

TACT (Tenants and Council Together)
Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 24th March 2021, 2pm
MS Teams

Attendance;

Monica Gill	Central
David Chafe	Stanmore
Sandra Salter	Winnall
David Light	Stanmore
Lin Mellish	Kings Worthy
June Glass	Winchester
Lizzie Christian	Stanmore
Joshua Christian	Stanmore
Sue Green	Stanmore

Guests;

Cllr Kelsey Learney	
Cllr Caroline Horrill	
Lucy Spence	WCC
Denise Jenkins	WCC
Rebecca Hallett	WCC
Richard Lewis	WCC
Amber Russell	WCC
Gillian Knight	WCC

		Actions
1	<p>Welcome, Introductions and Apologies</p> <p>The chair welcomed all to the meeting and introduced the guests. She explained that to ensure everyone who is speaking can be heard all microphones and cameras will be switched off while there is a speaker, and we will turn them on again when we have a question.</p> <p>Apologies have been received and accepted from;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Martin Taylor • Michelle Smith • Sheila Burns • Joan Stevens • Carole Bull • Chris Bone 	
2 2.1	<p>Minutes of Meeting on Wednesday 24th February 2021.</p> <p>Corrections</p> <p>None</p>	

2.2	<p>True Record Minutes proposed as being a true and accurate record of the meeting agreed by all present.</p>	
2.3	<p>Matters arising / actions from previous meetings</p> <p>TACT asked if alternative routes of reporting complaints were available, as the phone lines are incredibly busy and it is difficult to get through to the customer centre. One TACT member did comment that the WCC call back service does work, and is worth trying if there is a long phone queue. UPDATE 25/02/21: Feedback sent to Gilly Knight and Liz Moore for comment. UPDATE 24/03/21: Complaints on the agenda of this meeting for further discussion.</p> <p>Cllr Horrill commented that reporting issues by phone is not always easy for tenants, and some are unable to do so through the internet either. Martin Taylor asked if tenants to report bin issues to the housing officers when they visit. The information could then be emailed to Martin. Janette agreed to send this idea through to the relevant Service Lead. UPDATE 25/02/21: Suggestion sent to Amber Russell for comment.</p> <p>Telephone Waiting Times – one attendee raised that the wait times to pay your rent over the phone, are very long. In their experience, one hour has been the shortest time to be answered. Janette agreed to pass this feedback on. UPDATE 25/02/21: Issue passed to Liz Moore and Gilly Knight.</p> <p>UPDATE 24/03/21 – The Housing Management Team and the Council’s Communication Team have been investigating the issue of busy phones raised at TACT.</p> <p>This has confirmed unacceptable call wait times both for the Council’s Customer Service Centre and the Housing Hub and immediate action has been taken to address this.</p> <p>A combination of factors appear to have been the cause:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • staff availability and vacancies • COVID working restrictions to keep safe i.e. home working rather than being office based. This has an impact on the time taken to investigate queries. • the number of calls received by the Customer Service Centre in response to garden bin initiative 	

	<p>We are bringing in a temporary Housing Hub manager to provide daily line management and to monitor call handing while recruitment to the permanent post takes place.</p> <p>Phone messages have been set up, as other organisations have done, to warn that the Council is experiencing a high numbers of calls.</p> <p>We will continue to review performance. Once new staff are in place and fully trained we propose that officers meet with TACT and tenant representatives to agree target response times.</p>	
3	<p>Denise Jenkins – Housing Projects and Performance Manager Complaints Action Plan and Communications Scrutiny Feedback</p> <p>A copy of the handout was sent to tenants prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Denise explained the background to the new Housing complaints action plan and reiterated that this is specific to Housing, There is a corporate Council policy already in place.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman published a new Complaint Handling Code in July 2020, setting out good practice that will allow landlords to respond to complaints effectively and fairly.</p> <p>Key areas in the Code</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Universal definition of a complaint • Providing easy access to the complaints procedure and ensuring residents are aware of it, including their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service • The structure of the complaints procedure - only two stages necessary and clear timeframes set out for responses • Ensuring fairness in complaint handling with a resident-focused process • Taking action to put things right and appropriate remedies • Creating a positive complaint handling culture through continuous learning and improvement • Demonstrating learning in Annual Reports. <p>The Code is part of the Ombudsman’s new powers in the revised Housing Ombudsman Scheme.</p> <p>The purpose of the Housing Ombudsman’s Complaint Handling Code is to enable landlords to resolve complaints raised by their residents quickly and to use the learning from complaints to drive service improvements.</p> <p>It is for landlords to assess the service that they provide to their residents and how this meets the Complaint Handling Code.</p>	

There is a requirement for landlords to self-assess against the Code by December 2020, to publish the results and take appropriate steps to make sure complaint-handling is in line with the Code. The results of the self-assessment should be shared with elected members.

