



Minutes from the:

St Albans City & District Council Tenant and Leaseholder Forum

1. Date / Time:

24 April 2025, 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

2. Attendees:

Six tenants and leaseholders attended, representing properties in Abbots Avenue West, Aldwick Court, Haig Close, Smallford, and Chiswell Green.

The quorum (six attendees) was met.

Tenants continue to demonstrate a strong commitment to sharing their views and making meaningful contributions that strengthen resident engagement. In turn, the Council remains dedicated to listening, learning from lived experiences, and using feedback to shape more informed, inclusive decisions. This joint approach supports better outcomes for all.

3. Disclosure of Personal and/or Pecuniary Interests:

- No financial or pecuniary interests were declared.
- Parking costs were reimbursed, and attendees were reminded that all reasonable expenses for attending will be refunded.

4. Minutes of the Previous Meeting (Including Matters Arising)

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 March 2025 were approved. Ongoing actions were acknowledged, including work on contractor performance, real-time feedback tools, and resident satisfaction measures. The Capital Programme discussion was deferred and will be added to the May agenda.

5. Policy Spotlight – Supporting Vulnerable Residents

Officers presented the draft **Vulnerability and Reasonable Adjustment Policy**, following members of this Forum requesting one was developed.



Tenants emphasised that homes are 'safe spaces' and must be respected during visits to vulnerable individuals. Concerns were raised about unannounced visits by multiple staff members, which can feel overwhelming. Suggested improvements included: advance notice of visits, clear identification (including DBS checks), option for advocacy or support to be present, increased awareness of trauma responses and neurodiversity, and sensitive, respectful communication.

These comments were welcomed, and it was agreed this would be fed back to frontline staff. In addition, an update was given on how the Council intended to capture more resident data to capture vulnerabilities and any reasonable adjustments required.

Forum members challenged the policy to make sure it covered a number of examples from the lived experience, and it did, giving reassurance that it can be taken through the formal approval process.

6. Communication, Culture, and Language

Tenants shared experiences and examples of a poor tone and use of language during interactions with officers and contractors. Requests for improvements in customer care and consistency included:

- Staff to ask whether any adjustments or support are needed at the start of conversations,
- Demonstrating greater empathy and kindness in all communication,
- And avoiding impersonal terms like "stakeholder".

Officers agreed these values should be embedded into training and service standards. This will also be monitored via the Tenant Satisfaction results annually and brought to the Forum.

7. Vulnerability Flagging & Multi-Agency Support

Tenants discussed with staff present, the systems used to record and respond to support needs.

Suggestions to gather and refresh information included:

- Annual tenancy visits,
- Agreeing a clear and consent processes for data sharing with support agencies,
- And better coordination with social workers and health services.



Officers confirmed a new system will support this work and help proactively identify vulnerabilities. A consensus formed around the idea that 'vulnerability' is a very personal issue and can be short-term or indeed at the other extreme permanent and may well require different approaches.

8. DBS Checks for Contractors

Concerns were raised about ensuring all contractors are appropriately DBS-checked. Tenants suggested: visual ID confirming DBS status, clear guidance in the policy on safeguarding expectations, and assurance for vulnerable and single-household tenants.

9. Accessing Services & Contact Issues

Tenants reported inconsistent experiences when contacting the Council via phone, MyStAlbans, and email. Issues included calls not always being returned, voicemail messages going unanswered, and some difficulty getting through to the correct team. Suggestions included: publishing a contact list or key extension numbers, including useful numbers in newsletters and leaflets, and improved call triaging through the Council's central number. Tenants agreed to submit specific examples for officer follow-up.

As part of ongoing efforts to assess service responsiveness, tenants conducted a series of mystery shopper calls to the Housing Repairs, Housing Management, and Leasehold teams.

Each call involved leaving a standard, non-complex enquiry with a request for a call back. These tasks were intentionally routine in nature to reflect typical resident contact.

Outcomes from these calls will be collated on Thursday 8 May and formally reported at the next Tenant and Leaseholder Forum for discussion and learning.

10. Tenancy Handbook and Written Information

Some tenants reported not receiving the tenancy handbook which is given at sign-up. Officers confirmed the handbook will be reviewed at a future Forum. Suggested improvements included more accessible formatting, plain English, and the inclusion of support contacts.

11. Follow-Up Actions

1. **Officers** to investigate a reported example of potentially fraudulent conduct from an out of hours repair contractor.



2. Further mystery shopper phone calls to be carried out ahead of the next meeting **by those present**.
3. **Tenants** to submit contact and service experience examples for review.
4. Review communication response times and voicemail processes to be presented at next Forum **by officers**.

12. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 23 May 2025, 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

Planned topics: Review of the 2025/26 Capital Programme, Mystery shopper findings, Draft Vulnerability Policy feedback