



Repairs Meeting
Held on Tuesday 5th March 2013
Building Services, Springkerse
10.30am

Present: Moira Robertson, Peter Palgrave, Dolly Gemmell, Alec Lamb, Alex Wallace, Tom Howden [SC] John MacMillan [SC] Alexa Scrivener [SC] Laura Calder System Development Officer, SC

Apologies Michael Griffiths

Scottish Housing Charter Performance Report

Laura spoke about the Scottish Social Housing Charter, what SC is doing to achieve the Charter outcomes and how they intend to report their performance and progress and involve tenants.

Laura is a new employee with SC and will be looking at what they need to measure for the Charter with fresh eyes.

There are 7 sections covering:

- equalities,
- customer/landlord relationship
- housing quality and maintenance
- neighbourhood and community
- access to housing and support
- getting good value from rents and service charges
- other customers.

There are 16 outcomes and standards in the Charter that social landlords should aim to achieve. [An outcome is a result we want to happen]. These are supported by 37 performance indicators and 32 contextual indicators [information about the Service such as financial and stock information]. SC will be working to find out where the gaps are and what is required.

At present SC is setting up systems to measure everything needed in order to collect the information required to measure their performance against the service standards and outcomes set out in the Charter.

SC need to get tenants involved and encourage tenants to challenge SC; who will show tenants how they are measuring and if anything needs to change.

The Charter is only for social landlords.

Emma and Laura are working together on this.

The Report has to be done as soon as possible after the end of the reporting year, but no later than October each year. SC would like their report to be completed by September 2014. They want tenants to volunteer; no-one present today was interested.

SC needs to benchmark themselves against several LA with stock size similar to SC.

Laura has been working in the background up to now. The website will be updated soon.

Laura would like to attend a STA meeting; Moira will ask the STA committee at their next meeting.

Action Moira

SC will submit a report to SHR next May, and this will be reported to everyone; they will do a mock report before the end of the first quarter. Reporting back would probably be through Emma.

In the TLI group, tenants choose which particular area to inspect, the plan of action is drawn up between officers, tradesmen and tenants. The TLI write up the report and a recommended action plan.

There is a system in place to report accurately, and if a worrying pattern develops, the Scottish Housing Regulator [SHR] would come and inspect.

This subject will be going to HAG at some stage.

Laura gave out a hand-out with the List of indicators, which are performance and contextual.

Over the next 2 months, they will continue with the checking system, altering where problems seem to be occurring and monitoring results as they go; they will also share practice with other councils. This should enable them to improve the service where problems are thrown up.

SC will be setting their own targets; some will be used for other performance reports such as key performance targets.

They want help from tenants for the mock report in October.

They plan to do more Staff training to ensure staff are aware of the Charter and the performance report.

Laura will have a stall at the Open Day in order to chat to tenants and maybe get them involved. She would like us to spread the news. Laura has also asked the Housing Officers [HO] to encourage customers who are expressing dissatisfaction to get involved.

Responsive Repairs – Timescale for heating repairs

At a HAG meeting it was agreed that SC would start 2 shift heating engineers, one on a standard shift of 8am to 4pm and a gas engineer who will work 12 hours shifts from 9am to 9am. The peak reporting time for gas heating repairs is 5pm when tenants return home from work. This is the time the emergency service takes over. Although at present we would normally catch the repair the next morning, the tenants is likely to be at work. With the new shift patterns this will enable someone to attend that evening and so make for a more responsive service. This information will not be in the next Open Door because the recruitment system will just be finished by then. SC is advertising for 1 engineer and the other place is being filled by an apprentice who finished at the end of last summer.

New heating refusals.

If a previous tenant has refused a new heating system it will be changed to the most cost effective system when the property is void; if not then new tenants can choose in the soak up during 2014/15. There are lots of reasons for refusals; tenants get the option again and following another refusal it moves on to boiler replacement only [a 15 year lifespan]; SC is likely to catch more people at this stage, so new heating is offered on 3 separate occasions.

SC has a right to put in improvements without tenant consent, but politically has chosen not to unless there is a justifiable reason for doing so.

So far there have been 350 refusals, but where possible new systems will be done whilst property is vacant.

If a new system is put in and someone accepts a transfer to that property, then they will not have a choice of another system.

Standards and eviction

What if people don't keep their homes in good standard, can they be evicted? It is possible for them to be evicted for 'act of waste', but there have only been 2 cases in John's time where this has happened. 'Act of Waste' is extremely subjective and when the case goes to court, the landlord has to prove it. For example it could be that someone doesn't use their heating, but this may be caused by fuel poverty. If it is weeds in gardens, rubbish etc. SC will do the garden and charge tenants, but it is more difficult when the problem is inside the house. On occasions a tradesman has refused to work in a property because they considered it too filthy, but when a HO attends they say it's untidy but not filthy. It must be very extreme before SC can evict someone.

Mutual Exchanges

In the past when tenants wanted to do mutual exchanges, SC would look at properties and see what needed doing. If the tenants agreed to move anyway, then SC would not carry out repairs for a year [except for the likes of lights gone etc.]. Nowadays they give a proforma of an agreement between 2 individuals and also do an Energy Performance Certificate [EPC] so that the tenants can see how efficient the heating, insulation is etc. and a gas and electric check. But SC is trying to take a step back and leave the exchange more in the hands of the tenants. It is not a SC responsibility but they have produced new leaflets which show that it is contract between 2 tenants. There have been no real issues up to now.

