

**Minutes of Housing & Property Services Sub-Committee meeting
held on Tuesday 08 August 2023 at 6.00pm
held in Cloch's Office and on MS Teams (Hybrid)**

Present (online): Kelly Ferns, David McIndoe (Co-optee), Eleanor Robertson (joined at 18.18pm).

Present (office): Eileen Tamburrini (Chair).

Attending (office and online): Alana Durnin (CEO), Paul McColgan (Head of Property Services), Nicola Findlay (Senior Housing Officer), Caroline Orr (Senior Housing Officer), Carolyne Swinney (Corporate Services Assistant) – Minute Taker.

1.	Apologies & Declarations of Interest
	<p>The Corporate Services Assistant (CSA) intimated apologies had been received from Hristina Tarpanova (Co-optee) and David Brown.</p> <p>Eleanor Robertson joined the meeting at 18.18pm and apologised as she had experienced problems when trying to log in.</p>
2.	Minutes of the Meeting held on 16 May 2023
	<p>The Board were taken through the minutes from the last meeting and discussed the previous action in which a Vice Chair was still to be nominated.</p> <p>D McIndoe intimated that they would be happy to stand in as Vice Chair for the interim period.</p> <p><u>RESOLUTION</u> There were no amendments to be made to the Minutes. The Minutes and interim Vice Chair were proposed, seconded, and approved.</p>
3.	Matters Arising & Outstanding Actions
	<p>An update was given by the Head of Property Services (HoPS) and Senior Housing Officer (SHO) on the colour coded report.</p> <p>For Housing Services, the action in relation to devising a policy for former tenant write offs was still outstanding. This was due to this already being mentioned in the arrears and legal action policy and it was therefore felt that this should be a procedure rather than a new policy.</p> <p>The action in relation to adding a table under section 4.1 of the Letting Plan regarding Section 5 (Homeless Referrals) was still outstanding. The SHO explained that the Head of Housing Services (HoHS) had collated some of the information, however, this required to be verified and is still being worked on.</p> <p>The action in relation to Tenancy Sustainability was complete as new Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) had been included in the Housing Services, Quarter 1 Report.</p> <p>For Property Services, the HoPS confirmed the action in relation to Mould & Condensation had been completed.</p>

	<p>The HoPS also provided an update on the outstanding roof anchor action, e.g., requirement for testing, noting a management procedure for this was required and this has been included in the departmental action plan to take this forward, associated with the contract.</p> <p>The HoPS explained that some roof anchors are contained in attics and there have been access issues. The contractor has been contacted; however, the HoPS will devise an actual procedure and is currently working on this.</p> <p>Risk assessments were discussed, and a committee member asked if the local authority can serve notice, where Cloch are struggling to gain access. The HoPS is going to the Glasgow West of Scotland Form and will raise this to get feedback on what other Associations are doing regarding this issue.</p> <p>ACTION CARRIED FORWARD Management Procedure for Roof Anchors</p>
	<p>ITEMS FOR APPROVAL *</p>
<p>4.</p>	<p>New Policies & Policies for Review</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p><u>Unacceptable Actions Policy</u></p> <p>The SHO explained that this was an existing policy, however this has been updated with some minor changes.</p> <p>The key issues for the Sub-Committee to consider were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal consultation with all departments had taken place which allowed each member of staff to review and comment on the policy. • The changes to the policy had been highlighted in yellow throughout the document for ease of reference. • An equalities impact assessment would be required for this policy. • The Sub-Committee were being asked to approve the changes. <p>The Sub-Committee discussed the policy. The SHO confirmed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy was compliant regarding data protection and retention of personal information. • The policy covered people who are abusive and serial complainers. • Section 1.2 would be updated to reference referral to Tenancy Support Services. <p><u>ACTION</u> The Sub-Committee were asked to approve the changes subject to section 1.2 being expanded per the text in blue above.</p> <p><u>RESOLUTION</u> The Sub Committee proposed, seconded, and approved the Unacceptable Actions policy subject to a sentence being added into section 1.2 about tenancy support services.</p>
<p>4.2</p>	<p><u>Garden Tidy Scheme Policy</u></p> <p>The SHO explained that they were looking to make changes to the current policy. The changes were required due to expected rise in landscaping costs of circa 30%, with the contract due for tender in October to be in place from April 2024. This would effectively mean less discretionary landscaping services for the current number of tenants on the scheme. It was noted that there had also been changes to the benefit system and that the proposed new policy would go out to public consultation, initially to customers already on the scheme.</p>

