

Tenant Board Meeting

Wednesday 8th July 2026

Attendees:

Liz Perryman	Tenant Board Member (Chair)
Gerry Crease	Tenant Board Member
Sara Szczepanski	Tenant Board Member
Paula Warren	Tenant Board Member
Carole Richards	Tenant Board Member
Louise Tully	Head of Housing Transformation and Regulation
Vicky Freer	Tenant Insight and Improvement Manager
Georgia Mecoy	Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator
Kerry Lecomber	Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator
Cllr Richard Winch	Housing Portfolio Holder (Mid Suffolk)
Cllr Ruth Hendry	Housing Portfolio Holder (Babergh)
Rebecca Sweeton	Regulator for Social Housing
Phil Clooney	Regulator for Social Housing

Introduction

Apologies were received from Tony Cole who will try to make it by the end of the meeting. LP welcomed Louise Tully as the new Head of Housing Transformation and Carole as a new member of the Board. LP asked the visitors to introduce themselves. They are Rebecca Sweeton and Phil Clooney from the RSH inspection team who will be observing the meeting.

Declarations of Interest

None needed.

Actions from last meeting

- Scrutiny Action plans shared on Monday and all in a file on the website and will be on the agenda for a full update at the next meeting.

Voids Scrutiny information sharing

KL gave overview of background to the project. LP and TR from Tenant Board viewed two newly void properties in Babergh and PW and GC viewed two newly void properties in Mid Suffolk. They will then view the properties for a second time once they are ready to be re-let. They were shown round the properties by the Voids Manager, Voids Surveyor and a representative from the Contractors carrying out the works.

LP took meeting through their visit to Shotley. Between her and Tim they asked a lot of questions and got a lot of information. She was looking at it very much from a personal point of view for the community and Tim was looking at the more practical aspects such as the garden and what was left there. They both had questions about the effect that long-standing tenants passing away would have on their neighbours.

LP went on to talk about Brantham and what was found there. The property was in incredibly poor condition, and it made her consider the community and people who live there and also the contractors and how they could carry the work out safely.

Her conclusion was that people who had lived there hadn't had any respect for the property, the council or themselves.

RH enquired if they were surprised at the condition of the properties. LP advised she was saddened by the first one and angered by the second one rather than shocked. RH advised she's found that people don't understand how much work must be carried out to get a property back in a good condition. LT enquired about role of TR. VF advised that he is a Tenant who has a construction background.

PW advised that from looking at the Lettable Standard the classification of 'Major' on the Surveyors report means it was likely to be in excess of £10k of work.

LP raised issue of recharges for work which all Board members were interested in as a subject to explore during the scrutiny project.

LT advised that it's often more nuanced than we anticipate. For example, in properties where there has been DA there's a lot of damage and high repairs bill. This can make it difficult in terms of recharge – wouldn't want to exacerbate that but there is a tenant responsibility and we have responsibilities in terms of tenancy management.

CR enquired if there are ways properties can be inspected, especially where it's known there are problems in terms of ASB. LT advised there will be tenancy audits to check behaviour and to see if the right support is in – for example when looking after gardens. Now have a larger team with smaller patches to carry out that more qualitative in-depth work. **Action: She will report back into Board once it's up and running.**

VF added that we've built a high-risk property dashboard which will use data to find which properties to prioritise for Community Housing Officer (CHO) visits. Have looked at both lots of repairs, no repairs and gaps in engagement.

LP advised that CR needs to be sent the jargon guide. Action.

KL took meeting through findings from all four visits that she had collated which were agreed with board members shortly following the visits.

PW took the meeting through their visit to the property in Stowmarket which was in good condition but not very clean or very well maintained from a tenant point of view. Made her both a bit cross and sad that people were living like that and treating the home like that. She advised that the Surveyor, Manager and contractor were so informative and helpful.

GC took the meeting through the property in Eye which was in very poor condition and had had to be cleaned already before it could be viewed. He advised that it was a wreck with the garden 10ft high in brambles right up to the windows and doors. He felt very sorry for the neighbours. The Surveyor said he'd get a digger in and dig the whole garden out. GC advised that he'd never been a fan of pre-void inspections before now but that has completely changed his mind. Recharges were talked about at length and he was wondering about claiming from an estate and how that could be treated sensitively. He had never seen a property in that state.

LT advised she found the reflections very useful and it seems they're having empathy with the Housing Officers having to go in and out of homes like this. And although this is General Needs housing over half of our tenants have vulnerabilities that we need to bear in mind. Big gardens, overcrowding and household vulnerability needs to be considered when managing the subject.

CR enquired about people who can manage but just don't care or want to. LT advised that's where tenancy enforcement comes in and we have all sorts of powers legally. Crucially we can only spot those homes and situations through a closer monitoring of the homes that we let.

RW enquired if they were selected randomly and if it's representative. KL advised that was a question asked by board members to the Voids officers and they advised that these were representative, there were sometimes properties that could be re-let very quickly but it was rare.

GC enquired if now we have more CHO's, should they be able to keep a closer eye on things and not let them get so far. He has never seen a CHO in the 16 years he's lived there. LT advised that we are now positioned to more closely monitored and supported. Should see impact over the next six months or so.

