



RESIDENTS FORUM – Meeting Notes and Actions 11th July 2024

Present:	DK DC MM LG (Part) KT JC (Virtually)
Officers in attendance:	Zarina Chowdrey – Customer First Manager Niki Stockton – Director of Customer Experience John Mansergh – Director of Business Improvement Richard Hayes – Director of Homes Diane Hill – Head of Property Services Lauren Crawford – Customer Engagement Partner
Apologies:	SP JE MH
Circulation:	As above SLH Board and all managers

ACTION

1. Welcome & Introductions took place around the room.
2. **Approval of the Minutes 8th May 2024**
 - 2.1 The minutes of the last meeting were approved. There were no matters arising which would not be covered within the main agenda.
 - 2.2 Niki outlined the main items on the agenda, which had been informed by resident feedback at the last meeting.
3. **Self-assessment against the Consumer Standards**
 - 3.1 Zarina gave a presentation setting out the background behind the new social housing consumer regulation standards and how these would be regulated going forward. The Forum was provided with a summary of each of the four consumer standards.
 - 3.2 Zarina then provided evidence where SLH was able to demonstrate compliance with the new standards and improvement areas where the team are focusing resources over the next twelve months or so. This included; grounds maintenance, repairs, customer vulnerability and insight, sheltered housing, better recording of information and a new website to improve access to information. Karl asked about the quality of CRM software and use of technology, Niki replied that this is in place, but further

improvements and better recording was needed, and training is currently taking place with colleagues.

- 3.3 Zarina advised that SLH has published its data for the Tenant Satisfaction Measures and General Measure (known as the TSMs), incorporating the latest available benchmarking information [TSM Customer Satisfaction Survey Results - South Lakes Housing](#) in addition to the complaints & service improvement annual report [SLH-Annual-Complaints-Service-Improvement-Report-202324.pdf \(southlakeshousing.co.uk\)](#)
- 3.4 RF Member (Resident Forum) asked whether SLH also focus on positive feedback and gaining an understanding of why 5-star ratings are given and using this insight to drive improvement. Niki confirmed we do, but that for transactional surveys we contact customers who score 1-3 dissatisfied/ very and neither and advised that whilst there is not the resource to follow up all responses, she provided assurance that SLH was focusing on gaining insight across the board, including compliments and not just focusing on dissatisfaction or complaints.
- 3.5 RF Members asked about the decanting procedure and were provided with examples of where they are being used. RF Members also asked about secure tenancies and use of starter tenancies. Niki advised that security of tenure was important and we provide the most secure tenancy we can, adding that the first 12 months new tenants are on starter tenancies which then converts to an assured tenancy which provides long term security. She also mentioned that the Renters Reform Bill, which is likely to become law, will prevent the use of starter tenancies and SLH will need to develop a new tenancy agreement and that she supports the move to end section 21 evictions, much talked about regarding the private sector.

4. Repairs Customer Experience Project

- 4.1 Richard and Diane H gave a presentation covering the objectives of the repairs customer experience project, following the Forum's request at the last meeting. The goal of this project is to improve the customer experience for all SLH residents when reporting and enquiring about a repair. He acknowledged that the service is not consistently good and that we need to improve communication, the time it takes, right first time and follow on. Richard also reflected on the workforce challenges and recruitment campaigns to attract skilled trade operatives and sub-contractor availability.
- 4.2 Several RF members commented that communication within the repairs service has massively improved and staff are friendly. One member commented on the *My Account* system and whether it was possible to have a status update on jobs to know what is happening and prevent further calls. Another member gave an example about an out of hours repair and multiple visits to diagnose the fault that was causing a leak. All RF members commented on the need for customer service staff to be trained around questioning techniques rather than technical training, so the trade operatives get better information before they arrive to do their jobs. Zarina said that regular training takes place with the Repairs Manager and quality assurance is now in place. Karl advised that he has spoken to several operatives, and some are not as qualified and are not aware of why some jobs are sent to different colleagues. He suggested a survey going to the workforce to see what things can improve and the focus should be on first time fix. Richard thanked RF member for his suggestion and advised that colleague feedback is a key part of the project. RF member asked whether there were any repercussions for residents if they were not at home for their

appointment. Richard advised that he would be bringing the no access issues to the Forum at a later stage. Richard undertook to follow up on the suggestion from the last meeting re the timing of text messages to remind residents of appointments the week before rather than the night before and to telephone on the day.

