherland
- By Invitation:** Julie Fletcher (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Strategy)
Geoff Clark (SCDC – Services Manager – Tenancy and Estates)
Eddie Spicer (SCDC – Service Manager – Housing Assets)
Bronwen Taylor (SCDC – Resident Involvement Officer) – Minute taker
Gina Manderson (SCDC – Resident Involvement Communications Officer) –
Admin Support
- Apologies:** Cllr Mark Howell
Cllr Jose Hales (absent – no apology received)
Dave Armitage (SCDC – Resident Involvement Team Leader)

1. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting at 2.03pm. He especially welcomed Bob Buss, the new tenant representative for the West.

Apologies were received from Councillor Mark Howell and Dave Armitage.

2. Quorum

The meeting was quorate.

3. Minutes of previous meeting – 17 July 2023

The Chair referred to the minutes of the meeting held on 17 July 2023.

The minutes were approved by the board as a true reflection of the meeting.

3.1 Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 17 July 2023

The matters arising from the previous meeting are listed below.

Item 4.1 – Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 23 March 2023

Item 2 – Appointment of Chair

The Chair advised that at the previous meeting, the following amendment to the Terms of Reference document had been requested:

- Point 6.3 – the term of office for the Vice-Chair to be changed from 24 months to 12 months

Bronwen Taylor advised that a further point, under the above point had been added which read:

- Point 6.4 – The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected every 12 months

Dave Kelleway said he thought there should be further minor changes as follows:

- Point 6.1 – SCDC will provide an experienced person to chair the meetings for the first year. Afterwards the HEB members will nominate and vote for a chair.

The point to be removed, as the first year had passed, and be replaced with:

- The Chair will normally be the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing and the Vice Chair will be an elected tenant representative unless none was available.

The following point to be amended as follows:

- Point 6.2 – The Vice-Chair will be an elected tenant representative unless none are available. Any HEB member, willing to undertake relevant training, may put their name forward.

The words “suitably trained” be removed from Point 6.3.

Dave Kelleway referred to point 4.1 and said that the make-up of the board should be reviewed as there were no guarantees that a leaseholder would always be a member, as we could end up with no leaseholders or all leaseholders. He thought that it should read:

- Two elected tenant representatives from each area plus one leaseholder from the district

Dave Kelleway said that this would ensure that there would be one leaseholder who would represent all leaseholders from the district. He added that the word “consecutive” be added after “two” in point 4.8 as it was not clear whether it was annually or consecutive.

The Chair said that the minor changes would be made and suggested that the make-up of the board be discussed at the next meeting.

Peter Campbell said a wider piece of work being done by Dave Armitage on the structure of tenant participation and this would be presented at the next quarterly meeting. He added that a politician had made a suggestion to allow for substitutions for councillors who could not attend these meetings and the current Terms of Reference was silent on this point, and he asked if this would be supported by the wider tenants group.

The Chair said that this issue would be discussed at the next meeting.

Dave Kelleway said that the difficulty for some councillors was that these were daytime meetings that clashed with other meetings and he did not think they would dispute the need that councillors substitute for each other as it was important to have attendance by councillors. He asked if he could propose that the changes to the smaller points referred to above be implemented.

The Chair said that there were no objections, however, the only issue that he had was that he was reluctant for the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing to always be the Chair as they should choose the Chair.

Dave Kelleway asked if point 6.1 could say “will normally be the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing” which meant that it would not always have to be.

The Chair said that he would prefer that it was elected and that the whole board was in favour of the Chair.

Dave Kelleway said that it was important for someone in his position to Chair the meetings as they would participate in and be fully engaged in the HEB.

Peter Campbell said that as the wider review on the structure was being conducted, he did not feel that major changes, such as the position of the Chair, should be made to the Terms of Reference document.

The Chair said the original minor changes referred to earlier were to be made.

Actions by: Bronwen Taylor and Dave Armitage

Item 4.1 – Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 23 March 2023

Item 5.3 – Sheltered Housing Schemes Audit Accounts

Bronwen Taylor advised that Dave Armitage had confirmed that the statements would be displayed at all communal halls. She said that Marianne Crozier, Sheltered Estate Team Leader, was working on the format with Martin Lee.

Item 5.5 – Estate Inspections Report

Bronwen Taylor emailed the Estate Inspections Standards – Gradings document and the Estate Inspections Standards Questionnaire document to the board on 18 July 2023.

Item 6.1 – Co-option of New Member (West Area)

A letter of thanks, signed by Cllr John Batchelor, was emailed to Peter Tye on 27 July 2023 and a copy posted on 9 August 2023.

Item 6.3 – Policy Review

Mutual Exchange Policy

Julie Fletcher emailed the details on how to make a written statement to Cabinet and how to attend the Cabinet meeting to make a statement to the board on 2 August 2023.

Item 6.4 – Service Plan and Resourcing

- 1.) A report on the Reasons for Refusal was included in the agenda pack for noting.
- 2.) Julie Fletcher did not receive feedback on the Service Plan from the board.
- 3.) The following tenant volunteers gave input on the Aids and Adaptations policy:
 - Les Rolfe
 - Eleni Koutso
 - Patti Hall
 - Paul Bowman

Item 7.1 – Stock Condition Survey

Eddie Spicer received the details of the complaint from Les Rolfe and advised that he was happy with the service provided by the contractor.

4. Standing Items

4.1 Mears Repairs Contract – Performance Review Joint Working Group

Eddie Spicer referred to and apologised that the meetings for August and September 2023 were cancelled, the first one due to the bank holidays and the other as his father had passed away. He added that the contract was going well and things were improving.

Margaret Wilson referred to the installation of carbon monoxide detectors and said that she was appalled at the standard of work. She said that when her one was installed it was hung on her kitchen wall by a nail being knocked into the wall, as the Mears operative did not have the correct tools for the job, and that another had been hung on by a double-sided tape hook which fell off and broke an ornament. She asked what kind of oversight was there from SCDC for the standard and quality of repairs done by Mears.

Eddie Spicer said they did take on any comments that were made and also did some post inspections on repairs, however, they could not have enough resources to follow up on every repair that was carried out. He added that they did rely on feedback and of the 3,500 installations done to date, this was the first time that he had heard of problems.

Margaret Wilson said that the tenant whose repair she was referring to thought that this was what was expected from the council and did not bother to say anything about it.

The Chair suggested that the issue be reported.

Margaret Wilson asked what was being done to monitor work done by Mears.

Julie Fletcher said that since July 2023, M.E.L Research have been commissioned to conduct monthly satisfaction surveys on Mears repairs, either by text or telephone, and this information would be reported at the HPP quarterly meetings.

Margaret Wilson said that it needed somebody from SCDC to go around and check on random jobs done.

Peter Campbell said that this was why it was so important to report issues, and that if had been reported at the time of the repair, it would have been investigated.

4.2 Forward Plan 2023 / 2024

Julie Fletcher referred to the Forward Plan included in the pack and referred to the items planned for December 2023, as follows:

- Tenancy Policy – which is about not having fixed term tenancies and making sure that it was aligned with all the statutory legislation

- Introductory Tenancy Policy / Procedure – which feed into the Tenancy Policy
- Assignment & Succession Policy – which feed into the Tenancy Policy
- Homelessness Review
- Improvement Plan
- Resident Involvement Framework

She asked if there were any items that the board wanted added to the Forward Plan and brought to the meetings.

Dave Kelleway referred to the Mutual Exchange Policy and asked for a report to be presented and discussed at meetings.

Julie Fletcher asked how often the data should be presented and suggested every six months in order to have qualitative data. She added that the policy had been approved and the next stage would be to roll out training in the next month to all the housing officers and anyone else who would be involved in mutual exchanges.

4.3 Estate Inspections Report

Bronwen Taylor referred to the enclosed report for noting.

Les Rolfe asked why the Gradings for the inspection held on 24 August 2023 were missing.

Bronwen Taylor advised that Andrew Cole had conducted the inspection on behalf of the HSO as she was on sick leave. She added that she had asked her to update the worksheet which had since been done.

Les Rolfe referred to the inspection held on 27 July 2023 and the issues for Cannons Close where Andrew Cole had said that he would remove the weeds when he was next in the area.

Geoff Clark explained that HSOs often did small jobs such as this on their estates.

Les Rolfe said that although that was good, it was work that should have already been done by SP Landscapes and they should not be asked to quote on such jobs.

Geoff Clarke said that it appeared that this was for work that was beyond the contract or for work that we were asking for SP Landscapes to attend to that was scheduled at a certain time of the year and not every time they were out. He added that he would be discussing this later on in the agenda.

5. New Matters

5.1 Aids and Adaptations Policy

Julie Fletcher advised this was a review of the Aids and Adaptations Policy which was highlighted in the Ombudsman case about communicating better in terms of time scales when we were looking at disabled adaptations. She said a workshop was held with members of the HPP to review the document and that she had received constructive feedback and comments which were incorporated into the policy. She added that it was being brought to the HEB for either approval or any further comments.

Dave Kelleway referred to the following bullet point of item 11, Refusal of Adaptation, in the policy document and said he thought it was appalling and should not be in the policy.

- Where a resident or their family is deemed to be under occupying by one or more bedrooms. And where suitable alternative accommodation will likely become available within 12 months.

Julie Fletcher clarified that this only applied to “significant” adaptations, and that these were examples of refusals and gave an example of when it could be used. She said we were being pragmatic in making best use for meeting those needs.

Dave Kelleway said the policy did not state what type of adaptation would be refused. He added that it needs clarification as we need to think about tenants and we should not force them to move.

Julie Fletcher said she would make the changes to the policy.

Action by: Julie Fletcher

5.2 Damp and Mould Policy Update

Peter Campbell advised that this policy was 95% completed and that a workshop with tenant volunteers would be held. He said that they did not want to wait until the next meeting, therefore, after the workshop, the document would be circulated for comments after which it would be taken through the formal approval process as soon as possible in order for it to be implemented. He asked for volunteers to contact him.

The Chair said that he had seen statistics from the Stock Condition Survey on mould which was running at 1.5% with some issues.

Peter Campbell said we were confident that we were dealing with known cases of damp and mould quickly, however, what had come out of the survey was that there were a small

number of tenants who had extreme issues of mould but had not made the council aware. He added that it was allowing us to address these and to make follow up visits to these cases.

