

Notes of the Tenant Panel Meeting

Held on 11 September 2020 at 9.45 am held virtually

Attendance – Tenant Panel Facilitator, Governance Coordinator, Anne, Frances, Inge, Charlotte, Hazel, Sandy, Sarah and Annette.

Apologies – David W and David H.

All welcomed Sarah to her first meeting with the Tenant Panel. The Tenant Panel Facilitator and Tenant Panel welcomed Sandy who was attending Tenant Panel on Zoom for the first time. There was another interview the following week for a tenant interested in joining the Panel, the Governance Coordinator agreed to update all on the outcome.

Declarations of Interest – None.

Work Programme – This was noted.

	Item
1	Notes of the Last Meeting held in July 2020 and Matters Arising
	They were approved as a correct record, and the matters arising report was noted which contained updates from the Governance Coordinator on follow up work agreed at the last meeting. All follow up actions had been resolved.
2	New Chief Executive Anita Jones The Tenant Panel welcomed Anita Jones the new Chief Executive of Freebridge to the meeting and all present introduced themselves. The Chief Executive shared that she was delighted to come to the Tenant Panel meeting. She introduced herself and her career background, which included 25 years of in working within the housing sector some based in Norfolk and Suffolk. She shared that a particular part of the job she enjoyed was having good communication with tenants to improve what was important to them. She added that Covid-19 had restricted the ability for her to get out and about to talk to tenants directly, which was a shame in starting in the new role. Following a query about the Government's green paper on Social Housing which aimed to tackling stigma and helping communities to thrive, the Panel wished to understand how the Chief Executive would tackle this issue and how she had done so in previous job roles. The Chief Executive shared that she felt that she was a powerful ambassador for our tenants; communities were part of that, and giving tenants a voice was paramount. The Chief Executive shared that she had visited both community centres and she could tell there was a strong sense of community around those areas. The Chief Executive shared that she was not arriving with a rose tinted view of the job in front of her, and there were particular parts of the service that would require improvement such as the repairs and assets service and over the past five weeks since joining the organisation, she had focused on trying to understand this aspect. The Chief Executive shared that since joining the organisation she had phoned one tenant a day and to date had spoken with about 30 people. She noted from these conversations the following areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Customer service was good;• Freebridge was a nice organisation;• Employees were always polite and friendly;• Simple number one issue was repairs and maintenance

The Chief Executive had recently also visited Hillington Square and she could see that it was an amazing improvement.

A Tenant Panel member welcomed Anita and wished to make a positive comment. They shared that for tenants in social housing there had been a 'class system' in the United Kingdom for many decades and it would take time for those barriers to be removed and certainly not suddenly, but there were many good movements on removing barriers locally and nationally. The Tenant Panel Member commented that within a tenants own community there are often lots of opportunities to interact positively, the wider community was also not just made up of social housing, and they could therefore become champions of 'coming from social housing' and take part in all the activities on offer. The Panel Member shared that in taking this view they were not at risk of becoming victims and less likely to be affected by stigma.

The Chief Executive shared that the Leadership Team and Board had begun discussions on the next five year business plan and what the priorities might be, she was interested to know if Tenant Panel Members had a top three that should be included.

Tenant Panel Members shared suggestions to be included in a top three priority list:

- Exterior of homes was very important on the outside not just the inside and had been an outcome from the Tenant Priorities Survey in 2017. Architects had won awards on their amazing designs fitting into landscapes and new builds did not stand out as much as social housing homes. Housing associations had the opportunity to champion architects to help integration into the surrounding community so that social housing did not immediately stand out.
- Keeping up with repairs.
- Being part of local events. In King's Lynn there was a great presence from Freebridge but it was important that it took part in the rural villages too.
- Property Services in particular in recent times prior to Covid-19 maintenance was taking 10-12 weeks to put repairs in place. What starts as a minor repair when reported by tenants can then turn into major if left and over the winter even worse. Property Services needed to be reviewed as top priority.
- When a tenant takes on a tenancy for a property, it would be good that there is more of a hand over to show customers how to use their homes as efficiently as possible in terms of heating and hot water.
- When a tenant moves into a property, a deep clean financially and environmentally may make more sense than removing all unfixed items. Either incentives so that there is the best decorated home or garden may help tenants think about their homes more. Alternatively, another decorating voucher other than when just moving into a home may encourage people to look after their homes.
- Over the next 5 years, it would be good to introduce an inspection standard and perhaps incorporate the health and safety standard.
- Maybe try to house people in areas where there are others who have similar needs.
- Next five years look at the communications and system used by the Contact Centre for raising repair jobs, as it is not working.
- Get the existing stock up to standard. Freebridge needs to have better follow ups to see if the work has been done properly and that tenants are satisfied.
- Communication back to tenants. Tenants will speak to managers and directors to look at a problem, and they say that they will look into it and they do not get back to them. Tenants are more interested in the current housing stock, and there can be the perception that Freebridge is only interested in new development.

