

## SHAL's Community Chat (review)

Thursday 27 October 2022

Angela Gascoigne led a chat about... well, the chats. We had people "listening in" and using the chat function in Zoom as well as people with their cameras and microphones on.

We all started by describing the kind of day we'd all had and choosing a colour to describe it. Our days had been busy, productive and positive.

One described their day as a "kaleidoscope" which started badly when they dented their car and continued when the dishwasher broke at work and they had to wash up after feeding 80 for breakfast – and then again for lunch! Another described their day as rather hectic after organising an event for 17 people! Someone else was running around after 4 kids under 5 so it was a bit hectic to say the least!

### What's going well?

*"It's nice to see that I'm living under people who care."*

We agreed communication is good (much improved recently) but it's a two-way relationship. Tenants need to be prepared to talk about things and SHAL needs to be prepared to listen. Problems occur when communication breaks down. It's important to be caring, approachable, professional and personable, especially when dealing with people and difficult/upsetting circumstances.

**It's important to listen to what's being said – and understanding where people are coming from.**

"Professional" means getting things right, doing what you'll say you do (or explain why you can't/won't) and keeping people informed.

### What have we learnt during the chats?

Simon White said he comes away from every chat having learnt something and being given something to think about (e.g. how we re-let our homes and how we communicate about the energy efficiency improvements). Lee Martin-Scull said they're a great way of building relationships and it's important to invest that time in listening to each other.

Lee Barrett said the conversation style of the engagement helps both sides understand one another. COVID, lockdowns and the increase in the cost of living have all been a leveller and the chats are a way of helping everyone understand their impacts.

*“I definitely feel positive and confident that if I ever need help I’m able to come to you guys.”*

### **What’s not gone so well?**

Our text messaging service sometimes “loses” messages and tenants don’t get a reply. However, it’s reassuring that tenants can call and speak to a person easily if required.

It was agreed the level of engagement was down to the individual and no-one is forced to do something they’re not comfortable with – and can “listen in” if that’s what they prefer to do.

Around 20 different tenants have attended the chats since the beginning of 2021. While it would be good to see more people attend, we agreed the quality of the conversation was more important than the quantity of people who attend. Everything is shared before and after – including online, by email and in the newsletters. We receive feedback from people even if they don’t attend the chats – and we’ve seen a wide range of people attend the chats.

We appreciate everyone’s busy and sometimes life gets in the way. We can’t all just drop everything and log into an online chat for an hour here and there.

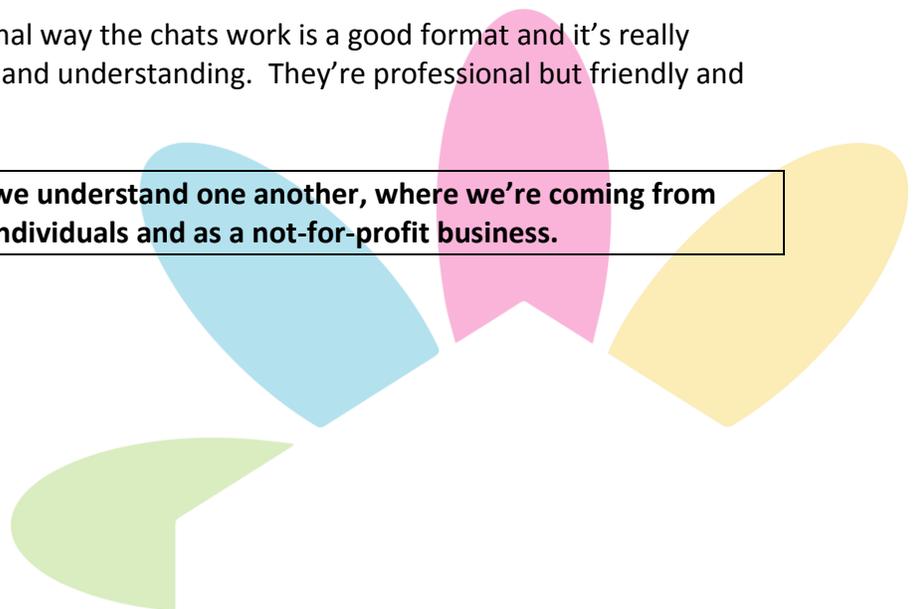
**Lee Martin-Scull reiterated the importance of letting people know it’s OK to get in touch if they’re not happy with something even if you may have had a bad experience in the past.**

While we think we’re doing a good job and the chats are positive it’s important we don’t take it for granted. We appreciate those who join in and it’s important to feedback to everyone and share with them the improvements we’re making as a result of the feedback we’re getting.

### **What’s the one thing we’re taking away from this review?**

We agreed the informal conversational way the chats work is a good format and it’s really working. It helps build relationships and understanding. They’re professional but friendly and informal.

**It’s more important than ever that we understand one another, where we’re coming from and the challenges we’re facing as individuals and as a not-for-profit business.**





*"SHAL sounds really positive and interested in tenants but I don't know if that's just words."*

Actions speak louder than words as they say and we were always determined to ensure the Commitments are not just words on a poster.

As Bing Crosby said in 1944 how can we "ac-cent-tchu-ate the positive and e-lim-i-nate the negative"?

