

Minutes

Meeting name	Scrutiny Committee
Date	Thursday, 20 March 2025
Start time	6.30 pm
Venue	Parkside, Station Approach, Burton Street, Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire. LE13 1GH

Present

Chair Councillor M. Brown (Chair)

Councillors A. Thwaites (Vice-Chair) S. Atherton
R. Child H. Cliff
M. Gordon S. Lumley
R. Sharp

In Attendance Landlord Assurance Board Tenant Representative – Brian Ellis
Landlord Assurance Board Tenant Representative – Jenna Evans
Landlord Assurance Board Tenant Representative – Haris Saleem

Officers Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive)
Assistant Director for Housing Quality, Development and Landlord
Services
Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer

Minute No.	Minute
41	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chubb and Pritchett.</p>
42	<p>MINUTES</p> <p>The Minutes of the meeting held on 23 January 2025 were confirmed.</p>
43	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>Councillor Gordon declared an other registerable interest in relation to Minute Numbers 46 and 47 as she is a tenant of a Council owned property. She was advised that as no decision would be taken, she can remain in the meeting and participate.</p>
44	<p>REVIEW OF THE FORWARD PLAN</p> <p>The Chair introduced the Cabinet Forward Plan and invited Members to comment.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding preventative maintenance programme, in response it was confirmed that the Director for Place and Prosperity would be asked to provide a response.</p> <p>A query was raised regarding the Forward Plan document. In response, the Senior Democratic Services and Scrutiny Officer stated that the Forward Plan is a statutory document and there are elements that must be displayed on the document. The document lists all key decisions scheduled to be taken in the next four months, as well as non-key decisions due to be taken by the Cabinet. The document only lists decisions due to be taken and decisions that have been taken are listed on the website and on the decision register, a copy of which is attached to the Members' Bulletin.</p>
45	<p>REVIEW OF THE SCRUTINY WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25</p> <p>The Chair introduced the Scrutiny Work Programme 2024/25 and updated the Committee on the alterations. He stated that the changes were necessitated by Officer workloads and the resources required for the local government reorganisation interim proposal.</p> <p>The Chair of the Youth Strategy Task and Finish Group, Councillor Cliff, provided an update of the work carried out by the task and finish group. She recognised that there had not been as much progress as had hoped but that there would be an interim report in June, with a full report in November.</p> <p>A couple of queries were raised about what could be done for the youth of the Borough, however Councillor Cliff stated that the aim of the task and finish group was to provide a steer on what could go into a youth strategy and not to write the youth strategy, therefore the group would not advance specific initiatives at this stage.</p>

	<p>A request was made to add a particular customer service issue on to the work programme. The Chair responded by stating that no new items would be added this Municipal Year, however the issue can be raised for consideration at the Scrutiny Work Programme Workshop in June. Members were reminded that Scrutiny would not look into individual circumstances but would look at systemic issues.</p>
46	<p>REGULATORY COMPLIANCE IN HOUSING</p> <p>The Director for Housing and Communities (Deputy Chief Executive) introduced the report on regulatory compliance in housing.</p> <p>A Member commented that the tenant satisfaction rate of 63% is lower than expected, although it was noted that the national average is 68%. However, it was recognised that the service has been on a journey in relation and that improvements have been made.</p> <p>Concern was raised regarding the property that has not had an asbestos survey. In response it was noted that for certain checks, i.e. gas safety, the Council can get a court warrant to gain entry but for asbestos it can't. It was noted that if the Council does gain access for checks, then it will be used as an opportunity to assess whether other checks can be carried out at the same time.</p> <p>A comment was raised as to whether it was worth completing asbestos surveys every five years because if it isn't disturbed then it is isn't a problem. In response, it was explained the reason for testing every five years is to check on the condition and ensure that there isn't any damage.</p> <p>A Member queried the length of time it takes for repairs to be undertaken, in response it was clarified that the contractor has 28 days to complete the repair from when it is reported. It was also confirmed that that the cost to the Council of carrying out 10 repairs in one day is the same as carrying out 10 repairs across 10 days and therefore it is in the contractor's interest to carry out multiple repairs in the same call.</p> <p>When questioned, Officers clarified that the aim is to get every property to meet the decent homes standard by 2028. A query was then raised as to why it would take until 2028 to get 100% of the properties to a decent homes standard. It was clarified that that this is down to budgets and to ensure that there is sufficient capacity and resources throughout period.</p> <p>Following a query about the 100 homes not up to standard, assurance was given that there are a number of reasons why homes fall out of the decent homes standard including an aging kitchen. It is not the case that the homes are in a very bad state.</p> <p>The Committee were assured that when surveyors find hazards, the Council and its contractors would sort them out. The serious hazards are done more urgently and the less serious ones done when possible.</p>

A comment was raised about the tenant satisfaction survey and the participation rate. In response it was clarified that the aim is to have a sample size of 20% and that this year the target was exceeded. Although, it was noted that the Council will aim to engage with all tenants.

