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| **MINUTES** | | **MEETING:** | Housing Involvement Panel | |
| **DATE:** | 22nd March 2023  10.30am-12.30pm | |
| **VENUE:** | Hybrid  Meeting Room 5A/B / MS Teams | |
| **CHAIR:** | Stella Parkin (Council Tenant) | |
| **MINUTE TAKER:** | Callie Lamb | |
| **In Attendance** | | | | |
| Winston Cook, Keith Stringer, Mo Ramzan, Phil Hayes, Mary Jacques, Donna Draper, Jake Turner, Ann Hitchins, Winnie Billups, Jo Workman, Karen Jay, Lynsey Skidmore, Paul Elliott, Stella Parkin, Cllr Brookes, James Clark, Heather Kealey, Callie Lamb, Julie and Sam Sharp, Claire Tester | | | | |
| **Apologies** | | | | |
| Scott Clayton, Complaints team, Mears, Cllr Sheppard | | | | |
| **Item** | **Subject / Discussion** | | | **Action** |
| **1.** | **Welcome & Introductions**  Stella Parkin welcomed everyone to the meeting and facilitated introductions. | | |  |
| **2.** | **Minutes of the last HIP meeting – Jan 23**  All agreed. | | |  |
| **3.** | **Introduction – James Clark Assistant Director of Housing**  James joined Rotherham Council at the end of January to take up the Assistant Director for Housing role. James said hello and explained that he joined Rotherham from the civil service and before that worked in local government in London. | | |  |
| **4.** | **Rent Setting – Paul Elliott**  Paul presented information about Housing Revenue Accounts (HRA) rent setting & the business plan. The main information given was as follows:  Rent is reviewed annually.  How services are funded for tenants and residents of Rotherham.    Money available for the 30 years and needs to balance.  District heating and rent letters all sent with changes to pricing, to come into effect 3rd April 2023.  Government said 7% was max increase, 4% lower than inflation. Average rent to increase to £84 per week, extra £5 million of income to spend, however costs have increased more than £5million due to inflation so shortfall to fill.  7% increase investment in garage sites, council housing, improvement to estates, parking. New build to high standard, 0 carbon ready.  Starting to review District Heating pricing due to Government not increasing the cap to £3,000 and keeping it at £2,500 cap. Revised pricing will be discussed around July time to go through decision process as a council.  16,000 of tenants in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit – full or part of the increase in rent is covered due to uplift of benefit.  Financial Inclusion Team – referrals, debt advice, package of support for residents struggling with Cost of living crisis.  **Questions and comments from the panel**  **Mary –** Any other help for U25 due to their lower benefit amount. Checks can be made for eligibility for other benefits – referrals and support with employment support / tenancy support. Ownness put on the individual to improve their personal position due to council resources.  **Jo W –** Improvement in council homes – referred to her own home needing improvement. Cllr Brookes advised to email her with concerns regarding her concerns. Paul Elliott referred to stock surveys and investment program. Survey determines what work is required to continue to meet standard.  **James Clark -** advised EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) is taking a priority to get EPCs standard to C or above.  **Julie Sharp –** How are tenants informed of surveys? Paul Elliott advised tenants are sent a letter to advise your property will be part of a stock condition survey.  **Phil & Karen -** leaflets for Open Arms Project – additional layer of support | | |  |
| **5.** | **Housing Revenue Account Business – as above**  Paul covered Housing Revenue Accounts as above in agenda item 4. | | |  |
| **6.** | **Tenant Scrutiny Review of Comms**  RMBC staff gave thanks to the Tenants Scrutiny Panel for all the involvement and work included.  Lynsey updated the panel on the main actions that came from the Communications review as below:  Ensure language is understandable for all communications  **Compliments and complaints –** Visibility on how to easily make a complaint or compliment; Direct link to make a complaint from housing web page and in Home Matters magazine.  **Website –** Accessibility. Not all services are on website and work is needed to update housing website. Home Matters is currently available in one language and printed version. Magazine would be more accessible through website.  **Newsletter accessibility –** Review how home matters is sent and formats it is available in.  **Telephone Calls –** target is 6mins.  **Staff training -** to capture tenant feedback. Ideas to have role play sessions of how to deal with varied tenants problems.  **Questions from the panel**  **Mary –** Asked how to meet Housing Officer and could it be published on a newsletter or added to the Ward news bulletin.  Tenant Satisfaction Survey will be going out to tender.  **Jo –** Negative response from when she has tried to get other council tenants involved with various meetings because they don’t want to attend at Riverside House as it is intimidating.  **Julie –** Language used for sign up online is complex for people with various disabilities. A guide would be helpful as a step by step guide.  **Julie -** raised concerns about ideas of moving meeting from Riverside House and does that mean the meeting cannot be done via Teams. Cllr Brookes – always open for discussion on location however hybrid is essential.  **Phil –** six tenants to help develop training package with Claire Tester  **James C –** extended thanks to scrutiny panel. Priority to get more people involved with tenants panels. Acronyms and abbreviations need to be looked at in documents to help ease for tenants. | | |  |
| **7.** | **Consultation on housing regime: Mutual Exchange / Tenant Involvement**  Lynsey Skidmore gave a presentation and some of the main points of the presentation are below  Strengthened requirement to provide a wide range of meaningful opportunities to get involved and consider tenant views when making decisions.  Ensure tenants can scrutinise landlord strategies, policies and services.  Support tenants with the ‘Right to Transfer’.  Offer support to meet the diverse needs of tenants who might otherwise struggle to engage with involvement activities.  Set a standard on tenant involvement that includes shared ownership properties.  Provide grant funding to support tenants to become involved.  Retain requirement to provide mutual exchanges and provide support to tenants who do not have internet.  Greater freedom on how tenants can access mutual exchanges.  Feedback from Phil Hayes – Covid was intense, however new groups have kept going and formed. | | |  |
| **8.** | **Rotherham Federation of Communities TARA Case Study / Showcase – Jo Workman**  Jo attended the panel to talk about the SEND youth club and explained that:  TheYouth Club created 5 years ago. Voluntary service to allow children to explore. Parents / carers can stay, to allow them to chat to other parents and share experiences and have support from one another.  Peer support group – funding received for parents to get together for them to learn new skills. | | |  |
| **9.** | **Any other business**  There was no any Other Business from the meeting. | | |  |
| **10.** | **Next meeting is Wednesday 24th May 10:30am at Riverside House.** | | |  |