**Tenant Scrutiny Group**

**Minutes**

**Sunday 7 April 2024**

**10- 2pm, at Saffron Barn**

**Attendees**

**Tenants:** Lauren Bromage (LB), Steve Hastings (SH), Fiona McGregor (FM), Mary Riddell (MR), Peter White (PW), Kim Davis-Claydon (KDC), Jaszmine Gray (JG)

**Staff:** Emilie Hildreth (EH) Tenants & Communities Manager, Rebecca LeCaille (RL) Tenants & Communities Officer

**Apologies:** Nadine Terry

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| **Agenda Item** | **Discussion Points** | **Actions** |
| **-Apologies**  **-Agree last Minutes**  **-Declarations of interest**  **-Introduce new members** | Nadine Terry  The last meeting minutes were agreed.  There were no declarations of interests  RL Kim Davis-Claydon and Jaszmine Gray. |  |
| **Angela Lomax (DTP) and Becky Tyrell**  Upcoming IDA by the Regulator | Becky Tyrell and Amanda Lomax came to talk to the group about the up-and-coming inspection in May. AL is supporting Saffron with preparation of evidence gathering for this.  AL talked to the group about her experiences of working with other housing associations and their inspections, AL explained what the process was like and what to expect, in order to offer the group reassurance and answer any questions. AL explained that the regulator would be coming to observe the group and that is not a test or that they are not being marked or evaluated as a group or individually but that it is about checking Borad regulatory performance against the regulator’s standards.  The next meeting on the 9th of May will be observed and after they will have a discussion with the group. The regulator will be given the papers for the meeting and will sit and observe the meeting. The group were advised to get on with their meeting as they normally would and be themselves. No questions will be asked during the meeting from the regulator. After the meeting they will ask them questions and Members were encouraged to be honest open about the group, how they choose the areas they scrutinise, how they carry out their role and the flexibility they have as a group and how they find working with staff. They will be asking if they have training or development about working together or what the plans are for this. The will also be asked what outcomes they have, how are this feedback and tracked, and the impact be reviewed. Members may also be asked what they want to improve or change if they have anything.  AL explained that the regulator will be interested in asking the group questions around the TIA standard and would be interested in things such as Saffron’s openness and transparency, how easy it is to access services, their performance results and what information they are provided with. They would also be looking at how Saffron responds to diverse need and their customer service, what information is provided about making complaints, Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and what Saffron has learnt from complaints and TSM learnings. Members were told It would be ok to take notes into of things that Members want to talk about around this.  Members were able to ask questions to AL around the inspection process.  AL is happy if members have any further questions, they can submit these through BT or the Engagement Team.  BT and AL left the meeting. |  |
| **Customer Satisfaction Surveys**  -Update on plans for the year  -Statistics for the year | *Appendix 1 & 2*  RL went through the Housemark spotlight report on satisfaction covering Registered Social Landlords as a whole beforehand, to give Saffron data more context in terms of the bigger picture.  Members were surprised at how complaints have increased nationally and felt the pandemic attributed to these and the push towards tenants seeking legal cases towards their landlords. KCD said that Backlogs of work across many sectors have also caused an increase in wait times and volumes of work, and this was reflected in the statistics too with regard to repairs. Members felt the overview was helpful to know.  SH suggested that this is also shared with other tenants too to them a better understanding where Saffron are.  EH to discuss sharing with PT on the Saffron website where Saffron’s performance is shared to set the scene.  A Customer Satisfaction Surveys data for the 2023-24 was shared in a presentation with the Group. RL talked Members through the slides for each service area.  This financial year Saffron is outsourcing the surveys to increase the number of responses by email and telephone. This increases will provide us with statistical confidence. This frees up department time.  ASB  There were 113 responses throughout the year.  PW asked RL to explain to the Group what neutral responses meant. RL explained that it means neither satisfied or dissatisfied and they had to be offered as an option.  KDC felt that it is hard for Saffron to get a good response due to the nature of the area. Members discussed this.  Call Handling  There were 574 responses throughout the year.  Membrs felt the feedback was good for this area.  Complaints  There were 39 responses to complaints throughout the year.  KCD felt 39 people responding was good and not hearing from the others could be a sign people are satisfied. LB however felt that they could not confidently use statistics.  SH asked the number of complaints RL explained that was in a later presentation. EH added it was around 700.  Heating  85 responses throughout the year.  Income  146 responses throughout the year. RL added that it would be interesting to see if the question around letters goes up in satisfaction because TSCG had worked with the Income Manager to make them more tenant friendly.  Lettings  123 responses throughout the year.  Repairs  142 responses throughout the year.  It was noted that the number of the responses for this area was very low given the size of the service area. Members asked who made the calls. RL explained the Customer Contact Team carried these out.  TPM  140 responses throughout the year.  It was explained for the benefit of the new members that these are surveys carried out in tenants homes to assess the condition of properties and the survey just relates to the surveys process as a service area. | EH  RL |
| **BREAK** | | |