5.3 Grounds Maintenance Contract

Geoff Clark said that he acknowledges that they should have done more to involve the tenant representatives in the procurement of the grounds maintenance contract. He added that it was a joint procurement with Cambridge County Council which included their park and ride sites and the guided busway. He said that the winning contractor provides a service for both elements of the contract, and what they deliver and what we deliver were managed completely separately. He said that SP Landscapes was awarded the contract and that there was one other contractor who was close, however, they were three times more expensive.

Geoff Clark said that the service standards needed to be refreshed and they would have the opportunity to do this at the beginning of the contract. He asked for volunteers and said he was looking at a meeting on 11 October 2023, where they would explore all the options available.

Margaret Wilson said the grounds maintenance maps needed to be updated and suggested that they be displayed in communal areas. She also suggested incorporating doubling nature in the SP Landscapes contract.

Geoff Clark said our maps were quite accurate and SP Landscapes knew our district well. He agreed that there were some changes that we had not made and said that the new Lands Officer would make sure the maps were accurate. He said SP Landscapes were willing to work with us with doubling nature and were already involved with tree planting, delivering labour to plant trees free of charge, working at weekends, watering new trees and identifying areas for wild-flower planting.

Les Rolfe said they had still not had sight of the previous service standards document. He added that the maps were not accurate as when he had walked along a footpath with staff from SP Landscapes, they were not aware that it existed even though it was on the map. He said that hedges, shrubs and footpaths were also on the maps which they should be looking after yet SCDC were still asking them to quote for work on these issues.

Geoff Clark said that with the weather we have had this year, trees, shrubs and hedges had grown a lot more than last year. He added that SP Landscapes do a cut of shrubs and

hedges at the beginning and end of each season, so if they were growing in between that time, they were not going to cut them unless it was a health and safety risk and we asked them.

Les Rolfe said there were some hedges at blocks of flats that had not been cut in years and he felt that they were not doing what they were contracted to do.

Geoff Clark said he acknowledged that maps used at the inspections were not truly accurate and the recruitment of the Lands Officer would bring about real improvements in terms of how we maintain the maps and make sure they were as accurate as possible.

Dave Kelleway said the one problem was that they were not doing what they should be and the other was the number of cuts being done a year, which could not be reduced. He asked if it would not be more efficient to put more money into the contract and get the jobs done properly than having to pay for ad-hoc work to be done, which cost more.

Geoff Clark said that it was something that they could look at. He reminded the board that the grounds maintenance budget would not be fully HRA funded and there was cross funding from the general fund, therefore if the grounds maintenance budget were increased, it would have an effect on the general fund as well.

Action by: Geoff Clark

5.4 Proposed revised Consumer Standards and Fees payable to the Regulator

Julie Fletcher said the Consumer Standards and Fees payable to the Regulator were being revised since the implementation of the Social Housing Regulator Act and she felt that the consumer standards were being tightened making them much more robust in terms of what was expected from landlords in terms of providing housing.

Julie Fletcher said that they were not going to respond to the consultation as there were no concerns and our focus was working towards making sure that we could implement them. She said that many officers within housing were also part of different working groups within the Chartered Institute of Housing or the Housing Quality Network, and were feeding into those consultation responses. She added that she had sent the link to the consultation as the board may want to collectively respond to it. She added that they were having in-house training on the proposals the following week.

Julie Fletcher said there was also a consultation on how the regulator would be paid and there were some proposals put forward in terms of how the regulator would charge fees to all housing providers. She said that previously only housing associations paid the fees and

as local authorities were regulated differently, we did not pay them. She reported that now there was a proposal that we would also have to pay a fee between £7 and £8 per property per year, which totalled approximately £40,000 per year for us. She said that we would be responding to this proposal.

5.5 Access to reports and confidential matters

Margaret Wilson said that this issue had been raised as they had been made aware of an Ombudsman report, which they were refused sight of when asked to see it, and they had not had sight of the grounds maintenance tenders due to data protection. She said that she thought it was important for tenant representatives who were representing all tenants to have sight of confidential information and referred to item 19 in the table on page 16 of the Taroe Trust report included in the pack. She said she thought that at least one tenant representative had access to data protected information in order for tenants to have a meaningful part of any process where data protection was an issue. She added that they should be trusted to sign a confidentiality agreement in order to have access to confidential information and thought they should have a discussion on this subject.

Peter Campbell said that he agreed that an environment of openness was important and he was happy to work together with tenant representatives and our data protection officers to work out a protocol for when sharing information was appropriate. He referred to the two issues raised, those being the grounds maintenance contract and the Ombudsman case, and said that some of the data for the grounds maintenance contract was not ours and the Ombudsman case had very personal information about somebody's health issues. He said they needed to have clear guidance and suggested that Dave Armitage work with our Data Protection Officer to outline what was possible, and have a working group to look at this issue to report back to the board.

Action by: Dave Armitage

5.6 Tpas National Tenants Conference – Reports

The Chair referred to reports from Jim Watson and Paul Bowman included in the pack for noting. He asked Jim Watson if he had any further comments to add.

Jim Watson said that the conference was interesting and it was always good to keep up to date with changes in legislation.

6. Any Other Business (AOB)

6.1 Stock Condition Survey and Energy Certification

Margaret Wilson referred to the Stock Condition Survey and the Energy Certification, and said she would like to see the list of the measures and criteria used for both. She said that when she had the energy certification, she asked the technician about cavity wall insulation and he said that she had it as there were two concrete plugs in the outside wall. She added that another tenant who had problems with the cold removed some bricks and it did not look as though the cavity wall insulation was very effective. She said she asked him how he knew the condition of the insulation and his reply was that it had been done and if she wanted to have it checked to make sure it was working efficiently, she would have to pay for the survey. She asked if the council had records of cavity wall insulation and of repairs done in properties, and asked if the HEB could have sight of the questionnaires that were completed for these surveys.

Eddie Spicer said that it was a standard set of government questions that could not be changed. He advised that this was a non-intrusive survey which meant that they would not take out bricks in walls or look in boarded lofts to check the insulation. He said we were conducting investigations which was in relation to another project where we were looking at cavity wall insulation that may have de-graded, and that may need to be extracted and re-done. He said that once all the worst performing stock was brought to a satisfactory level within our targets for 2030 of an average Band C, we would then start to look at the rest of our properties and do a more intrusive survey into the cavity wall to see what improvements we could make on those properties.

Eddie Spicer referred to the Stock Condition Survey and said there were three categories which were condition, risk and energy. He said it was purely a visual survey to determine the condition and suggested lifespan of items which were currently in the property and from that we could plan work replacements in the future. He added that they were also conducting a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) survey to identify any hazards, for example, trip hazards, banisters removed from stairs and damp and mould, which as landlords we need to be aware of. He said the third area was to collect data on the energy data. He added that it was all standard government information gathering.

Margaret Wilson asked why they could not have sight of the questions.

Eddie Spicer said that they could and he would send them to the HEB.

Peter Campbell added that the Stock Condition Survey looked at all elements of a property, which are, the walls, roofs, windows, doors, etcetera, which gave us several

metrics being the size, the type and an estimate of the remaining life. He said this information would be shared with all tenant representatives.

Dave Kelleway asked what records were held by the council, for example, the age of the property, when major repairs such as new bathrooms were fitted, etcetera and if this information was given to the surveyors.

Eddie Spicer said that we did have the full information on all our properties but did not give it to the surveyors as they wanted the properties to be look at “with fresh eyes”.

Action by: Eddie Spicer

6.2 Policies on Net Zero

Dave Kelleway said some TPP members were concerned about what they read in the media about net zero, in terms of heat source pumps, air source pumps, etcetera, and had asked for a report on the Council’s policies on progressing towards this. He added that people were worried that this would be imposed on them.

Peter Campbell said that this was outlined in a great detail in the Asset Management Strategy and said our first approach was to make the houses as well insulated and as easy to heat as possible. He added that the information Stock Condition Survey and some of the trial work that we were doing would help to inform the next steps to renewable heating systems.

Dave Kelleway asked if there were currently any plans in terms of renewable energy systems.

Peter Campbell said with new builds and when we replace heating systems, we look at viable alternatives. He said that when looking at alternative heating systems, what was needed as a prerequisite was a warm, well insulated property and in the early years of the Asset Management Strategy, our focus was on providing that so that we were reducing energy use. He added that in the later days, when the heating systems need replacing, we would be in a better position to replace them with one that was “green”. He added that the net zero target from the council was 2050.

Dave Kelleway asked Peter Campbell if would send an email to all the tenant representatives advising that this issue had been raised and explaining what the policy was.

Peter Campbell said that tenant representatives were involved in the progress of the strategy and signing it off at the time, however, he would send an email with a link to the strategy.

Eddie Spicer said that with technology constantly changing, the council were continuously monitoring the performance of heat source pumps. He added that any decisions or plans that were made and put in place, were cost effective to tenants.

Action by: Peter Campbell

6.3 Structure of HEB

Julie Fletcher referred to the restructure of the HEB, of having different member input into the meetings and the timings of meetings, and said that we would look at that these as part of the review which was on the Forward Plan for December 2023. She said that we would have further meetings before December 2023 to discuss the structure.

6.4 Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Julie Fletcher referred to the structure of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey and said that we were about to start the Tenant Satisfaction Survey which we had to conduct in terms of the new regulations. She said that there were a set of questions that we had to ask which could not be changed, however, we did have the opportunity to ask additional questions and she would be in contact with all the tenant representatives to ask for any questions they would like to include in the survey.

Action by: Julie Fletcher

6.5 Decoration Grants

Jim Watson said he had been approached by a few elderly residents in sheltered housing asking if the council offered decoration grants. He said that many years ago the council did offer them and asked if they were still available.

Eddie Spicer said that we did have the handyman service which could be utilised and he was not aware of any decoration grant, however, he would check and advise the HEB.

Action by: Eddie Spicer

7. Proposed Meeting Dates for 2023 / 2024

The Chair referred to the proposed meeting dates for 2023 / 2024 as follows:

- 14 December 2023 (Zoom / venue to be confirmed)
- 28 March 2024 (Zoom / venue to be confirmed)

8. Closing

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting ended at 3:51pm.

3.1 Matters Arising from previous Meeting

Item 3.1 – Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 17 July 2023

Item 4.1 – Matters Arising from previous Meeting – 23 March 2023

Item 2 – Appointment of Chair

Action: Bronwen Taylor to amend the Terms of Reference document.

