

**Freebridge Tenant Panel Meeting Notes  
Friday 15 March 2019 at 10.00 am in the Barn**

<b>Present</b>	Richard Maun (Tenant Panel Facilitator); Governance Coordinator; Anne Manning, Sandy Peckover, Charlotte Beck, Frances Fox and Zana Balcuiniene.	
<b>1</b>	<p><b>Welcome &amp; Introductions and Apologies for absence</b> There were apologies from Mick Harpley, Annette McGivern and Stephen Lamprell.</p>	<b>Action or Added Value?</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Declarations of Interest – None.</b>	
<b>3</b>	<p><b>Minutes of last meeting – January 2019 –</b> The minutes were read and agreed as a true record.</p> <p><b>Matters arising</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Placeshaping activities review was programmed in the work programme later in 2019 with the Placeshaping Manager.</li> <li>• The Governance Coordinator had passed the Tenant Panel’s thanks to employees that had helped the Monks Close Community gain a new play area.</li> </ul>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Work Programme and Draft Meeting Dates for 2019</b></p> <p>The work programme for 2019 was noted and the meeting dates presented were agreed for 2019.</p>	
<b>5</b>	<p><b>Quarterly Update from the Board with the Vice Chair</b></p> <p>Simon Smith, Vice Chair of the Board attended to provide an update from the Board. He shared the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wished to celebrate what the Tenant Panel have achieved over the past year in their involvement and contribution. He felt that sometimes there may not be realisation of progress that had been made, but an away day is a good opportunity to reflect on that.</li> <li>• The Board moved to meeting four times a year and so there was a lot of work it was progressing through. There was a real link between the work of the Tenant Panel through to a Board decision, in items such as the budget and the Asset Management Strategy. The work of these areas and others which the Panel had been involved in, aligned with the standards that have been agreed.</li> <li>• He shared that the Tenant Panel continues to remind the Board that despite Freebridge building new properties, that it has to be mindful of the amount of housing stock that still needs to look after which was very important.</li> <li>• The Board also remind Management Team of the important of working with both rural as well as urban areas also from the influence that the Tenant Panel has provided in sharing their views.</li> <li>• He shared that the Board are mindful that they are passionate about building more homes over the next five years, however they also wish to be a first rate housing association.</li> <li>• Each Board Member looks to attend Out and Abouts, and as part of their individual Board appraisals they have to demonstrate an element of community focus, which is done through attendance to these events as well as Complaints Panels.</li> </ul>	

<p>A Tenant Panel Member commented that some tenants were not happy with the existing stock which resulted in complaints, they felt that this may make people want to exchange out of Freebridge homes and Freebridge needs to make sure that it monitors this aspect. The Vice Chair shared that he had spent time travelling and viewing different stock within West Norfolk that Freebridge owned, and there was a very varied housing stock and build type. He added that performance overall was good at Freebridge and if this was not the case the Tenant Panel would be consulted. He added that most targets were around 80%, but it was the aspiration to push this up further to 90%.</p>	<p>Added Value.</p>
<p>A Tenant Panel member asked the Vice Chair about employee's communications with customers and the increase in Complaints Panels. He shared that the Complaints Panels gave a good insight into operations at Freebridge and there was some great learning outcomes that potentially can be gained from holding them. Work to improvement of Property Services was ongoing but it was expected once they were in place this would have a positive effect.</p>	
<p>Following a query from a Panel member about the infrastructure when building homes within a community, the Vice Chair advised that as part of planning homes there was a directive from Government and the local council for different areas of West Norfolk. He added that it was important to Freebridge that as a community organisation there was good structure within a community.</p>	<p>Added Value.</p>
<p>Following a query from a Panel Member he advised that overall customer satisfaction of repairs was good, but perhaps not consistent in terms of work and customer communications. He shared that the Board and Management Team recognised that systems needed to be better and improvements were being made.</p>	
<p>Following a query from a Panel member about extractor fan cleaning, the Governance Coordinator advised that the Director of Property had shared that he had agreed to include the cleaning of extractor fans as jobs that tenants could request, and this hadn't been communicated to the First Contact Centre and the repairs team. He also shared that he would discuss with the Head of Housing and Customer Services and the Head of Service Delivery and inform them of this new process so they can filter down through their teams. In regard to operatives returning jobs, the Director of Property advised after looking into the issue, he could confirm that it may have happened on a few occasions, however but it was more an issue an operatives organisational skills. He also confirmed that following this being raised by a Tenant Panel Member that he would be issuing some further guidance in the pre-inspection procedure to operatives. The Vice Chair of the Board summarised that feedback from the Tenant Panel on the repairs processes and systems was relevant and fitted in well with what the Board and Management Team they were trying to achieve.</p>	<p>Added Value.</p>
<p>The Vice Chair also wished to update the Tenant Panel about communications, and shared that the Communications Business Partner did a very good job and had a lot of work to progress, there would be further work on the wider engagement of tenants and shareholders in the coming months and the Tenant Panel would be kept informed.</p>	

