



Minutes from the:

St Albans City & District Council Tenant and Leaseholder Forum

1. Date / Time:

27 March 2025, 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

2. Attendees:

Seven tenants representing properties across Masefield Road (Harpenden), Abbots Avenue West, Aldwick Court (two attendees), Sleepshyde Lane, and Haig Close (two attendees).

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 previous meeting did not meet quorum.
- Minutes were still approved and will be circulated for reference.

5. Resident Engagement Update – Customer Experience (CX) Feedback

- DE advised that a new resident engagement system for collecting real-time tenant feedback has now been approved.
- The system enables targeted communication based on various data categories, such as geography, property type, EDI group, or even block level (e.g. in the case of a leak).
- While designed primarily for marketing and surveys, it can also support tenants with disabilities or other needs.
- A demonstration will be provided once the system goes live.
- Tenants queried how data is managed when residents move; DE confirmed it links with the housing management system and updates automatically every night.
- The system will help address information gaps for existing tenants, with improved data collection at sign-up for new tenants.
- It will also support tracking of perception trends and satisfaction levels over time.

6. Ward-Level Engagement & Community Facilities

- Attendees raised the importance of utilising church and community spaces for the benefit of local residents.

7. Regulator Benchmarking & Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

- SW explained how the Council's performance is benchmarked through HouseMark against approximately 180 local authorities and housing associations.
- The Forum had previously scrutinised TSM results, which placed all perception scores in the lowest quartile.
- HouseMark examined current performance data as a leading indicator of future TSM improvement.

- While many performance indicators remain low, progress into the third quartile (50–75%) was noted, particularly around repairs completed on time and satisfaction with those repairs.
- These improvements reflect the Forum's recent focus on repairs.
- A tenant raised concerns about submitting TSM feedback due to past negative experiences. Other members encouraged honest feedback to support improvements.
- A detailed example was shared involving unresolved repair issues and contact with the Housing Ombudsman.
- Other tenants shared similar dissatisfaction with Morgan Sindall (MS), especially around contract length and accountability. Some recognised that procurement processes can take up to a year, so contract duration must be considered carefully.
- It was agreed the Forum would maintain a focus on repairs but ensure it does not become the sole topic of discussion.

8. Repairs & Contractor Issues (Morgan Sindall)

- Reports included no-shows, poor communication, and contractors arriving unprepared. However, one example highlighted a respectful and competent contractor.
- Tenants noted inconsistencies with MS's tracking app and appointment information, although they appreciated its general functionality.
- There were 704 missed appointments recorded in the last quarter—some due to tenant absence, others to contractor failure. This will be further investigated to determine the balance.
- SW proposed surveying households marked as "not in" via CX Feedback to gain more insight into the root causes.
- A tenant expressed concern over the heavy focus on MS and the slow pace of improvements. This was acknowledged.

9. Fire Safety & Capital Works – Aldwick Court Focus

- The show flat for fire door installation was not ready despite work having started.
- Ongoing rodent issues in sheds had not been effectively addressed—previous solutions failed, though the problem is now resolved.
- Tenants called for earlier consultation and improved scrutiny before capital works begin.
- Concerns were raised about poor project management and a lack of on-site checks.
- Aesthetic concerns were raised over the new fire doors, described as “prison doors,” and disappointment that previously offered colour choices were not honoured.
- LB acknowledged that early consultation and clear communication are key to avoiding dissatisfaction.
- It was agreed that the 2025/26 Capital Programme would be brought to the next Forum so the communications plan could be reviewed.

10. Consultation & Communication Improvements

- Tenants want clearer explanations for changes such as the installation of sprinklers or new doors.
- Suggestions included using block noticeboards to improve communication, given issues with unreliable mail distribution.
- DE clarified that consultation includes opportunities to question and challenge plans.
- The Forum supported a broader, more transparent approach to consultation, with feedback shared even when consensus is not reached. This principle was agreed.

11. Complaints Handling & Customer Journey

- SADC scored among the lowest nationally for complaint resolution in the recent TSM survey.

- Tenants shared examples of distress caused by long complaint journeys and use of patronising language.
- DA advised that an audit of complaint responses had been completed. Standards varied from excellent to poor, and consistency must now be improved.
- Concerns were raised about the Council's voicemail system and a lack of follow-up surveys. LB agreed to investigate and report back at the next meeting.
- The Forum agreed to trial "mystery shopper" calls to assess responsiveness at the next meeting.

12. Vulnerability Policy & Support Systems

- Forum members raised concerns about perceived gaps in support for vulnerable tenants during repairs or complaints.
- LB explained that the Council must remain impartial when investigating neighbour disputes, supporting both parties initially.
- Tenants requested stronger systems to identify and support those experiencing domestic abuse or other vulnerabilities.
- It was agreed to co-produce a Vulnerable Persons Strategy, with officers drafting a version for the Forum to contribute to at the May meeting.

13. Housing Officer Relationships & Advocacy

- Tenants called for a more human connection with housing officers, including informal interactions and potential advocacy during complaints, especially relating to repairs.
- Feelings of intimidation during inspections and contractor visits were raised, particularly for vulnerable tenants. This will be reflected in the drafting of the Vulnerability Policy.

14. Date of Next Meeting



- Agreed to spend less time on MS at the next meeting and focus on the Capital programme and mystery shopping.
- **Next Forum Date / Time:** 24 April 2025, 6 pm – 7:30 pm