**Tenant & Leaseholder Scrutiny Group**

**Saturday 22nd March 2025, 9:30 am – 2.00 pm**

**Sandwell Council House**

**Chair – Phillippe Brown**

**Minutes**

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| **Circulation:**  **Scrutiny Members** | |  |  | |
| Ahmed Abdulrahman  Aynols Reid  Shenalee Brown | | Phillippe Brown  Sue Smith | Anthony Averis  Alison Allen | |
| **Councillors**  Cllr Dhatt | |  |  | |
| **Sandwell MBC**  Nigel Collumbell  Christine Davis | | Manny Sehmbi Gwen Haq | Paul Smith | |
| **Apologies:**  Cllr Lewis  Sarah Ager | |  | Stembile Mhlanga  Ali Yassin | |
| **Items for Discussion** | | | | | |
| 1. | **Introduction to Formal Meeting**  Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, formal introductions were made.  Apologies as above  There were no declarations of interest  The minutes from meeting 14th December 2025 had previously been circulated. No amendments were requested, and the minutes were agreed. | | | Chair | |
| 2. | **Action Sheet Update**  Update from Jim Brenan around the ‘Neighbourhood Management Policy’ is ongoing. AR queried section 4 2.4 seeking clarity about, ‘what is noise nuisance’ and how this differs from ASB, NC stated this policy is about preventing actions from becoming ASB, discussion took place about risk assessments and how SMBC will triage, identifying the correct agency and the appropriate course of action.  AR gave an example of what would have appeared a “simple” neighbour dispute which ended up becoming a Police issue. The Chair stated that the policy needs to be launched with a view of creating better understanding as this will encourage tenants to take ownership and implement the policy. Further consultation will be taking place with tenants and residents. It would be helpful if the group could provide any and further comments by Tuesday 25th March 2025.  PB suggested that the policy needs to be launched to encourage residents to talk to each other.  A new repairs policy has been finalised and further follow up work with participants in the focus group will be planned to share the changes that have been implemented.  CD confirmed amendments have been made to the letter to tenants about the stock survey. The visit should take about 30 minutes. CD also confirmed that the concern about surveyors taking photos of personal family items should not be an issue as the tenant should be asked to remove them. Also, the tenant can refuse to have photos taken during the survey. | | | CD | |
| 3. | **Housing Improvement & Transformation Programme Exception Report March 2025**  NC gave an overview of actions that Sandwell Housing are required to do via compliance and the things that we want to do to become an ‘excellent landlord. NC went through the ‘Housing Improvement & Transformation Programme Exception Report March 2025’.)  NC confirmed that 3 projects are slightly off-track, IT/systems Transformation, Climate Change Response Plan and Communications Plan Of the three the Communications Plan is the more concerning which is why it has been rated as medium risk.  IT/Systems Transformation  NC stated that a new head of repairs has been recently appointed. The internal candidate was the legitimately the best candidate and TLSG members agreed.  Integrated IT systems are currently being investigated procurement this is slightly off track due legislative changes to procurement rules in February 2025 but still on track for implementation by September 2027. A question was asked, ‘with technology moving so fast how will we ensure that the new systems are not out of date by then?’ NC stated ‘as part of the contract IT updates are factored in. Part of the requirements for any provider will be the agility to respond to changing needs.  Cllr Dhatt pointed out poor systems and a lack of data was a key factor in the C3 judgement and therefore this is key piece of work.  Question was asked on whether it is expected that the Compliance, Asset Management and Housing Management will be one piece of software. It was confirmed the procurement is likely to be in 4 lots. It could be that a system is acquired which covers all areas or there could be 4 different systems but if there are multiple systems they will need to be able to be integrated. This is why SMBC has chosen not to simply purchase systems “off the shelf”. Negotiations will take place with providers.  The Chair stated that scrutiny have identified numerous times about the lack of data and welcomes this positive change. A request was made that TLSG receive regular updates on progress as the group needs data to do their work.  Climate Change Response Plan  Recycling of waste in high rise blocks have been deferred until later in the year due to plans to implementation 2 weekly waste collection across the borough. Despite the delay the roll out of recycling in high rise is still on track to be delivered within the next 18 months. SS stated that ‘tenants need to be educated about recycling and this needs to be looked into further to ensure recycling is not contaminated with waste that can’t be recycled’. NC agreed the correct communications is crucial. Example of Kenrick Park where housing staff engaged with residents prior to the roll out of recycling proved very successful with a lot less contamination than previous pilots. AA felt is was important that the communications come from SMBC rather than relying only on Serco. Due to the changes in rubbish collection a question was asked, ‘will this mean this mean there are different bins for residents in low-rise’, it was confirmed yes it would.  It was agreed by member of the group that education of residents is going to be key and residents need to be made aware that the new processes are compulsory. Clear labelling of bins will also be crucial.  