	<p>Following a query about annual inspections to properties, the Vice Chair advised that Freebridge had a good range of engagement activities with tenants and that needed to be built on.</p> <p>He shared that he was unable to attend the joint Board and Tenant Panel session in February, but had received the notes from the session and asked if there was any feedback from the Panel. The following was discussed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Panel had found it very useful session and better than the tenant promises session previously held.</li> <li>• It felt more engaged and less rushed.</li> <li>• It was good to have tenants, the Board and employees all in one room to share views.</li> <li>• Opportunity to speak up and be heard.</li> <li>• It was felt more of these sessions with the Board would be good.</li> <li>• Jennifer Osbourne CEO of TPAS had presented at the session.</li> <li>• It was an opportunity for tenants to give their opinions.</li> </ul> <p>The Tenant Panel thanked the Vice Chair for attending and sharing the update and he left the meeting.</p>	
6	<p><b>Policy Review Update and Governance Map</b></p> <p>The Tenant Panel welcomed the Business Assurance Manager to the meeting who was attending to update on the Policy review that had taken place and the new Governance Map.</p> <p>He shared that the Policies had undergone a review recently but there had been no significant amendments. He shared that if there had been significant amendments the tenant panel would have been consulted on the tenant facing policies. He shared that the revised version had been approved by Board in February. There were minor amendments to the wording within the Shareholder policy due to legislation and regulatory changes. There were also policy amends following the data protection changes in legislation to some of the policies. There were also some minor amendments to policies that were about how the Board operate such as the annual appraisals, training and recruitment. He shared that should there be significant changes within any future reviews to tenant facing policies and procedures the tenant Panel would be consulted early on in the review process. The Tenant Panel noted the update.</p> <p>Following a query regarding tenant shareholding, the Business Assurance Manager advised that new tenants were made aware of shareholding by the Governance Team who write to them six months after their tenancy starts, and there as a continuous article in the Streets Ahead magazine. The Governance Coordinator advised the Panel that the Company Secretary was due to attend in June and they would be able to discuss this aspect more with them if they wished to.</p>	Added Value

	<p>The Business Assurance Manager also presented the Governance Map that had been created at the end of 2018. He shared that the map aimed to show how the organisation was structured from a Governance perspective and the Tenant Panel was included within that plan. He shared that the overall structure of Freebridge meant that there was no authority to do anything with no direction from the Board. The Tenant Panel was part of the relationship of this structure to allow free flow of comments and open and transparency. The Tenant panel helped to look at work and improvements that could be made to how Freebridge operates. He shared that Standing Orders and Financial Regulations assisted the organisation in delegating some of its operations for decisions to Directors which allowed it to be legal entity, and anything outside these rules would mean that a person would be operating as an individual. The Tenant Panel thought the map was a good document.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel thanked the Business Assurance Manager for his attendance and he left at this point.</p>	<p>Added Value.</p>
<p>7</p>	<p><b>Development Slot: Mental Health at Work</b></p> <p>The Tenant Panel Facilitator provided the Tenant Panel with a session regarding the importance of Mental Health at Work as part of their development programme for 2019. He shared with the Panel a poster from MHFA England on the triggers and signposting, for people within the workplace and out of the workplace, which may need support.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel felt that it was good there was increased awareness of mental health and brilliant it was being recognised within Freebridge.</p> <p>He shared that Freebridge had a lot of trained coaches in the business to support employees and management, as well as a month of wellbeing for employees in the autumn. He added that Tenant Panel members were also supported in anything that they have or need.</p> <p>There were three themes for mental health at work :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Employee Engagement.</li> <li>2) Organisational Culture</li> <li>3) Mental Health.</li> </ol> <p>The following were also important aspects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A good physical environment for work</li> <li>• The opportunity to develop</li> <li>• Giving employees a good work/life balance</li> <li>• Good leadership of the organisation.</li> <li>• An organisation that was diverse and inclusive.</li> </ul> <p>The Tenant Panel thanked the Facilitator for a well-informed session and were pleased to hear that Freebridge had many mechanisms in place to support employees in their mental wellbeing.</p>	