Report back: The Terms of Reference document has been amended as follows:

- Point 6.1 – SCDC will provide an experienced person to chair the meetings for the first year. Afterwards the HEB members will nominate and vote for a chair.

The point to be removed, as the first year had passed, and be replaced with:

- The Chair will normally be the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing and the Vice Chair will be an elected tenant representative unless none was available.

The following point to be amended as follows:

- Point 6.2 – The Vice-Chair will be an elected tenant representative unless none are available. Any HEB member, willing to undertake relevant training, may put their name forward.

The words “suitably trained” be removed from Point 6.3.

For noting.

Item 5.3 – Grounds Maintenance Contract

Action: Geoff Clark to invite tenant representatives to a workshop on 11 October 2023 to discuss the Grounds Maintenance contract.

Report back: The workshop was held on 8 November 2023.

Geoff Clark to report.

Item 5.5 – Access to reports and confidential matters

Action: Dave Armitage to obtain clear guidance from the Data Protection Officer.

Report back: Dave Armitage to report back under item 5.5 of the agenda.

Item 6.1 – Stock Condition Survey and Energy Certificate

Action: Eddie Spicer to send the standard set of government questions to the HEB.

Report back: The following documents were emailed to the HEB on 28 September 2023:

- Government guidance to HHSRS (142631) which will detail for you the 29 areas that are looked at and scored accordingly
- 3 x documents showing the questions being asked of the Stock condition survey
- 2 x excel files with examples of the data being collected (no actual data from SCDC)

For noting.

Item 6.3 – Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Action: Julie Fletcher to contact all tenant representatives for input on the Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

Report back: Julie Fletcher to report

Item 6.4 – Decoration Grants

Action: Eddie Spicer to investigate if decoration grants are still available.

Report back: An email explaining why the decoration grants were stopped about 9 years ago was sent to the HEB on 29 September 2023.

For noting.

4. Standing Items

4.1 Repairs Performance Group

The Annual Report on the contract is included for noting.

Eddie Spicer to report.



Working together to care for your home



Annual Contract Review Report

A Year of Progress 2023

Eddie Spicer

Service Manager – Housing Assets

November 2023



True and Effective Collaboration

The repairs contract reached its first anniversary on the 3rd of October 2023.

The year has been interesting, fast paced and has made impressive improvements for the services we provide and the experience of the customer.

Working together across all sections, residents, officers, and members e have delivered an effective repairs service suitable for the future.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This executive summary provides an overview of the annual contract review for the social housing repairs contract between South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and Mears. This contract, which commenced on 3rd October 2022, plays a crucial role in ensuring the quality and efficiency of maintenance and repair services for our social housing portfolio.

Key Objectives

The primary objectives of this annual contract review are as follows:

- Assess the contractor's performance and adherence to the terms of the agreement.
- Identify areas of improvement and opportunities for enhancing service quality and efficiency.
- Ensure compliance with all applicable regulations and standards.
- Review financial aspects, including budget adherence and cost-effectiveness.
- Enhance communication and collaboration between both parties.
- Performance Evaluation:

Quality of Work

Mears has demonstrated a commitment to delivering high-quality repair and maintenance services. This includes meeting the quality of work demanded by the Council.

Timeliness

Mears has generally met the established timelines for repairs, addressing emergency situations promptly.

However, there were some minor delays in certain areas of work such as ground works, fencing and some LAS flooring, requiring improvement. To address this Mears have put in additional measures including operative upskilling and additional contractor support from central teams and sub-contractors

Customer Satisfaction

Overall tenant satisfaction remains high, with 93% of residents reporting satisfaction with the service.

Complaints have been low minimal over the period. All complaints have been fully investigated and any lessons learnt have been used to improve the service further. Full details are shown further within this report.

Compliance and Regulatory Adherence

Mears have shown a commitment to compliance with relevant laws and regulations, ensuring safety and quality standards are met.

Regular audits and inspections confirm that the contractor maintains a compliant approach in all operations.

Asset Management and improvement projects

In addition, as acting as the repair's contractor for the Council the new contract places an obligation for Mears to be more involved in wider projects. Successes include the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), where Mears have been fundamental in the successful award of funding from Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DENZ) to help decarbonise our properties with funding value of £1.8m. The Mears central team are supporting the delivery of the project over the next 2 years. This will involve the installation of measures such as Insulation, Windows and Doors, Solar Water Heating and Photo Voltaic, and in some cases upgrading heating systems.

Financial Performance

Budgetary Control

The contract remains within budget for the year, demonstrating fiscal responsibility and cost control.

Cost-Efficiency:

The contract has returned a cost-effective impact for the Council. The structure of the contract has provided some buffer for the Council against the impact of material cost inflation and fuel costs. The Contract is based on general inflation based on Retail Price Index (RPI) rather than inflations based off the Building Cost Index (BCI) which has been significantly higher.

The pricing structure of Price per Property for repairs, Gas servicing and Empty Property works has meant we have seen savings per property on all areas of works, this was a model used solely on repairs in the old contract terms and proved beneficial once implemented and has been the same during the first year of this contract.

Recommendations for Improvement

Addressing Timeliness:

Mears should work to minimise delays, especially in flooring and roofing, by optimizing resource allocation and scheduling.

Handling Tenant Concerns

Continue with the improvements that have been implemented over the year to improve the customer journey if things have not gone to plan. The new positions in Mears created to support the contract in customer service roles, have led to the creation of a very good system within Mears and the contact centre which deal with issues rapidly and effectively. Issues raised by residents are directed to dedicated staff members with a suitable level of authority to act and resolve issues rapidly.

This has led to a reduction in complaints, and the complaints that were received have been used through lessons learnt to influence change and ongoing improvements in the service and processes used. Full details of complaints performance are shown in detail within the report.

Continued Compliance

Ensure ongoing compliance with regulatory standards and safety measures, with particular attention housing standards and customer perception along with ongoing regulatory compliance in all areas of building safety embedded within the day-to-day delivery.

Enhancing Efficiency, Sustainability and Cost Efficiencies

Explore further opportunities for cost savings and resource Optimisation while maintaining service quality.

Maintain scheduling and delivery efficiency.

Continue to explore new products and materials for sustainability, energy efficiency cost effective delivery.

Conclusion

The annual contract review highlights the positive performance of Mears in delivering quality repair and maintenance services to our social housing portfolio. However, there are areas where improvements are needed to ensure continued tenant satisfaction and operational excellence.

Moving forward, it is imperative for both parties to collaborate closely, addressing the identified areas of concern and building upon the strengths of the existing partnership to ensure the continued success of this essential social housing repairs contract.

SCDC remains committed to the collaborative pursuit of excellence in social housing maintenance and looks forward to working together with Mears to enhance our services in the coming year.

Carbon report

We are aiming to be able to report on the Carbon impact of the contract in its entirety, unfortunately at this time, Mears collate the information on a corporate level covering all clients. We have managed to extract the vehicle fuel usage data as shown below as this is a measurable impact at branch level, the wider report is being worked on at Mears.

The below report shows that there has been a reduction in vehicle emissions related to the contract by 13 Tonnes for the same period the previous year.

Summary of Organisation's Emissions										
GHG Emissions Source	2021/2022					20212/2023				
	Activity Data					Activity Data				
DIESEL 10PPM UK	123001.4	Litres	2.51233	309.0201073		120643.3	Litres	2.51233	303.0957819	
ULTIMATE DIESEL 10PP	3486.25	Litres	2.51233	8.8		2081.85	Litres	2.51233	5.2	
ULTIMATE UNLEADED 10	230.37	Litres	2.19352	0.5		44.63	Litres	2.19352	0.1	
Unleaded 10PPM	2718.29	Litres	2.19352	6.0		1615.54	Litres	2.19352	3.5	
Total Emissions (Tonnes CO2e)	324.2466624					311.9676922				

We are continually reviewing activities and lessons learnt from comments, complaints and service reviews.

Lessons Learned

- Call wait times are too long:
 - Mears have employed additional Call Handlers and Planners to improve call wait times. They have also removed the options on the phones for heating and responsive repairs to streamline call handling and reduce waiting times.
- Poor communication is received, lack of updates:
 - Following the increase in office staff Mears now have more resource available to contact customers with updates.
- It was difficult to report repairs outside of office opening hours:
 - Repairs can now be booked via the active housing portal at a time convenient to them. And this will be enhanced further by the end of 2023 with the introduction of the dedicated App with full tracking and communications functions.

Continuous Improvements

- Communication – improvements made – having 1 telephone number for 1 point of contact
- Recalls – A dedicated SOR (Schedule of Rates) at zero cost has been created to monitor Key Performance Indicator (KPI) accurately, and evidence attendance.
- Asset management – stock surveys for PAS2035 decarbonisation works
- Mears have invested in TCW Certification validation software for improved accuracy of certification provided and the software delivers the certification directly into the SCDC system for review and compliance.

Online repairs portal

- Web based option to report repairs 24 / 7
- Introduction of dedicated App M+Me for repairs

Delivering Bid Commitments

Green Working practices

- Mears have amended operational processes and have zoned the district into 3 areas significantly reducing driving hours and fuel usage, reducing time and carbon output. This can be seen below in the carb on reporting figures.

Fleet 50% EV in first year

- Have not been able to implement due to lack of local infrastructure to support but still high on agenda for future implementation.

Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund

- Successful in the retrofit grants being awarded £1.8M which will see 250 properties brought up to a minimum C EPC rating, contract benefiting from the partnership with Mears Carbon Reduction Team who have provided a large amount of analytics and research work in the compilation of the grant bid and delivery project management.

Sustainability

- Have moved away from tiling and trialled wall boards
- Boilers specification change from Vaillant to Ideal which includes integrated smart controls further improving efficiency to the resident.
- Mears Task Team fencing developing and provide opportunities for innovative renewable fencing.

Subcontractors

- Mears have been proactive in a recruitment drive and have signed up 3 new contractors to support voids and in process of signing up a new pest control contractor to support SCDC pest control.

Resilience

- Task team Mears have introduced a national task team to support peak work flows in local contracts, these are currently being used to deliver a peak in fencing and groundworks, from November 2023 there will also be a decorating team working within the contract to deliver some peaks in this area.
- Fencing team mobilised

Resident involvement

- Monthly meeting and Mears national scrutiny



Performance

Performance of the contract as a whole has increased against targets, the contract targets set against the contract are particularly ambitious in comparison to national average achievements, the results proven from the contract have been close but not quite to the targets set, however the achieved performance figures against the national averages as provided by HouseMark peer statistics we are performing well in the upper quartile of national performance with our sector peers.

