

**RESIDENT SCRUTINY PANEL MEETING
MINUTES
Tuesday 28 November 2023 6–7.30pm at Monson House**

Present: Members

Paul Evans (PE)
Steve Hill (StH)
Teresa Godden-O’Callaghan (TGO’C)
Adam Field (AF)
Alex Tuckwell (AT)
Abdul Kader (AK)
Sue Masters (SM)
Kirsty East (KE)
Steve Hill (StH) (via Teams)

In attendance

Sarah Holden (SH), Resident Scrutiny Manager
Katherine Parker (KP), Independent Chair
Bob Heapy (BH), TCH Chief Executive
Amanda Mankelow, (AM) Resident Scrutiny Administrative Assistant (Minutes)

| 1. | Welcome & apologies for absence | Actions |
|-----------|---|----------------|
| 1.1 | KP welcomed the panel and Bob Heapy, TCH Chief Executive to the meeting. | |
| 1.2 | Apologies had been received from Natalieann Leadbetter (NL). | |
| 2. | Declarations of interest | |
| 2.1 | None. | |
| 3. | Presentation and discussion about Tpas conference from resident scrutiny panel members Alex Tuckwell, Teresa Godden-O’Callaghan, Valerie George, assisted by Natalieann Leadbetter. | |
| 3.1 | KP introduced the next item as hearing inspirational topics from this year’s Tpas conference. | |
| 3.2 | She first asked that the panel introduce themselves to BH which they did. | |
| 3.3 | KP requested that AT present first, followed by TGO’C and then VG. | |
| 3.4 | AT began by telling the panel that there had been lots of different seminars on offer at the Tpas conference in Coventry in July, and that her focus had been on the keynote speaker talking about damp and mould. She stated that she wanted to talk particularly about accountability and began with the dictionary definition of the word. She said that London Borough of Croydon’s (LBC’s) presentation at the | |

conference started by them showing the ITV news story about their properties at Regina Road. AT stated that she felt there's was a shining example of accountability.

- 3.5 She noted that other residents she met had commented that their social housing provider would only allow one resident from their organisation to attend the conference. AT advised that she felt TCH's accountability started with allowing the resident scrutiny panel to attend, but she asked if we were doing enough.
- 3.6 AT continued with the next point that LBC had made at the conference about preventative planning. She said that the damp and mould focus group held as part of TCH scrutiny panel's review had highlighted some unresolved problems residents were experiencing. AT felt we needed to learn from these and build better relationships with the residents who were involved.
- 3.7 KP interjected, acknowledging the commitment TCH has to the panel and stated that she remembered that from when she first started as chair nine years ago.
- 3.8 AT added that she had learnt to keep quiet at the conference regarding how well TCH does.
- 3.9 BH wanted the panel to know how much the board value them, stating that they regularly check that the recommendations the panel have made are being implemented, and he confirmed the panel's unfettered access to the board. He stated there was more to do about damp and mould but felt that TCH was in a better place than some other social housing providers, having made dedicated calls to residents who may have unreported concerns.
- 3.10 AT went on to say that it had taken LBC a long time to get to the point they are now. She stated that having a relationship with the board at TCH makes all the difference.
- 3.11 KP asked if AT had any thoughts about what else TCH could do better.
- 3.12 AT advised of the damp and mould focus group participant who had given up after trying to get a resolution after ten years plus with a damp and mould problem. She acknowledged that it takes a long time to rebuild relationships.
- 3.13 BH added that no one should be living in these types of situations.
- 3.14 AT felt that TCH should work on better engagement, using negative comments on social media to learn.
- 3.15 TGO'C told the panel how much she loved the Tpas conference, stating that she had attended in previous years. She said that she liked learning from other people, and she felt lucky that the four members got the opportunity to go. She went on to say that there was a lot of focus this year on the resident voice.

