



Notes of Meeting			
Subject:	Tenant and Leaseholder Committee		
Date:	26 th January 2023	Time: 6:30pm	8:00pm
Location:	MS Teams		
Attendees:	<p>Chair – Cllr Isy Imarni</p> <p>Staff – Cllr Margaret Griffiths (Portfolio-Holder), Jenny Dickerson (Improvement & Engagement Officer), Daniel French (Improvement & Engagement Coordinator), Ada Terry (Improvement & Engagement Team Leader), Sue Prowse (Improvement & Engagement Projects Lead Officer), Vicki Nash (Home Energy Conservation Officer), Farne Conway (Interim Housing Strategy & Investment Manager)</p> <p>Committee members – Andy Forbes, Tracey Halls, Charlotte Palmer, Andrea Maloney, Paul McMahon, Mavis Cook, Paulette Reed, Michelle Mitchell, Max Sengul</p> <p>Apologies – Cllr Gbola Adeleke, Mutsa Cornish</p>		

Item	Subject	Actionee
1	Welcome, apologies and notes from the last meeting	Chair
	<p>Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p> <p>FC introduced himself to the rest of the group.</p> <p>Everyone agreed that the minutes from the last meeting were an accurate record.</p>	
2	Renewable Energy	VN & FC
	<p>VN shared a presentation which is available upon request.</p> <p>PR – Can tenants request the installation of solar panels, if you do not already have plans in place to provide them? There could be a system in place where the tenant provides some money and you will provide some money towards them.</p> <p>VN – It is something we need to look at as part of our strategy.</p> <p>FC – There are a number schemes throughout the south east that focus on the collective purchase of solar panels. I think Dacorum is involved with one of these schemes, and there is a list that you can put your name on.</p>	

Item	Subject	Actionee
	<p>VN – There are things we need to take into consideration when we develop our policy on this. For example, if the roof is very old and will need replacing soon, it does not make sense to put solar panels on there. If someone decides to purchase their property via the Right to Buy scheme, then we need to look at who owns the roof and the solar panels.</p> <p>PR – You get lots of phone calls from companies these days offering solar panels for free. A lot of them are probably cons but some of them might be legitimate.</p> <p>FC – We are looking at this as part of our strategy for the decarbonisation of housing. There is an organisation called Emergent Energy that has been installing solar panels for Gateshead Council and other local authorities.</p> <p>PR – In relation to EPC certificates, I know of somebody that wanted to apply for a warm home discount but couldn't do this as their EPC certificate was out of date. They phoned Dacorum and somebody came out straight away to help them so the tenant is happy now. I know there are quite a few people with expired EPC certificates, as there is a ten year life on them.</p> <p>VN - We had a stock condition survey back in 2012 and we did a lot of EPC certificates then. As it's been just over ten years since then, a lot of them are now starting to expire. We have been doing the EPC certificates since then but only when a property becomes empty because that is when you legally have to do it.</p> <p>Cllr MG – We will be carrying out a new stock condition survey that will be happening every single year. We will be looking at 2,000 homes per year. That will include EPC certificates, but they will also look at the roof, electrics, gas, windows and other things. They will check your whole house, and will be starting on the 1st of April.</p> <p>MaC – In your solar panel strategy, please could you also consider leaseholders?</p> <p>Cllr MG – I think the panels could be used to feed the communal areas in any blocks where leaseholders own property. It wouldn't be possible for solar panels to support a whole block.</p> <p>FC – It is a common issue, and we are looking at whether the use of a micro grid would allow us to feed the power directly back to the residents.</p> <p>SP – Unless your lease specifically says that your roof forms part of your property, you may not be able to put solar panels on it. It will depend what is written in your lease. There are very few leasehold properties that include the roof.</p>	

Item	Subject	Actionee
	<p>PM – Is there a programme to use solar panels to power roadside furniture such as street lighting?</p> <p>FC – I can't give you a precise answer right now, but I am meeting with some engineers tomorrow who specialise in carbon neutral highways. That is in their expertise, so I will ask that very question.</p> <p>PM – You said there was a potential for 75 homes to be fitted with solar panels. Is there any thought into how you will select these and what the criteria is around this? I suggest using this to help the people on the lowest income first.</p> <p>CIlr MG – The 75 properties have already been identified and they are the properties with the lowest energy efficiency.</p> <p>VN – Greener Herts are setting up a Green Panel of Residents for anybody who would like to volunteer and get involved. They will speak about their future plans and find out what tenants think about their plans. They are also looking to put together some activities on World Environment Day to get involved in. If you are interested then get in touch with Jenny or Daniel.</p>	<p>FC – Ask about solar powered street furniture.</p> <p>All – Let Jenny or Daniel know if you are interested in volunteering.</p>
3	HTIP Update – TLC Proposals	AT
	<p>AT shared a report with the group which is available upon request.</p> <p>PR – I think it's a fantastic idea to start running additional TLC workshops. Sometimes when we get to these meetings there are some big policies and big items as part of the agenda. At the meeting we have to go through a long report, and accept or disagree with it very quickly.</p> <p>It would be useful to have some additional meetings during the months that we don't usually meet, to talk as a group about some of the bigger items. In terms of scrutiny boot camps, I attended one previously and I think I was one of the only tenants there. We need to work out how we can get more tenants involved.</p> <p>MS – One of the biggest issues that I've experienced is that there's not enough layers of process to competently manage issues. The problems lie within the processes of departments and there is not enough accuracy with the information flow.</p> <p>When I have put in a complaint about a matter, it starts off with a clear conversation and then somewhere along the line it gets lost. I don't understand why this happens, when there should be a clear chain of process in managing that complaint.</p>	

