

Minutes from the:

## ***St Albans City & District Council Tenant and Leaseholder Forum***

- 1. Date / Time:** 16 January 2025, 6 pm – 7:30 pm
- 2. Attendees:** Five tenants and leaseholders from various locations within the district attended, living in a diverse range of locations and housing types (bungalows, flats, and houses). Although a quorum (six attendees) was not met, it was agreed that the meeting would proceed, with actions and discussions shared in the minutes for wider review and no votes were taken.

*The tenants are passionate about sharing their perspectives and contributing valuable insights to improve resident engagement. The Council is equally committed to listening to their lived experiences, using these to shape better-informed decisions – a collaborative effort that benefits all.*

- 3. Disclosure of personal and pecuniary interests:** No personal or pecuniary interests were declared.
- 4. Minutes of previous meeting (including matters arising):** The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 were approved with no amendments.

### **5. Key Discussions and Tenant Feedback:**

- **2024 Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs):**
  - Concerns were raised about the Council's performance in providing well-maintained homes, with only 50% satisfaction reported.
  - Tenants expressed frustration based on their experience with perceived delays and unfulfilled promises from the Council, requesting more accountability and clarity around action timelines from contractors.
  - Simon explained that figures needed to be validated by MEL-Research who provide 3<sup>rd</sup> party assurance (by end of the month) but are unlikely to change significantly. Tenants requested to see finalised figures for discussion at the next meeting.
- **Respect and Professionalism:**

- Tenants highlighted concerns about examples of a lack of respect shown by some Council employees and contractors during visits, particularly regarding appearance and behaviour.
- A request was made to confirm whether tenants receive follow-up texts after visits from contractors or Council staff.
- **Maintenance and Repairs:**
  - Dissatisfaction with contractors, specifically John O'Connor, was noted, with issues such as uncut hedges being a recurring complaint.
  - Tenants suggested greater individual accountability, preferring named responsibility for jobs.
- **Communication and Technology Improvements:**
  - The forum welcomed the inclusion of officer photos in the newsletter and the reintroduction of welcome visits – both of which the Forum requested.
  - Tenants expressed interest in integrating MyStAlbans services with a repairs database to provide transparency and accountability, including tracking missed rubbish collections.
  - Daniel Eyre confirmed that a new system is being developed to improve these services.
- **Fencing Issues at Gordon House:**
  - The recurring cost of repairing a feather-edge fence damaged by anti-social behaviour (ASB) was discussed. Tenants suggested replacing it with a railing for durability and cost-effectiveness. The concept of spend to save will be taken forward when scrutinising things like the asset management strategy.
- **Contractor Performance and Tender Processes:**
  - Concerns were raised about Morgan Sindall's performance, with tenants requesting further transparency around the tendering process and extensions to their contract.
  - Daniel Eyre confirmed plans for a focus group to address contractor accountability and performance metrics. Any future contracts being tendered will be subject to resident scrutiny and involvement. This is the best way to help ensure contracts deliver what matters most to residents.

## **6. Mutual Exchange Policy:**

- Tenants highlighted issues with the current process, including the lack of disclosure about ASB in areas where exchanges occur.
- Concerns about data protection were raised, with tenants requesting better communication on relevant neighbour-related issues during exchanges.
- Recent changes aligning the policy with the Allocations Policy, including a spare room subsidy adjustment, were positively received.
- It was agreed that the wider point around disclosure of any known ASB to the incoming tenant would be discussed further by officers and an update will be given at the next Forum.

## **7. Community Days:**

- Proposed locations for future community days included Batford, Westfields, and South Down.
- Tenants emphasised the need to adjust event times from 2:00 pm–4:00 pm to 3:00 pm–6:00 pm and to ensure better communication of event schedules. This was agreed.
- Suggestions also included inviting mental health charities and police officers to provide informal chats and support. Again, this will be taken forward.

## **8. Asset Management Strategy:**

- Tenants discussed the need for architectural expertise to improve the planning and execution of maintenance work.
- Concerns were raised about the qualifications of surveyors, with tenants advocating for RICS-accredited professionals to ensure quality outcomes if this wasn't a current requirement.
- An annual programme of works will be agreed upon and communicated with tenants annually.

## **9. Confidentiality Agreement:**

- Tenants were surprised that no confidentiality agreement exists for forum discussions.
- It was agreed that an understanding of what is public knowledge and what requires discretion would be explored at the next meeting. However, we do want this forum to be a place for open and honest discussion.

## **10. Future Actions and Improvements:**



- A focus group will be established to review the customer journey for repairs reporting.
- A further discussion around confidentiality at this meeting will be held at the next meeting.

**11. Date of Next Meeting:**

The next forum meeting date will be confirmed via email and published on the Resident Engagement page of the Council's website.

**12. Conclusion:**

The meeting concluded with an acknowledgement of the need for greater respect, transparency, and accountability in Council services. The forum remains committed to ensuring tenant voices are heard and acted upon and appreciated the examples of 'You said, we did'.