

East Local Area Committee

Meeting held 7 December 2023

**PRESENT:** Councillors Mary Lea (Chair), Nabeela Mowlana (Deputy Chair), David Barker, Dianne Hurst, Ben Miskell, Zahira Naz and Sioned-Mair Richards

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

1.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mike Drabble, Terry Fox, Mazher Iqbal, Laura Moynahan and Sophie Wilson.

**2. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

2.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

**3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

3.1 There were no declarations of interest.

**4. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

4.1 RESOLVED: The minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 11 October 2023, were approved as a correct record.

**5. HOUSING PRESENTATION**

5.1 The Committee and members of the public in attendance received a presentation from the Council's Housing Team. Thomas Strong was in attendance to give the presentation. The presentation will be uploaded to the Council's meeting pages, along with the minutes.

5.2 Thomas Strong explained that the East Neighbourhood Team was 1 of 6 Neighbourhood Teams across the City. The Team was made up of Neighbourhood Officers, Neighbourhood Support Officers, Block Cleaners, Estate Officers and Management.

5.3 The East Neighbourhood Team covered Darnall, Park & Arbourthorne, Richmond and Manor wards, in which they were approximately 6,000 council tenancies.

5.4 Thomas Strong gave a brief overview of the work carried out by the East Neighbourhood Team. This included:

- Tenancy Visits
- Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour
- Providing Customer Service
- Providing rehousing advice
- Estate Management
- Tenancy Management

5.5 Thomas Strong explained that the East Neighbourhood Team also worked with external organisations such as South Yorkshire Police, South Yorkshire Fire & Rescue and the RSPCA.

5.6 So far in 2023/24, the East Neighbourhood Team had issued approximately 1900 tenancy visits and had discussions with 75% of those.

5.7 The Housing Service engaged with customers through Local Area Housing Forums and Estate Walkabouts. Thomas Strong explained that he welcomed views on how to improve engagement.

5.8 Following the presentation, Councillor Sioned Mair-Richards asked about introductory tenancies.

Thomas Strong explained that as of 1 October 2023, a new policy had been introduced on introductory tenancies. New tenants signing up for a council tenancy will now have a 12-month introductory tenancy. This should improve sustainability by reducing tenancy evictions.

5.9 The Committee and members of the public in attendance received a presentation from the Repairs and Maintenance Team. Martin Kay was in attendance to give the presentation.

5.10 Martin Kay explained that the presentation was a performance review of the Repairs & Maintenance Service, from April to December 2023. The presentation will be uploaded to the Council's meeting pages, along with the minutes.

5.11 Following the presentation, Councillor Dianne Hurst asked what the Council's targets were for each of the slides mentioned.

Martin Kay explained that there were 'dotted lines' on each of the charts shown on the presentation. That dotted line represented the Council's targets.

5.12 Martin Kay mentioned that there had been some issues around staffing resources this year which had led to the increase in 'overdue jobs'.

5.13 Councillor Zahira Naz asked how flexible the Repairs and Maintenance Team were with working with tenants who might not be able to take time off work to stay at home whilst a repair needed to be completed.

Martin Kay explained that front line operatives were now instructed to contact tenants, and to not leave the property until they have rung the tenant. If the tenant is unable to be at home for the repair, then they can arrange a time for the repairs team to come back.

- 5.14 Martin Kay confirmed they were occasions where an operative from a different team had to be called out to the property in order to complete a repair. Although he believed that this was rare and that the right operative should be sent out to repair an issue at a council property. In some cases, this was unavoidable though, and there can be times when an operative was carrying out a repair, they discover a new issue in which a different operative may be needed before the original operative could continue in a safe way. He added that they were also looking to upskill operatives so that different operatives could carry out each of the more common repairs and mitigate the waiting times for repairs to be carried out.
- 5.15 Martin Kay confirmed that the Council had a diagnostic tool, and that data was being reviewed to ensure the tenants were not left waiting for repairs for excessive periods of time. By reviewing the data, officers could determine whether the right operatives were being sent out to complete a repair or whether other operatives were needed at the property.
- 5.16 Martin Kay confirmed that the definition of 'right first time' were repairs in which an operative completed a job and was not needed to return to the property for a second time.
- 5.17 Councillor Ben Miskell raised concerns around the delays for carrying out fire stopping repairs.

Martin Kay explained that a fire risk assessment was carried out every year for each of the Council properties. As part of the risk assessment, if any repair was identified, then it would be put into categories of urgency. He added that some fire stopping materials were bespoke and needed to be ordered which could cause some delays.

- 5.18 Councillor Dianne Hurst mentioned there was a property in Richmond Ward that had been vacant for some time. She asked what the process was for ensuring these properties were turned over quickly and that revenue for the Council were not being lost.

Martin Kay explained the average turn around on vacant properties, from getting the keys to the property back, were 36 days. He believed there must be some significant issues with that particular property for it to be vacant for that amount of time.

The Chair asked for the details on this property to be shared with Councillor Hurst, after the meeting.

## **6. WORKSHOPS**

6.1 Following the presentation, Members of the Committee broke out into breakout groups with Officers and members of the public. They were asked to consider the following:

6.2 The Regulator of Social Housing is seeking views on the revised consumer standards. Within the consumer standards, there are several recommendations below where we would like to get your views:

1. Engagement with tenants – Landlords must take tenants views into account.
2. Information about landlord services – Landlords must provide information so tenants can access services.
3. Performance information – Landlords must collect and provide performance information.

Question: With the above in mind, how can landlords improve on this and what ideas do you have?

6.3 Following the breakout session, the Chair (Councillor Mary Lea) explained that the discussions had been captured and would be passed back to the Housing Service.

## **7. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS**

7.1 No public questions or petitions were raised at the meeting.

7.2 The Chair thanked everyone for attending the meeting and explained that the next meeting of the Local Area Committee was the 28 February 2024.