

**Tenant Scrutiny Panel Meeting Minute
Thursday 27 June 2019, 1pm
Bruce House, Arbroath**

**Present: 5 members of Tenant Steering Group
6 key members of staff**

1. Scrutiny Panel Presentation

AL introduced Scrutiny Panel presentation which shows Angus Council performance for 2018/19 in comparison to Scottish Local Authority averages.

2. Landlord Profile

Stock has increased by 216 compared to last year. This has been through a mix of open market purchases and new builds, with the regeneration of the Timmergreens area in Arbroath progressing.

Rent due has increased as a result of stock changes. The rent increase was 3.5% compared to 4% in the previous year.

3. Income Management

The key indicators reviewed as chosen by the tenant group are:

3.1 Current Arrears as % of Gross Rent

GN gave overview. Gross rent arrears have increased significantly, and this is likely due to the implementation of Universal Credit. There are approx. 1,500 cases on UC, and 980 are more than 8 weeks in arrears due to delays in payments of UC. This had led to increase in rent arrears overall, and is unlikely to reduce unless the UC timescales to process improves. Tenants who are on/off UC payments also causes issues for rent arrears level. One tenant asked why the figure for Angus is so much higher than the Scottish LA average. This is due to some LAs not yet having completed the transition to UC, and so there is likely to be a drop in the average performance once all authorities are using UC. This increase in the average figure is likely to be seen next year. There have been an increase in court actions, and an increase in rent arrears written off as this debt is no longer likely to be collectable. JM advised that the service review of staff framework will lead to more preventative action. Discussion with tenants on target for 2019/20, originally 10% suggested by staff, but tenants wanted to reduce this to aim towards better performance. Agreed on 9.9% to keep this realistic.

3.2 % Rent Lost due to Empty Properties

Rent loss has been affected by the sheltered and retirement housing allocations and the turnover issues within these complexes. An allocation review is currently underway to consider options, including decommissioning sheltered accommodation as there is no demand for it. Poor condition stock at termination has also affected the rent loss due to increased void time. Some issues with contractor performance, including McGills going into administration. Tenants agreed upon target of 0.7% for 2019/20. Focus will be on prevention – to get in before termination to find any issues with non-reported repairs. Maisonettes are more difficult to let and can affect the void rent loss as well.

3.3 % Rent Collected in the Year

This indicator is linked to rent arrears. Previously was at 101% with 100% target, although staff advised this was ambitious due to Universal Credit and rent arrears issues. Discussion over target which tenants wanted to keep at 100% – need to consider that not all rent will be collected, and if we know 100% is unachievable the target should not be set as high. Agreed on 99% target.

3.4 Average time to re-let all properties

This indicator has improved, but tenants queried the link with void loss as performance there has dropped. Better condition properties are let quickly which brings the average down. Agreed on 29 days target for 2019/20. The aim is to improve re-let time by 2 days less each year. Tenants asked if this will improve if void loss also improves and discussed beating trend of the LA average.

3.5 % of Tenants satisfied that Rent represents Value for Money

Target of 82.5% was ambitious for last year, and has not been met. Improvements may mean tenants feel more satisfied. One tenant suggested that those who have not had improvements will not be as satisfied and may feel unhappy when others get new build properties. Some tenants discussed that they and their neighbours were impatient waiting on the new bathroom and rolling improvement programme which could lead to lower satisfaction. Other issues can also impact answers, such as ACCESSLine wait times but this is not a Housing problem. May help to provide some comparisons to private sector. Unable to set a target due to the dates for the survey being collected next year as it will not be completed in time to review against targets.

4. Maintaining & Improving Homes

Indicators reviewed are as follows:

4.1 % Repairs completed Right First Time

Results now come from tenant survey rather than contractors. Tenants are concerned that the information provided by contractors is inaccurate, for example 45% previously and now much higher. It is difficult to compare this indicator due to different methods of collection for all LAs. This will no longer be a Charter indicator for 2019/20 onwards, but tenants felt it was useful to gather and monitor performance, and agreed on target of 92%. Tenants mentioned that contractors should try to complete repairs in one visit, and maybe have multi-trade attend to avoid revisits where possible.

