

Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) Meeting Minutes 07.11.24

Attendees:

Sophie Tuffin - Service Manager Housing Maintenance Programmes & Servicing
Cllr Steve Davies, Portfolio Holder, Housing and Homelessness

Tenant Representatives: Ann Cox, Alaine Willis, Brenda Freeborn, Chris Reynolds,
Jane Cantillon, Melvin Utley, Paul Woodroof, Sally Titley

Tenant Engagement Team

Apologies from: Alex Elliott and Brian Isaacson

Symbol	Description
?	Tenant question (for RI team to obtain answer to)
R	Tenant Recommendation
D	Tenant Decision
A	Action (for RI team / Tenant Representatives / NFDC Officers)

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The group was shown the 1st draft of Hometalk magazine, and a vote was taken on the groups preferred front cover.

Housing Maintenance Programmes and Servicing Service Manager Update Presentation from Sophie Tuffin

(The slide deck has been sent to TIG panel and is available on request)

With the increase of renewable technologies that are being used to make energy improvements in our properties, it is important that our operatives are on the same decarbonisation journey that the council are currently on. To achieve this the council are upskilling the electrical and gas operatives to be able to service these new technologies such as Air Source Heat Pumps, PV (Solar panels) and Electric Vehicle chargers.

The council currently have 11 passenger lifts in our communal blocks, several stair lifts in our domestic properties and a few through floor lifts. As part of the council's obligation to make sure people are safe within their homes using this equipment, we make sure that they are serviced on a yearly basis.

There are 7 playgrounds in the district that we are responsibly for, weekly visual inspections are carried out via NFDC staff and external contractors are used to ensure that we are full filling our legal obligations regarding safety of the playgrounds.

NFDC currently have 23 homes that are without electrical certificates in date. These properties have been identified to the relevant teams that are able to support us and if access still isn't gained we will take guidance from our legal team.

The new electrical access policy mirrors the gas access policy. The reason for this is because it can prove that NFDC has tried all reasonable routes to access the property to complete the safety inspection. The process is to send a number of letters to the tenants, the letters are followed up with phone calls and text messages to attempt to gain access as soon as possible.

- **Does council carry out an electrical test in void properties before they are handed back for re-let?**
- Yes, when a property becomes void, we do several tests whilst it is empty. We will do a stock condition survey to make sure it meets the decent home standards. We will carry out an energy performance certificate (EPC) and plan in any future improvement the property may need to improve its energy performance. We carry out a gas and electrical safety inspection every time a property is void regardless of when the last safety certificate was completed.

The Housing Compliance report dashboard is currently a snapshot of the data that is collected from the council's central asset data base. In the future as new technologies are adapted this will become live data. It gives a good overview of where NFDC are with compliance and highlights areas that needs improvement.

The figures on the dashboard that aren't showing at 100% doesn't mean that the council aren't being compliant in those areas, doors and shutters for example is showing at 97% this is due to the certificates still being in paper format which can take up to several weeks to be received and to update the data in the systems.

The current TSM's do not include all the compliance areas such as electrical safety inspections, the lift safety only looks at passenger lifts and doesn't take into account stairlifts or through-floor lifts unlike the housing compliance report dashboard.

- ? **Would the council share with tenants what the maximum electrical usage is at their property, so they don't overload the sockets?**
 - The electricians that complete the electrical safety checks will know the maximum load for each property and they will determine whether that's safe for the number of sockets for the property. Overloading of sockets and extension leads can become a problem by creating a risk in the extension lead and not in the main supply of the property. The operatives will check for any alterations that the tenants have done to the property that may affect the electrical current and to make sure that it isn't a fire risk.
- ? **When the electrical usage for a property was determined over 30 years ago, how would the council update the number of sockets per household to keep up with the demand of usage and technology?**
 - During the electrical safety inspection, the operative would inspect the amount and the age of the sockets in the property and would update them and additional units can be added if necessary. When we attend a property once it becomes void, we would complete a stock condition survey, this will give us a good idea of where the property sits with the decent home standards and its suitability for retrofit.

? How can the council encourage tenants not to overload a socket or use extension leads?

- We can't stop tenants from overloading a plug socket, what we can do is offer advice to the tenant on the inspection as to best practice. We hold regular toolbox talks with all the operatives as to what to look out for on any visit and they are encouraged not to just be focused solely on the job in hand but to look out for any safety issues and safeguarding concerns.