The Chief Executive shared that information that had been shared with her by tenants gave her a clear manifesto, and agreed that Freebridge within the community should not just be about the

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	<p>town centre in King’s Lynn but across the borough. Property Services was a priority and a focus, and though she had only been in post for 5 weeks she was already really proud of what was being delivered at Freebridge, but repairs satisfaction of 67% needed improvement. She shared that having an in-house team was positive as tenants can be familiar with those who visit their homes, but it has to work and has to be the highest level of customer service. She shared that she would expect the Tenant Panel to hold management to account on these aspects. Other aspects was about giving homes a type of annual inspection and health and safety check at the same time, and to look at everything that needed doing within a property. She shared that it was a good idea to have a campaign about how people can feel proud about their homes. She added that the handover of a letting is the first impression that a customer will get of Freebridge and so that crucially needed to be right.</p> <p>The Chief Executive shared that the topic of new homes and existing homes had been discussed quite a lot across housing associations, and it was great to be able to help people gain access to new homes in West Norfolk, but not at the detriment of the current stock. The Board discussions had included this aspect at the strategy afternoon recently, but this was a challenge, as customers would potentially see new developments being built to a better standard than those, which they live in. She wished to assure the Tenant Panel that there was not ever any intention to make new homes more important than existing homes. The more homes that Freebridge build the more money there is to recycle back into the organisation, communities and existing stock.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel Facilitator thanked the Tenant Panel for their comments. The Chief Executive shared that she would enjoy having continued conversations with the Tenant Panel and she intended to come back. The Tenant Panel Facilitator shared that the Tenant Panel could always have more time with the Chief Executive and the Tenant Panel had lots of expertise it had built up over time that she was welcome to utilise. The Chief Executive wished to thank the Tenant Panel for the time in meeting with them, the Tenant Panel thanked her for attending, and she left the meeting.</p>
3	<p>Quarterly Update from Board with Simon Smith, Vice Chair of the Board</p> <p>Simon Smith attended the Tenant Panel Meeting to provide a quarterly update from the Board; and in attendance was also Board Member Pauleen Pratt.</p> <p>Simon wished to open the session to share that since Anita Jones, Chief Executive had joined the organisation five weeks previous, she was the leader of the organisation in this role, and the Board was very much there to set the strategy and each part had different set roles.</p> <p>Also discussed at the Strategy afternoon had been the topic of development and homes that people wanted to live in and that they also needed to be in the right location and that it was not just about the quantity built. He shared that often the topic of development was complex of what you may expect initially. The Board also discussed carbon neutral, and in order to achieve this it would create a huge spending need much like other associations the need to get to grip with it was on the horizon. There would be a need for more investment on the current stock in terms of the decent homes standard and over the next five years, there would be lots of work to ensure the decent homes standard was maintained.</p> <p>He shared that they also discussed Risk and its Management, which was a dry subject but a very important one, and when considering Covid-19 there were controls to ensure everything worked well and most risks needed to be managed in this way.</p> <p>Simon shared that the Tenant Panel could be assured that the finances of Freebridge were very strong and the ability to get funding was good, and rents had continued to be paid with not a great deal of issues with arrears, which was better than they had feared from the onset of the pandemic.</p>

