

## **Appendix B**

### **Social Housing – Task and Finish Group**

#### **Meeting with tenant representatives from both Network and Clarion Housing Associations**

**10 March 2020 at 2pm Charrington’s House Bishop’s Stortford**

**Present:** Councillors N Symonds (Chairman), M Brady and M Goldspink

Network Homes (three tenants were in attendance)

Clarion Housing (one tenant was in attendance, accompanied by a support officer)

**Officers:** Lorraine Blackburn, Scrutiny Officer and Jonathan Geall, Head of Housing and Health

#### **1. Introductions**

The Chairman welcomed the group and introductions were made. The purpose of the meeting was explained and that tenants’ names would not be attributed to any comments.

#### **2. Questions posed to tenants’ representatives:**

**a) Can you contact your registered provider and people you want to speak to with ease?**

#### ***Network tenants’ comments***

- A lot of improvements over the last 11 years; the RP is making greater use of social media, twitter, facebook, emails.
- Reducing use of letters but the needs of the elderly needed to be taken into account;

- If you are unable to use social media it is possible to go into the Hertford Office. The office is accessible and back office staff are keen to help.
- Being able to phone was important if a resident could not get to the office or use social media.
- There was one number to call (which operated a queuing system) which registered the issue (complaint or other) and a reference number given. There have been improvements within this system over the last 10 months. In terms of resolving a problem the tenant explained that it depended on how complex an issue was as this could impact on the period of time needed to resolve the issue.

### ***Clarion Housing tenant's comments***

- Clarion is good at responding on issues raised via a call when a job reference was provided.
- Repair seem to take longer than under previously.
- Communication with tenants is improving.

### **b) Is information readily available about contracts, online and as a hard copy?**

#### ***Network tenants' comments***

- All new tenants received a very comprehensive "Welcome Pack". It was acknowledged the some private landlords failed to provide such basic but important information.
- The "Welcome Pack" included information on how to get key fobs registered and other key information.
- Some tenants might feel the pack is too weighty to read through and wondered if this could be simplified, for example, have a key summary.

- Wonder whether follow up visits by an officer could be arranged to help residents through initial processes, for example, fob registration, refuse, social issues, schools, and particularly help given to the elderly.

**c) Are you regularly updated about changes both minor and major?**

**and**

**d) How efficiently are your issues dealt with if you raise one?**

### ***Network tenants' comments***

- A lot of involvement by Network Homes in terms of encouraging the community to report faults in an effort to keep up the communal areas and encouraging tenants to be a part of the neighbourhood team.
- It is important to consider the social and personal impact that some neighbours might have on other tenants' lives as a result of anti-social behaviour. A tenant gave first-hand experience of how such anti-social behaviour.
- There's a financial "balancing act" in relation to moving from private sector to social housing. The tenant praised the support given by East Herts Officers at the Hertford office at the time.

### ***Clarion Housing tenant's comments***

- Within the block there is a large notice board with regularly posted updates including information about residents' meetings every three months. Additionally, there was a manager who regularly kept residents up to date [within the sheltered housing scheme].

- Some concern about the lack of a vetting process in allocating accommodation and how this impacted negatively on residents' lives. It was noted that a number of residents within the sheltered block worked and from early in the morning, doors could be heard banging as residents left for work. More could be done to vet people prior to them being offered accommodation, particularly as it was very difficult to evict people who were anti-social.
- It is important to socially include people to help them become part of the community.

*The Head of Housing and Health explained that the council nominated individuals to a housing association and the housing association could choose not to accept the nomination if there were very specific.*

**Supplementary ques: Views on starter tenancies, anti-social behaviour and the powers and roles of the RPs, the police and council regarding tackling anti-social behaviour?**

- It was noted that Network Homes are providing life time tenancies. Some tenants suggested that a five year tenancy (or even probationary tenancies) might be a good approach (especially where there were historical anti-social behaviour issues).
- It was noted that this was for the RPs to determine.
- Communication from the police with tenants when dealing with an anti-social behaviour case could be improved.

*The Head of Housing and Health explained that the council has an Anti-Social Behaviour Officer who works closely with the police.*

**e) In relation to the bidding process, do you find this difficult?**

***Network tenants' comments***

- A tenant explained that as a recent tenant in social housing, she felt the bidding process did not make sense and was not understandable. She said the whole process was overwhelming and caused her a lot of stress.
- A tenant explained that during their process that he had received a great deal of help from the staff at Wallfields and considered the whole process reasonable. He was offered a property within three months of bidding.

*The Head of Housing and Health assured tenants that the Housing Team was always available at both locations (Wallfields and Charringtons), to provide help when asked.*

### **Clarion Housing tenant's comments**

- The tenant found the whole process relatively easy. She explained that she had been offered a property within four months.

The meeting ended at 3:30 pm