

## Minutes of the All Panels Meeting 6 December 2023 – 3pm – The Fountains Room, Harrogate Civic Centre

**Involved tenants: Lesley Peplow; Barbara Rickards; Richard Hinson; David Thomas; Teresa Fox; Michael Fenwick Scott; Carol Lawson;**

**Staff: Lucy Tyne (Tenant Involvement Officer); Stephen Wilson (Neighbourhood Services Manager); Dawn Saxby (Independent Living Manager)**

### **1. Welcome and apologies**

1.1 Lesley welcomed all to the meeting.

1.2 Apologies for absence had been received from - James Jenner, Arnot Wood and Duncan Morris

### **3. Minutes of the All Panels' meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> September 2023**

3.1 The minutes were approved as a correct record; they will now be placed on the Councils website. A few comments were raised.

3.2.1 Barbara asked if there had been any update on the legislation for housing management staff to hold relevant qualifications. Steve and Lucy explained that nothing has been updated yet. Lucy shared that at a conference she recently attended someone from the regulator was explaining that managers should be given the opportunity to gain further qualifications within their posts if necessary and appropriate.

3.2.2 David asked for an update on how the unitary council are working together. Steve explained that not much had changed since the last update and we are still awaiting a restructure.

3.2.3 David asked when a new group of tenants will be inspecting void properties, Lucy explained a new group will be chosen in the new year.

3.2.4 Teresa asked for an update on whether the number of 1 bed properties the council own is increasing. Steve confirmed there are a number of 1 bed properties at a new site in Panel Ash.

**Action:**

## **4. Review of minutes of recent panel meetings**

### **4.1 Housing and Property Services Panel held on 7th November 2023**

The draft minutes of this meeting had been circulated previously. No issues were raised – a copy of the minutes will be available on the council website.

### **4.2 Neighbourhood Services and Housing Needs Panel meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2023**

The draft minutes of this meeting had been circulated previously. A number of comments were made.

4.2.1 Teresa asked what was meant by the term ‘sheltered housing’. Dawn explained it refers to independent living, generally for older people. A warden is generally on-site weekday mornings but they do not provide hands on care. Every flat in a sheltered scheme has a lifeline system installed.

4.2.2 David asked Dawn for a breakdown of how the wardens should spend their time during working hours. Dawn explained that there’s not a prescribed amount of time, each person, scheme and day is different, meaning each wardens duties will differ.

## **5. Dawn Saxby (Independent Living Manager)**

5.1.1 Dawn explained that in Harrogate there are 6 sheltered housing schemes. There is a team who look after 118 units within these schemes and around 800 lifeline customers in the community. A 3<sup>rd</sup> party call handler is used to answer lifeline calls. The wardens work on a patch basis, currently the team are down by 2 wardens. 1 of the posts is not able to be filled until there is a restructure of the service. The other post is held by a warden who has been off for some time, they have now returned to work on a phased return.

5.1.2 Dawn explained the difficulties that sometimes arise when trying to let sheltered properties, she used the example of Maple Creek. There are currently 3 empty units there. Maple Creek is quite a way out of Harrogate and doesn’t have the same numbers of services around it that some other sheltered schemes do. Although it’s a lovely place to live, people who don’t drive or those who need certain services close to them may not chose to live in Maple Creek.

5.1.3 Dawn shared that since we are now a part of North Yorkshire Council, the service is looking at a call centre that Ryedale has; this could possibly be used instead of the 3<sup>rd</sup> party call handler for lifeline customers. This is still in the very early stages of discussion.

5.1.4 Dawn shared some good news with the group in that Maple Creek had a fire risk assessment recently and it went very well.

5.2 Teresa asked if sheltered accommodation is only for 60s and over. Dawn explained that those under the age of 60 can be considered however the schemes qualify for a concessionary tv license, there is worry that they only qualify for this if everyone living in the building is over 60. The group were assured that if someone under the age of 60 was deemed suitable to live in a sheltered scheme they would be considered.

5.3 Barbara raised a concern that people who have the lifeline service are not getting visits. Dawn explained that there are 2 levels of service offered and it is more expensive to have a monthly visit. The standard service does not include a visit. Barbara passed on details of someone she knows, who she believes to be paying for the enhanced service but still isn't getting a visit. Dawn is going to look into this.

5.4 David asked a couple of questions about Maple Creek. He queried if the cleaning at Maple Creek should be done every day. Dawn explained that due to staff shortages the cleaning cannot be done every day there. It is currently being done once a week.