All performance statistics are monitored by the:

Operational Core Group monthly

The Resident working Group for the Repairs contract Monthly

Housing Performance Panel (HPP) / Housing Engagement Board (HEB) Quarterly Meetings

Strategic Core Group Quarterly

Members and Leadership Quarterly

Extract from HouseMark Pulse survey

Housemark Pulse survey results from March 2023					L = Lower values are better Quartile 1 is top performing N = Neutral (no polarity) No quartile is top performing H = Higher values are better Quartile 3 is top performing			
Measure	Quartile 1	Median	Quartile 3	Polarity	SCDC average for the new contract year	Contract targets set	Commentary	Comparison to Pulse
Proportion of homes with a valid gas safety certificate	99.87%	99.99%	100%	H	100%	100%		Equal to top performing in the sector
Emergency repairs completed (per 1,000 units)	48.6	73.2	100	N	4.16	15%	Ratio emergency /routine 5%/95%	Emergency repairs fall considerably below national averages
Non-emergency repairs completed (per 1,000 units)	182.4	241.7	295.6	N	267	85%	Considerably exceeding the target	Non emergency repairs within the average per 1000 units
Percentage of non-emergency repairs completed within target	72.90%	83.20%	91.40%	H	92%	97%	Performing higher than top quartile but not reaching contract targets	Exceed national averages
Satisfaction with repairs (transactional)	79.40%	86.40%	93.00%	H	93%	95%	Independent average for July - October 93%	Equals the highest Quartile
*Electrical is not included as that is carried out with another contractor								

Empty Property Relet Performance

Empty Property Relet performance is an area where the contract is struggling to keep pace with demand, the numbers of Empty Properties returned to SCDC over the past year has increased by approximately 50 properties, in addition to the temporary let and shared equity properties that are not recorded in the standard figures.

The volumes of work required in these properties has increased, this is due to the age of some stock, the condition returned for many reasons, we suspect that the cost-of-living crisis has had a bearing on this but there are no definite trends on this, but benchmarking information suggests that this is a national trend since Covid restrictions were lifted.

The target set for these within the contract is very ambitious, since the introduction of the contract we have worked hard on analysing the processes and reporting to be clearer and more transparent in the reporting process. Initially there was just the one target KPI for overall return times.

Although we still report this overall figure, we have split the targets into types to show a more accurate reporting process.

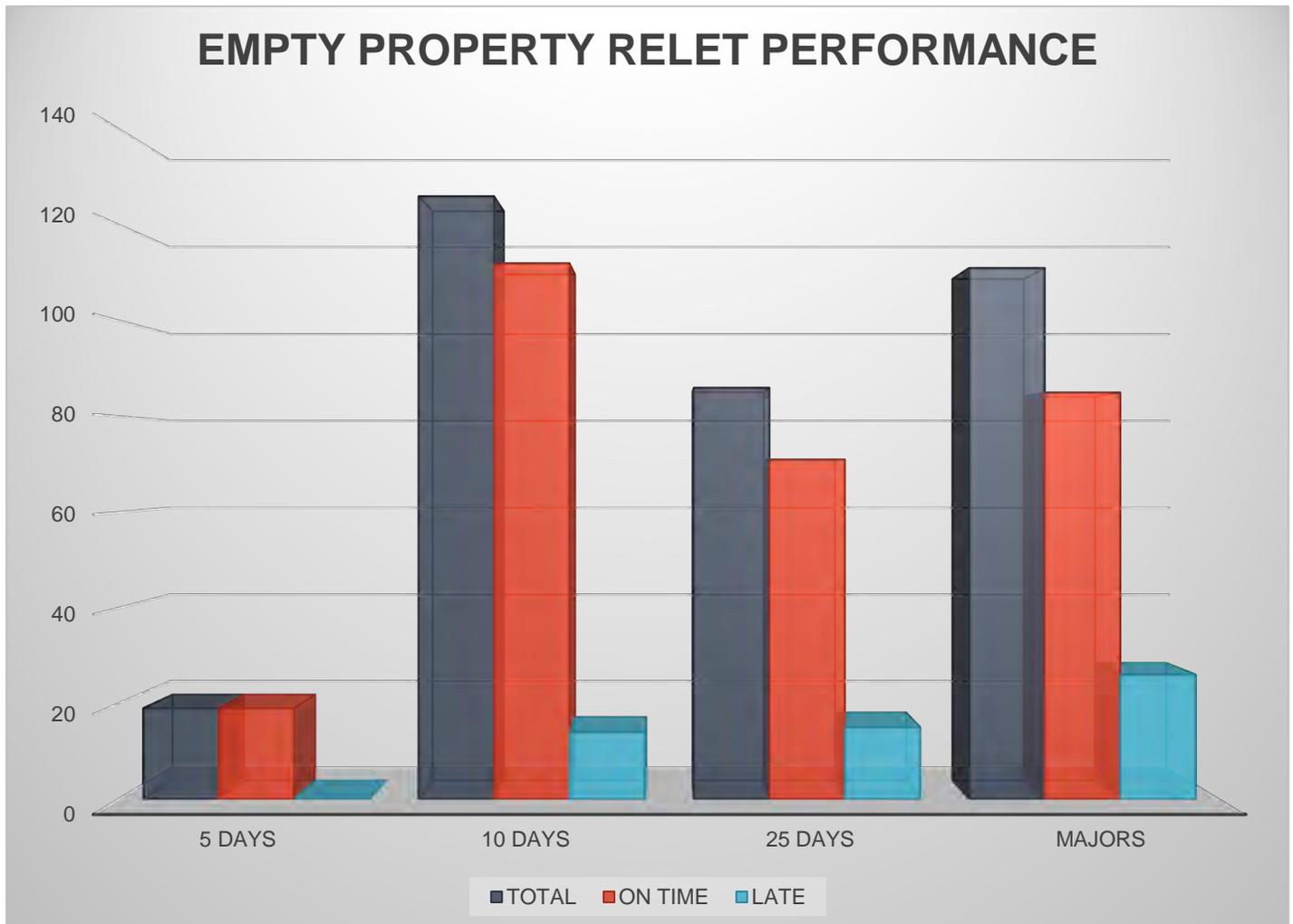
We now report on KPI' as per type:

- 5 Day,
- 10 Day,
- 25 Day
- Major (which are in excess of 25 days)

VOIDS					
V1	% Standard voids completed within target time (5 working days)	97%	Contractual	100%	19/19
V1a	Average number of calander days to complete 5day void repairs			3 days	
V2	% of 10 calander day voids completed within agreed timescale	97%	Contractual	89%	112/126
V2a	Average number of calander days to complete 10day void repairs			12 days	
V3	% of 25 calander day voids completed within agreed timescale	97%	Contractual	83%	71/86
V3a	Average number of calander days to complete 25day void repairs			46 days	
V4	Average number of calander days to complete void repairs	18 days	Benchmarking	33 days	111 Majors
V5	% Post inspections completed as satisfactory: Void repairs	98%	Contractual	100%	
V6	Post Inspection Defects - Void Repairs	2%	Contractual	0%	
V7	% Gas check and test order for void properties completed within prescribed time limit	98%	Contractual	100%	

Relet performance comparison to previous year

KPI No.	KPI	Target	Contractual or Benchmark	KPI %	Number of jobs completed	KPI %	Number of jobs completed
VOIDS				22/23		21/22	
V1	% Standard voids completed within target time (5 working days)	97%	Contractual	100%	19/19	98%	48/49
V1a	Average number of calander days to complete 5day void repairs			3 days		18 days	
V2	% of 10 calander day voids completed within agreed timescale	97%	Contractual	89%	112/126	41%	41/100
V2a	Average number of calander days to complete 10day void repairs			12 days		33 days	
V3	% of 25 calander day voids completed within agreed timescale	97%	Contractual	83%	71/86	18%	15/84
V3a	Average number of calander days to complete 25day void repairs			46 days		45	
V4	Average number of calander days to complete void repairs	18 days	Benchmarking	26 days	33 with 111 majors	32	44 with 59 majors



Financials:

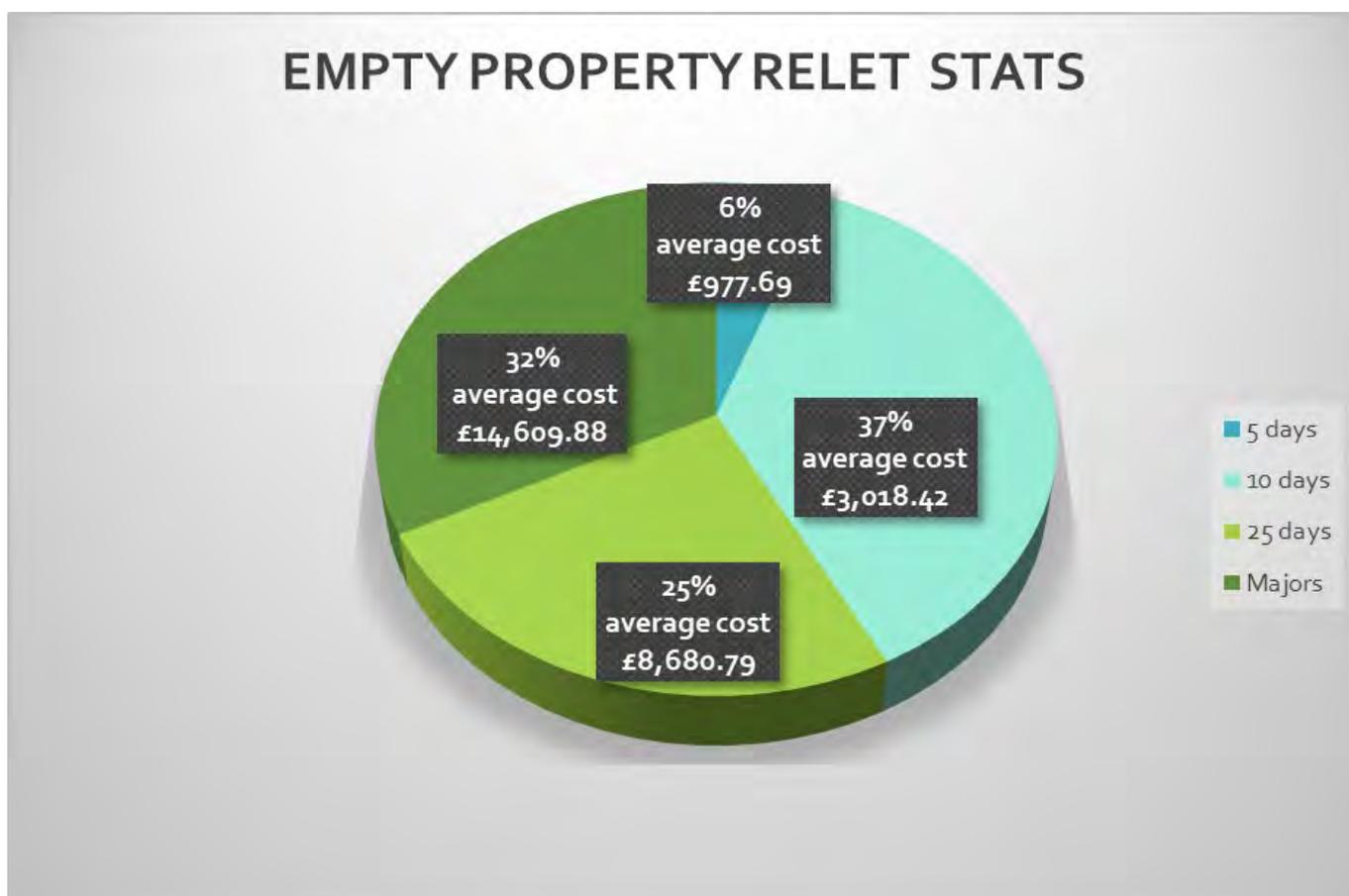
There have been some delays with the IT integration of the new pricing system due to some incompatibility issues which Mears worked quickly to resolve with our software provider.

