

DRAFT

Housing Standards Panel Meeting 5 November 2024 – Council Chambers, Harrogate Civic Centre

Attendance: Staff - Lucy Tyne (Tenant Involvement Officer); Sarah Thompson (Tenant Involvement Manager); Paul Cole (Housing Standards Manager, Improvements); Ian Bury (Housing Standards Manager, Repairs);

Cllr Philip Broadbank

Involved Tenants –Barbara Rickards (Chair), Lesley Peplow, Carol Lawson, Chris Hesketh, David Thomas, Kim McBride, Teresa Fox, Gary Bridge

1. Welcome, introductions and apologies.

1.1 Barbara welcomed all to the meeting, went through housekeeping and ran through introductions with tenants and officers.

1.2 Apologies for absence had been received from - James Jenner

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 August 2024

2.1 Chris read out a statement in objection of the minutes –

“Again I have to object to the accuracy of the previous minutes as follows; sanitising of minutes by adding personal comments to questions or statements is not acceptable so removal of these undermining comments is required.

These involved tenant meeting are our meetings to ensure that tenants of social housing have an opportunity ‘to be involved in its management and hold landlords to account’ as per the democratic process clearly set out in the current terms of reference operating agreement as follows;

Officer positions & periods of office; At the panels last meeting in any calendar year a chair and vice chair will be elected from the tenants/leaseholders on the panel by a show of hands of those tenants/leaseholders.

Action:

Officers may hold the position for a maximum of 3 consecutive years after which they will be required to take a break of at least one year before standing for re- election

Please note no mention of election of officers through the "any other business" section has been scripted so therefore the democratic procedure & process should be conducted at the start of the meeting not the end, to ensure democratic process implementation going forward."

2.1.2 Sarah replied to Chris and explained that the team have already acknowledged that tenant involvement is not where it should be and we are not compliant with consumer standards, hence the self-referral to the regulator. We have previously explained that involvement meetings are still been held in Harrogate until a new tenant involvement strategy is in place. Once we have consulted on a new strategy, our ambition is to have a tenant involvement offer that is led by tenants and more representative of the wider tenant population.

2.1.3 Kim shared that during his time attending the steering group meeting for the new strategy he saw how the council were intending to make these changes and improve things.

2.1.4 Chris responded to this with the below statement – "The question was not addressed with any detail so still remains unanswered from both the tenant officer and NY board. Generic or gas lighting on such imperative specific subject matters should never be acceptable in any circumstances and in particular when it effects the health of safety of tenants 24/7. In a democratically and well-run tenant panel, this problem would never arise, as the tenants' officers would never be asked to reply to tenant questions directly as it is not their job, their job is to liaise between tenant & landlord to help deliver vital questions to the landlord via the IT controlled agenda & subsequent IT meetings set by the simple straightforward democratic procedure & process laid out in the current IT terms of reference operating agreement, to which the current NYC landlord appointed officers and previous HBC officers have been clearly instructed not to implement in which a recent retrospective analysis on over 30 previous IT housing panel meetings identifies & exposes the root cause problem that continues to put the health & safety of tenants in their homes at constant risk. A democratic procedure and process implemented would provide the proactive link between landlord & tenant & clearly define the role of the landlord appointed officers, the IT chair/vice chair, and the tenant panel members to which would then help ensure that all involved tenants have an opportunity to be proactively involved in its management and hold their landlords to account; as per the RSH consumers standard.

2.2 Chris queried 2.3 – he asked if all properties in Selby now have carbon monoxide alarms fitted, if not, how many are still without them. The officers at this meeting did not know the answer – Lucy will find this out and feedback to Chris.

Kim added that he's recently had a gas safety check and has now had a carbon monoxide alarm fitted in his property.

Chris asked if officers are aware that if the alarms are not fitted in all properties, NYC are breaching consumer standards set out by the regulator. He said "an urgent reply is required".

2.3 Chris asked for a forward plan for the current decarbonisation project. Lucy will get back to Chris on this.

2.4 Chris then asked about the recruitment of apprentices from schools and colleges. He asked if he could have evidence for how many apprentices the council have employed going back some years. Lucy will see if she can get this information for Chris.

2.5 Chris added that he had asked to see the council flueless gas policy, Lucy had confirmed there isn't one. Micheal Woodhouse is happy to speak to Chris about this in more detail.