The Sub-Committee had a detailed discussion on the policy, with the considerations noted below:

Cost considerations:

- How can the current service be met when costs are expected to be 30% higher.
- Consider reviewing this service as part of the 2024/25 rent consultation as tenants may wish to stop this service re: rent reduction options for consideration, as only 67 customers benefit from the service.
- Carry out an assessment of the financial impact for both Cloch and tenants.
- If gardens are not regularly maintained, in the long turn, this can lead to more resource and cost to bring the garden back up to an acceptable standard
- Possibility of tenants contributing to the service, rather than this being 100% funded.
- Consider the benefit system and if tenants can use any of their allowances for the service i.e., carers allowance to a pay a gardener.
- Being honest about the challenges ahead and telling tenants what the cost is going to be – firm up on quoted costs of the service.
- Quick Quote option to firm up on what the costs are likely to be.

Alternative option considerations:

- Are there any other options where we can help to provide this type of service in relation to benefit changes, e.g., community pay back orders was suggested but this is a one-off service.
- Option for a community group or organisation to carry out the service via a grant.
- Other charities might be able to offer assistance (Inverclyde Mental Health at Broomhill Hub and The Shed).
- SHO said that they will investigate other services via partnership organisations to try and mitigate cost increases.

Criteria considerations

- A discussion on the over 70 criteria took place, and it was felt this should be replaced to reflect need not age.
- Section 1.2 needed to be revisited regarding the criteria.
- Adult disability should cover both mental and physical in terms of eligible criteria.

Approach considerations

- Consider ending the service and starting a fresh with a re-apply process.
- Give information to our tenants, letting them know about our tenancy support services and partnership working with other service providers, who may be able to offer a similar support service.
- Consultation with tenants on proposed changes would be needed before any changes were made.
- Consider the impact of our properties' gardens and estate management, in addition to the public view if this service was stopped.
- Housing Services focus on getting back to home visits with tenants, to priorities needs for this service and ensure gardens are being maintained as part of the tenancy agreement.
- Carry out case studies and speak to tenants who use the service as part of the evaluation process.
- Do a survey and bring the results back to the Sub-Committee.
- High impact, low value service.
- The current service included grass, hedges (some big), weeds, pruning, driveways – not just grass cutting.

The Sub-Committee members confirmed that they recognise it is always difficult when reviewing reducing a service but there were a lot of unknowns around the policy that needed to be investigated, emphasising that they do not want to give up this invaluable service.

It was asked about any schemes where garden equipment can be provided, however the HoPS confirmed this would be a health & safety issue and explained about portable applicant testing (PAT).

The HoPS discussed procurement and that information is the key for tenants. Planned maintenance has already had to be pulled back due to the lower than inflation increase, therefore tenants were aware of the financial challenges.

The Sub-Committee agreed that the policy needed to be visited again, get more information, and bring the data back to the Board in time for the HoPS to go out to tender.

ACTIONS

- Remove the reference to mental health / over 70 in the policy with reference to need rather than age or disability characteristic.
- Once these changes have been made, go out to consultation on the draft policy, and also survey the people who currently using the scheme to get their views.
- Provide customers with further context as to why the policy needs to be amended and get their thoughts on the service and the draft policy. This should also consider the possibility of paying a contribution towards the service and the possibility of partnering with charities who could provide this service/work in partnership with Cloch to provide the service.
- Use new software for surveys and bring back more data and analysis to the Board.

