

Notes from Tenants Together Meeting Held on 13th July 2017

Present: Nigel, Pat, Sheila, Rex

In attendance: John Shipley (Operations Director), Simon White (Maintenance Manager – for planned maintenance programme discussion)

Matters Arising

Recruiting New Members - John and Lee have pulled together an article for the next newsletter (due to go out in a couple of weeks' time) which will explain what Tenants Together is and invite people to contact John if they might be interested in getting involved.

The same article, or possibly a slightly shorter version of it, will go on the SHAL website. If the combination of the article and the website fails to attract sufficient new members, John and Lee will send an email round to all those tenants we have email addresses for to draw Tenants Together to their attention.

The next meeting of Tenants Together will be held at Victoria Park Community Centre which has level access and good parking and refreshment facilities. After that meeting, the venue will move around the area (Taunton, North Petherton, Bridgwater etc)

Planned Maintenance programme

Simon did a presentation on the planned maintenance programme. Asked if the work was being carried out by SHAL's in-house team or by external contractors, he explained that SHAL are developing the in-house team so that they can do more work. We have closed the depot, changed work practices (e.g. by introducing mobile working) and are now scheduling work more smartly. The in-house teams are doing the kitchen replacements, bathrooms are out to tender, doors will be replaced by Nationwide Doors and new boilers are being fitted by Joe Betty.

Simon took the group through the stock condition survey that was carried out and explained that SHAL are, first of all, doing the works that most need doing. He explained the life cycles of different elements of a property but said that the stock condition survey was based on the condition of each element rather than the age.

The programme for 2017/18 was outlined – 42 new bathrooms, 53 kitchens, 190 doors, 3 roofs, 4 fascias/gutters, 11 fences. 5 rewires and 27 boilers. He also gave an update as to where we were on each of those programmes and explained that we and our contractors have to deliver the programme flexibly to make it work. We are now part of EEM, a consortium of around 80 landlords, which gives us greater purchasing power and lower costs.

John explained the approach that SHAL is taking if tenants who are due to have improvement works have rent arrears with their kitchen and bathroom refurbishments being delayed if they are in arrears until after Christmas to give them the opportunity to show that they can bring their arrears under control. If their arrears are not under control, SHAL will defer their refurbishments further. The group supported that approach.

Rex raised some concerns about the lack of communication in connection with an asbestos survey carried out in his home before a planned kitchen refurbishment (the first he knew of it was when he received an email from the contractor). Simon agreed that communication could have been better and that we will make sure tenants are communicated with more effectively in

relation to the programmes that are coming up (as an example, letters have recently gone out to all tenants whose homes are included in the door replacement programme). Simon also agreed to speak to the asbestos contractor about the way they had carried out the inspection at Rex's home.

What is SHAL? What are its aims? What are its values? What is a housing association? How is SHAL funded?

John took those present through the history of social housing in the UK and how organisations like SHAL came about. He then went on to talk about how SHAL came into being, the nature of the trickle transfer and the development of the organisation over the last 20-odd years.

He explained the legal structure of SHAL, its non-profit making approach, how the Board operates, how SHAL is regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency, how funding works etc.

All those present thanked him for the explanation and wondered if something similar (perhaps an newsletter article and something in the sign-up pack) might be useful for all SHAL's tenants as many will not know what a social landlord is.

New developments – an outline of what SHAL are currently working on, the costs, the funding, the approach

John took the group through how the development process works, how funding works, how SHAL has to borrow money (or use reserves) in order to fund developments and how some developments will have local connection criteria that have to be applied. He also outlined some of the difficulties that can occur in developments and how the financial viability assessment works.

John explained the Watchet development (16 homes) that is on-site at the moment and the Homberg Way development (37 homes) that is still at an earlier stage.

Next Meeting

Victoria Park Community Centre, Bridgwater – 2.00pm on Thursday 7th September 2017

The group will talk about recruiting further members (if necessary) and the main topic of discussion on the day will be Customer Service Standards. John asked those present to think about what they value in customer service, companies that they deal with that give really good customer service and what they think fantastic customer service looks like.