Winchester City Councils Self-assessment can be found on the following web pages;

<https://www.winchester.gov.uk/about/contact-us/complaints>

There are a number of actions that have come about as part of the self-assessment process. These need to be achieved in order to meet the Ombudsman Complaints Handling Code and to support the campaign “make things right”. These are;

- Housing complaints policy to be published
- Compensations policy
 - Contractors to sign up to a contract agreement in line with our complaints/compensation policy
- Staffing
 - A Customer relations officer to be responsible for investigating complaints
 - Staff training on handling complaints and process
- Standard and consistent letter and how we response to complaints
- Complaints performance informing our residents
 - Website
 - My Winchester Tenancy online portal
 - TACT (TI annual report AGM)
 - Tenants complaints Panel
 - Annual Report
 - Tenants e-newsletters
 - Sheltered newsletter
 - Shared on Resident Engagement Facebook page
 - Members & Senior Management
 - E-newsletters
- Be transparent on how we learn from complaints

As part of the white paper the Government launched a “make things right” campaign on 5th March 2021. This is aimed at improving social housing residents’ understanding of the complaints process for the sector. The campaign will involve the government running adverts on social media and music streaming sites about the social housing complaints process and potential barriers.

The Chair commented that she had previously attended a complaints workshop with another tenant and it was very interesting how different other

	<p>organisations dealt with complaints. From experience some complaints to WCC have never been acknowledged.</p> <p>Gilly commented that it is important to remember WCC has a corporate complaints policy, what we are looking at now is bespoke to housing. One of the most important messages now is that the process is completely transparent and we are working to get it right first time. As a landlord WCC have a good record of making sure tenants voices are heard, but what we need to get better at is making changes from lessons learned.</p> <p>Feedback from the communications scrutiny was that acknowledgment of complaints should be happening in every instance. Gilly added that this is a service expectation so if it isn't happening it should be taken very seriously.</p> <p>The Chair commented that she has first-hand experience of a complaint not being dealt with.</p> <p>A tenant commented that she wondered whether consideration has ever been given to the interpretation of what is a complaint, and whether there is sometimes a misunderstanding. If a complaint goes straight to the individual officer what happens with them? Should they be overseen by a central base? Could they be forwarded to an official complaints channel? Denise commented that the interpretation of what is a complaint is a really useful point and something that may be identified as a training need. Complaints should be overseen but this is not always happening. There is a new email address specifically for complaints; complaints@winchester.gov.uk</p> <p>Denise outlined the next stage as being the setting up of a working group made up of tenants and officers who work collaboratively to achieve what has been set out. If any tenants would like to be part of the group, or know of any other tenants who they think would be interested please either contact Denise direct or through the Tenant Involvement Officers.</p>	
4	<p>Rebecca Hallett and Richard Lewis – Neighbourhood Services Team Managing Communal Waste Proposal</p> <p>A copy of the policy and procedure being presented was sent to tenants prior to the meeting.</p> <p>Rebecca and Richard explained that housing services have a duty to ensure the health and safety of the sites it manages and maintains. The Neighbourhood Services Team undertake health and safety inspections at communal areas on housing sites, daily, weekly, monthly or on a quarterly basis according to a work schedule. The overriding purpose is to identify risk, work to minimise those risks and maintain health and safety for all residents,</p>	

visitors and contractors to housing sites. They regularly find bulky items left in these areas. WCC have a duty to ensure these areas remain clear.

Currently if waste or bulky items are found the following actions take place;

- Any waste found within the bin area is treated as waste. Where suitable it is placed in an appropriate bin. Where that is not possible because they are Bulky items, additional arrangements for the waste to be removed are made.
- Any items that are deemed dangerous or hazardous, due to the item or its location are removed immediately, or arrangements are made for a contractor to attend immediately.
- Items found on landings have a card placed on them. This informs the resident that the item must be removed within a set time frame. If on a re-visit the said waste is not removed an officer will arrange removal.

However, it is often difficult to identify the source of the waste and the current policy does not provide a clear process for action or enforcement against those residents who are guilty of inappropriately disposing of their waste.

A new approach is being proposed.

In the first instance priority will be given to identify the source of the waste. A clear enforcement plan will be in place for those who repeatedly dispose of waste in communal areas and bin stores inappropriately. When the source of the waste has been identified they will be charged for the removal costs. An additional element to the service charge will be put in place.

The idea behind the new approach is that everybody knows exactly what they will be charged. Rebecca outlined how the charges have been calculated. She stated that they have been mindful that the re-charge amount shouldn't be different depending on where the person lives. For example, you are not charged more for living in the rural south because it's geographically further for the operatives to travel.

Charges would be made retrospectively taking away any re-charge costs recouped. In addition to this there will be a programme of education and promotion of the health and safety reasons for the policy and the policy itself. Rebecca commented that they would make sure the posters in blocks are rotated so residents notice new information and are more likely to read it, rather than the same old information that no one looks at.