Overall, the financial benefits to us have shown that it is worthwhile to continue the PPV Model.

The figures below show the performance and averages.

There is an overall higher costs which reflects the increased in costs, materials and tendered values within the new contract against the previous, however the primary reason for the overall increase is the condition of properties needing substantial works and renovations due to the age of the property where there may have been no improvements carried out recently for various reasons such as refusals by the outgoing resident.

Quantity	Quantity	Value of Works Average per property	Costs to SCDC	Savings provided by using Price per Void
2021 / 2022 Old Contract	292	£6,135.68	£6,135.68	-
2023 / 2024 New Contract	342	£9,591.05	£8,091.05	£1,499.95



Repairs

The repairs side of the contract covering, Emergencies (new 4-hour response), Urgent (24-hour response), Routine (20 Day) and Planned Responsive Work (40 days).

We have changed within the new contract terms the response times and appointment provisions from Emergencies being 24-hour responses to 4-hour responses but with a more limited scope of work.

This has proved to be very successful, the delivery to the customer has been excellent for actual emergencies and we have maintained a 100% record of attending within the timescale, allowing better use of resource for less urgent responses.

The appointment structure has also changed from either an AM or PM slot to a 2-hour slot, this has been one of the biggest fundamental changes the contract has brought to the service delivery. The scheduling and management of operatives into areas has allowed this to be possible and has reduced mileage and fuel use.

We identified early on that there was an issue within more major works, these would be works that were larger than a routine repair and would previously have been moved to a planned program to be picked up over the following year, in some cases this is still the case but there were also jobs which fell in this category but were more urgent, for example a roof that needed replacing and had had a temporary repair carried out under response. We created a new priority of Planned Response Work to be completed within 40 days, this allows for the larger works to be scheduled and materials acquired, this has proved very successful and has improved the service delivery to customers who would otherwise have had to wait for the planned program to reach them. This in turn will help to reduce ongoing responsive repairs while waiting for planned works.

Mears have recruited additional operatives within the responsive delivery team and have also upskilled some of them to cover more specialist works such as flooring to deliver more services from direct labour.

Overall KPI

OVERALL					
O1	% Overall Job completions within target	97%	Contractual	92%	24929/27218
O2	% recall Order	0.50%	Contractual	0.12%	33/2718
O3	Emergency vs Urgent/Routine Repairs	15%/85%	Contractual (shared)	5% / 95%	817/17073
O4	Overall Customer Satisfaction (all workstreams)	95%	Contractual	92%	1643/1796

RESPONSIVE REPAIRS (including heating repairs)					
R1	% Emergencies within target (4hrs)	100%	Contractual	100%	817/817
R2	% Urgent within target (24 hours)	100%	Contractual	100%	4906/4906
R3	% Routine repairs exceeding 20 working days for completion	<5%	Contractual	16%	1920/11727
R4	Average number of calendar days taken to complete Routine Repairs	<10 working days	Contractual	17 days	
R5	Average number of calendar days taken to complete Routine, Urgent and Emergency Repairs	6.5 days	Benchmarking	11 days	
R6	% Urgent and Routine Repairs completed on first visit (i.e. operative does not leave property until repair completed)	85%	Contractual	86%	19209/22304
R7	% Appointments Made and Kept (Urgent and Routine)	95%	Contractual	95%	16267/17352
R8	% Customer Satisfaction (all repairs)	95%	Contractual	93%	1201/1298
R9	% Urgent and Routine repairs completed on first visit (HouseMark definition)	97%	Benchmarking		
R10	Number of repairs appointments made	100%	Benchmarking	100%	22304/22304

Financials

The cost model for responsive repairs remained on the Price Per Property (PPP) model, this has allowed us to pay a fixed price for inclusive works, there are a number of items outside the scope of PPP and classed as exclusions due to the value of work, or they are a specific request which falls outside standard response repairs scope, the vast majority of jobs are included within the PPP value.

Over the last year or so the costs within the industry have risen dramatically, in some cases by 60% – 70% on materials and 20 – 25% on labour, the PPP model has protected us from these increases and created a more stable budgetary balance.

For Responsive Repairs only

Actual Spend 2021 / 2022	£2,428,475.75
Actual spend 2022 / 2023	£3,365,450.00
Actual spend 2023 / 2024 to date October	£1,616,876.00
Projected annual spend 2023 / 2024	£2,793,000.00

Showing a projected saving of £572,450.00 on the previous financial year (50% was within the new contract terms.)

There is an expected RPI annual increase to be added to the contract.

Mears – Contact Centre Performance and Improvements

Following the improvements to the contact centre processes and removal of the second number and hold streaming the call answering times halved, this was also improved by around 10% of repairs being reported via the online portal. It is expected that the M&Me app being launched for January 2024 will improve these further and allow for a better experience all round and more time available for those wishing to call in.

The national average time as provided by HouseMark is Peer Median: 164 seconds and an average percentage of calls answered at 82.76%

The current call answer percentage for October 2023 is 97.25% for this contract.

Average call answer time is 28 seconds.

	calls offered	calls handled	Average speed of answer (hh:mm:ss)
FEB	2420	2262	00:00:42
MARCH	2861	2744	00:00:42
APRIL	1925	1880	00:00:18
MAY	2419	2305	00:00:19
JUNE	2221	2163	00:00:15
JULY	2238	2178	00:00:26
AUGUST	2317	2191	00:00:36
SEPT	2233	2170	00:00:28
TOTAL	18634	17893	00:00:28
	96% answered		

Examples of Compliments Received

Mrs. Fordham has called to say she is very pleased with the job done by Mears to re surface the path from her door to the footpath, She has said Mears are a fantastic company and do a great job.!

"I'd just like to say thank you, to you and the team (and your operative) for being so responsive and assisting with these garages, and so late in the day as well. Both I, and I'm sure the tenants, really appreciated the swift action, great job all round.

'Good communication text to notify time of arrival. job carried out with respect to clients home.'

*"An overjoyed resident of ***** got in touch with me yesterday to say resurfacing work had started. I cannot convey how happy I am on their behalf".*

"The Mears men have done both the slabs and the fence panel. Amazing job and such lovely chaps. I am well chuffed".

'Very friendly and listened to my concerns to which they went above and beyond to ease my fears.'

'The gentleman who attended has now fixed several problems for me and my neighbour and as always has done an excellent job and went the extra mile to make sure my problem was resolved. Feel really bad I can't remember his name.

"Wanted to say how pleased she has been with the service and help she has received from Mears. She had 2 emergency call outs where they responded immediately with a great attitude. She wanted to say a big thanks."

"The real heroes are the MEARS engineers who are always out and about regardless of weather. Some real gentlemen who know their job inside out and are so efficient. Whoever has been training them is doing an outstanding job."

'The repair was completed on time, quick response and good job, the plumber was very polite and understanding.'

Social Value

Social value is a new addition to the contract terms and provides an innovative structure within the contract to deliver additional benefits for our residents.

The initial commitment was to install 16 free of charge, benches provided through our community fund at communal rooms across the district, these have all now been delivered and installed.

Mears run a monthly coffee morning at sheltered scheme communal rooms across the district which provides many added benefits for the residents, including, a digital inclusion session, energy efficiency session, support with repairs and maintenance of their homes, an operative is generally on site to assist with small repairs and jobs that residents may have locally and an opportunity for the residents to interact directly with Mears.

There will also be opportunities available for third parties such as the CAB to have a presence.

- *In January Mears donated the first batch of promised winter warmer packs for SCDC to distribute to those highlighted as most in need.*
- *In April staff volunteered at local food banks*
- *In May Mears partnered with other contractors for SCDC and refurbished derelict land to create a community garden at a sheltered scheme in Harston*
- *In June the branch hosted work experience opportunity for students from Cottenham Village*
- *In July staff volunteered at the job centre and gave opportunities for mock interviews*
- *In August the Mears foundation granted £2,000 towards the St Vincent's Garden project which will see staff volunteering to deliver project.*
- *October was the Mears Big Volunteer month, all staff litter picked in areas all across the district.*

Additional Benefits

Since the new contract was implemented, we have had access to the wider Mears support services provided by Mears Corporately.

These have been the Asset management, Sustainability and Decarbonisation, and data analytics, supported by the central Mears Core.