4.3 Domestic Abuse Policy

The SHO explained that they'd consulted with customers and stakeholders regarding changes to the policy and the wording of the policy. A change in legislation had come into force and the policy needed to be updated to reflect this.

The key issues the Sub-Committee were asked to consider were:

- Internal consultation with all departments had taken place which allowed each member of staff to review and comment on the policy.
- External consultation with customers and stakeholders had taken place, e.g., Women's Aid, Inverclyde Council's Violence Against Women Coordinator and Inverclyde Council's Homeless Services. The policy had been put on our website for public consultation. All feedback and comments had been taken into account in the policy review.
- The changes to the policy had been highlighted in yellow throughout the document for ease of reference.
- An equalities impact assessment will be required for this policy.
- The sub-committee were being asked to approve this policy.

The SHO asked if the Sub-Committee had any questions or comments on the changes to the policy.

A Sub-Committee member asked about the coercive control element, retaining the tenancy and what happens when perpetrator is removed.

The SHO explained that the options were associated with the homeless or the person could apply for a 'like for like' property via Inverclyde Common Housing Register (ICHR), however, restrictions may apply in relation to court orders.

Another Sub-Committee member asked about sections 3.2 and 8.2 regarding staff input and training for staff and how often does this occur. The SHO confirmed that training is planned for next month. When asked if this was on a rolling basis, the SHO confirmed it was.

The Sub-Committee noted that the language used in the policy was impressive and blended everything well. It was appreciated that activity associated with the policy could be onerous for staff, however it was acknowledged that training and support for staff was provided.

RECOMMENDATION

The Sub-Committee were asked to approve the Domestic Abuse policy.

RESOLUTION

The Sub-Committee proposed, seconded, and approved the Domestic Abuse policy.

ITEMS FOR NOTING/DISCUSSION

5. Head of Property Services Report

There was a technical issue with the HoPS presentation. The CSA will upload this to the Board Portal for the sub-committee to review.

The HoPS discussed the report. The main purpose of the report was to provide an update to the Sub-Committee on all aspects of the Property Services section which would outline performance to date and the ongoing work of the section.

The key points from the report were:

- Good performance against target figures.
- Update given on the tenant safety / regulated compliance.
- Mould & damp cases and actions taken. Still work in progress – need an electronic system opposed to diary notes which is what SDM currently provides.
- Mould & damp policy to be amended to reflect a 6 month follow up visit.
- Energy Efficiency in Social Housing (EESH 2) – Board Portal had been updated with the most up to date information from Scottish Government for the Board to read i.e., energy performance certificate (EPC) rating.
- Current reactive repairs and void contracts ending with existing contractor – these have been formalised.
- New contractors ready to go live on Monday 14th August 2023 – communication sent to all tenants in time for this. Meeting with staff regarding implementing the repairs.
- Fire safety measures – all sites inspected, and systems or equipment tested as per site requirements.

A Committee Member mentioned workshops that are being held by the Scottish Government in relation to EESH 2 and about consultation on EPC. The HoPS explained that they knew about this in relation to downgrading homes due to gas boilers. Further expert advice was needed in relation to how much energy is needed to heat and maintain a home. The HoPS explained Change Works are working with Cloch and hopefully we should get feedback soon on the new standard.

The Sub-Committee discussed the fire safety measures and the HoPS was asked about fire risk assessments. The HoPS confirmed these were carried out for housing in multiple occupancy (HMO) to ensure compliance. Also, testing on fire alarms are done manually and annually by a contractor. The HoPS confirmed there is work to be done on

fire safety as a whole and we need to get more advice to ensure common areas are compliant. Also, an overview needs to be done in relation to fire doors as a stricter regime is due to be implemented. The HoPS confirmed that Elliott Court have common corridor doors.

A Sub-Committee member expressed that the report given by the HoPS was good and another member said the KPI results and procurement outcomes were great. It was acknowledged that it had been a challenging year and the resilience along with expertise in the Property Services Team had been noted.

The HoPS said there was more work to do but he would pass on the Sub-Committee ‘thanks’ to the team.

