

SHAL's Community Chat (strategic priorities)

Tuesday 29 March 2022

Lee Barrett led a discussion about SHAL's strategic priorities and there was a wider chat about the challenges people are facing.

Background

In 2018 the government published their green paper. It was called the [New Deal for social housing](#). In 2019 the National Housing Federation published the Together with Tenants Charter. Later that year we carried out our tenant survey.

40% of our tenants responded to our [survey](#), which is a great result. The following priorities were identified:

1. Invest in improving the energy efficiency of our homes and reduce energy bills
2. Invest in maintaining and improving the standard of homes
3. Do more to help people with disabilities get the support they need
4. Support people who want to maintain and improve their homes themselves
5. Help people improve their mental health and wellbeing
6. Help people get onto the property ladder (e.g. shared ownership)
7. More help dealing with conflict and anti-social behaviour in our communities
8. Build more homes

In 2020 the government published their white paper. It was called the [Charter for Social Housing Residents](#). In 2021 our community agreed our [Commitments](#). These are based on the work we did during 2020 and 2021 and include all aspects from the green and white paper and the original Together with Tenants Charter. They are:

1. Create a strong community
2. Build strong relationships
3. Provide quality homes and services
4. Include, listen and understand
5. Be transparent and accountable

Strategic priorities

We talked about the challenges everyone is still facing including:

Anxiety and mental health

No-one could have predicted what we've been through over the last couple of years. It's taken its toll on everyone and while we're now being told to "live with COVID" it's not gone away and we don't know what the future holds. Not only are people still trying to process what's happened over the past 2 years we're anxious about what the future holds.

"It's OK not to be OK."

We talked about how we all have access to so much (almost too much) information sometimes and it can be overwhelming. – even events completely out of our control (e.g. the war in Ukraine).

We also talked about the impact all this is having on our children and how it's very easy for them to access lots of information (not all of it good) they may not be able to process.

We talked about how the past 2 years have changed how we talk about/deal with challenges, especially if we've not previously experienced anxiety and poor mental health. "Living with COVID" means having to go about our normal busy day to day lives including school runs, back to work, social lives meeting people (and all the associated costs) while still being anxious about what's happening – and what may happen in the future.

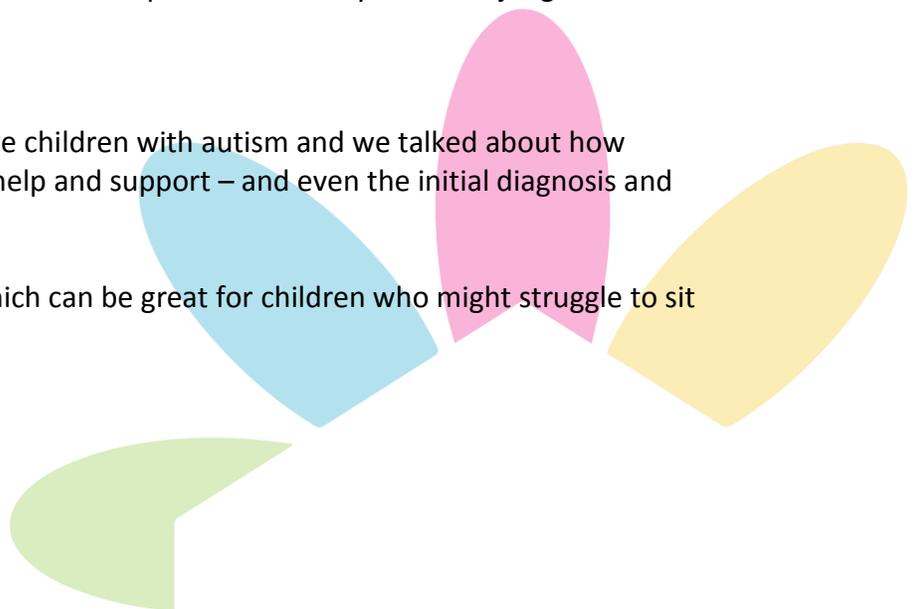
Lisa from the [Rusty Road 2 Recovery](#) talked about the rise in people approaching them for help with their mental health and talked about helping people who are suicidal who are struggling to get help and support elsewhere.

They've recently started a lunch club that people can join. It's so important for people to be able to talk about their mental health in a safe place where they won't be judged.

Autism

A number of people in the Chat have children with autism and we talked about how challenging this can be getting the help and support – and even the initial diagnosis and support plans.

Disney Pixar produce short films which can be great for children who might struggle to sit through a full-length film.



Also, wearing ear defenders to the cinema can help with sensory differences. We also talked about [supermarkets offer “quiet hours”](#) to make shopping with children with sensory differences easier and more accessible.

Cost of living and energy costs

This is a cause of concern for everyone in the community, both tenants and staff. We've published lots of information about [help and support available](#) to those who may be struggling to make ends meet.

As we begin to emerge from the pandemic and try and get our heads together we've been hit by another thing that's going to be a cause for concern.

Rents are increasing by 4.1% from next week and although our rents are among the lowest in Somerset it's still a concern for tenants. SHAL is seeing some materials increase by up to 33%. However, we're determined to continue to provide our services, planned investment and energy efficiency programme.



Our Strategic Priorities

We've recently agreed our strategic priorities. They are:

1. Embedding 'Restorative Practice' across the organisation as a demonstration of our values
2. Investing well in our homes through great asset management
3. Supporting tenants and employees

What do they mean?