RH echoed this and in 25 years she was in Babergh property the same. This has resulted in a backlog but with more CHO's, Housing Audits etc. it should all come through but will take a bit of time to improve.

CR enquired as to communication to tenants about these changes coming into effect to let them know that things are changing. VF advised that the tenant newsletter (MHB) is going out this evening there's an article about Tenant Engagement Review and it's in that. It will also be promoted through MHB regularly.

LP advised that tenants could report problems building up with neighbours in terms of safeguarding and monitoring people who aren't able to cope – social services, carers etc.

GC advised it's good to be well intentioned but need a careful balance so tenants don't feel they're being constantly monitored.

GM took meeting through the findings from the surveys of tenants who had moved into their homes recently both through the TSM surveys and going out to the wider group of tenants.

CR enquired if timeframes were different for Babergh and Mid Suffolk as results differed, but GM advised they were the same.

PW enquired if it was equal amounts in Mid Suffolk and Babergh. VF advised that producing and reviewing Customer Journey Maps here should provide the context.

LP enquired as to how old the information was, but VF advised that these were recent, but we do see a lot of tenants moving in with repairs outstanding. Some of the changes in the repairs team have already improved things but there's still some work to unpick. LP enquired if it would improve and with Chris Ball, the new manager things are really starting to go in the right direction.

GM went through the Lettable Standards work. PW advised she picked up a lot of 'See Appendix A, Appendix B' but they were not provided and would be useful to see them. **Action: GM to provide appendices.** In comparison to the Anchor one I didn't think ours was as detailed, but information could have been in the appendices. She advised that the void reports provided were amazing – the combination of visits and void reports was consistent but didn't seem to relate into the lettable standards. No mention of meter readings in standards but were in the void reports. Grouting condition was in the void report but not in lettable standard. Need to ensure they marry up. Other thing she picked up was gifted items. What happens if the tenant doesn't want it? LT advised it's offered as a one-off gift and if they don't want it, it gets removed by us. It's a genuine choice but we need to know this early on. PW advised that needs to be clear in the lettable standard. CR thought it was clear in there that new tenant is responsible for kitchens and bathrooms if they accept them and they aren't standard.

GC advised that in terms of gifting he can confirm that if you accept a modification as a gift then you are responsible for the maintenance. Also, if someone has done a kitchen or bathroom themselves they must have permission and it would have to be checked in terms of safety. Compliance is covered in lettable standard.

PW advised she felt that the absence of a pre-void visit is a weakness.

Themes

- LP advised she would like to look at it in terms of the Community and Neighbourhoods – putting the trust back into the community.
- CR advised she thinks respect needs to be considered as most of our communities are very close and the respect aspect is hugely important.
- PW advised that from the surveys more than anything else she thinks condition of lettings and the communication were the key areas that she picked up on.

LT advised around redecoration debate which is a national conversation at the moment – raising the standard to foster respect for homes and communities. Carpets in one downstairs room – permission for hard floors and noise nuisance.

CR advised of situation with neighbour who has no proper flooring and noise level compared to previous tenant is astronomical and so she thinks that's a really good thing.

LP advised with regards to flooring and painting should be considered but with regards to painting every house she goes to all have different colours to go with their personalities and people that it should be their responsibility and encouraged to make their house their home.

RH advised agreement and we always look at the finances – potentially money they shouldn't be spending. However, lots of people struggling financially so perhaps we ask the tenants? Some will want to and can do but there will be a large number who would be very happy with just lovely clean paintwork and flooring. So perhaps it's about tailoring to be considered once they are set to move into the property.

GC advised that if we're looking about a lettable standard then it has to be clean and basically decorated and ready to move into. If you get to the point where you're asking if they want it decorated at all – how do you know it will actually be done?

PW advised that for those without funds for carpets there are help from charities – Ropes Trust locally.

Housing Ombudsman Self-Assessment

Philipa Alston joined the meeting and took the Board through our annual self-assessment. LT advised that she and PA had a plan to refresh the Complaints Taskforce and ensure that learning is embedded in staff behaviours, policies and procedures.

LP advised one of the learnings they had from the Complaints was that Customer Services would have more teeth and be the first point of contact. PW advised that this is something that is ongoing. The percentage has increased from the previous quarter but it's an ongoing task. There is a target to be around 70% and we're now around 68% so it's improving and lots of work going on.

PA also advised that we do welcome complaints and we need to keep being told where we can make improvements.

Asset Management Strategy

VF took the meeting through an update which Richard Spencer asked her to give following Ridge attending the meeting previously and presenting on the Asset Management Strategy. They are busy working on it; all the work is ongoing and as soon as it's available it will be shared to go through feedback.

Any Other Business

Timings of future Board meetings.

Now carrying out engagement work with other areas of the council in terms of the Joint Local Plan. Working alongside their Resident Engagement team including Tenants. Will go out in MHB tonight. LP enquired how they can engage, and GM advised there will be a link in MHB to carry out an online consultation. PW advised consultation is open to end of July. At CAP there's a QR code to go onto it. VF advised in MHB this evening there's an article about it. LT advised it's an open consultation for all tenants and stakeholders in the Districts – good survey to take part in.

Next meeting Wednesday 29th July.