SCDC have collaborated with Mears in these areas to facilitate the submission of a successful grant funding bid under SHDF Wave 2.1 (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund) provided by DENZ (Department for the Environment and Net Zero) Government funding scheme. SCDC were successful in the award of £1.8m of funding for a £4m decarbonization project on our social housing stock over the next 2 years. This has already started in earnest with nearly 100 surveys and designs carried out in preparation for delivery on site in early 2024, the aim is to bring nearly 300 properties above an EPC band C.

Mears offer a community fund grant which was applied for by Elaine at the Cottenham branch to support the community garden initiative being built at Girton, this was awarded £2,000 towards the project. This is a community growing garden for local residents to enjoy, come together and reap the harvests from the produce. This is an excellent scheme which will help to reduce loneliness and encourage a wider community feel in the local area.

Mear's commitment to staffing adequately within the delivery of the new contract has shown to be working well and is reflected in the structure below and is continually reviewed for suitability to deliver and wherever possible upskilling opportunities are employed within the team.

Operational Structure:

We have to date successfully recruited:

- 2 new Customer Service Advisors (Mears Call Centre)
- 1 new planner
- 1 planned / voids administrator
- 4 new multiskilled operative

Current Vacancies:

- 2 multis (response)
- 1 voids surveyor

Still to recruit:

- 1 Resident Liaison Officer (expected 2024 when more planned works delivered)
- 2 multi and electrician to installed planned bathrooms from 2024.
- 3 Subcontractors to support Voids.
- 1 subcontractor to support Pest Control for 2024

Complaints

Category	Upheld	Not Upheld	Partly Upheld	Total
Charges	1	1	0	2
Communications	6	1	1	8
Failure to act	17	6	3	26
Other	11	6	0	17
Service Delivery	20	6	4	30
Processes	1	0	0	1
Staff Conduct	1	1	1	3
Total	57	21	9	87

	Trends
6	Damp and Mould complaint following increased media coverage
13	Missed or delayed appointments
11	Refused requests for replacements or additions
10	Lack of or quality of Communication
7	Workmanship quality or behaviour
8	Heating or hot water delays
34	Other non-trends

Percentage of Repairs	-	-
-	27,218	Total Jobs completed by Mears during the new contract period
0.32%	87	Total Complaints
0.21%	57	Upheld

From the identified trends within the complaints data (full redacted data, available on request) a number of lessons learnt have been identified and improvements implemented as stated above.

These improvements have directly proved beneficial in reducing the volume of complaints and the noticeable reduction in complaint types over the contract duration.

Improvements made as a result of complaints received

Missed or delayed appointments

- Additional resources available, Task team, additional direct operatives
- Additional call handling staff to aid communications of delays.

Lack of or quality of Communication

- Changes have been made to the call handling system to speed up responses and allow better communications.
- Additional Cal handling staff
- Addition of a dedicated Customer service champion
- Addition of a Call Centre supervisor
- More Specialist training for call handlers
- Faster approval and resolution processes between Mears and SCDC

Workmanship quality or behaviour

- Closer monitoring of quality of work delivered either by direct staff or sub-contractors.
- A direct escalation and action by dedicated supervisors when poor quality or behaviour are reported, this has led to direct and swift actions of additional training through to disciplinary actions to prevent future incidents.

Heating or hot water delays

- Changes to supplier of some heating products with better availability has shown some reduction in completion times.
- Processes developed to ensure where possible temp solutions are made available.
- Area split resources have produced faster response times.

4.2 Forward Plan

Julie Fletcher to provide an update on the Forward Plan which is included in the pack.

Housing Engagement Board – Forward Plan – 2023 / 2024

Date of Meeting	Topic	Description	Lead Officer	Decision Route
June 2023	Complaints	Review of yearly complaints handling statistics 2022 / 2023	Grace Andrews	For Information / Scrutiny
June 2023	Housing Service Plan	To approve the Housing Service Plan for 2023 / 2024	Julie Fletcher	For final sign off by the Lead Member for Housing
June 2023 Carried forward Project delayed. Appointment of temporary Policy Officer November 2022	Policy Review	To provide an overview of current policies – identify gaps and programme for reviews Verbal update on priority programme for policy reviews	Julie Fletcher	For Information
Briefing session to be arranged outside of HEB for tenant representatives March Summer 2023	Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy	Review of the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy	Julie Fletcher	Consultation
September 2023	Damp and Mould Policy	To update on the process for the damp and mould policy	Peter Campbell	Lead Member for Housing or Cabinet – to be confirmed
September 2023	Grounds Maintenance	Re-tender of grounds maintenance contract. Tenant engagement to be part of the process to help shape KPs	Geoff Clark	For Information
September / December 2023	Aids and Adaptations Policy	To consider the Aids and Adaptations Policy and make recommendations following wider tenant involvement	Policy Officer	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
June 2023 December 2023	Tenancy Policy	To approve the Tenancy Policy following the ending of fixed term tenancies	Policy Officer	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing

Date of Meeting	Topic	Description	Lead Officer	Decision Route
June 2023 September 2023 December 2023	Homelessness Review	Review of Homelessness & Homeless Strategy	Heather Wood / Sue Carter	Consultation
September 2023 December 2023 Deferred	Improvement Plan	Update on the progress of the actions contained in the Improvement Plan	Julie Fletcher	For Information
December 2023	Resident Involvement Framework Review	Proposals for new framework to be brought to Housing Engagement Board	Dave Armitage	Dependent on outcome of review
December 2023 [New]	Access to confidential / personal data	GDPR Advice – guidance note	Dave Armitage	For Information / Implementation
December 2023 [New]	Introductory Tenancy Policy / Procedure	Linked policy / procedure to Tenancy Policy	Policy Officer	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
December 2023 [New]	Assignment and Succession Policy	Linked policy / procedure to Tenancy Policy	Policy Officer	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing

Date of Meeting	Topic	Description	Lead Officer	Decision Route
January 2024 Carried forward The mobilisation of the Mears Contract has taken more time than expected. Currently working on some preliminary works around this but won't be progressing with residents until at least October 2023.	Empty Property Re-let Disposal and Standards	Consider findings and recommendations following the outcome of the project working group – Empty Property Re-let Disposal and Standards. Currently undertaking some internal process mapping to feed into the project working group	Eddie Spicer	Housing Engagement Board
December 2023 / March 2024 [New]	Tenant Satisfaction Survey	Outcome of the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures	Julie Fletcher	For Information
March 2024 [New]	Communications Standard	To consider the Communications Standard and make recommendations following wider tenant involvement	Julie Fletcher	Housing Engagement Board / Lead Member for Housing
June 2024 [New]	Mutual Exchange Policy	Monitoring report of mutual exchange policy – 6 months following implementation	Julie Fletcher	For Information
June 2024	Council Stock Condition Survey	Outcome of the Stock Condition Survey	Eddie Spicer	For Information
TBC	Together with Tenants Charter	Review what actions are required to achieve the Together with Tenants Charter	Resident Involvement Team Leader	Cabinet

4.3 Estate Inspections Report

Reports on the Estate Inspections held in September and October 2023 are enclosed for noting.

The following field was added to the Estate Inspection questionnaire form and was first used at the inspection on 19 October 2023.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points – to identify any accessible, communal parking areas that could be utilised for EV charging points (NOT to include disabled bays, allocated parking bays or tenants off street parking).

Estate Inspection – Summaries – September 2023

13 September 2023

Papworth Everard – The Close (Sheltered Housing)

1 issue raised, which is as follows:

- An email has been sent to SP Landscapes to add the piece of land outside number 13 to the regular grass cutting schedule as it does not belong to anybody.

Eltisley – Greenfields

4 issues raised, which are as follows:

- Quote requests have been sent to SP Landscapes to attend to the following 4 issues:
 - 4x Trees to the front of numbers 17 and 19, in the green area, need to be cut back.
 - The tree hanging over the footpath behind number 15 needs to be trimmed back.
 - The trees at the entrance to Greenfields, by the garages, to be cut back away from the parking bays.
 - The area behind the garages, at the entrance to Greenfields, to be sprayed with weed killer in order to create a clear space.

21 September 2023

Little Wilbraham

Orchard Close

4 issues raised, which are as follows:

- Quote requests have been sent to SP Landscapes for work to be done on 2 landscaping issues which are:
 - The corner of the carpark near number 9 needs cutting back.
 - The alleyway behind numbers 1 to 3 need clearing.
- The fence of 15 Manor Close is broken and hanging over our path. A letter has been sent to the owner to repair it.
- The trees opposite numbers 7, 8 and 9 are quite large, however, do not appear to be causing a problem at the moment. The Housing Service Officer (HSO) will monitor this.

Manor Close

1 issue raised, which is as follows:

- Cars parked on the grass. Letter have been sent to all residents reminding them that they should only park in allocated spaces. This issue will be monitored.

Great Wilbraham – Church Close

6 issues raised, which are as follows:

- Quote requests have been sent to SP Landscapes for work to be done on 3 landscaping issues which are:
 - Nettles to the side of number 6 need cutting back.
 - The trees on the green area, approaching number 26, are hanging low.
 - The hedge on the road is very overhung. SP Landscapes has been asked if this includes both sides of the hedge.
- 2 issues are items that have been dumped to the rear of properties. Letters have been sent to the residents of numbers 5 and 6, and number 13 asking them to remove the items.
- 1 issue was the ownership of the path next to the garden of number 23. The HSO has checked and it belongs to number 23.

Ratings

The ratings are as follows:

Date of inspection	Village	Street / Area	Litter	Weeds	Regular grass cutting	Roughly cut grass	Communal area shrubs	Tenant's gardens
13 September	Eltisley	Greenfields	4	2	4	N / A	N / A	4
	Papworth Everard	The Close	4	4	4	N / A	4	3
21 September	Little Wilbraham	Orchard Close	4	2	3	2	N / A	4
		Manor Close	4	3	3	N / A	N / A	4
	Great Wilbraham	Church Close	2	2	3	2	4	3

Estate Inspection – Summaries – October 2023

19 October 2023

Fulbourn

Fromont Close

11 issues raised, which are as follows:

- Letters have been sent to 5 tenants for issues, as follows:
 - Number 1 – Old fencing and other items to be cleared from the front garden.
 - Number 3 – Old tyres, wood and other items to be cleared from the front garden.
 - Number 7 (not SCDC tenant) – The fence adjoining number 6 needs to be repaired or replaced.
 - Number 9 – A trailer and other items to be cleared from the front garden.
 - Numbers 15 (not SCDC tenant) and 19 – The front hedges need cutting back.
- Quote requests have been sent to SP Landscapes for work to be done on 4 landscaping issues as follows:
 - Number 6 – a very large tree in the rear garden to be trimmed back / removed to allow light in the property and the garden is untidy. The work was carried out on 10 November 2023.
 - Numbers 10 and 12 – the alleyway to the rear of these properties needs cutting back and weeding.
 - The communal car park next to no. 14 needs weeding and tidying. The work will be done in the first week of January 2024.
 - The shrubs on the pathway alongside the right-hand side to the entry to Fromont Close are to be cut back. The work will be done in the first week of January 2024.
- There is a skip in the communal car park to the rear of numbers 19 to 25 which appears to be hired by 71 Cambridge Road, without our permission to place it in the car park. The HSO to contact the residents as it is occupying a parking bay.
- A Nissan vehicle, with a flat tyre, was parked inconsiderately (one wheel on the kerb) in the communal layby. A note was left on the car. The car has since been removed.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points – in either of the communal car parks or opposite number 17 using a parking bay.