3. Housing Standards Update

3.1 Paul Cole, Housing Standards Manager (Improvements)

3.1.1 Paul began by giving an update on his team, he shared that he is still recruiting to the operational team in all areas, including trades staff. This is going well, and the team are receiving great responses.

3.1.2 In Harrogate there is a large void team meaning that a lot of the work previously done by contractors can be brought back in house.

In Selby, prior to LGR there wasn't an in-house maintenance team – this is currently being built up. The team are still short of a couple of operatives and electricians. However, with the team currently in place there is a programme of works in Selby that is being carried out by in house staff, ranging from small jobs to refitting kitchens. The aim is to get to the point where there is less reliance on external contractors. Paul explained that of course there will always be a

need to use specialist contractors in some cases, but the council would like to reduce the need for them.

3.1.3 David asked if the council spend more money on contractors or on the in-house teams? Paul explained that at the moment the council are still spending more money on contractors than they would like to be, however the in-house teams are starting to take back a lot of work – Paul added that this is only the beginning of the journey – NYC are not yet where they want to be.

3.2 Paul moved on to discuss the retrofit grant funding he shared that the contractor has been appointed for Selby – the process to appoint is still ongoing in Harrogate and Richmond. He reminded the group that 75 homes need to be completed by March 2025. Paul also shared that he is working to bid for 'wave 3' funding – this will mean NYC can complete retrofit works on even more homes.

3.2.1 Chris asked if Paul could confirm exact figures for the funding of this project and how the money from the first decarbonisation pilot has been used. Paul didn't have these exact figures to hand. Lucy will feed this back to Chris.

Chris also asked if the council are on schedule to complete 75 homes by March – Paul confirmed they are on schedule to achieve this.

3.3 Lesley asked there is a contractor to carry out roof repairs. Ian confirmed there is.

3.4 Ian Bury, Housing Standards Manager, Repairs

3.4 Ian began by explaining that, similarly to Paul, he has been growing the repair team in all 3 areas. He explained that there has been a lot of success in recruiting. He shared that on the repairs side, his teams are only 18% away from a fully staffed structure. He explained that in the long term this structure may grow. The two areas that seem to be the most difficult to recruit to are joiners and electricians.

Ian added that there is still a vacancy for a repairs team leader in Selby.

3.5 Ian shared that across the council, his teams are receiving around 3000 repairs each month. There is still a backlog of repairs at the moment.

3.6 Ian gave the group an update on Planon, training for Planon has begun – it was previously used in Harrogate. Teams are looking at implementation early next year hopefully.

Ian explained that the roll out of Planon will have a really positive impact on the repair service, it will create consistency in that everyone will be using the same system.

Ian mentioned that system access still isn't the best, for example, because he originally worked for Selby District council, he only has visibility for properties in Selby. This is being addressed through out the council.

3.6.1 David asked if Ian could explain what Planon is for those who may not know. Ian explained that Planon is a housing system that the council will use to operate the repairs system. He explained how part of the process will work.

Customer service receive a call in from tenant, they will log this. It will then go through the Planon system, and a planner will schedule it to an operative, this will go through to an operative's tablet device— it is all automated.

3.7 David asked if the tenant would sign the tablet when the repair is completed and report whether they are satisfied. Ian explained that this is a function Planon has but there are ongoing discussions as to whether it will be used. He explained that tenants might not give an honest review if the operative that that did the job is stood in front of them asking them to sign a form. The group agreed with this. Ian explained that there will still be a function to measure satisfaction with repairs – the team are just not sure what this will definitely look like yet.

3.7.1 Paul mentioned that Barbara had commented that the repair satisfaction surveys aren't always replied to. Paul added that some tenants could be discouraged from filling out satisfaction surveys if they feel as though they will never get a reply. Sarah added that the service needs to get better at recording feedback and evidence what has changed as a result of tenant comments.

3.8 Chris raised an ongoing point he has been raising in regard to the change of policy from Yorkshire water on servicing external stop taps. "The withdrawal of their "imperative" proactive service to period maintain external stop taps on request to which he has filed a retrospective analysis, in contact with the regulator OFWAT to which is ongoing, to which highlights the concerns as a joint bill payer, involved tenant and in the consideration of public interest, will keep the group & Lucy informed accordingly."