<p><b>8</b></p>	<p><b>Complaints Panels including Damp and Mould Discussion</b></p> <p>The Communications Business Partner attended to discuss the topics with the Tenant Panel.</p> <p><b>Damp and Mould</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This was a fairly regular concern from customers and an issue amongst housing associations.</li> <li>• The tenancy team and operatives recently took part in a two day training course to update their knowledge on the causes and resolutions of damp and condensation. This was hoped to help the level of complaints we receive in having the right knowledge to assist tenants.</li> <li>• The Tenant Panel had received a leaflet that was supplied to new tenants and any tenants who had reported issues with tips of how to deal with condensation.</li> <li>• All buildings suffered with condensation in some form, but a lack of heating and ventilation tended to make issues worse. Costs of heating was an issue and tenants worried about letting drafts in through venting windows made condensation worse. Condensation leads to mould growth and if not cleaned away will increase.</li> <li>• If there was a need to investigate further beyond condensation then Freebridge would instruct a surveying company to investigate and assess damp levels.</li> <li>• Any individual needed to report any issues they were experiencing as a repair if they were concerned.</li> <li>• Help can be offered to tenants through the Freebridge Energy Advisor including help with finances for heating costs.</li> <li>• It was hoped in time and education problems that customer's experiences could be managed.</li> </ul> <p>Following a query from a Tenant Panel Member the Communications Business Partner advised that there was no specific policy for dealing with condensation and mould, and it was more dependent on the findings that a surveyor made when visiting a property.</p> <p>A Panel member commented that the leaflet was useful for those who didn't understand how they could best manage their homes to alleviate condensation and mould.</p> <p>A Panel member recommended that the leaflet be placed on Facebook and the Communications Business Partner advised that this was a good idea and they would look into doing it.</p> <p>A Panel raised a concern that when a tenant reported an issue about condensation and mould Freebridge needed to ensure that it was fully investigated for any other possible issues that may be about the building.</p>	<p>Added Value.</p> <p>Added Value</p> <p>Added Value. Simon</p>
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<p>A Tenant Panel member commented that Freebridge was good at what it does, but the communications to tenants is what needed improvement, and there was a risk that tenants may become frustrated and not use the complaints process.</p>	<p>Added Value.</p>
<p>The Communications Business Partner shared that he regularly discussed complaints and issues with the First Contact Centre.</p>	<p>Added value.</p>
<p><b>Complaints Panels</b></p>	
<p>The Communications Business Partner stayed in the meeting to discuss complaints panel process as detailed on the Tenant Panel Work Programme for the March meeting.</p>	
<p>There had been a Green Paper from the Government which included an element relating to complaints processes being transparent, available to all, quick and review of learning outcomes.</p>	<p>Helen</p>
<p>Following queries the Communications Business Partner provided the following responses:</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Tenant was referred to the Housing Ombudsman after a stage 2 complaint, but the process could take between 6-12 months to investigate.</li> <li>• He would be able to provide the Tenant Panel with a brief update on the nature of complaints received, whether they were resolved and how many.</li> <li>• Complaints were not looked at in isolation and would consider the wider issues that may be relevant.</li> <li>• ASB cases were usually complex and were dealt with outside the complaints process. If Freebridge had not followed its procedure in regard to the ASB process, then a tenant or person could make a complaint about that through the Complaints process.</li> </ul>	
<p>The Communications Business Partner shared a Complaints and Compliment report that was provided to Management Team. The Tenant Panel agreed that they would like a more regular updates in the form of the report and the Communications Business Partner agreed to provide this. The Tenant Panel also requested there to be information on the subject or topic of a complaint so that they were able to monitor this aspect. The Governance Coordinator agreed to add to the work programme quarterly.</p>	<p>Added Value</p>
<p>Following a query about referencing of a 'designated person' within the Government's Green Paper on Social Housing to review a complaint, the Communications Business Partner advised that within leaflets that Freebridge has about Complaints Panels, it described the 'designated person' as either being a Councillor or MP, but to clarify not the Tenant Panel. The Governance Coordinator agreed to add to a future work programme more discussion with the Communications Business Partner regarding 'designated person'.</p>	<p>Added Value Helen</p>
<p>The Communications Business Partner shared that if Freebridge were to review the Complaints process he would present it to the Tenant Panel for comments to ensure that it was in keeping with all of these elements.</p>	

		Added Value Helen
9	<p><b>Any Other Business</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sheltered Schemes and Communal Gardens Planters – The Governance Coordinator agreed to find out about planters as schemes that were not being used internally and feedback what was possible.</li> <li>Away Day Venue – It was agreed to email Helen ideas for venues to discuss at the April meeting.</li> <li>The Governance Coordinator agreed to compile what the ‘Added Value’ items from the past year for discussion at the away day.</li> <li></li> </ul>	Helen Added Value All Helen
10	<p><b>Meeting Review – What did we do well?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enjoyed today.</li> <li>Informative.</li> <li>Very interesting.</li> <li>Interesting.</li> <li>Very varied.</li> </ul>	
11	<p><b>Next Meeting Date</b></p> <p>Friday 5 April from 9.45-1.45 pm in the Barn.</p> <p>Close 1.45 pm</p>	