"Strategic priorities" is basically what we'll be focussing on over the next year and we'll work together, including in the Community Chats, to deliver them.

Restorative practice

Restorative approaches enable those who have been harmed to convey the impact of the harm to those responsible. And for those responsible to acknowledge this impact and take steps to put it right.

Restorative approaches refer to a range of ways which can be used both to prevent relationship-damaging incidents from happening and to resolve them if they do happen. For example:

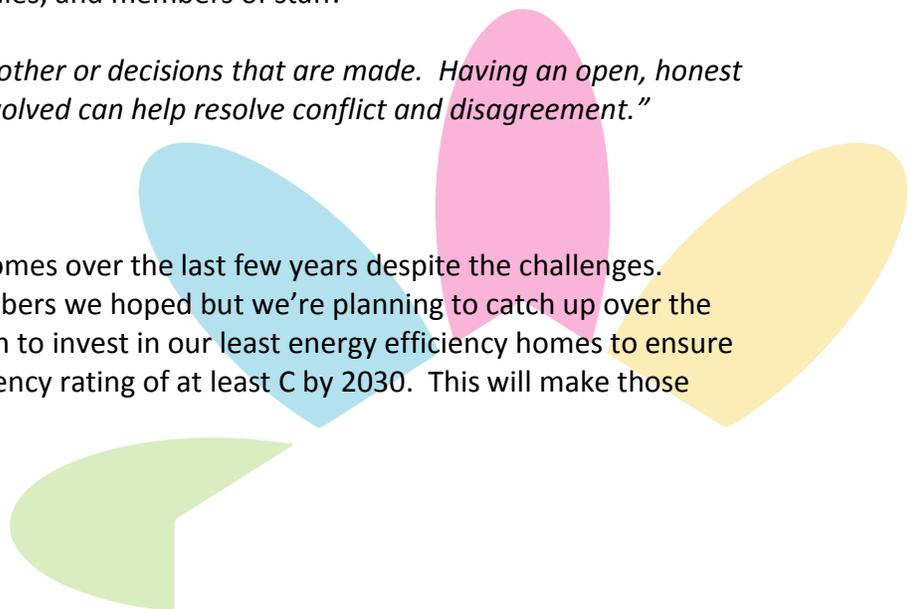
- reduce crime, violence and bullying
- improve human behaviour and strengthen civil society
- provide effective leadership
- restore relationships and repair harm

It can be used in all walks of life, including schools, to alleviate problems such as bullying, classroom disruption, truancy and poor attendance. As well as antisocial behaviour, and disputes between pupils, their families, and members of staff.

"We won't always agree with each other or decisions that are made. Having an open, honest and fair conversation with those involved can help resolve conflict and disagreement."

Investing well in our homes

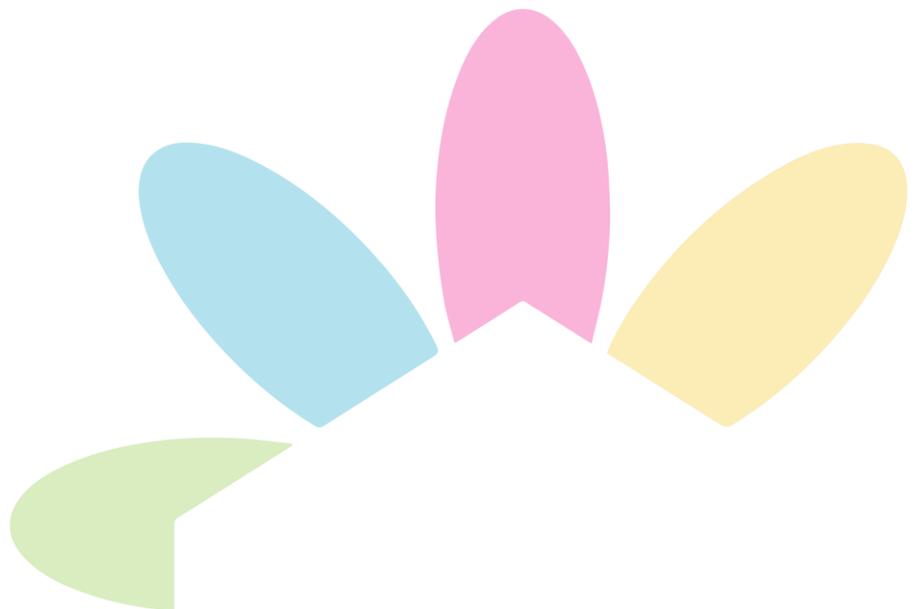
We've continued to invest in our homes over the last few years despite the challenges. We've not been able to do the numbers we hoped but we're planning to catch up over the next few years. We also have a plan to invest in our least energy efficiency homes to ensure all our homes have an energy efficiency rating of at least C by 2030. This will make those homes warmer and healthier.



Supporting tenants and employees

The next couple of years are going to be challenging for everyone, including tenants and staff.

We want to work together to embed our commitments, co-create better information and services and help, support and empower our tenants, their families and our community to deal with what the future holds.



Our Community Chats

We were pleased to welcome another new face to our Community Chat last night – and welcome back old faces.

Everyone is welcome – even if you’d just like to “listen in” with your camera and microphone off.

If you’d like to find out more you can check out our website and Facebook page (and group) or you can give us a call on 01278 444344.