- 3.16 She spoke of the Four Million Homes programme funded by the government whose presentation she had attended. Slides were shared on screen.
- 3.17 TGO'C said that she would wish for the details of the programme to be advertised to all TCH tenants, stating that they have training events continuously.
- 3.18 She said that over the 15 years she has been a resident, TCH had changed so much it had flipped on its head. TGO'C added that she knew people who just didn't bother to get in touch and added that the stigma of social housing is changing but hasn't yet fully changed.
- 3.19 She recognised that TCH gives her a voice but feels that not all tenants know that. She said she doesn't agree with the longstanding view of what TCH is like, saying that she is 'born and bred' TCH and her whole family is in social housing.
- 3.20 She felt that residents still hold the view from when TCH was High Weald Housing Association and suggested that TCH needs to change residents' opinions of them, prove them wrong.
- 3.21 AT advised that she had heard from people that TCH didn't look after them before and they felt that as they are now part of a bigger organisation, they would have even less time to look after them. She advised that TCH had done an awful lot for her personally.
- 3.22 KP advised that communication comes up always in reviews and felt that it was a lovely position to be in where good news stories were being shared.
- 3.23 KE felt that it would be great to share the panel's stories on the website rather than just among themselves. SH advised that this type of communication was coming, adding that the panel weren't yet aware of this except for AT. BH advised that the new group chair had asked for a resident piece at the beginning of each board meeting which he described as positive.
- 3.24 TGO'C stated that her family describe scrutiny as her "thing". She advised that they don't understand what it is and she would like them to know what she does.
- 3.25 SH felt that the message about holding onto a historic opinion of TCH was interesting as she had not thought about the continued impact of having a jaded idea of how things were in the past.
- 3.26 VG had some slides to go with her presentation, which were shared on screen. She stated that the conference was the best thing she had ever done in her life saying that those who went with her from TCH have now become friends.
- 3.27 She advised that she had shared experiences with other panel members over breakfast on conference day. She had felt it was purposeful going, and taking away learning from others. VG said she didn't know what to expect when she met the others at the train station to travel up.

- 3.28 VG said she felt empowered, that it was a good opportunity and that she felt totally honoured to represent TCH. She added that the four panel members who attended were all different but supported each other. VG continued that she had met people there who weren't confident or empowered. She stated that it was a journey personal to all of them but that they were a team.
- 3.29 VG described the "looking after you" session that she had attended at the conference which she wished to focus on, saying that she had taken part in a team session with people she didn't know. She spoke about what we do if we get knocked down and how bad experiences cause poor self-esteem, like the focus group participant. She advised that several of those presenting at the conference were social housing tenants themselves and she read out top tips for wellbeing from one of them called Jackie.
- 3.30
- 3.31 KP thanked the three panel members for their different perspectives.
- 3.32 AK wanted to add that having heard about tenants' rights, to receive a good service from TCH, there needed to be a balance around them being responsible and looking after their homes so it doesn't become an entitlement. Other panel members agreed.
- 3.33 StH added his thanks to the three members for presenting back.
- 3.34 BH finished with his thank you to the panel, and SH/AM for guiding them. He stated that TCH was very lucky to have such a group of residents who care so much.
- 3.35 He continued by stating that KP had been independent chair for nearly ten years and this was her last meeting. He presented her with some flowers and thanked her for being a steady hand on the panel.
- 3.36 BH left the meeting.
- 3.37 KP told the panel that she had loved being a part of it and that since SH had taken on the role of Resident Scrutiny Manager, there had been a waiting list for members which had never happened previously.
- 3.38 A short comfort break was taken.
- 4. Minutes of last meeting (Tuesday 26 September) & matters arising**
- 4.1 The answers to questions posed to Justin Clarke, Service Manager – Damp and Mould prior to the last meeting had been uploaded to SharePoint for the panel to review.
- 4.2 A summary of the emails to new tenants had been uploaded onto SharePoint.
- 4.3 TGO'C asked what happens to existing tenants, adding that a lot of work seems to have gone in for new tenants. She felt that if it was an update, everyone should be getting it and that momentum needed to be built on.

- 4.4 KE advised that she gets emails relating to her block e.g. someone's dog being allowed to soil outside. AK added that he also gets specific emails for where he lives. SH likes the idea of bespoke communication. TGO'C felt that residents will just flick through a general newsletter to the bits that interest them, stating that even if it just had, for example, High Brooms in the title it would be more noticeable.
- 4.5 AM was in the process of identifying how previous panel recommendations were going to be fulfilled now the starter tenant handbook doesn't go out.
- 4.6 The panel had not thought of any further questions for Justin Clarke, Service Manager – Damp and mould following his presentation at the last meeting, apart from the below.
- 4.7 SM had shared her question which she had not been able to pose to him during the meeting, and this had been included in the recommendations.
- 4.8 The damp and mould survey results had been uploaded on SharePoint. SH advised the panel that only four residents attended the focus group but stated that it was worthwhile.
- 4.9 StH was in attendance on Teams for this meeting.
- 4.10 TGO'C, VG and AT had prepared to present at this meeting and it had been well received. NL had ultimately been unable to attend.
- 4.11 SH and AM had been in touch with the panel about the focus group which, as mentioned above, took place.
- 4.12 The panel agreed that the minutes were an accurate reflection of the meeting held on 26 September.