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	<p>Simon reminded the Tenant Panel about the Tenant Priority Survey conducted in 2017, and shared that the top five areas that were shown by tenants was important and needed to be remembered.</p> <p>There was also discussion about the Freebridge community offer, and around what it offered in town and rurally in supporting sustainable communities.</p> <p>Finally, in the light of looking to maintain a reputation a recent article had been provided in the local media about Anita joining Freebridge. This had been shared with the Tenant Panel on email.</p> <p>Simon shared that it was envisaged that when Anita comes back to the Board with some plans close to the end of the year, the Board will look to provide her with feedback and comments, and then work could start on rolling out what is required next year.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel Facilitator wished to thank Simon for the information.</p> <p>A Panel Member commented that they would assume from the update provided that the Board and Leadership Team meeting was quite an in-depth discussion and with so many points covered. They added that they were delighted that carbon footprints had been brought to the forefront of the agenda, particularly as most areas of the business was regularly covered this was a new subject brought to the Tenant Panel's attention.</p> <p>Pauleen shared that the Board and the Leadership Team were keen that there were visible improvements. Discussions that the Board had, had shaped that Freebridge were part of the wider community and it was about homes not property. The Board was hoping that the Leadership Team brings change and looks to move areas forward quickly. There were building blocks to get right so that we can start doing the 'better' stuff. Pauleen felt that discussions had proved positive and pushing the business forward and hoped to feed this back to the Tenant Panel, as well as hearing what the Panel members say as a different perspective.</p> <p>A Tenant Panel member commented that it all sounded positive and a right direction to go in and it will be interesting to see what happens over the coming months to see if this happens.</p> <p>Following a query about carbon neutral Simon shared that the Government were expecting it from Freebridge and we will be looking to comply with national housing standards. Housing associations had to have a 35-year plan as required by the regulator; small changes can be enormous across the lifetime of any plan. The Board will be needing lots of guidance on this topic going forward.</p> <p>A Panel Member commented that with new builds it was easier to achieve carbon neutrality as architects were already working to new rules in order to make it work, but for Freebridge employees to call on houses in the course of their work if the whole fleet were replaced with electric vehicles it would make a massive impact on this target. In addition, people sharing transport would help. A Panel Member commented that it was good to bring older buildings up to an energy saving standard but there was very little you could do unless you invest in areas such as insulation and solar panels.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel Facilitator highlighted that as part of Covid 19 the carbon footprint had lowered somewhat with employees working from home etc. Simon shared that the meeting on Monday had been the first 'in person meeting' in last 6 months with some attending remotely, and potentially the only meeting that would be held in this way for the coming months.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel thanked Simon and Pauleen for their attendance and they left the meeting.</p>
4	<p>Update on the Customer Service Committee Pilot</p> <p>Angus MacQueen, Company Secretary attended the meeting to provide an update on the Customer</p>

Service Committee pilot.

He shared that the pilot had been on hold due to covid-19 and lockdown but it had restarted.

The Committee would have its first meeting on 2nd November. As a key part of the pilot was to see how the Tenant Panel and Committee worked together, to avoid duplication, there may be times where the Tenant Panel and the Committee are looking at the same topics but from a different angle. As the pilot progresses, we will see how it develops. He shared that Anita was keen that the Committee were successful and that the pilot continued.

The Company Secretary wished to thank those of the Panel who assisted with the test of the equipment earlier in the week and it was helpful. The AGM was on Monday 21 September at 12.45 pm virtually via Zoom.

A Panel member commented that if there in time was a diagram to explain the relationship and workings of the Committee and the Tenant Panel it would help them understand it future, and the Company Secretary agreed to note this suggestion.

The Tenant Panel thanked the Company Secretary for attending and he left the meeting.

Deleted: The Tenant Panel Facilitator shared that there will often be overlap and until the Committee has met a couple of times, it will not be possible to have details of how each group interacts. The Company Secretary shared that there was no reason why the Tenant Panel could not receive the minutes of the meeting, but he would discuss information sharing with the Chair of the Committee and the Chief Executive. ¶

5 Response to Feedback in Regard to Customer Satisfaction and Performance at July Tenant Panel Meeting

The Communications Business Partner attended the meeting to provide feedback to the Tenant Panel following their discussions at the July meeting for the first quarter data. He clarified that the data that the Tenant Panel had received was for the Tenant Panel rather than Streets Ahead.

Responses to style:

Frowning face on positive data – the team had since changed the data presentation and will remove this for the next issue.
 Will ensure that a review of the amount of different colours is reviewed for the next issue.
 Information presented was commented as being too simple and could insult the intelligence of most tenants.