Communication of Communal Repairs

When officers/tradesmen come out to make repairs in communal closes, could they speak with the tenants, so that they know what is going on. There is a big security programme going on in one area, regarding metal doors, fences etc. but normally this is on a small scale and they would only speak to the tenant who reported it. If there was repeated damage, then they may need to speak to tenants. Tenants could also speak to the repairs team who are approachable.

It is not always obvious that a number of repairs have occurred to the same block over a period, but if this is brought to the attention of SC then something would be done.

In the case where they are owners in the block, they must agree to improvements, but this is not the case with repairs, where they are obliged to pay their share. If a safety door is continually being damaged, then replacing it with a stronger type of door would be regarded as an improvement, but to continually repair it is not economically viable either. Tenants are responsible for their visitor's behaviour. A stronger door costs about £3000, which is significant, and if someone is determined to get in, then they will whatever the type of door.

Communication after chimney checks

Some tenants were told that if they wish to continue to use their chimneys after new heating systems were installed, the chimneys needed to have a safety check first. Once this was carried out, there was no communication with the tenant regarding the result of the check or the timeline for installation of the new heating. A new line is being put into the system to make sure that tenants are kept informed.

Comments and complaints procedures

Housing Service [HS] is putting in place a new 2 stage complaints procedure ordered by Scottish Public Service Ombudsman [SPSO] by April. This forced SC to look at their system of recording comments and complaints. Alexa would know about HS complaints but not if there was a list of complaints to several departments. Now with LAGAN [new computer system] whoever takes the complaint call, will log into LAGAN and recognise who is responsible for that complaint. SC is also encouraging front line staff to resolve complaints more quickly and without passing the person on to someone else. They will also be able to look at trends being thrown up, maybe tradesmen, or maybe materials etc. All HS staff is getting trained at the end of the month on this new system; it is an electronic learning course run by SPSO which Alexa has done, but others will complete by the end of the month. Alexa will show us how LAGAN works at the next meeting. **Action Alexa**

If a person wants to know the progress of their complaint, they would be informed of the timescale, but if someone else phones on their behalf, HS would need the complainant's permission beforehand. Would you take being representative of tenants as OK? HS would still need permission if telephoning, unless they have previously phoned Alexa or put in writing that they want 'x' to do it for them. If SC not sure then they could phone complainant first.

New build update

Overall programme is funded by Scottish Government [SG] grant scheme, money from HRA and prudential borrowing. All grant money must be spent by 2015. All of the current programme will do this.

In Riverside 3 bungalows are almost completed,

In Killearn 6 units [3 semi-detached blocks, build to design for older people]

In Killin 12 units being built by an external contractor.

In Cowie 10 single storey units.

In Drymen 1 house of special adaptations to meet planning requirement of NP and the needs of the tenant. This is a one-off.

Opposite Wallace House building 64 flats and commercial premises at ground floor for mid-market rents; these will be rented out for 10 years and then SC have the option of buying back or selling to sitting tenants.

In Corton building 9 units of small bungalow type.

In main street Balfron completing a development where the builder went bust. [This was brought by SC] The rest of mid-market rent properties are where a builder cannot sell the properties already built and SC has/will purchase some of properties; there are some in Callander at old post office site, some in Cowie and are all mid-market rents.

In Drymen, there is planning approval for a private sector development, but the developer needs to give some sites for social housing; this development has stalled at the moment because the developer won't build until the market is better.

SC is looking at the coal yard in Plean for main stream rent houses and a development site in Thornhill.

SC has decided to change all new developments not already in train to 1-bedroom properties and not build 2-bedroom properties because of the welfare reforms.

Is it true that in Fintry SC intends to build beyond Menzies properties? This site is not on the current plan, but SC will be looking at any sites that become available and where there is a demand, [there is in rural areas]. This is a private development.

With all new build SC now does a lot of consultation with the community beforehand; it is a really detailed process, more than private sector [which puts in a planning application first and that's when the community knows]. The reason SC now does this detailed consultation is because people are often more upset about social housing being built, concerned about the value of their house being reduced, junkies etc. and with more consultation SC can add community support to their planning application.

Other areas may come into SC focus when a site become available, but SC would then start consultation.

What's happen about old swimming pool in Riverside? John under pressure to demolish but doesn't really want to because it is a lovely building. The other old swimming pool is being demolished and a Premier Inn and 2 other hotels being built.

Please tell people to come to Open Day where new build will have stall. It is on 20th April at Albert Hall 10.30 to 2pm and letters will be sent out soon.

PV solar panels on roof.

These are being installed in rural areas where there is no gas heating available. See diagram in appendix.

Customer Service Excellence

The audit for Customer Service Excellence is being done on 15th March 2013, in Springkerse, and HS invited tenants along to meet Tom Banks, the Auditor at 12.30pm. Tom wants to meet to see how information is gathered and used and whether HS give a good customer service; he wants the customer viewpoint as this award is customer focused. Alex Wallace, Dolly, Peter and Alec Lamb will attend.

AOCB

Alex and Peter will take their concerns about work not being done/completed to Tom Howden after the meeting.

Date of next meeting

Monday 3rd June 10.30am then Tuesday 10th September at 10.30 in Springkerse.