? Does your team work with adult or social services?

- We don't work directly with those organisations, but our housing teams regularly work with lots of different agencies. Between our housing teams we would act on their advice and would address anything that was raised by another agencies.

? If a tenant is overloading the sockets at their property, could they request the amount sockets to be increased?

- We would book an inspection to assess the property, we would also have a look at existing documents like past electrical tests. We would risk assess the property and the situation. Each case is different so the decision would be made case by case.

From the data gathered from the stock condition surveys it allows us to improve the energy performance rating of our homes through day-to-day reactive and programme replacement so every time we replace a boiler, we can update the energy performance data and not need to put these properties on retrofit programmes. The advantage of this is less disruption for the tenants and much more cost effective.

NFDC are always looking for new technologies to help us with the monitoring of our stock. One of these new technologies is remote environment monitors. These monitors plug in to your home they use their own GSM cards, so it doesn't need wifi to work. It is designed to sit in the home and monitor a range of useful insights. We would use this type of technology when a property has reported issues or is at risk of damp and mould or if a tenant is reporting an overheating risk. We would put sensors in the property and monitor humidity levels. The data can be monitored by us via an online portal and the tenant will be able to access this information via an app. The monitors will sense the increase in humidity and will alert the tenants via the app and will give prompts as to how to resolve the increase of humidity.

? Have you got any evidence that the new technology at Penman House is working?

- Surveys have been sent out to all the residents of Penman House and we are in the process of receiving that information back. We currently have 6 months of data for the properties, and we are finding that the average temperature at the properties is 18°C in the bedroom and 20°C in the living areas. There is currently no reported cases of damp and mould, so the humidity is what we expected it to be. We are working closely with the tenants as they haven't switched their heating on since they moved in, so we are helping them understand their heating systems. We will be reporting the findings to council

in March and would be happy to return once we've got all the data and give the group more insights into Penman House.

? Will there be information in Hometalk about the social value fund?

- Once the process has been finalised, we will advertise the SVF in Hometalk.

? What does retrofit mean?

- Retrofit means the installing of technologies and energy improvements into existing homes to improve wellbeing, air quality, humidity, and energy performance. We access some funding through the government for whole house complex retrofits. We completed 70 retrofit programmes last year, we are currently doing 98 properties this year, and we plan to do 100 properties each year for the next 3 years.

? Is there any reason why tenants couldn't have their radiators bled at the same time as the gas safety check?

- This is something that we are actively reviewing. We already have magnetic filters fitted to our boilers and we use inhibitors when a system is refilled to help reduce the build-up of sludge in the heating system.

? Who decides which property is suitable for a retrofit?

- Not all techniques and technologies are suitable for every property if we use the Government scheme, they will set out the criteria on the homes that would be suitable for a retrofit. The new social housing decarbonisation fund is available from March which prioritises air source heat pumps.

? How often are the audits done on the retrofit work?

- Audits are completed yearly. The audit is very in depth and makes sure the work is done effectively. We work closely with the tenants that are undergoing a retrofit, so they are aware and understand why things are being completed in a certain order.

The group thanked Sophie for her presentation and for attending the meeting.

Dave Brown's afternoon update

Complaint case study (*The slide deck has been sent to TIG panel and is available on request*)

The group was presented an overview of a complaint made by a member of the TIG. The group then discussed and reviewed the outcome and the response to the complaint.

As group they agreed that the person should not have been treated the way that they had been and felt they would also have been aggrieved about the way the call was handled. They would expect NFDC to speak to them in a clearer manner and not be so dismissive. They would expect to be listened to and would expect NFDC to get it right first time. The group felt that had this of happened to them they would have also challenged the council.

The consensus of the group was that they felt the person was not listened to and was not shown any empathy and, unfortunately, they felt this seemed to be the norm in too many cases.

They didn't feel that the complaint response resolved the issue or that it was a good response. As a group they felt that it showed that NFDC hadn't listened as the information on the letter was partially incorrect. They felt that the letter was overly lengthy.

A TO PROVIDE THE GROUP WITH THE OUTCOMES OF THIS SPECIFIC COMPLAINT.

A DAVE'S AFTERNOON UPDATES DURING THE TIG MEETINGS TO INCLUDE SCHEDULED TIME FOR THE GROUP TO CONTINUE MONITORING AND REVIEWING NFDC COMPLAINTS HANDLING.

Meeting ended