



CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

1 July 2019

PRESENT:

Directors

Robert Buckley (Chair)
Elizabeth Bird
Sheila Bouitieh
Michael Hood
Eileen Gill

Advisers

Neil Bouch	Interim Managing Director
Hazel Forster	Head of Neighbourhood Services
Deborah Ewart	Head of Support Services
Kevin Johnson	Head of Customer Services
Emma Metters	Rent and Income Service Manager
Paul Andison	The Adaptations and Grants Service Manager
Stuart Gibson	Governance and Risk Lead

Apologies

Jim Turnbull

1 MINUTES

The minutes of the last meeting of the committee held on 16 May 2019 were approved as a correct record.

2 REVIEW OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATOR TARGETS 2019/20

The Board, at its meeting on 28 March 2019, approved the key performance indicators and service standard targets for 2019/20, but requested a further review of the following targets: -

- % of leaseholders satisfied with the service they receive
- % of tenants satisfied that their views are taken into account
- % of tenants satisfied that the rent and service charges paid are good value for the services received
- % of tenants satisfied with the neighbourhood they live in

Further information was provided in relation to each of the four indicators and an explanation of given for why the targets had been reduced.

Housemark benchmarking allowed the company to track over a period of time. The exercise carried out in 2018 by TLF provided the company with customer satisfaction at a single point in time and allowed for further analysis which had

been fed into the service planning for 2019/20. The proposed targets that were presented to Board in March 2019 took account of the TLF results.

Following the comments at the Board, the proposed targets had been amended and details of these were reported.

The committee discussed and accepted the explanations and proposed amendments to the targets.

The committee was particularly pleased that the proposed targets for percentage of tenants satisfied that rent provided good value for money and percentage of tenants satisfied that service charges provided good value for money had both been increased from 77% to 82%. It was agreed to make it clearer in the report to the Board that this was the new baseline target for both the new indicators that had been split.

RESOLVED – That the Board be recommended to approve the revised targets for 2019/20, subject to the new targets in respect of satisfaction with the targets for rent and service charges being clearer in the report to the Board.

3 TENANCY AND ESTATE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received an annual update on the work undertaken to manage tenancies and estates during 2018/19. Key service developments planned for 2019/20 were also reported.

The committee noted that the Garden Tidy Service not being eligible for payment by Universal Credit only impacted on two tenants and alternative options would be investigated for these two tenants.

The committee felt that it was important to feed back the positive impact of customer involvement in Estate Walkabouts otherwise it might discourage them from taking part.

The committee welcomed the care navigators and social prescribing and looked forward to a further update on the impact of the 21 referrals that had been made.

RESOLVED – That the committee is satisfied with the annual update on work undertaken to manage tenancies and estates during 2018/19.

4 MULTI-STOREY TEAM – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received an update on the activity, performance and customer service of the Multi-Storey Team during 2018/19. Key service developments planned for 2019/20 were also reported.

The committee felt that the company needed to be alert to any changes in advice from the Fire Service around the stay put policy. It was noted that a new Health and Safety Risk Register in the Property and Assets Directorate was being presented to Audit Committee on 3 July 2019 and it was agreed to highlight the risk of changes in advice during these discussions.

RESOLVED – That the committee is satisfied with the work and performance of the Multi-Storey Team during 2018/19.

5 OLDER PERSONS HOUSING TEAM – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received an update on the activity, performance and customer satisfaction for the Older Persons Housing Service during 2018/19.

It was agreed that Board Members be given the opportunity to attend the Boccia tournament, which was held in May.

RESOLVED – That the committee is satisfied with the work and performance of the Older Persons Housing Team during 2018/19.

6 HOUSING OPTIONS SERVICE – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received a summary of the activity undertaken by the Housing Options Service during 2018/19.

The Homelessness Reduction Act came into force on 3 April 2019. Due to the legislative changes and the way the government now recorded homelessness on a new case management system, 2018/19 data was being published as “Experimental Official Statistics”. Due to changes in the recording system, the data provided relating to the official statistics in the report only covered the first three quarters of 2018/19. This was the only data that had been verified and published to date. Once the fourth quarter’s data had been verified, a further update could be provided to the committee.

It was acknowledged that the 64 individual temporary accommodation units was not enough to meet the current demand.

It was agreed that the Homelessness Business Manager would be invited to a future meeting of the committee to provide more detail on the current developments, including bids for funding.

The committee received a verbal update on a recent visit by MHCLG. The company received very positive feedback on its approach to prevention and received some good practice. It was agreed to bring back the learning to a future meeting of the committee.

Concern was expressed about the approach being taken by Nexus in response to rough sleeping in Gateshead Interchange and advice that was being given by planning departments to local shops. It was agreed to speak to Nexus about how they should be making connections with rough sleepers and to contact the Council’s planning department about giving the appropriate advice to retailers.

RESOLVED – (i) That the committee is satisfied with the annual report on Housing Options performance.

(ii) That the committee receive the full year’s data for 2018/19 once it is verified and available.

(iii) That the Homelessness Business Manager be invited to a future meeting of the committee to provide more detail of the current developments, including bids for funding.

- (iv) That the committee receive a report on learning from the MHCLG visit at a future meeting.

7 HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received an update relating to the following Housing Support activity: -

- Housing Support for under 25-year olds
- Housing Support for over 25-year olds
- Housing Support for Offenders and Ex-Offenders
- Armed Forces Community Outreach Service
- Learning Disability Supported Accommodation

It was noted that overall there was increase in demand for all housing support services. The committee made the point though that some of the most important work the company did for these individuals was not quantifiable from statistics.

RESOLVED – That the committee is satisfied with the work undertaken in Supported Housing during 2018/19.

8 REFUGEE RESETTLEMENT PROGRAMME – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received an update on the work undertaken in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme during 2018/19.

RESOLVED – That the committee is satisfied with the work undertaken in relation to the Syrian Vulnerable Person Relocation Scheme during 2018/19.

9 SAFEGUARDING – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received an update on the range of work undertaken during 2018/19 in relation to the safeguarding activity across the organisation.

Copies of a presentation to Northumbria University on the company's approach to hoarding were tabled.

RESOLVED – That the committee is satisfied with the performance and progress update in relation to Safeguarding during 2018/19.

10 LETTINGS – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received an annual report on the lettings activity in 2018/19.

RESOLVED – That the committee is satisfied with lettings annual report 2018/19.

11 ADAPTATIONS AND DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received an update on adaptations to Council properties and on the activity associated with Disabled Facilities Grants across all tenures in 2018/19.

RESOLVED – That the committee is satisfied with the update on adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grants for 2018/19.

12 RENT ARREARS MONITORING AND PREVENTION – ANNUAL REPORT 2018/19

The committee received an update on the rent arrears monitoring during 2018/19 and the company's approach to rent arrears prevention.

It was noted that company aimed to contact all new universal credit claimants to offer advice and support within 10 days of being made aware of their claim. This was if the company had not already helped them make their claims in the first instance.

RESOLVED – (i) That the committee is satisfied with rent arrears monitoring during 2018/19 and the company's approach to rent arrears prevention.

(ii) That the committee place on record its thanks to members of staff dealing with universal credit cases.

13 FORWARD PLAN

A forward plan of reports that will be presented to meetings of this committee during the next year was submitted.

RESOLVED – That the Forward Plan be noted.

14 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the committee would be held on Thursday, 12 September 2019 at 2pm in Room S21, Gateshead Civic Centre, Regent Street, Gateshead.