David also queried the levels of protection that the fire doors give, as well as the evacuation policy. Dawn explained that these questions are best discussed with Paul Boreham. Lucy will go to Paul with these.

5.5 David asked when lifelines will be checked. Dawn explained that again, she is aware they need testing at Maple Creek and the covering wardens are on with it. It was also mentioned that tenants can test their own lifeline whenever they want.

## **6. New build update**

6.1 There are no updates as of yet, Lucy explained that she should have one to share from James Robinson in the next week or so.

## **7. Scrutiny update**

7.1 Lucy explained that her and James had seen a finished project at Dene Park, the property had a lot of fire damage. It had been adapted for a disabled tenant; worktops had been lowered, a wet room was installed, and the front door was also adapted. It has also been decorated to a good standard. They had also seen a new void on Newby Crescent, major works were not needed in this, just needed updating. We are yet to see it finished.

7.1.1 In the new year a new group of tenants will be chosen.

## 7.2 Statement from Paul Cole regarding void works –

Since my last update, we have stepped up our retrofit projects on vacant properties with the seeing of a lot more properties becoming vacant that are of poor energy performance. We have introduced various measures of improvement to each property and have taken each one on a case-by-case basis as every property has been different, so one size does not fit all. This has been a really positive experience with these properties being re-evaluated and coming out as high C to high B producing a high standard of comfortable and desirable home for all new and existing tenants.

We still acknowledge that implementing additional measures to improve the homes rather than quickly turn around properties to get them back for occupation is still worthwhile as it provides quality and energy-efficient homes, reducing future further repairs and maintenance as we get it right at the void stage.

In my last update, I mentioned that we were in the process of installing environmental sensors as a pilot project to monitor the improvements made during and after the implementation of energy-efficient measures. I have now assessed the data from these and it is proving extremely crucial to each project both for the tenant and the council to understand the performance of the property once measures are in place. With this in mind, I have expanded this across all projects that we are doing to ensure we capture essential data to provide feedback to the occupier and ensure that all the measures we have installed are improving the home's energy performance. Allowing us to monitor the home throughout the process and continually after gives us essential data that allows us to make any necessary adjustments and work with the occupier to ensure continuous comfort and affordability in the home.

I am also currently working closely with Align Property Partners in putting together our bid for additional funding for the latest Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund which is now available, and I hope to secure this early next year and add additional Capital Reserves to allow us to make energy efficiency improvements across at least 150 homes within our housing stock of which will be made up of improvements to both tenanted and void properties. I will give further updates on this as it progresses further, to hopefully if accepted implement a strategic plan of action that I can then share further as this develops.

Furthermore, we are still progressing with the expansion plan of our team to perform this work in-house with positive applications from tradespersons who want to join our team to assist in the refurbishment and maintenance of our void properties. This strategic move aims to continue to reduce contractor expenses, enhance control over installation standards, and, ideally, improve our turnaround times. Our long-term goal still has not changed and remains for this team to

eventually oversee 95% of repairs and maintenance for NYC housing stock.

I trust again that this update offers everyone a clear and concise overview of our current position and as always, we remain committed to providing further updates to keep everyone up to date with our plans to enhance our homes, continue to construct better ones, and importantly improve the services and comfortability for all of our tenants, whether new or existing.

7.2.1 Lesley wanted to thank Paul Cole for the regular updates he gives to the All Panels group.

## **8. Tenant involvement budget**

8.1 A report summarising spend on the budget was shown.

8.1.1 Richard asked why no money has been spent on training so far— Lucy explained that because we don't know what tenant involvement will look like in NYC we haven't felt appropriate to roll out training. There will be a programme of training once a new tenant involvement strategy is put together, this won't be possible until a staff structure is in place.

8.1.2 Barbara asked when the structure will be finished. Lucy explained that something should be in place by April next year.

## **9. Any other business**

9.1 Barbara highlighted that herself and Lesley have come to the end of their chairing responsibilities. Lucy suggested that if they both do not mind could we keep it as it is until we have more of an idea of what tenant involvement will look like going forward and we have a strategy. The group agreed with this.

9.2. Lesley asked if we could have an update on the ground source heat pump compensation scheme. Lorraine has confirmed she cannot give specific details but as of the end of September all claims that met the criteria of the report agreed by Cabinet Member have been settled.

9.3 Lesley asked what happened to the £16 million that was in Harrogate's' HRA. Steve explained that we just have 1 HRA now. He also went on to comment that there is still a lot going on in Harrogate with planned works and new projects.

## **10. Date of next meeting**

10.1 The date of the next meeting will be confirmed in due course.

The meeting was closed at 4:15pm