Hollmans Close (Sheltered Housing)

2 issues raised, which are as follows:

- 1 issue is that the pathway to the rear of numbers 3 and 4 needs weeding. SP has been asked to weed the area. The access gates are also always locked due to wheelie bins being set on fire in the past. The Sheltered Estate Officer (SEO) is to meet with the fire department on site to discuss access to this area.
- The fence to the rear of number 4 is damaged, the shed is in poor condition and a fire hazard and a caravan is parked in the rear garden. The SEO to discuss these issues with the tenant and find out their intentions, and if necessary, advise the HSO.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points – opposite number 4, occupying a parking bay.

26 October 2023

Meldreth – Bell Close and Gable Close

Cancelled due to bad weather.

Ratings

The ratings are as follows:

Street / Area	Litter	Weeds	Regular grass cutting	Roughly cut grass	Communal area shrubs	Tenant's gardens
Fromont Close	4	2	4	N / A	2	3
Hollmans Close	4	3	4	N / A	4	3

5. New Matters

5.1 Homelessness Review

The following documents are to be read in conjunction and can be found on our website at <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/housing/homeless-strategy-consultation-2023/>.

- Homeless strategy 2023
- Homeless Review 2023

Sue Carter to report.

5.2 Tenancy Policy

The following documents are included in the pack:

- Tenancy Policy Report
- Tenancy Policy – reviewed November 2023

Julie Fletcher to report.

Report to:	Housing Engagement Board (HEB) 14 December 2023
Lead Officer:	Julie Fletcher : Service Manager – Housing Strategy

Tenancy Policy

Recommendations

1. That the Housing Engagement Board (HEB) note the Tenancy Policy at Appendix A and provide any further comments prior to approval by Councillor Batchelor, Lead Member for Housing.

Reasons for Recommendations

2. The Tenancy Policy has been reviewed to take into account Cabinet's decision to no longer offer fixed term tenancies.
3. Under the Council's constitution, Part 3 – Table 4 (point 19): Responsibility for Executive Functions, the Lead Member for Housing has delegated powers to approve the policy.

Details

4. The Tenancy Policy sets out the Council's approach with regards to the types of tenancies that will be offered. Notwithstanding the withdrawal of fixed term tenancies, all other tenancy types remain unchanged from the previous policy and meet the legislative requirements set out in the relevant Housing Acts.
5. Whilst the review of the Tenancy Policy has not involved tenant representatives prior to consideration at the Housing Engagement Board, their views have been fundamental in the decision regarding the withdrawal of fixed term tenancies.
6. Following the approval of the Tenancy Policy, we will prioritise the review of our Introductory Tenancy Policy, Succession and Assignment Policy, the Social Housing Tenancy Fraud Policy, and the use of council housing as temporary accommodation, to ensure they are aligned to the withdrawal of fixed term tenancies where appropriate and are still fit for purpose.
7. The Lettings Policy was updated in July 2021 and sets out how South Cambridgeshire District Council, in partnership with Registered Providers with properties in the district, will allocate their properties through the Home-Link Scheme. This policy is not specific to our landlord services and is not impacted by the changes following the withdrawal of fixed term tenancies by the Council.

Background Papers

Appendices

Appendix A: Tenancy Policy

Report Author: Julie Fletcher : Service Manager – Housing Strategy

Telephone: (01954) 713 352



South Cambridgeshire District Council

Tenancy Policy

Version	2.0
Ownership	Geoff Clark, Service Manager – Tenancy and Estates
Approved By	Councillor John Batchelor, Lead Member for Housing
Policy Contact	Debbie Barrett, Housing Services Team Leader
Approval Date	
Publication Date	
Date of Next Review	



Version Control

Date	Version	Details of Review
October 2012	1.0	New Policy
October 2013	1.1	Update to take account of changes in the use of temporary accommodation in Council stock. Amendments include elaboration of Temporary Licences and insertion of Non-Secure Temporary Tenancies
November 2023	2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Update to take account of Council's decision to cease Fixed Term Flexible Tenancies.• New sections on Tenancy Support and Tenancy Fraud.• A reduced and combined section on Assignments and Successions providing key provisions with reference to Assignment and Succession Policy for details.• A reduced section on Mutual Exchange with reference to Mutual Exchange Policy• Additional details on the Right to Improve section• Additional points included on victims of Domestic Abuse. Formatting and reordering of paragraphs and sections



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1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Tenancy Policy provides clear guidelines regarding the Council's approach to offering different types of tenancies. It sets out how different tenancy types will be offered and reviewed.
- 1.2 The Council will no longer offer fixed term tenancies for its own housing tenants and will replace these with secure lifetime tenancies. This decision was made by Cabinet on 22 March 2022.
- 1.3 This policy will operate in conjunction with the Council's Lettings Policy, Succession and Assignment Policy, Mutual Exchange Policy, Policy on the use of Council housing as Temporary Accommodation and the Introductory Tenancy Policy and Procedure.
- 1.4 Where discretionary aspects of the policy exist then close monitoring systems will be in place to ensure that these decisions are made based on the principles of the policy.

2. Transition from Fixed Term Tenancies to Secure Tenancies

- 2.1 The Council no longer issues Flexible Fixed Term Tenancies to new or existing tenants. Tenants currently on Flexible Fixed Term Tenancies will be offered a Secure Tenancy with an aim to complete the transition process for all fixed term tenants over the next few years. In certain circumstances tenants may be offered a Secure Tenancy earlier such as during a Mutual Exchange, assignment, or succession of tenancy. A tenant will not receive an offer of a Secure Tenancy if the Council is taking legal action against them.
- 2.2 Tenants currently on Flexible Fixed Term tenancies will be required to surrender their existing tenancy prior to signing their new Secure Tenancy.
- 2.3 Tenants who do not wish to take on a Secure Tenancy will be required to vacate their property at the end of their Flexible Fixed Term Tenancy. Six months before the end of the Tenancy the Council will formally serve on the tenant a notice of seeking possession of the property. The Council will provide advice on finding alternative suitable accommodation in the private sector where applicable.
- 2.4 Subject to successful completion, all existing introductory tenancies will automatically convert to a Secure Tenancy at the end of their tenancy period.



3. Rent Levels

- 3.1 All new tenancies are charged at target social rent or affordable rent.
- 3.2 All target social rents are set in accordance with the government’s rent formula as set out in the Policy Statement for rents for social housing. Affordable rent housing (inclusive of service charges) must not exceed 80% of gross market rent. Further guidance on affordable rents set locally can be found in the Council’s Affordable Rents Policy as an annex to the Greater Cambridge Housing Strategy.

4. Tenancy Types

Introductory Tenancies

- 4.1 Introductory Tenancies will be granted to all new tenants from 1 April 2013. This gives the Council the opportunity to ensure that the conditions of the tenancy are being met in the first 12 months. Upon successful completion, all introductory tenancies will then go on to be a secure lifetime tenancy. Those few tenants that may have breached their tenancy during the introductory period will be offered an extension (up to a maximum of 18 months in total). In cases of serious breaches legal action will be taken to end the introductory tenancy. Where a tenant disagrees with the decision taken then an appeal process can be pursued. More information can be found in the Introductory Tenancy Policy and Procedure.
- 4.2 Below is a list of the type of tenancies the Council offers:

Tenancy type and who will this be offered to
<p>Secure Tenancy (lifetime tenancy)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new tenants upon successful completion of Introductory Tenancies • Existing SCDC tenants who wish to transfer to another SCDC property in the district • Existing tenants on Flexible Fixed Term Tenancies • Tenants with Secure Tenancies transferring from other local authorities • Tenants with assured (non-shorthold) tenancies transferring to SCDC from other registered social landlords • Tenants with assured shorthold fixed term tenancies transferring to SCDC from other registered social landlords • New or existing (sole or joint) tenant if the Council is satisfied that a lifetime tenant or a member of their household has been a victim of domestic abuse and either had to move or lost security of tenure as a result of domestic abuse.



All Secure Tenancies will be offered in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1985.

Introductory Tenancies

New tenants to SCDC who have not previously held a social housing tenancy will be offered an Introductory Tenancy in accordance with Part V of the Housing Act 1996 S.124 to S.143.

Short-term Accommodation

Households might be placed in council owned properties as a short-term option while the council makes inquiries into the household's housing situation and decides how they must help in the longer term. Accommodation is likely to be offered on a Licence agreement in accordance with Section 188 of the Housing Act 1996.

The council may also offer accommodation on a temporary basis whilst a household is waiting until suitable longer-term accommodation becomes available. Accommodation is likely to be offered as a Non-secure temporary tenancy in accordance with Section 193 of the Housing Act 1996.

Further details about the use of temporary accommodation can be found in the Council's Policy on the use of Council housing as Temporary Accommodation.

Equitable Non-Secure Tenancies

Under 18-year-olds are offered equitable non-secure tenancies. When they turn 18, they will be offered Introductory Tenancies and the equitable period will not count towards the introductory period.

All Equitable Non-Secure Tenancies will be offered in accordance with Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1985.

Demoted Tenancies

Demoted tenancies are given when ordered by the court. The Council may also apply to have a tenancy demoted if;

- There has been anti-social behaviour; and / or
- The property has been used for illegal purposes.

Demoted Tenancies will be offered in accordance with Section 82A of the Housing Act 1985 and Section 6A of the Housing Act 1988.