An inaccuracy was pointed out in the policy document, Trussell Crescent is not in Stanmore as states in the document. Rebecca said this would be corrected.

A question was asked as to whether consideration has been given to bulk collection days when tenants can dispose of items free of charge. Richard

<p>commented that this has been done in the past in some areas of the district. This is something that would possibly considered if there was a specific need in an area.</p> <p>A query was made as to whether residents would end up paying twice with this new policy? Rebecca and Richard answered that the new policy would replace the current policy so tenants would not be charged twice. The new policy would mean the costs and charges are far more transparent for everyone to understand.</p> <p>A comment was made that the tenant would be aggrieved paying for other peoples dumping of waste. Rebecca and Richard commented that as a service charge payer you would already be paying for this, it is just not very clear within the bill how the payment is calculated.</p> <p>The full calculation of charges is on the policy handout circulated prior to this meeting.</p> <p>The bin cupboard at Godson House was raised as an area of concern. It should be locked but hypodermic needles have been found in there. Rebecca commented that this has been noted. The area will also be flagged with the outreach and homelessness teams for officers to attend and if there are new needles these will be removed.</p> <p>Simmonds Court was raised as an area where cards have previously been put on items in communal areas but these items have not been removed. Rebecca commented that Simmonds Court is inspected on a monthly basis. She will speak to the officer to check the issue raised. The Chair said she will pass photos of the complaint to Rebecca.</p> <p>It was suggested that residents didn't know who the Neighbourhood Services Officers are and a suggestion made that they could set specific times of the day they are going to visit each scheme. Rebecca explained that unfortunately the volume of work they have means the officers cannot give an exact time they will be at each scheme as they have to deal with whatever comes up at each site. Amber commented that a leaflet was sent to all residents last year explaining who the Neighbourhood Services Officers are and with their pictures so residents knew their faces. This can be something that is looked into again. Amber reiterated that sometimes things take longer to resolve than everyone would like. This is due to the procedure depending what's been left.</p> <p>A tenant from Valley Court stated she has been waiting for someone from Neighbourhood Services to visit to see where a store could be placed for a scooter. Rebecca stated someone will get in touch with the tenant.</p>	<p>Rebecca Hallett</p> <p>Rebecca Hallett</p> <p>Rebecca Hallett</p>
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	<p>A comment was made regarding the cost charged by Biffa to remove items from outside the property. They will not enter the property to pick items up. This is not helpful for those who are not able to remove it themselves. Rebecca stated this is something they will look into in the future as it may be a gap in service.</p>	
5	<p>Martin Taylor - Contracts Manager WCC</p> <p>Martin Taylor sent his apologies as he was unable to attend the meeting.</p> <p>The bins at Valley Court were raised as the operatives don't seem to realise there are more bins there as any not at the front are not being emptied. Rebecca Hallett said she will flag this with the Contract Monitoring Team.</p> <p>A tenant asked if the council are now issuing clear bags for recycling waste. Rebecca stated the clear bags are only issued at specific locations. However, if you think you would benefit from using a clear sack please contact the council to discuss,</p>	Rebecca Hallett
	<p>SDG Updates from Meetings Held Lucy Spence – Tenant Involvement Officer</p> <p>Repairs & Maintenance SDG The next meeting is scheduled for Friday 14th May 2021 11am MS Teams</p> <p>Housing Management SDG The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 1st April 2021 1pm MS Teams UPDATE – this meeting has been postponed, date to be confirmed.</p>	
8	<p>Any Other Business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Chair informed TACT that Chris Pink, a long standing involved tenant who was a member of TACT and the Housing Management SDG sadly passed away a couple of weeks ago. Condolences have been sent to his family on behalf of TACT. The Chair raised an issue she was made aware of from a tenant in Compton regarding a young mother receiving unwelcome attention from a PH Jones contractor. This has been dealt with by Steve White who has had confirmation from PH Jones that the contractor will not be used again. Amber will speak to Steve White to check what's been put in place. If needed she can have extra support and safeguarding security in place. 	Amber Russell

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political canvassers around the Stanmore area have raised concerns with tenants. They are not always wearing ID when knocking on doors. Gilly reiterated the Chairs comment that everyone should ask for ID. If they are not wearing any and don't display it when asked they should be reported. A tenant commented that some authorities provide stickers for doors stating 'no id, no entry'. This could be a suggestion if people were concerned. • The Chair reminded everyone that Monday is the last day for nominations for TACT committee elections. • The next meeting will be the AGM in May. If anyone has any suggestions or ideas for a speaker please forward them to the Chair. 	
9	<p>Forthcoming Meetings</p> <p>All forthcoming meetings will be virtual via MS Teams until Government advises it is safe to resume face to face meetings.</p> <p>Wednesday 26th May 2021 – TACT AGM Wednesday 21st July 2021 Wednesday 22nd Sept 2021 Wednesday 24th Nov 2021</p>	