



Minutes from the St Albans City & District Council Tenant and Leaseholder Forum

1. **Date / Time:** 28 November 2024, 6pm – 7:45pm
2. **Attendees:** Seven tenants present: Representing properties in Masefield, Harpenden; Howland Garth, Cottonmill; Abbots Avenue West; Breadcroft Lane, Harpenden; Saxon Road, Wheathampstead. No leaseholders present.

A warm welcome was extended to attendees. An offer was made for a volunteer to chair the next meeting - by contacting Dan directly.

3. **Disclosure of Personal and Pecuniary Interests**

No personal or pecuniary interests were declared.

4. **Approval of Minutes from the Previous Meeting**

The forum approved the minutes, noting agreement on the draft Resident Engagement Strategy (including their suggested amendments) discussed at the previous meeting.

5. **Terms of Reference**

The Terms of Reference were revisited and reviewed. Tenants raised queries about accountability, asking, "Who are we answering to?" and emphasising the importance of tenant-led oversight. There was concern that engagement could feel like a "box-ticking exercise," with tenants questioning whether SADC genuinely values tenant input. It was explained that they are a key part of the governance process and their comments would feed directly into the Housing & Inclusion Committee of the Council.

Key themes raised included respect for tenants and open communication, the importance of focus groups to drive meaningful change, and broader engagement to include diverse tenant groups. **Attendees agreed to review the Terms of Reference further** and submit feedback within the next fortnight.

6. **Gaining Access to Tenants' Homes Policy**

The forum broadly welcomed the policy and noted it was what the Council needed to do. However, the forum wanted to also discuss what the Council needed to do to deliver their part of the contract. An example was given where a new tenant didn't receive their six-weekly visit from their housing officer.

Discussion focused on the importance of home visits, as outlined in tenancy agreements, particularly the six-week home visit policy post-mutual exchange. Concerns included delays in implementing home visits post-COVID and issues with contractors not attending scheduled appointments and failing to



communicate. Lydia clarified the steps being taken to reintroduce visits and improve contractor accountability, with additional resourcing expected in Q2 of 2025. Tenants emphasised the importance of clear timelines and transparency.

7. Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Attendees discussed the need to improve the presentation of TSM results to include breakdowns by service areas, such as repairs and complaint handling. The forum agreed that overlaying TSM results with demographic and geographic data would be beneficial for identifying trends. Actions agreed included circulating blank survey forms to tenants before the next forum to remind them of what was asked, and it was **agreed that a draft report on the TSM results would be presented at the first meeting of 2025 for further scrutiny.**

8. Community Days

Attendees shared mixed feedback on community days. Positive outcomes included some quick small-scale improvements. Concerns raised included limited tenant awareness of events and lack of follow-up on issues raised during community days. Although local residents were all written to, it became apparent that some letters were not received, possibly due to the Royal Mail. Attendees agreed that better communication and visible results from these events would improve engagement. Following suggestions from residents, **examples of improvements made will be incorporated into future invites.**

9. Safety and Security Concerns

Significant concerns were raised about security issues, particularly at Haig Close. Key points included broken security doors allowing unauthorised access, enabling anti-social behaviour such as drug use and dealing, and tenants feeling unsafe and demanding urgent repairs and consistent follow-up from the council. Residents expressed frustration that promises made during previous community days have not been fulfilled. At the time this was emailed to the repairs team for an urgent update and **this would be shared with the local residents.**

10. Resident Engagement and Communication

The forum revisited ongoing themes of respect and improved communication. Tenants emphasised the importance of knowing their housing officers and building stronger relationships. Suggestions included **displaying housing officer details on noticeboards and newsletters which were agreed.**

11. Maintenance and Repairs

Contractors, specifically Morgan Sindall, were a recurring point of concern. Tenants requested that Morgan Sindall representatives attend a future meeting to address repairs issues directly. Concerns raised included poor communication regarding missed appointments and inconsistent quality of



repairs. Tenants later suggested inviting Jason Grace to a forum before involving Morgan Sindall, either at a specific forum or focus group – **which was agreed.**

12. Future Actions and Improvements

Resident-led accountability was emphasised, with tenants calling for greater respect, transparency, and follow-through from SADC. Key areas for improvement included safety and maintenance, clear timelines, better contractor performance, improved communication, and more inclusive engagement. **See action above.**

13. Actions: Feedback on Terms of Reference to be submitted by tenants within two weeks. Lydia and Dan to circulate blank TSM forms and follow up on contractor accountability concerns. Simon to bring draft report reviewing the TSMs to the next forum for scrutiny. SADC to address security issues at Haig Close urgently and report progress to residents concerned and more widely at the next forum.

14. Conclusion The forum focused on key issues of respect, safety, communication, and accountability. Tenants stressed the need for meaningful engagement and timely follow-up on unresolved concerns. The council reaffirmed its commitment to addressing these issues and ensuring tenant feedback informs future decisions. Continued collaboration and clear communication will be essential to building trust and driving improvements.

15. Date of Next Meeting

No meeting will be held in December 2024. The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday 16th January 2025. An email reminder will be sent to all forum members, alongside the agenda and relevant documents.