| **Tenant Satisfcation Measures**  -What they are  -Statistics for the year  -Comparison to STAR | *Appendix 3 & Appendix 4*  RL explained what Tenant Satisfaction Measurers were and the origin of the surveys and that they are a perception survey. There were brought in by the regulator and Saffron have replaced the Survey of Tenants and Residents abbreviated as STAR Surveys with the TSMs. Saffron now has the first years’ worth of TSM data. The regulator can monitor Saffron’s performance and also to look at what Saffron does with the information to make improvements.  Saffron has to survey 564 people each year for statical confidence.  RL talked Members through the presentation which gave members a year’s worth of TSM figures and gave the numbers of the responses for each TSM which they had asked for.  (TP06) LB expressed that the group may find it interesting to find out if there was another reason why people feel that Saffron does not listen to their views.  Members felt that some of the questions are not worded very clearly. RL explained that Saffron does not word the questions.  (TP09) Only tenants who have made a compliant answer the TSM question about complaints.  (TP10) Members discussed what the tenants’ responsibility was form maintaining of communal areas and what was Saffron. RL added that Saffron does not service charge the communal areas of flats and that in the tenants Tenancy Agreement there will be a paragraph to say they are responsible for cleaning communal areas.  KCD asked about the communal grassed areas and who is being service charged. Currently only a small number of tenants are being serviced charged for grounds maintenance of Saffron areas. MR pointed out private estates can pay service charges. RL explained that any service charges would be broken down in the rent letters.  Members discussed the TP011 about Saffron’s contributions to neighbourhoods. KCD felt that tenants would not necessarily know what Saffron does.  Independent East partnership between 5 small independent housing associations working to share knowledge and experience (Saffron Housing, Broadland Housing Association, Freebridge Community Housing, Havebury Housing Partnership and Orwell Housing). Are comparing their TSMs and best practice. There are a couple of Tenants from each of the landlords who attend, and MR is on this Group. SH suggested that the group look at the data from other landlords as an exercise to compare Saffron.  RL shared a presentation for the Group to see how the previous STAR and TSM results compared, where it was possible to compare them because the questions were comparable. These overall were fairly similar and the only significant changes were around the complaint handling where satisfaction had gone down.  The Group felt that the Complaints feedback was an area to look at and that it was concerning. |  |
| **Complaints**  -Root cause  -Time taken to respond  -Stage 2 & Ombudsman | *Appendix 5*  The presentation was prepared by Josh Warden the Operations Manager – Complaints, Insight and Service Improvement at Saffron. The Group remarked this was very through and contained a lot of data.  The complaints feedback had been broken down into the four quarters of last financial year and included the number of complaints for each quarter and the root cause for complaints in each quarter.  Delays and communication, mainly around repairs were the main driver for complaints in Q1, Q2 and Q3. The root cause for Q4 had not yet been established at the time of the TSG meeting. It was noted after Q2 complaints around Mutual Exchanged had reduced.  It was identified that compliance with complaints stages was an issue. In response to this there were two more members appointed to the Complaints Team and also the number of managers looking at complaint cases have been increased too. A Service Improvement Group has also been established to look at service failings and look to make improvements to the service. The learning from complaints was discussed.  The Group wanted to know if there was a theme with complaints dissatisfaction. A member gave her own experiences of having a compliant and felt that there was a lack of communication was a major dissatisfaction. The Group wanted to know what the issue was with the lack of communication .  LB the group wants the comments for the Complaints feedback. |  |
| **LUNCH** | | |
| **Review data and agree next steps** | The Group considered all of the performance information and the information in the presentations, to decided what they wanted to look at in more detail. LB said that communication is an issue and asked Members if they should brake it down to look at as it is such a vast area.  Members discussed what areas they want to request to look at the free text comments from all of the above surveys. It was decided all comments for the negative and natural responses, around repairs would be asked for.  It was agreed that on the 9th May that they would focus on the comments detailing communication failures.  The impression of the groups is that if repairs are fixed first time the service is good, but where parts are not on the operatives’ vans and or a follow-on repair is needed this causes problems and it is communication which then lets Saffron down. The group felt there are inconsistencies in the service tenants receive.  KCD suggested they also wanted a general round-up pf positives to see if the group’s perception that the good feedback relates to where jobs have been completed first time, so that they are not basing their opinions on assumption.  RL will email the paperwork out before the meeting on the 9th. All members were asked to make their own feedback to discuss at their next meeting.  LB requested that the new members are sent for the last reports for the Group to the new members beforehand as well. RL added that they can also shadow the call handlers and schedulers like other members have.EH asked if the new members would like to do this over MS Teams to which they said they would.  RL also suggested that the Group think about how they will measure the outcomes following on from their recommendations.  SH asked if Saffron would be able to tell the Group the number of jobs that are fixed first time and those which are not. RL will ask if they have this data and for the group.  It was also noted by the group members that they needed to be mindful when reviewing all of the feedback that there has been a massive increase in workload. The group also questioned whether the volume increase is because of repairs not being fixed first time.  RL will send all of the information out to members before the next meeting and answers to the questions. | RL  RL/LB  RL |