Chris asked if Ian had been made aware of Yorkshire Waters policy to stop servicing external stop taps. Ian confirmed he has.

4. **Housing Delivery update – Lesley Fargher – Housing Delivery Manager (Small Sites)**

Written report

4.1 I can report that we have a business case approved to provide 500 new council homes over the next 5 years across the whole of the county with an additional 90 homes for temporary accommodation, 60 of which will be provided by the council and 30 with support to our housing association partners.

We don't know where across the area the 500 homes will be built just yet. We know where the high need is for temporary accommodation, which is Scarborough and Harrogate, but have yet to finalise the general need areas.

We are still in the process of finalising our delivery plan where areas, numbers and tenures will be targeted, but working to deliver homes where we can in the meantime.

We completed on the acquisition of 6 new build homes form Keepmoat in Scarborough last week, along with the acquisition of a HMO for temporary accommodation.

Work continues to deliver our legacy schemes from the former districts and boroughs where various funding was allocated such as Brown Field Housing Fund, Land Release Fund etc. mainly on smaller projects.

We continue to look at options to provide shared ownership and other low-cost home ownership models, along with right to buys and buy back of ex council homes.

We are working up schemes to ensure all our new build homes will meet accessible, adaptable standards and where possible, will provide a number of wheelchair accessible homes on each scheme.

We continue to aim for our goal to become Net Zero carbon and how we can become greener, more socially responsible, and more environmentally sustainable.

4.1.1 Chris asked what heating systems will be in these new builds. Lucy will ask the specifics on this.

4.1.2 Teresa shared her confusion around housing associations using gas heating systems on their new build properties when it seems that the council are trying to move away from this.

4.1.3 Chris added that air source heat pumps are been fitted wrongfully in homes they are not suitable for - they are

recommended to run 24/7 & to serve a hot water storage cylinder to optimise energy performance & validate warranties to which equates to 8,760 associated hours of electricity per annum for hot water requirements alone as opposed to point of use combination boilers [gas/electric] that would require only 52hrs per annum to produce the same hot water needs, to which this basic heating calculation is based on my own circumstances of two people living in a small ground floor flat, with an electric shower and hot water points to basin, bath & kitchen sink, to which identifies & exposes the root causes of associated compensation claims that have been exasperated by a lack of appropriate due diligence, accountability and transparency prior to installation by government decision makers prior to installation of these climate essential green appliances that continue to be undermined by the lack of appropriate professional advice prior to installation going forward.

4.1.4 Paul added that the council now only fit an air source heat pumps if the building is suitable. There is not a one size fits all approach – its what best suits the tenant and the building.

4.1.5 Chris added that is it not only the fabric of the building it's the size of the property – he stated that air source heat pumps are ideal in bigger homes but not for 1 bed properties. Ground source pumps are ideal for multiple occupations places. He emphasised that the council need to ensure they are installing the most appropriate appliances. He pointed out the new properties that were built recently on Dene Park have air source heat pumps even though they are small homes. In his opinion electric combination boilers would have been an all-round better choice both in cost of relative installation and specifically running costs for the tenant to where a forward planned hot water running cost calculations should always be available and prioritised into any relevant new housing or decarbonisation project.

4.2 Gary asked if there is a plan to go back and visit the properties that had the pumps fitted when it was not the most suitable option. Paul confirmed the council will be revisiting these homes as part of the retrofit works. The plan is to address all homes that have an EPC of D, E and F by 2030. Paul explained how to find your EPC certificate.

4.2 Sarah updated the group on the change to the right to buy discount and rules due to the government budget. The changes come into action at the end of this month so there has been an influx of applications to deal with.

4.2.1 Chris shared that he'd attended some fantastic webinars hosted by Four Million Homes, during one of these, right to buy was covered and the view that right to buy was one of the major root cause factors contributing to the lack of social housing.

5 Any other business

5.1. Chris' read a statement to the group -

"Firstly, I want to point out to the panel from the 10th of October I have constantly supplied 20 issues on a daily basis for inclusion in today's agenda with no appropriate or proactive response to which highlights the tragic consequences of "cover up management" to which the 8,000 + tenants of North Yorkshire the IT housing panel is here to represent, surely deserve better than this!