RH

- 4.3 RF member asked about the use of sub-contractors and commented that Bell Group were focused on the job in hand, but that scaffolding has been up at this scheme for a while, with no work taking place which gave concerns around health and safety and insurance. Diane H agreed to look into the issue. RF members asked about performance of contractors and contract clauses around penalties and time periods. Members commented that tighter controls needed to be in place for the management of contractors and their accountability. RF members asked to be more involved in the Repairs Customer Experience Project via the Repairs Forum.

RH

5. Proposal to Change the Company Rules

- 5.1 John (SLH's Company Secretary) outlined the consultation to change the SLH Rules. He explained that the Rules govern the operation of SLH as a Community Benefit Society and the majority of its contents would remain unchanged. The proposals include removing the requirements of the annual general meeting, closing the shareholder scheme, and removing the 'reserved' places on the Board for residents. He emphasised the following points;

- SLH is strengthening customer voice, including via the Residents Forum (RF) but also around areas such as learning from complaints and customer satisfaction insight.
- The Board has been reviewing all areas where traditional forms of customer engagement have not been adding value.
- Instead of an annual general meeting which is attended by a very small handful of resident shareholders, the Board instead would prefer to meet with residents and have discussions around the things that matter to them.
- The Board will always welcome 'lived experience' and will put in place support for any residents who wish to serve as Board members. The aim is that the RF will provide a sound training ground for SLH residents to consider applying for Board vacancies in the future.

- 5.2 John advised that consultation would be taking place between now and 7th August with shareholders, SLH funders and Westmorland & Furness Council. He added that if residents have any comments to make then to contact him, adding that he would send RF members a copy of the consultation document afterwards (along with the copy of the minutes).

- 5.3 RF members noted the proposals and did not have any comments to make at this stage. Karl asked when the proposals would take effect. John advised that the changes would be on the agenda for the September general meeting and, if approved, would then be implemented following approval by the Financial Conduct Authority which would take place within a month or so after the general meeting.

6. Resident Forum Chair – Role & Responsibilities

- 6.1 Niki highlighted the wish for the Forum to elect a Chair and that, in addition to chairing these meetings, they would also attend the meetings of the SLH Board ensuring that the customer voice is heard at Board level on the things that matter most to residents.

6.2 Niki shared a draft Role Profile for the Chair, requested by a member at the last meeting and asked the Forum to consider the profile and come back to her if RF members are interested. She also said that it would be helpful if in the meantime one of the members attends the next Board meeting to give an update on the work of the Forum and the matters of concern to residents. KT stated that he was willing to do this, with support from Niki. KT and Niki to meet after the meeting.

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7. Any Other Business

7.1 John stated that SLH's Communications & Marketing Partner has requested volunteers to input ideas and feedback on the draft annual tenant report. Whilst no longer a regulatory requirement, annual reports are good practice and there is still a requirement to publish performance data and information about landlord services in a way that is accessible to tenants. Zarina will make contact with the RF members and other engaged residents to ask if there was interest in being involved. Zarina also mentioned that we are planning to update the website with a section for the RF.

7.2 RF member asked whether SLH has a policy about the maintenance of gardens. Niki advised that we look to support customers and hope relatives and neighbours will support if they are unable to do it themselves or refer to other local agencies who may be able to help like Age Concern. She added that there is some provision within the Tenancy Agreement and the neighbourhood team does act when residents gardens are untidy, but that legal enforcement via the courts was unlikely to succeed except in exceptional circumstances. Niki acknowledged that it can be frustrating for other residents who look after their gardens.

7.3 RF members asked about the use of local contractors. Richard advised they are used where we can and where it makes better value for money. The heating contract includes sub-contractors for air source at the moment. For larger contracts, SLH need contractors to provide services at scale which was sometimes out of reach for smaller local companies.

7.4 The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

8. Date of Next Meeting

6pm on 5th September – residents to be consulted on whether this will be a hybrid meeting, via MS Teams or in-person.