| **Engagement toolkit and forms** | The TACT team has created an Engagement Toolkit for all staff to use so that all staff engage with tenants in the same way and that outcomes are recorded and tracked, and the impact is determined. The Toolkit was shared with the Group. The forms were shared with Members and RL went through them.  EH explained they were moving towards the Tenants and Communities Team (TACT) overseeing a programme of Engagement for the year, and monitoring this, and at the end of the year the whole impact is assessed and success or learnings shared with Tenants in our Annual Engagement Impact Assessment.  EH The desire is to change the culture within Saffron around Engagement and that it is not just something the Engagement Team does.  It was suggested that something the group can consider doing in the future is meeting the service heads and middle managers come and meet the Tenant Scrutiny Committee to build a good relationship with them.  RL added that it was also about ensuring tenants and residents are involved from the beginning and not just reviewing the end product.  The group were very positive about the Toolkit and direction of Engagement. |  |
| **TPAS update** | It was explained to the new members that Saffron has commissioned Tpas to help trial a blueprint of a Task and Finish process, and this is being trailed on the Alterations and Permissions Policy. Tpas will also be carrying out staff training – which is mandatory for all staff. They will also be looking at a project with the two Groups and wider tenants to review our engagement structure with the view of increasing engagement and reducing barriers.  It has been identified by TACT that there is lot in the process of becoming a Saffron Community Member. The previous Your Voice Members was much simpler, and members grew faster. We want to make sure what we offer is varies and open to as many different people and in different ways. |  |
| **Training for the year & SQC shadowing** | This year we want to arrange the Scrutiny Training after the Engagement Structure has been reviewed. All members will be asked if they would like any other training including Chairs training – which both Group Chairs received in September 2023.  KCD recommended talking through the district councils about Chairs training. There will be individual development reviews for members will be offered on an individual level. IT also doesn’t have to be formal it could be more shadowing other departments. LB asked to shadow the CEO. RL will arrange.  LB explained to the new members who the Service Quality Committee were and that they could see the discussions that take place and the Chairs feedback around their reports. LB asked Members if they would like to observe a Service Quality meeting.  IT was felt beneficial that everyone the SQC dates and let RL if they wanted to shadow a meeting. It was agreed that all members would benefit for attending at least one SQC meeting. | RL |
| **Together with Tenants charter & Engagement Impact Assessment** | RL explained that Saffron are Members of Together with Tenants Charter, this is something that all registered providers of social housing, like us, can adopt with the aim of improving the relationship that we have with  tenants and residents (by residents we mean, Leaseholders, Shared Owners, and Licensees). Part of this involves the Group and wider tenants determining with Saffron whether they have met these commitments and how they have, and any feedback or recommendations around these.  Now the Groups have been established it was agreed This year Saffron would carry out an Impact Assessment of Engagement activities. To look at the impact as well as the Together with Tenants Charter. MR, SH, JG, KCD and PW, LB can’t make it and FM will confirm.  The meeting will be a combined evening online meeting 5-8pm on Monday 13th May. |  |
| **AOB** | LB would like a member to become her Vice Chair to the Group to share some of the workload.  Itwas agreed a description of what this entails would be sent to members and that Members could consider and let her know.  LB suggested that they plan their Group’s team building activity. RL explained to new members that each person has £50 each to take part in a team building activity. Ideas need to be inclusive of members, but it is not compulsory. To date have been race nights, Murder Mystery Dinners and Escape Rooms suggested.  PW had shadowed CCT and he found a few points that he wanted to share. PW raised that there were jobs being booked that tenants did not need to attend, it would be good to include this information as a standard response when confirming appointments with tenants.  Email replies to tenants do not address the tenants by name. PW had pointed this out to the person and PW felt that this should be part of the Standard Operating Performance. The person he spoke to did not seem to know what her colleagues did in this respect.  EH will take this feedback to PT who is coordinating the new service standards which are nearly finalised. PW felt that spot checks need to be carried out.  Everyone agreed that communications should be personalised to tenants wherever possible.  FM asked that tenants contact notes were updated to say that there was a dog/s in properties, and if not could it be made known so if there are staff who are afraid of dogs that it is clear on the tenants’ contact notes if they need to visit the property, because an employee of Saffron had not been able to carry out a repair job because of their phobia of dogs. The group discussed this, and it was felt that it was not a good enough reason or attempted to be resolved by asking for the dog to be shut in another room and that perhaps this could be addressed with the appropriate person at Saffron. | RL |