Performance Data

- **Compliment data assessment – how do we determine a compliment?** – We take comments when customers have made an effort to contact us to let us know and they are logged. Some can be with lots of words and some can be simple.
- **Conducting a survey once a repair taken place?** Recently when it had been in place it hadn't proved useful due to low response numbers, but we are looking at reviewing that again and it may be put back in place and the Panel will be consulted with.
- **Complaints data – is there a split between in-house and contractors?** We do keep an eye on where the complaints are coming from within Freebridge and whether they are from in-house operations or from contractors. All contracts have contract managers so if there are problems we will discuss this directly with contractors. Contractor's employees are provided the Mary Gober Customer Service training. The Communications Business Partner agreed to seek more information from the Customer Service Manager on data to show the ratio of complaints whether they are in-house or from contractors and for all future statistics that the Panel review and monitor.
- Jobs carried out by in-house operatives and contracts ratio – The Communications Business

	<p>Partner agreed to ask for the information on the Panel's behalf to be shared with the Tenant Panel at their next meeting about customer services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repairs performance – Comments were noted that the it hadn't been what Freebridge wished it to be and there was a lot of ongoing work in that area. • Data Trends – The Communications Business Partner agreed to seek two years' worth of data for the next review stats provided about performance. • Complaints target - The complaints target was not zero officially, though it was a desire not to have any complaints, the targets were there to encourage teams to do the best they can. • Repairs during lockdown – Following a query the Communications Business Partner advised that there was a backlog of repairs and during the onset of the outbreak, there had been less repairs calls. <p>The Communications Business Partner shared that if the Panel members generally had questions about information they receive please do contact him direct to query.</p> <p>A Panel Member commented that a complaint or negative feedback was not always a bad thing, as it may be based on training staff to learn from the mistakes. The Communications Business Partner shared that complaints were useful and they do alert us to the fact that we are doing something wrong so that we can improve, and we are getting better at understanding what the learning outcomes are from the complaints we receive and hold people to account.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel thanked the Communications Business Partner for his attendance and he left the meeting.</p> <p>The Panel agreed to receive the Customer Service and Performance data at the earliest time after the end of each quarter but on their own, and then as a result of queries they have invite a response from management at the meeting after. The Governance Coordinator agreed to arrange.</p>
6	<p>Development Slot – Home Standard</p> <p>The Tenant Panel had received a copy of the Home Standard as part of their development plan in 2020. A Panel Member felt the document was written well and covered everything within this topic area, but felt Freebridge was not covering some aspects of it. They felt that specifically Freebridge needed to meet the standards and design quality on the homes bill, and these were not being upheld in their (1.1 sub b), in older housing stock.</p> <p>The Panel agreed that they wished to know about water safety within homes and how that was reported or regulated within statutory requirements, the Governance Coordinator agreed to seek a response.</p> <p>A Tenant Panel Member shared that they had received a letter from Freebridge about an Electrical insulation conduct report due on their home, but they were unclear what it meant and if they needed to do anything. The Governance Coordinator agreed to feedback that this terminology was unclear and whether it may be possible to provide more explanation to tenants. The Tenant Panel also wondered whether if there are fire alarm checks and other checks routinely being done if this and any asbestos surveys could not be done at the same time, the Governance Coordinator agreed to find out more and provide a response.</p> <p>The Governance Coordinator also agreed to find out what arrangements had been put in place to check the fire alarms that needed to be tested since the onset of lockdown, particularly on schemes and in the flats.</p> <p>The Governance Coordinator agreed to find out from the Director of Housing what had been in place to check up on vulnerable tenants and those that were not accessing the paid for daily call</p>

	<p>service.</p> <p>The Tenant Panel Facilitator shared thanks to the Tenant Panel for their comments.</p>
7	<p>Any Other Business</p> <p>There was no other business.</p>
8	<p>Meeting how did it go</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting the new Chief Executive Anita. • We did well having a meeting in this format on Zoom. • All been very interesting and done well. • Quite pleased and come through on Zoom, enjoyed the meeting and found it very interesting. • Welcoming the new Chief Executive Anita was a lovely experience and all contributed well to the meeting. • Good to have official introductions. • Good connectivity. <p>The Tenant Panel Facilitator reflected that it was nice to hear from the new Chief Executive Anita. Thanks to everyone and the Governance Coordinator as we were all managing with the technology well, and thank you to the Tenant Panel Members for their patience in order to get through the meeting.</p>
9	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>Friday 9 October, for a 9.45 am opening for 10 am via Zoom start.</p> <p>Meeting Closed at 1.20 pm</p>