5. Digital focus group feedback, final recommendations, board report and board meeting on Thursday 25 January 2024 5pm

- 5.1 KE advised that she had listened to the recordings of the focus group and suggested that damp and mould operatives should receive EDI training. SH stated she was unsure if TCHR receive the training already as TCH does, but that she would find out and add to the recommendations if not.
- 5.2 VG added that staff need to be educated and all residents given access to the same help and support. She referenced the previously mentioned example from the Tpas conference of a LBC resident who had reverted to using his title and surname, rather than his first name, as he felt he was being ignored because of it. AT acknowledged that if this type of discrimination happens in LBC, what about Tunbridge Wells which has a much less diverse population.
- 5.3 KE acknowledged that the TCH focus group participant with the 10 year+ damp and mould issue could be suicidal as a result of the problem. VG added that if TCH makes promises to deliver a service, then it needs to do just that.

SH

5.4 SH advised the panel that the damp and mould review recommendations would be going to board at the end of January. She asked that if members had not yet read them completely, to take them away and let her know by the end of this week of any comments they wanted to make. She asked if anyone was desperate to deliver them to the board? She asked if KE would consider attending via Teams. VG felt that she would like to attend also, SH requested she do so in person. SH advised that the recommendations would all go into the board report.

5.5 AT noted that she would only be available to attend meetings over the next year or so, not any extras due to the training she is doing personally.

6. Next review and Epsom resident scrutiny panel

6.1 SH reminded the panel that TCH had merged with Rosebery who were part of Catalyst, who in turn had merged with Peabody. She continued that Rosebery already has a resident scrutiny panel and the natural progression therefore was to bring the two panels together.

6.2 SH advised that the Executive Management Team had requested that each panel perform one more review separately and then join as one in Summer 2024. She added that TCH may look to extend the panel's capacity from twelve members if it was required, saying that Rosebery would possibly require three places. SH explained that the plan was to relaunch as one whole panel in April 2025.

6.3 AT had to leave the meeting at this point.

6.4 SH continued that the panel would be paid throughout but possibly having a break from reviews after the next one.

6.5 SH went on to talk about the next review, stating that the Executive Management Team have asked that the Epsom and TCH panels swap topics. She added that Epsom had just completed a review of complaints and will move on to damp and mould. She asked how the panel feel about reviewing complaints and advised that TCH isn't currently meeting some targets.

6.6 TGO'C felt that it made sense to do this as over the course of a year, TCH would get a full picture of both service areas. SM agreed that it would be good to have a break. SH added that the panel could use that to do some training with Tpas, team building, etc. She stated that there were performance issues with complaints, whereby TCH isn't meeting some deadlines. TGO'C asked what the main reason was for going over deadlines. SH suggested that issues with Town and Country Housing Repairs was likely to be a contributing factor.

6.7 StH added that he felt it would be good to look at complaints next, the rest of the panel agreed. SH continued by saying that Peabody had received a few severe maladministration judgements from the Housing Ombudsman but that TCH had not to date. She said that the review would begin on 30 January, and although the start of a new review would usually be in-person meeting, it would be very soon after the last one. StH felt that it would be difficult for him to attend in-person and VG

stated that she had got to review her position on the panel since changing jobs, as she had had to leave work early to be in attendance today. SH suggested perhaps a hybrid meeting instead where the manager of the complaints service would attend.

7. AOB

7.1 VG acknowledged that KP had been amazing at emailing her to do wellbeing checks and then remembering to follow up afterwards too.

7.2 SH stated that the plan was not to replace KP as independent chair until the panels are brought together, stating that the panel will then recruit a new independent chair.

7.3 KP added that it had been lovely working with the panel and receiving all the support. She continued that she would be seeing the panel again the following week for the Christmas meal.

8. Date of next meeting via Teams (Tuesday 30 January 2024 6–7.30pm)

8.1 This had already been discussed earlier in the previous item.