



Minutes from the:

St Albans City & District Council Tenant and Leaseholder Forum

St Albans City & District Council – Tenant and Leaseholder Forum Minutes

Date: 29 May 2025

Time: 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm

1. Attendees

Five tenants and leaseholders attended, living in Abbots Avenue West, Aldwick Court, Chiswell Green, and Smallford. Special guests: DA (Leasehold Management Officer) and JC (Asset Manager). The quorum was not met, but the meeting was held as there were no formal decisions to be voted on.

2. Council Commitment

Tenants raised important issues and provided constructive feedback, including examples of good practice and areas for improvement. The Council remains committed to listening, learning from lived experiences, and using insights to shape more responsive, inclusive services.

3. Declarations

No personal 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

The minutes from the meeting held on 24 April 2025 were approved. Some tenants had not received a copy, and this will be followed up.

5. Capital Investment and Planned Works

JC provided an overview of capital investment plans, including the run-to-fail approach for boiler replacements, with savings reinvested into decarbonisation work. The 5-year stock condition survey cycle is ongoing, assessing 20% of homes per year. Planned works include heating system replacements, electrical upgrades, insulation works, kitchens, bathrooms, and PVCu windows (with a number of associated choices available to tenants).

Fire safety works continue, including compartmentalisation and fire doors in a number of locations prioritised by risk. Estate improvements include external decoration, communal doors (including the Aldwick Court replacements), and ad-hoc roof works. Structural works such as retaining walls are completed as needed, and major adaptations via OT referrals (e.g., wet rooms, ramps, stair lifts) are supported, with property extensions as a last resort given the large costs involved.

Concerns were raised about garage maintenance at Aldwick Court, particularly damage caused by ivy and the quality of work by John O'Conner. JC confirmed this will be followed up by him after the meeting.

At Aldwick Court, no further thermal upgrades are planned, as most flats are EPC C or above. Major roof replacements have been completed, and fire safety works are finished and compliant.

Telford Court is being decommissioned, with the remaining residents to be rehoused. The Council will decide the future of the site once it is vacant.

Gordon and Haig blocks will undergo a feasibility study to explore structural works, fencing, landscaping, and safety issues. ASB concerns were discussed, and the need for improved fencing (such as bow-top fencing) was acknowledged, with a commitment to explore solutions.

Future projects include fire stopping at St Paul's Place, asbestos removal at Cotlandswick, and estate improvements at Cell Barnes Lane.

6. Engagement and Contractors

JC confirmed the main contractors: Morgan Sindall (MS), Penmilne, Watret, Masco (communal doors), and CCS (decarbonisation works). MS deliver most of the responsive repairs, but concerns were raised about their performance, including missed or rushed appointments (e.g., gas servicing lasting 10 minutes instead of 30–90), poor communication, limited information for tenants and leaseholders, delays, inconsistent service standards, and a perceived lack of care when dealing with vulnerable residents. Frustrations over the handling of emergencies and how MS respond were noted.

DA and JC acknowledged these concerns and noted that an improvement plan had been agreed with them which was based, in part, on resident feedback from this Forum. JC emphasised a commitment to learning from mistakes, improving communication, and ensuring residents feel heard. An example of learning from feedback was highlighted at Aldwick Court, where concerns about communal door replacements were addressed, and a more aesthetically pleasing, compliant solution was implemented.

7. Communication and Transparency

Tenants raised concerns about the complexity of certain policies, legal jargon, and a lack of plain English explanations. The Repairs Handbook was described as overwhelming, with references like 15.1 and 15.2 being unclear. Suggestions were made for clearer formatting, a summary of tenant responsibilities, and better signposting for key information.

Concerns were raised about leaseholder engagement, including the annual survey (with a low 10% response rate), a perceived lack of follow-up, and unclear responsibilities. DA explained the legal requirement to send letters by post, although some follow-up is done via email. Challenges in reaching leaseholders who live abroad, and the need to improve communication and consultation, were discussed. Tenants also questioned how leaseholders are kept informed about works, how pricing is shared, and the transparency of the Section 20 consultation process. DA confirmed Section 20 notices are only issued for works costing over £250 per leaseholder, and there are limits to what can be shared under current processes. It was **agreed** that it would be helpful to dedicate a section of the Quarterly Newsletter for leaseholder issues.

8. Questions and Comments

Tenants raised several issues, including concerns about gas servicing visits, which were reported as too short to complete thorough safety checks. The process for following up on missed access, including the three-letter process, was discussed. JC advised that some safety checks on more modern boilers would take less time than on some of the older models of boiler.

CCTV and security concerns were raised, particularly in perceived ASB hotspots such as Haig House and Gordon House, and the process for installing tenant-owned CCTV or Ring doorbells was clarified. Dissatisfaction with garage maintenance was highlighted in some areas, alongside a lack of clear accountability. There were also concerns about transparency in leaseholder charges, the need for better updates and communication, and requests for completion photos to reassure leaseholders. The group emphasised the importance of plain English communication, better engagement, and clearer explanations of processes and legislation.

Next Steps



- a. A Morgan Sindall feedback session will be arranged for a future Forum, after gathering more tenant input.
- b. The Community Forum event will take place on 19 June 2025 at St Luke's Church, Cell Barnes, with promotion to encourage wider attendance.
- c. Forum recruitment will continue to expand participation, with the aim of reaching more tenants and leaseholders.
- d. Mystery shopping and data-led engagement will also continue, alongside a full review of the Repairs Handbook to improve clarity, accessibility, and the inclusion of tenant responsibilities.

9. Date of Next Meeting

The next Tenant and Leaseholder Forum will take place on Thursday 26 June 2025.