Following a comment regarding benchmarking, Officers clarified that there is a lot of sharing with Councils across the country. Also, the Local Authority Inspection Outcomes shows that Melton Borough Council's stock is good and the housing service is performing well when compared with similar Councils.

RESOLVED

The Scrutiny Committee:

- 1) Noted the progress and position update; and**
- 2) Provided comments and feedback for consideration by Cabinet.**

47

LANDLORD ASSURANCE BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2024/25

The Assistant Director for Housing Quality, Development and Landlord Services, Chris Flannery, presented the report. Also in attendance were tenant representatives from the Landlord Assurance Board: Brian Ellis, Jenna Evans and Haris Saleem.

It was explained that originally the intention was to co-opt three tenant representatives, however after expressions of interest it was decided to co-opt four tenants instead. There is a split of representation between the town and the villages.

The tenant representatives were asked why they had joined the Landlord Assurance Board and the following reasons were listed:

- To make a difference and make change, e.g. language of the letters to tenants and make the newsletters brighter.
- To ensure contractors all have the same expectations.
- To breakdown the "us" versus "them" dynamic.
- Find out the reason why something happens.
- Explain to neighbours what is going on and why.
- Bring forward a different perspective and the challenges that they face.
- Make a positive impact.
- Come together and find solutions together.

In questioning the tenant representatives, the Committee were informed that what the Council needs to do in order to encourage more tenants to get involved is to keep doing what it is currently doing, go out to communities and speak to people. The Council also needs to listen to tenants and that includes contractors for the Council.

Members were also informed that there needs to be more people in the your voice your choice group. It was noted that a lot of tenants don't know they have the opportunity to join. It was suggested that there needs to be incentives and tenants need to be asked what the barriers are for them to get involved.

A comment was raised that tenants do not always feel believed and listened to and that culturally, Officers and contractors need to listen to tenants and to what they are saying. It was recognised that a change in this direction has been taking place already.

A suggestion was made that the Council should have an open day for tenants. At the open day, tenants can feedback various issues affecting them including the upcoming benefits changes.

The tenants commented that when repairs are happening the replacement product is sometimes of poorer quality and needs repairing sooner than expected. Officers need to be inspecting the work and ensure that issues like this are being brought up with contractors.

The importance of the new Code of Conduct was raised. It was commented that tenants feel that the code assists them in receiving the best service possible and being treated with respect. It was explained that the Code of Conduct outlines the time frames for responses and repairs and sets expectations for both the tenants and the contractors.

It was noted that planned maintenance is information that is known and can be shared with tenants. Including the timescales for urgent and non-urgent repairs.

It was recognised that the Council needs to promote itself a bit better. There are a lot of complainers who are "keyboard warriors" and there are some people won't contact the Council and will only speak to people who they know. That is why the introduction of tenant representatives has been so important. From an Officer perspective, the voice and insight of the representative has been incredible.

It was noted that as a landlord, the Council has legal obligations that a person owning their own house doesn't have in terms of health and safety. They may appear onerous to an observer but they are legal obligations that the Council has to adhere to.

A concern was raised that the Council does not get in contact with tenants who don't get in contact with the Council. In response it was noted that Officers are introducing an annual contact with tenants, with a focus on the tenants who don't report repairs. It was recognised that there needs to be better data on tenants' preferences and needs.

The comment was made that an issue that is raised at the Board meeting and then actioned is a key metric that Officers should be making a note of.

	<p>A Member commented that essentially there are 1700 households and in order to engage with them, the best way is to go to them and not getting them to the Council. It was commented that if there is a resource issue then the resource needs to be provided as it would be a good use of time and resource to engage with tenants.</p> <p>The Committee thanked the tenant representative for their attendance at the meeting and their input.</p> <p>RESOLVED</p> <p>The Scrutiny Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Noted the progress made since development and implementation of the Landlord Assurance Board in 2024; and 2) Provided feedback and recommendations to Cabinet to support continued progress and impact of the Landlord Assurance Board. <p>At 8:01pm, during the consideration of this item, Councillor Child left the meeting and did not return.</p>
48	<p>URGENT BUSINESS</p> <p>There was no urgent business.</p>

The meeting closed at: 8.29 pm

Chair