There was a discussion regarding the Kilmacolm Road flooding that happened last year and the reference to Inverclyde Council within the report. It was asked if this needed to be amended. The CEO and CSA explained that Sub-Committee papers are not published externally, with only the agenda and minutes being published on the website, therefore no change was required.

RECOMMENDATION
The Sub-Committee were asked to note the contents of the report and performance.

RESOLUTION
The Sub-Committee noted the report and performance.

6. Head of Housing Services Report

The SHO had technical issues with the presentation on the Head of Housing Services Report. The CEO shared this via their system. The CSA will upload the presentation to the Board Portal.

The first three slides were about the policies already discussed earlier during the meeting. The other key points of note from the presentation were:

- Continuing good performance with arrears recovery during Q1. Non-technical arrears recovery was 0.91% at end of June 2023 which is lower than the previous year and also below the KPI of 1.15%, showing good performance.
- Former tenant arrears were 0.73% which was above KPI of 0.5%. - there was an increase in former tenant arrears relating to three terminations with large balances.
- Total current rent arrears were 1.01% at end of June 2023. This is below the KPI of 1.6%.
- Total gross rent arrears include all current and former arrears. This was 1.73% which is below the KPI of 2.10%.
- Days to let were 38.16 against a target of 35 days.
- 100% anti-social behaviour (ASB) complaints dealt with on time, with a wide variety of complaints.
- Sickiness absence impacting the new tenancy support services, however activity has been ongoing in terms of setting up the new service and recruitment of an additional member of staff, with an internal candidate being successful. A partnership agreement re: delivery of the Handyman Service with Bridgewater had also been established and the Q1 grant claim had been submitted.
- Tenancy sustainment – three performance indicators were to be reported on this for Q1, however, new tenancy support team still being set up and hope to have this resolved in time for Q2 figures.
- Legal action and abandonments – 3 notices of proceeding, 5 court actions, 1 order for recovery of possession, no evictions, 3 first abandonment notices served and 1 second abandonment notice served.
- Wellpark project and Cloch Plus have been delayed.

- Tenant Satisfaction Survey – contract still to be awarded.
- Staffing – temporary arrangements in place until outcome of structure refresh.

The SHO asked if there were any questions.

A Sub-Committee member asked about section 2.2.3, former tenant arrears and former tenant credits. The SHO explained that a lot of work was going into focussing on returning universal credit funds.

It was asked if the credit balances were a financial liability to the organisation. The CEO confirmed yes, however explained there had been problems obtaining a contact at Universal Credit, (UC) to validate some of the credit balances, (UC overpayments). Circa £13k had been validated to-date as being due for payment / being a liability and this value will be transferred to a liability account rather than showing within the arrears credit value. It was noted more work was required to work through all the credit arrears cases but things should move forward now we have a contact at Universal Credit.

A Sub-Committee member asked about the ASB complaints and how these are logged if more than one category applied. The SHO confirmed only one complaint is logged.

It was asked how often there is more than one category and the SHO explained there are a lot of them.

A discussion followed on the ASB complaints and the timescales. It was suggested that the complaints should be split under each category instead of logging them all under the one complaint. The current process could be under reporting in terms of staff resource to deal with these. Also, if there was an ASB complaint that was going to court then we would want all incidents recorded.

The SHO will discuss the current process regarding ASB complaint with the HoHS.

There was also a discussion on Inverclyde and the areas regarding drug dealing. The SHO confirmed that Cloch have a lot of joined up working with homeless, Police and Riverclyde Homes who all come together to help solve the problem. This is something that is on Cloch's radar. The Sub-Committee were pleased that this was happening and noted the benefits of partnership working.

A Sub-Committee member asked about wording in section 2.27 of the HoHS report in relation to tenancy support and also asked if the handy man service and possibly garden service could be brought under the tenancy support departments remit. The CEO agreed and confirmed the tenancy support team will take on existing work from the Housing Team, by working with those who need the most support. Regarding reporting, Sanctuary who has been running the service for 3 years, have confirmed they will share information. It was also noted that the handover from the Simon Community was limited in terms of information and there is still a lot of homework to be done on current case load.