Communications Plan  Communication team going through an organisation review and the impact of this has been felt across housing. A worker has now been identified and allocated one day a week to work with housing as there is a big for ‘push comms’ in terms of regular and proactive communications to be sent to tenants on a regular basis. SS stated that more use of the Sandwell Herald in terms of positive articles and not just electronic versions as there needs to be hard copies available for tenants. She also pointed out that not everyone gets access to The Herald.  Key Performance Indicators  KPI’s green arrows indicate improvement, cleansing of data and picking out repairs that can be done now and this is on track to be cleared by Spring 2026, NC stated that we are not where we want to be at the moment, but we are on track.  There was a query as to what ‘WIP’ meant, ‘Work in progress’ (WIP) i.e. current jobs. GH stated that from Nov 2024 – Jan 2025 52,000 repair requests have been received and the WIP is around 40 days. AA asked about Leaseholder info and whether this is captured in the current data for gas, electric certification. GH confirmed that where leaseholder information on gas and electric certification is available it is added to the data. AA confirmed he has encouraged leaseholders to take up the offer of annual gas checks via SMBC as pricing is very competitive.  **Action:** GH to come back with a metric about how and what this looks like.  To confirm if the provision of electrical checks will be offered to leaseholders.  NC stated that there are issues with HHSR (Housing Health and Safety Rating) and Housing Disrepair data which the team are attempting to decipher what this means in and how this impacts services going forward.  NC stated that to achieve 100% target forced entry and compulsory may be considered to ensure annual gas service checks are completed as this negatively impacts the percentage figure. Question was asked the cycle for gas inspections. It was confirmed this is done on a 40-week cycle. Evidence suggests the no access cases are not “repeaters” it tends to be different people in different circumstances. However, the implementation of new ICT will help to cross reference and identify any trends in tenancy data which should help in getting ahead of any issues. Fire safety checks are on track to be completed by the end of March 2025 and is on track for 100%. Asbestos safety checks in communal areas – figures have fluctuated based on concerns about the quality of data. SMBC now only reporting on new inspections. The achievement of the target will therefore take longer but there will be better assurance that the information is accurate and what is required.  Electrical Inspections (5 yearly) self-referral 97.5% and this is moving in the right direction. Asbestos Checks on track to be completed and implemented by July 2025, Cllr Dhatt stated that, ‘this is a positive good news story, and we are starting to have confidence in the data’.  AA asked, ‘will the capturing of current data influence and shape systems going forward?’, NC, stated that ‘Pennington Choices’ have been a third party organisation that has been brought in to cast an independent eye over what is being captured, this helps the service to react accordingly.  **Action:** NC The Housing Improvement & Transformation programme will be brought to future TLSG meetings to ensure progress/ action is captured and updated.  Self-referred measures:  Electricals - GH confirmed service standards need to be developed so that electrical remedial works as a result of inspections can be monitored.  There are currently 3 categories  C1 – high risk requiring immediate action  C2 – Action Needed – but no immediate risk  C3 – No action needed - no risk but could be improved  There are 812 CAT 2 remedials on the system but it is unclear how many are overdue.  Front Doors – Inspection of flat front doors is improving and another contractor has been appointed which should bring further improvement. AA asked what happens if doors are non-compliant – is it replaced or repaired and what happens in the case of door frames?  Getting access to view the internal side of doors has been an issue but measures being put in place to improve access and aiming to achieve 100% compliance  **Action**: Question for Sarah Ager, are door frames included as part of the fire safety survey check to ensure doors are/ remain compliant?  Stock Condition - GH spoke stock condition surveys. She confirmed if the contractors have any immediate concerns or spot any hazards these are reported immediately for SMBC to action. She confirmed at well as decency they look at HHSR including CAT1 hazards such as damp and mould. The contractors report on their work and this is monitored. | | | NC | |
| 4. | **Budget**  NC gave an overview of Savills Report.   * Increase rental charges 2.7%. * Repairs increase. * Pay awards. * Vacancy factor. * Capital programme. * Capital Investment. * Additional Investments. * No provision for retro fit, small amount of money devolved through government. | | | NC | |
| 4. | **Capital Investment Programme – Gwen Haq shared information prior to the meeting taking place and ran though key factors with the TLSG.**     * Is focused on existing stock * A commitment made in previous cabinet reports * Sprinkler installations is the level of spend * Moorlands, St. Giles Allen House making sure that is codesigned with the tenants in mind. * Home improvement Contract – 30 year programme improving communication. * Major projects – Walker Grange, Darley etc £11.5 million to address current issues remediation, fire doors, window restrictors, door entry systems, * Major adaptions i.e. bath removal and installation of showers, ramps etc * Home improvements – FHDS, boiler replacements, not committing to the allocation of funding until stock conditions survey is fully complete. * Mould and damp system * Demonstrator Homes – Retro fit measures to understand how changes have improved energy efficiency and could be occupied, codesign with the tenant, leaseholder. * Other project schemes, CCTV, recycling, estate walkabouts, street walks and road adaption schemes, stock condition contingency this is for unforeseen actions that may need to take place.   