Item	Subject	Actionee
	<p>CIlr MG – I think it’s fair to say that we have had to go back to basics in housing and this is what HTIP is all about. The starting of the HTIP plan goes back two years. We have been doing a lot of work to outline where we want to be as a council. For the last year, the work has been about how we get to where we want be. That’s why we have got a whole new structure.</p> <p>HTIP is starting to gather momentum and that is why you are going to see a lot of policies coming through to the TLC. I want there to be an open conversation, which is why we are putting our hands up and saying we have made mistakes in the past.</p> <p>One of the biggest things we will improve is the communication to our residents, tenants and leaseholders. I think we are good at going out and consulting people, but we are really bad at going back to those same people and thanking them for responding and letting them know about the changes we will be making.</p> <p>We need to make people feel involved in what we are doing. There will be a new communications plan and there is also a new complaints procedure that went live three months ago.</p> <p>SP – The complaints officers have been carrying out training with staff. It has been acknowledged that complaints were not being handled correctly on this past, so things should be changing.</p> <p>CIlr MG – Another thing we are now doing is home visits for our tenants and those should happen every three years. We are also carrying out monthly estate inspections to help improve our communities. In time, I hope that this is something the TLC may be able to get involved in.</p> <p>PM – In terms of communication, one thing the NHS do is publish information on their noticeboards listing different topics. Next to these topics, it will say if they are doing poorly, average or well. They will also put information on there about what they are doing to improve, where certain areas are poor.</p> <p>If you do something similar in your newsletters and publications, people will be able to see that you are acknowledging when things are bad, and they will also be able to see the things you are doing well.</p> <p>MS – I am worried about complacency and how robustly DBC managers follow new policies and new processes.</p> <p>CIlr MG – We have got a massive training plan going on and we have a new structure in place. It is very easy to say at this stage that everything will be fantastic and wonderful. Some things will</p>	

Item	Subject	Actionee
	<p>trip over and fall down, but when this does happen we need to make sure that we put it right next time.</p> <p>Cllr II – It does feel like an exciting time at the council. From what I have seen, many things will change and many things will be different.</p> <p>From what I’ve seen, people will need to start taking ownership of issues. Before, there was no responsibility or accountability to get certain things done, but now it will be part of people’s KPIs.</p> <p>MaC – Is there any information on your website about HTIP? It would be good to make people aware that the council is in a transition period and things will be changing. This will give people encouragement and reassurance.</p> <p>AT – That would be a good idea.</p> <p>Cllr MG – We could also use Dacorum Life to give people information relating to HTIP.</p> <p>AT – If anybody is interested in becoming chair of the TLC, we can give you more information and talk to you about what’s involved.</p>	<p>AT – Look at promoting HTIP to residents.</p> <p>All – Let Jenny know if you would like to chair.</p>
4	Decant Policy	AT & SP
	<p>AT shared a draft version of the new Decant Policy which is available upon request.</p> <p>MaC – I think the policy is good, and captures most of the key things that need to happen.</p> <p>TH – If somebody decanted needs a garden for their pets, would you provide them a garden?</p> <p>SP – They will always try to do decants that are like-for-like. If you are living in a house with a garden, they will try to give you a house with a garden. The needs of pets are not taken into consideration.</p> <p>TH – If somebody is an elderly person who has lived in council accommodation for a very long time, and their pet is part of their support network, it is very important that they are decanted to a suitable property.</p> <p>For some people it may not be suitable to keep going up and down in a lift or stairs when they need to let their pet out. They also need to be somewhere where it is safe for them to let their pet out at night, especially if they are vulnerable. These are all things that need to be taken into consideration</p>	

Item	Subject	Actionee
	<p>MM – One of my friends went through the decant process, and the council did their utmost to accommodate my friend. They were put in a very good standard of accommodation whilst the repairs were being completed at their property.</p> <p>PR – In your policy, it says that you will not consider animals when decanting and you will only consider people. If somebody is elderly and has had their dog for ten years, it is completely unreasonable to tell them that they have to get rid of their dog. A dog might be the only comfort that the person has.</p> <p>One suggestion is that you include a summary of changes at the end of your policies. There should be a section that says 'we used to do it this way, but now we do it this way'. This will give people a better idea of what the changes are. Unless you show us the previous decant policy, then we will not know what has changed.</p> <p>MM – I do think it is unfair when you say you would not consider pets when decanting somebody, especially if it is not the tenant's fault that they are being decanted.</p> <p>CIlr MG – We will always try to find somebody a like-for-like property so this should not be an issue. In all my years, nobody has contacted me about the decant policy complaining that they can't keep their pets.</p> <p>SP – We have an obligation to house people, but we do not have an obligation to house pets. We understand the benefits of pets and understand the value they have to people so they will always try to decant you to another property that is like-to-like.</p> <p>MaC – Is there a frequently asked questions page attached to this policy?</p> <p>SP – The policy is just the policy, but there is no reason you couldn't have a frequently asked questions page at the end. I will feedback your comments for consideration and we will send a revised version of the policy once senior management have looked into it.</p>	<p>SP – Refer to housing operations.</p>
5	Close / AOB	Chair
	<p>JD – Jo Fletcher from Osborne has requested volunteers to look at setting up a chat bot that will be used when people report repairs online.</p>	<p>All – Let Jenny know if you would like to volunteer.</p>
	<p>Next meeting is on Thursday 30th March 2023 via MS Teams.</p>	