- 4.3 The Council will grant tenants who have been moved into alternative accommodation during any redevelopment or other works a tenancy, with no less security of tenure on their return to settled accommodation.

5. Ending Tenancies

Tenants wishing to end Secure Tenancy

- 5.1 Only a named tenant can end the tenancy by giving the Council a written notice of at least 4 weeks before the tenant wishes to leave the property. The four weeks' notice must end on a Sunday. Any tenant on a joint tenancy can end the tenancy. If one of the



joint tenants wish to remain in the property, they must apply to their housing services officer to be re-assessed for the property.

Tenants wishing to end 10-year Flexible Fixed Term Tenancy prior to expiry

5.2 If a tenant wishes to end their tenancy prior to the fixed term end date they may do so by issuing a formal written offer surrendering their tenancy giving four weeks' notice. If a joint tenancy, the surrender offer must be signed by all joint tenants.

5.3 Surrender will be allowed subject to the following circumstances: –

- It is in the best interest of the landlord
- It is in the best interest of the tenant or neighbourhood
- The property condition doesn't breach tenancy conditions
- Rent account is clear

5.4 Where the tenant does not comply with these conditions, the request to surrender may not be accepted.

Ending a Secure Tenancy and Flexible Fixed Term Tenancy prior to its expiry

5.5 If a tenant breaches the terms and conditions of their Secure or Flexible Fixed Term Tenancy (as set out in Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1988), possession proceedings will be instigated commencing with serving a Notice of Seeking Possession. If the breach of tenancy continues following serving the Notice, application will be made to the County Court who may grant a possession order to end the tenancy. There are no formal internal appeals process in this instance.

Ending an Introductory Tenancy (that is, within the first year)

5.6 If an Introductory Tenancy is not conducted properly, we will serve a notice requiring possession giving at least 2 months' notice of issuing of possession proceedings. This will be managed in accordance with the Introductory Tenancy Procedure. A tenant will be able to apply for an Appeal against this decision in accordance with the appeals process.

6. Complaints

6.1 If a tenant disagrees with a decision about their tenancy and feel that the Council has not followed due process, they may make a formal complaint.



6.2 SCDC Complaints Policy can be found on www.scambs.gov.uk/your-council-and-democracy/feedback-and-complaints/complaints. Any complaints can be reported via My South Cambs [online](#), or by using any of the following methods:

- Email at feedback@scambs.gov.uk;
- Letter to South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA; and
- Over the telephone – Contact Centre on 01954 713 000

7. Mutual Exchange

7.1 All requests for permission to mutual exchange must be made to the landlord. Council tenants on secure or flexible tenancies will be eligible for mutual exchange.

7.2 Applications for a mutual exchange will be assessed in accordance with the Council's Mutual Exchange Policy which contains details on the type of tenancies exchange partners can expect to be granted or assigned to.

8. Assignments and Successions

8.1 A tenant may assign their tenancy to another person in the following circumstances.

- A potential statutory or discretionary successor,
- Mutual Exchange; and
- By statute, where a court has made an order to transfer the tenancy under any of the following:
 - Matrimonial Causes Act 1973, Section 24;
 - Matrimonial and Family Proceedings Act 1984, Section 17(1);
 - Paragraph 1 of Schedule 1 to the Children Act 1989;
 - Part 2 of Schedule 5 or Paragraph 9(2) or (3) of Schedule 7 to the Civil Partnership Act 2004;

8.2 The Localism Act 2011 abolished the statutory right of succession to a Secure Tenancy for family members. Accordingly, succession will be limited to spouses or civil partners for tenancies granted after 1st April 2012. This will not, however, affect existing Council Secure Tenancies granted before this date. The Council will have discretionary powers to grant a new tenancy to family members to ensure there are safeguards in place to



protect the vulnerable. These will be considered on an individual basis. For more information, please refer to the Council's Assignment and Succession Policy.

9. Right to Improve

- 9.1 Tenants on Introductory Tenancies are not normally permitted to make any alterations to the property. Secure and flexible tenants seeking to make improvements to their properties, must obtain written permission from the Council before any alterations can be carried out.
- 9.2 Tenants granted a Flexible Fixed Term Tenancy do not have a statutory right to improve their properties or be compensated for those improvements. Discretionary permission may be granted on an individual basis upon request.
- 9.3 Where a tenant has carried out any improvements with the Council's permission and decides to move, they may be able to claim compensation. This only applies to certain types of improvement and does not apply to flexible tenancies.

10. Tenancy Support

- 10.1 The Council will offer tenancy support services to tenants to help with maintaining their tenancies and prevent unnecessary evictions. This may include:
 - Managing their tenancy
 - Mental health support
 - Housing advice
 - Budgeting and debt
 - Accessing financial support
 - Social and community groups
 - Signposting to other services
- 10.2 The Council will also support older people to remain independent in their own home. This may include support with economic well-being, tackling loneliness and isolation and signposting.



11. Tenancy Fraud

- 11.1 Tenancy fraud is a criminal offence under the Fraud Act 2006 and Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013. Tenancy fraud includes unlawful subletting, obtaining housing by deception, unlawful succession and assignment, joint-tenancy fraud, false right to buy, key selling and non-residence.
- 11.2 The Council takes tenancy fraud seriously as it deprives people who are genuinely in need from accessing social housing. The Council will take necessary action where it receives reports, suspects and / or detects individuals of tenancy fraud. The Council's Social Housing Tenancy Fraud Policy outlines its approach to the prevention of and tackling tenancy fraud.

12. Service Standards

12.1 Our commitments:

- We will make clear the criteria which will be used when reviewing tenancies and deciding whether to offer a new tenancy. This will form part of the information provided at the time of bidding for properties as well as during the sign-up procedure for all new tenants.
- We will publish information about advice and assistance available and ensure that services are accessible.
- We will give our best endeavours working with partners to prevent homelessness, wherever possible, by providing timely advice and interventions. We will promote welfare benefit and independent money advice to customers as well as our in-house advice services.

12.2 We will review this Policy in five years, unless there are any substantial changes to policy prior to this date, to ensure it is fit for purpose and meets our key objectives for the Housing Service.

12.3 Our Vision:

We believe that our homes should be much more than just bricks and mortar. Places to feel safe and secure, where communities thrive and grow.



13. Linked Documents

- Introductory Tenancy Policy
- Lettings Policy
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- Succession and Assignment Policy
- Social Housing Tenancy Fraud
- Policy on the use of Council housing as Temporary Accommodation

We are about so much more than bricks and mortar. We create places where people feel safe and communities thrive.	 High Quality, Energy Efficient	 Customer Focused
	 Supportive	 Accountable

5.3 Improvement Plan

Julie Fletcher to report.

5.4 Resident Involvement Framework Review

Dave Armitage to report.

5.5 Access to Confidential / Personal Data

Dave Armitage to report.

5.6 Tpas National Scrutiny Conference Report

Margaret Wilson and Paul Bowman attended the Tpas National Scrutiny Conference, together with SCDC officers, in Loughborough on 4 October 2023.

Included in the pack is Paul Bowman's feedback report for noting.

TPAS

Scrutiny Conference 4th October 2023

Loughborough

With eight workshops to choose from, across the two sessions, we each attended different workshops in order to cover the widest range of subject matter.

The Keynote Speaker this year was Mila Simpson, Strategy Manager for the Housing Regulator.

- The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) is being given new powers to help improve the quality of housing and services for social housing tenants in a way that lasts.
- To help make this happen, 4 revised consumer standards have been drafted

Proposed consumer standards



- The standards set expectations that social housing landlords have to meet
- A Code of Practice has been drafted to make sure Landlords meet the standards

As Scrutineers (Tenants, Officers and Councillors alike) we should be familiar with the standards and the code of practice.

Data from the TSMs should inform scrutiny work.

RSH publications include judgments on providers.

Note: The RSH creates (and monitors) the standards, but it is the Housing Ombudsman (HO) who enforces them when investigating complaints. However, recently, the HO has been accused of 'parking its tank on the RSH's lawn'. This could create problems in the future if reporting processes and procedures for tenants are not agreed between these two bodies.

Essential Skills for Scrutiny

Presented by TPAS staff, this workshop gave pointers on what to avoid as well as what we need in our scrutineering toolbox.



So, the more the merrier.... Total skillsets required are unlikely to be found in small groups.

However, recruitment challenges often mean potential scrutineers are unable to commit to attending meetings, resulting in skills deficits.

Barriers to overcome?

- Conflict between scrutiny and landlord organisation
- Poor communication skills (for e.g., interviewing skills, effective challenge)
- Rigid processes that may be a turn-off for potential new scrutineers

Questions to ask yourself as a scrutineer

- Are you getting the right data/performance information for what you are scrutinising?
 - Is scrutiny led by residents or the organisation?
- How do you plan on being transparent and keeping residents informed?
- How do you plan on keeping a track of the recommendations made?
 - Do you have an open mind from the start?

Takeaway 1: Scrutiny must be Tenant led

Takeaway 2: The most essential skill for scrutiny? Being nose....

Being a Tenant Scrutineer – What's it really like?

This workshop gave an insight into the challenges, successes (and otherwise) of Kai Jackson, Chair of the Residents Panel at the Black Country Housing Group.

The list of her challenges was daunting. Most of those attending related to more than a few of the following:

- *Very time consuming*
- *Getting to know all the jargon and how your organisation works.*
- *Being stigmatised and having to prove yourself.*
- *Being discriminated against and seeing/hearing the discrimination*
- *Being confrontational without being combative.*
- *Fighting to change your organisations culture.*
- *Access to information and not having information sugar coated.*
- *Dealing with disappointment.*

On the plus side, Kai listed her following achievements:

- *Increased panel members and retention of all but 1 original member.*
- *Learnt so much about the work my organisation does; the good and the complaints.*
- *Increased my personal development, e.g. doing interviews, stage 2 complaints, additional training.*
- *Meet loads of new and interesting people, staff and tenants*
- *Learned about the housing sector*
- *Doing something I truly love*

Takeaway Quote:

“Never before has there been this level of scrutiny within the housing sector which is regulated and put into law. Customers are now given a voice and it’s important that it is used in the right way to help and benefit ALL people”

Paul Bowman 22 Nov. 23

6. Any other Business (AOB)

Any additional issues to be raised.

7. Meeting Date for 2023 / 2024

- 28 March 2024 (Zoom / venue to be confirmed)

8. Closing