Query around estate walkabouts NC gave an overview of estate walkabouts some groups members were unaware that this was going on.  AR pointed out if issue referred to HSO etc residents get feedback on the outcome. When issue reported via MySandwell is advises that issue dealt with and case closed but does not say what has actually been done. It would be better if more information was provided.  SB queried structural and what is included. SB spoke about a tenant that had a maisonette with extreme mould and damp issues due to a hole in the roof, it was agreed to pick this issue up after the meeting.  Cllr Dhatt spoke about ‘walkabouts’, and how it is resident led and proving to be a good mechanism to hear and see issues within the community.  AR would like something similar to happen on his estate.  The Chair spoke about how sometimes the communication and good news stories are not shared with tenants and residents.  NC agreed communications is very much needed. | | | GH | |
| 5. | **Reports On projects Funded by West Midlands Combined Authority**  Decarbonisation fund 625 properties, retro fit projects, drop-in sessions wave 2 will focus on windows, ventilation and doors.  **Action:** GH to bring a future update report that details the Net Zero targets and planned work. | | | GH | |
| 6. | **Tenant Satisfaction Measures**  NC circulated report prior to the meeting and gave an overview of some of the key points.   * Complaints – Housing ombudsman ratification, quarterly reports being produced to monitor performance from Tom Hogan and the Housing Insight Team. * ASB – There are issues with the integrity of the data as there are two pathways for ASB to be reported, either through the ASB team or through tenancy management. Tenancy management report incidents which are not recorded on the case management system some of these may actually be cases. There could also be a case of double counting, NC working with Nicola Plant, who is responsible for Regulatory Services and has overall responsibility for Community Safety to establish a new reporting mechanism for ASB. This will be done over the next few months. * Decent Homes Standard – As stock condition intelligence comes through this will shape how this is addressed. * House Mark Data – The collection of rent has improved, and some good work continues to take place. * Water and lift safety checks are 100%   Query: SB asked about water checks, NC stated this in communal areas at and not individual tenant properties. | | | NC | |
| 7. | **Leaseholder and Tenant Engagement Framework**  MS gave an overview of what the team are currently undertaking.   * TAG, ASB audit, action plan being developed which is expected to be agreed in April 2025 * Resident Engagement Officers have now increased with the addition of two new workers. * Two building Safety Managers have been employed, and this will ensure continuity and encourage tenant engagement as people from the blocks will get to know the new workers. * High Rise Forum Meetings – Two meetings have now taken place with eleven attendees. Terms of reference has been agreed. There will be a minimum of three meetings a year but on track to have more than this. 5 tenants are not part of a pilot for “Block Reps”. * Newsletters – Looking to be codesigned with tenants and this will ensure that news/ information can be shared with all tenants and residents. CD gave an overview of some of the actions that has recently taken place at St. Mary’s House. * Policies and procedures – Consultation continues to take place around the repairs policy etc, work with officers continues to ensure the voice of the tenant is heard. * Trinity House TRA – A gardening project is on the verge of being launched and this is hopefully due to take place April/ May 2025 this will also hopefully boost membership to the TRA. * Bleed Control Training – PS gave an overview of some of the work taking place across Sandwell that involves tenants, residents, partners, officers, Police and PCSO’s. * Tenant/ Leaseholder Conference – Work currently underway. * Young People/ Care Leavers – The Tenant Engagement team currently working on this project. * Net Zero Project – Currently taking place on the Park Estate in Tipton, tenant engagement is key, and this has seen a strong take up of volunteers, tenants and residents getting involved * SCIPS – The organisation continues to support the TRAs. SS spoke about support from SCIPS and the TRA network sessions that provides the opportunity sharing of good practice and challenges faced. A recent satisfaction survey of SCIPS stated that 87% expressed satisfaction * Training sessions delivered to officers in collaboration with SCIPS and the tenant engagement team. * SCIPS DigiCom training continues and has recently focused on high rise blocks, and this has been well received. * TLSG – Rotation of membership and work due to start to look at this. * Consultation in high rise blocks continues. * Staff/ officer training with SCIPS continues. * Webpage development in progress. * Annual report working group to be created. * A ‘pool of tenants’ is being developed. This is to ensure that there is a diverse range tenants available that can assist and have the opportunity to be involved developing different pieces of work. * Tenant Engagement Strategy development – Working group to be created involving tenants so that the strategy is co-designed   Discussion took place on the need to get more young people involved in Tenants and Residents groups and more generally. | | | MS | |
| 8. | The formal part of the meeting was concluded. | | |  | |
| 9. | **Date of next formal meeting: 21st June 2025**  **9.00 am for a 9.30 am start.** | | |  | |