If I can briefly refer to the last meeting minutes where I shared my concerns & displeasure on the omitting of two vital statements concerning Yorkshire water & to what only can be best described as the shambolic failure of the 2.3 + million government funded 2022 decarbonisation project, to which so far, all request for a retrospective analysis via a monthly work based analysis on the 16 month project period to establish appropriate due diligence, accountability & transparency, has been met with constant obfuscation & gas lighting together with the constant sanitising of minutes, the last minutes were damning to which the previous hbc council in particular & the current council members responsible should be "ashamed" to which the facts are based on public recorded minutes, to which to be fair to the 7 additional councils have walked into and inherited what must be a nightmare of a to do list, if the constant mismanagement of the involved tenant panel is anything to go by, to which the retrospective analysis on over 30 IT previous housing meeting minutes identifies & currently exposes the Council is in breach of the following:

- ; 1958 Public record act
- ; RSH Housing standard
- ; RSH Consumer standard
- ; Gas health & safety regulations

Consideration of public interest including the following:

- ; A wide range of values & principles relating to the public good or what is in the best interest of society.
- ; Protecting the rights & freedoms of others.
- ; Preventing burdens of the taxpayer
- ; Accountability & transparency, to promote public understanding & to safeguard democratic processes.

To which is evidence proved detailed via retrospective analysis & "tragic consequences of cover up management" document. To which an email copy will be sent to my local MP, regulator, ombudsman, and department of housing, communities & local government after this meeting following the outcome. To which if the democratic process is implemented can start to begin to rebuild the broken democratic foundations destroyed by the years of deploying

democratic, economic & environmental destroying cover up management and exasperated & blatantly violated by totally ignoring democratic procedures & process set out in the 2022 terms of reference operating agreement. To which is clearly laid out as follows; officer positions and periods of office; At the panels last meeting in any calendar year a chair & vice chair will be elected from the tenants /leaseholders on the panel by a show of hands of those tenants/leaseholders. Officers may hold the position for a maximum of 3 consecutive years after which they will be required to take a break of at least one year before standing for re-election."

5.1.1 Sarah followed on from this by echoing what she reported earlier – the council are aware of their noncompliance and have self-referred to the regulator. During these meetings and other involvement meetings the tenant involvement team have set out that there is a commitment and ambition to improve things. Sarah added that she is concerned Chris' statement is not representative of the tenant group. Sarah added that the council are in regular contact with the council.

Chris replied to Sarah – "Again we have a near perfect terms of reference operating agreement "template" that can operate annually for the three NYC tenant groups to which is simple straight forward complete on a a4 sheet of paper is open to annual review, and adjustments accordingly to which gives the tenants the voice required the only factor that is missing is the implementation that will give the IT control of the agenda and meetings that it was originally intended to ensure."

5.1.2 Kim commented that at the moment we're experiencing difficulty due to the 3 areas coming together, we all previously did things differently. We need a new and improved tenant involvement strategy to advance forward.

5.2 Lucy reminded the group about the Tenancy policy and strategy consultations, she asked people to please have a look on our website and work through these if they have the time. Lesley would like a paper copy of the new policies to read through.

5.3 Tenant Involvement Strategy

5.3 Sarah explained that she is still working on the strategy, she would like to present it to the involved tenants before it goes to a formal consultation. There will be a more diverse range of ways to get involved going forward.

5.4 Lesley shared that she had seen some good press for retrofit works on the news detailing the works carried out in Barbara's home. Paul added that the council recognise the investment they

need to make to improve properties – this story is an example of that.

5.4.1 Barbara added that she had a very positive experience of the retrofit works in her home, nothing was carried out without her consent, and she was kept informed along the way.

5.5 Chris asked for the number of compensation claims regarding ground and air source heat pumps. Lucy confirmed she will ask for this information.

6 Arrangement for the next meeting

6.1 Lucy explained that there will not be a date for the next meeting because the team are hoping to implement the new tenant involvement strategy in the new year. This will mean, new face to face meetings, panels will most likely discuss similar things to what is covered now but the format will be different. We want things to be more tenant led and recognise the need for tenants to have more influence. Meetings will be held to discuss the changes and formalise terms of reference etc.

6.1.1 Chris asked for confirmation that the team will not be implementing the current terms of reference. Sarah confirmed that we will not – there will be new agreed terms of reference for each new forum/meeting in the new strategy.

6.2 Barbara thanked all for attending and closed the meeting at 15:35.