4.2 % Repairs appointments Kept

Tenants asked if contractors always notify about appointments. This indicator only takes into consideration those repairs where an appointment was made beforehand, however, as part of the contract there should be appointments made for majority of repairs. Tenants highlighted that they have asked for a phone call beforehand, but this is not always happening. This is to be looked into. Discussed option of coffee mornings for sheltered accommodation and checking which repairs were required and arranging for each trade to complete all in the same day.

4.3 SHQS

SHQS did not meet the target of 94.5%. This is due to Open Market Acquisition properties not meeting SHQS standards, plus there are still door entry abeyances where owners are refusing to agree to communal work. Tenants highlighted that this can be annoying for tenants living in those blocks, and discussed whether the council would be able to enforce powers to allow work to go ahead. The difficulty is that if there are low levels of crime the owners may not see the benefit of paying for door entry systems to be installed. Staff advised that the cost of enforcing or covering owner costs to proceed would have to come from rent revenue and would mean higher rent increases which would not be fair. Agreed to keep target of 94.5%.

4.4 % Tenants satisfied with the Repairs service

There are known issues with the end of repairs contracts approaching, and contractors usually then improve right before the contract renewal. Tenants highlighted issues after McGills went into administration as there were longer wait times for those repairs to be completed. JM highlighted that there were several comments in the survey about increase in wait time so this has impacted satisfaction.

5. Housing Options

5.1 % Tenancies Sustained

6 tenants absconded. The tenant group were concerned about this being the highest reason, although it was low considering the total number of tenancies. Terminations are not always for negative reasons, as people may move in together or move into owner occupation. Tenants queried why mutual exchange was included – explained this was due to the Charter definitions, and based on the individual tenancies ending, although those people were still tenants. Some abandonments have rent arrears and abandon before their eviction date. Discussion over process for arrears collection and court actions – usually in court after 12 weeks.

5.2 Average time in temporary accommodation

Tenants queried process for eviction from temporary accommodation after certain time. This would only be done if duty to house had been discharged due to being found not homeless or intentionally so, or if they had built up rent arrears in temporary accommodation. If someone is unintentionally homeless they can stay in temp until they are offered housing. Angus Council don't use hostels. The average time in temp is high, but there have been some issues with the dates recorded. Tenants highlighted that the LA average is better, but there are more types of accommodation used which may mean Angus figures are not as bad as there is more pressure on fewer types of temporary accommodation. It's difficult to compare with other LAs. There have been regeneration pressures which means those being decanted are placed in temporary accommodation.

5.3 Homeless Presentations

There has been a drop in homeless presentations in all areas other than Forfar. Immediate to let would be suitable as a resolution to homelessness. Forfar may have some issues with the new build at Academy Court, although this indicator does vary.

6. Homes & Communities

6.1 % Tenants satisfied with Management of their Home

Target was 85%. Tenants may be dissatisfied with Anti-Social Behaviour issues which are not related to Housing. Tenants suggested that issues with bins may also negatively affect satisfaction, and that those who are satisfied may not bother taking part in the survey. No target set due to the time when the next survey will be carried out.

6.2 % Anti-Social Behaviour cases resolved

Tenants agreed that 98% was a positive result, maintaining good performance in the previous year. Tenants discussed whether there may be issues with inter-agency working following GDPR, and that there are fewer local police to be able to maintain this. Agreed with keeping target at 99%.

6.3 % Tenants satisfied with Overall Housing Service

Reduced Council services may impact this. Tenants discussed some areas which may also impact satisfaction, highlighted some issues with calls being disconnected after certain wait time, and some tenants are not comfortable reporting repairs online.

6.4 % Satisfied with being Kept Informed

Tenants highlighted that the digital move may not be popular with everyone, and some have been unhappy that the newsletter has stopped. Staff advised that staff resources have been reduced, so there is not the same resource there for producing newsletter which is expensive to print and post out.

6.5 % Satisfied with opportunities to participate

This indicator is a concern due to another drop in performance. Discussed best ways to encourage younger tenants to participate. Tenants discussed ideas for fun days held at other Las to increase tenant participation. Academy Court event was a success, but tenants not wanting to participate longer term.

7. Targets for 2019/20

Tenants wanted to keep targets for Repairs appointments and Right First Time even though these are no longer collected for the Charter. The satisfaction survey will be conducted over the summer months which means that it will not be ready in time to set targets this year.