RECOMMENDATION

The Sub-Committee were asked to note the contents of the report and performance.

RESOLUTION

The Sub-Committee noted the report and performance.

ACTIONS

	SHO to discuss with HoHS about ASB complaints showing true number of complaints rather than the number of cases. Housing to review how this information is presented to reflect resources required to deal with the complaints.
7.	Decoration Allowance Increase – verbal update
	<p>The SHO explained that currently the decorating allowance per room is £35 and a B&Q voucher is provided. It was noted that this allowance had not been increased in years, against rising costs.</p> <p>It was raised that the current allowance is not enough to decorate a room. The Cloch allowance had also been benchmarked against the local Housing Associations and was lower, e.g., Oak Tree are £50 per room, Riverclyde Homes give out paint packs and Larkfield's prices can vary between £45 to £140 dependant on the size of room.</p> <p>The SHO was looking to get views on increasing the current allowance from £35 to £50 and based on last financial year it would be a 40% increase, with an impact of £800 against last year's spend.</p> <p>The HoPS explained that under planned maintenance a disturbance allowance is given. The SHO said at this time it was just the redecoration allowance for void properties that they were looking at.</p> <p>The HoPS discussed the redecoration of voids and cost against the void budget, which have been high due to contractor decoration costs and that this also impacts the amount of time the property is empty, impacting void loss. If Cloch felt that an enhanced payment could be given to a tenant to encourage them to decorate, then this would be of benefit financially. Tenants can then go in and make their own mark on their new home.</p> <p>A Sub-Committee member asked why there wasn't a paper on the increase allowance request, with the suggestion that the value could be a little higher as this would be an investment into Cloch's stock and people's homes. The Board are passionate about supporting it but require a paper to set out all the considerations.</p> <p>The SHO explained this request had come following a discussion at the staff meetings re: performance with void turnaround days and high contractor decoration costs. This was only last week so this was why there was no paper with the topic being discussed verbally to get members views. The SHO confirmed the proposal was to increase the allowance as an interim position as other options were being reviewed for consideration to replace the allowance, e.g. paint packs, as in the short term £35 was not enough against the rising cost of paint and what other local Associations are providing.</p> <p>A Sub-Committee member explained that they would need to see the budget implications moving forward and if looking for approval they would need more detail on this.</p> <p>The HoPS said that when doing planned maintenance, they are not getting any negative comments about the disturbance allowance not being sufficient. It was suggested that Cloch could put a survey out in relation to the disturbance allowance, however, voids are different to planned maintenance, as with planned maintenance the tenant is already in their house.</p> <p>A Sub-Committee member explained that they need to assess the costs of the allowance as in reality, £35 or £50 may not be sufficient. The CEO confirmed a tin of paint, is circa £22 and if two coats were required the £35 allowance is tight. The suggestion made at the staff meeting to increase the allowance on an interim basis until the paint packs can be scoped out was a good suggestion, however appreciated a paper was required to be brought to the members for a decision to be made.</p>

	<p>The Sub-Committee said it was great that staff are coming up with ideas but wanted to understand the future budget implications.</p> <p><u>ACTIONS</u></p> <p>A paper is to be brought to a Board meeting with a written case for the increase. Consideration to be taken regarding impact on void policy and planned maintenance disturbance allowance. It was noted the increase would be proposed as an interim policy change as paint packs are currently being considered.</p>
8.	Health & Safety
	Nothing to note as everything was covered in the Head of Property Services report that was discussed earlier in the meeting.
9.	AOCB & Reflections
	<p>The CEO asked, if when giving reflections would the sub-committee prefer if staff left the meeting, and the points could be fed back later. This had been brought up with the CEO in terms of what other Associations do in terms of reflection.</p> <p>The Sub-Committee agreed that this is something to think about in the future.</p> <p>The Vice Chair for the next meeting will be D McIndoe at present.</p>
10.	Date of Next Meeting – To be confirmed after the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
	The meeting closed at 19.51pm