



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

OPERATIONS GROUP
Housing & Revenues Division
Town Hall, Darlington DL1 5QT

Tenants Panel – Monthly Meeting

Thursday 24th April 2025

Location – Town Hall, Darlington

Minutes

Present: Matthew Hufford (Tenant Involvement Officer), Sara Lunn (Tenant Involvement Officer) Sam, Claire Gardner-Queen (Head of Housing), Julie Paton (Lifeline Manager)

Tenants Panel Members Don Aitchison (Branksome Hall Drive), , Dawn King (Bank Top), Frank Hunter (Roxby Court), Tanya Caenazzo (Heighington), Carl Bennett (Branksome Hall Drive) Ivan Sparks (Red Hall), Cristian Bazgan (Lancaster)

Apologies: Carol Bradbrook Taylor (Park Side), Denise Parkin (Haughton), Christine Fishwick (North Riverside), Suzanne Carter (Bank Top), Hugh Mortimer (Park Place)

		ACTION
1.	<p>Introductions – Apologies for Christine, Denise, Karen, Suzanne and Hugh being absent. Next meeting informed to be the 22th of May.</p> <p>Sara Lunn, Matthew Huffard, Claire Gardener-Queen, Christina Hall, Sam Pounder in attendance from Darlington Borough Council</p>	
2.	<p>Lifeline Services</p> <p>Julie Paton to share information on Life Services. Dawn asked about not getting calls over the weekend. Julie explained how Lifeline don't do calls over the weekend.</p> <p>Dawn also mentioned the waiting time for responses. After clarification she said it was the response time for the Town Hall to respond. Julie said Lifeline will check the times with their logs, and further explained how the response works in the council, specifically mentioning how the service is commissioned from CCTV and then Lifeline decide how to respond from there.</p> <p>Julie further clarified Lifeline's role in the council and with the Housing department. Dawn asked what</p>	

	<p>happens on weekends and bank holidays, it was explained by Claire that someone from the response team will respond to the call.</p> <p>Ivan mentioned not getting the annual call from Lifeline. Julie said she will look into Red Hall's lifeline situation, and whether the equipment is out of date. Tanya mentioned problems with old Lifeline equipment, Julie explained how the Lifeline team responds to these incidents and also explained the digital upgrade project. She went on to explain to the panel what Lifeline's plan is when a scheme goes down. Julie asked Dawn to provide details for some properties that are having issues so that the Lifeline team can look into the problems. Julie briefly left the room to collect some of the new Lifeline equipment to show the panel members. While Julie was out Claire explained why all the equipment can't be upgraded at the same time (End of Life being all at once would cause problems), and the reasoning behind some of the changes and upgrades. Julie returned with the equipment and passed it around the panel while explaining how they worked and what they're for. One member mentioned a neighbour needing an ambulance and pulling the cord, Julie responded by saying that if someone needs an ambulance, they should call 999 instead of Lifeline. One member asked what a warden's role is in a scheme, and Julie proceeded to explain the different responsibilities of a scheme manager. Julie mentioned how the scheme managers usually have two schemes each. Julie asked if there was any more questions and informed the panel that they can contact her if they wish.</p>	
3.	<p>Presentation for Tenants Panel re RoSH standards Claire Gardner Queen to present.</p> <p>Regulator of Social Housing and their Consumer Standards. Claire gave presentation to panel members detailing the standards, how the regulator works and what they do. Explained that regulator can't access council budget, unlike a housing association. Rent standards mentioned and explained. Ivan asked about if mould is covered by the standards. Tenancy standards mentioned, champions fairness and transparency throughout.</p> <p>Transparency and Accountability. Mentioned how council tenants should work with the council and hold us accountable where appropriate. Council must treat tenants and prospective tenants fairly. Mentioned how tenant views must be considered (tenants panel).</p>	

	<p>Mentioned how inspections may want to contact tenants to ask how they feel. Regulators focus inspections on key areas. Claire mentioned what the council has done since the new regulations came in: lock training, gap analysis (what are we missing?), do our policies meet standards? Where can we improve? Mentioned considering extra training and collecting feedback from tenants. Dawn asked about Awab's Law, which Claire explained are new regulations relating to Mould that will apply to all homes in the country. Claire further explained the panel's/tenant's role in the inspection process. Ivan asked about Darlington by the Sea, it was explained how DBC and the tenants panel often have a stall there. Slides and links sent to panel members. Dawn asked about air source heating reimbursements from the government, Claire explained how the reimbursements are only for owners. Ivan asked about ASB issues: fire brigade, assault between kids. Claire mentioned how these will be looked into within the confines of the department's abilities. Tanya asked about electricity costs being high when the plan for heating is to move to electricity. Claire explained how the government plans to balance costs so that gas eventually costs more. Christian commented on disagreeing about gas shortages. He also asked a question about how frequently things should be reported. Sara and Claire clarified that things can be reported during meetings or over email.</p>	
4.	<p>You said we did</p> <p>Engagement Survey - Feedback – Tenants told Housing what they wanted to see, these are some of the highlights:</p> <p>'Invite HO to meetings' – that happened in March, and they will be invited to future meetings.</p> <p>'Could do with finding out more information' - noticeboards, what more information is needed – asking scheme managers to share on morning calls.</p> <p>'Leaflet Drop' – to promote</p> <p>'Look at Community Events' – Hopetown, Darlington by the sea and Golden Tea dance</p> <p>'Lifeline information requested' Julie to attend meeting,</p> <p>Matthew discussed the tenants panel recruitment leaflet. Early copy given to panel members. He also mentioned annual report and tenant involvement strategy.</p>	

	Ivan asked about online course. He and Don were unable to access, Sara mentioned it will be rescheduled. Course is for understanding scrutiny. Discussed how training courses could be split up for members with less time.	
5.	Tenants Panel Recruitment Leaflet Feedback from Panel	
6.	Any Other Business Community Funding	
7.	Next Meeting – The next meeting will take place on the 22 nd of May 2025 at 2pm	