

Leasehold Focus Group Hybrid Meeting

28th January 2026

Minutes of Meeting

Attendance: Katy Baker – Leasehold Services Officer (KB), David Smilie - Complaints and Data Protection Manager (DS), Kevin Hazelwood - Director Property Services (KW), Yvonne Doyle (YD), John Clark (JC), Mike Smith (MS) (online), Ian Ward (IW), Miss K Read (KR), Mr J Downing (JD), Alistair Lewis (AL), Marilyn Riley (MR), Ms B Plaza (BP), Mr G Monterola (GM), Ms B Plaza (BP), Carl Jursa (CJ), Mr M Lee (ML), Mr M Dyer (MD), Mrs R Craddock (RC), Miss J Huckfield (JH) (online), Mr T Sharland-Harris (THS) (online).

		Action
1	<u>Welcome</u>	
	Welcome and introduction completed by KB. KB also confirmed this was the very first Hybrid meeting for leaseholders and welcomed members who were attending online	
2	<u>Apologies</u>	
	James Williams – KB advised that JW was currently on long term sick leave so ensure if any queries not sent to his email until further notice. Also apologies from Mrs June Eggett, Mr R Singh, Miss Henson Webb, Mr B Reilly.	
3	<u>Terms of reference</u>	
	KB ran through housekeeping and the terms of reference and once again thanked everyone for participating in the meeting both in person and online and it was really positive to have such a well turned out meeting.	
4	<u>Guest Speakers – David Smilie - Complaints and Data Protection Manager Kevin Hazelwood – Director of Property Services</u>	
	DS provided an update on the complaints service and improvements being made to communication and complaint handling. DS gave overview of his previous experience in customer service and confirmed he was appointed to centralise the complaints function in response to resident concerns regarding previous processes and communication standards. DS advised that the number of complaints received has increased from approximately 50–60 per month to in excess of 100 per month. DS advised that this increase is viewed as an opportunity to identify service issues and areas requiring improvement. DS gave overview of complaints process of the two-stage complaints process currently in place: • Stage 1: response within 10 working days • Stage 2: escalation review and response within 20 working days DS advised that complaints may be submitted via customer services, the website/app, email, or through the leasehold services team. DS also outlined additional resources introduced to support the service, including dedicated complaint handlers, aftercare support for residents, and a dedicated surveyor to assist with repairs-related complaint investigations. A significant focus of the presentation was the need to improve communication with residents. DS acknowledged that communication remains the most frequent concern raised and confirmed that improvements are being implemented, including direct follow-up calls, improved internal liaison between teams, and enhanced monitoring of	

outstanding issues. DS opened up to take questions but advised that he will be available after the meeting if anyone wishes to raise anything directly with him as personal matter would not be discussed within the meeting. IW raised an query why recycling bags are not provided anymore – DS advised they are provided by the council so issue would need taking up with them and recommended to go through the their website so it is logged and tracked and dealt with. JH asked what is being done to improve communication between departments as in the past when Jan Tate was in post due to lack of communication matters were never resolved. KB responded by advising that JT has not been in post for a couple of years now and since taking on the role has developed a great working relationship with other teams in the organisation which helps mitigate this issue and will be happy to assist with anything and gave contact points to raise anything directly IW commented that they are still awaiting bags to be issued for waste removal and has raised this issue in previous meetings and also to his Resident Engagement Officer. DS advised to log this to the council via their website and they have to response. KH also commented that this issue has also been raised last week and a response due within 10 days time. MD raised issues he is currently dealing with and stated there is lack of communication with SEH – DS advised that he would be happy to discuss at the end directly as it is a personal issue he is raising. MD also advised it is difficult to get through to speak to anyone, waiting 30 minutes at time and when contacting the contact centre as they have to email through a call back request so you are then having to explain things more than once when you just want to speak to someone there and then. JC also went on to explain he feels correct information is not being passed from the contact centre when calling in and waiting on call backs. DS went to explain that efforts are being made to improve things and is grateful for the feedback and confirmed himself and his team are always willing to take calls and discuss any issues. IW went on to state that he wished to say something positive and say that since KB has been in post they have seen a massive improvement in the LH service and the meetings which was has seen a massive increase in numbers, this was backed up by other member in the meeting. KH provided an update on forthcoming legislative requirements relating to fire safety and resident engagement within high-rise buildings. KH advised every one of the introduction of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs), which become a legal requirement from 1 April 2026 for all residential buildings over 18 metres in height. It was advised that, under the new legislation, building owners are required to undertake an annual review of all residents living within qualifying blocks, irrespective of tenure, to determine whether any assistance would be required in the event of a fire evacuation. This applies equally to leaseholders, tenants, and sub-tenants. KH explained that where support needs are identified, a person-centred fire risk assessment will be undertaken to record any relevant mobility, health, or accessibility issues that may impact safe evacuation. This information will be shared with the Fire and Rescue Service to support emergency response planning and minimise risk to residents and firefighters. KH advised that officers are currently undertaking visits to all relevant high-rise blocks within the city to contact residents directly, confirm receipt of correspondence, and complete assessments where required. KH further advised that a High-Rise Living Focus Group has been established to improve resident engagement, communication, and service delivery for those living in taller blocks. The group is open to all residents of high-rise buildings and is intended to be tenure-neutral to encourage wider participation and encouraged everyone within the meeting to attend. IW commented that he knows it's difficult to get people to engage in focus groups and KH responded that he agreed but he wouldn't give up and feels with different communication methods and technology it	KB provided direct contact details in the meeting chat
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	should make it easier for people to engage. KH finished his talk by accepting any questions. JC raised concerns that occupants of high-rise blocks experience a lower standard of service in comparison with other residents and stated that they felt high-rise residents were being disadvantaged in relation to caretaking, grounds maintenance, communal repairs, and general service delivery. KH acknowledged JC concerns and stated that this is not acceptable and emphasised that the purpose of the High-Rise Living Focus Group is to ensure that the specific needs of high-rise residents are recognised, that barriers between residents and service providers are reduced, and that services are delivered in a manner appropriate to the nature of the buildings. Question asked how the data obtained from the PEEPS is managed. KH explained that info needs to be shared with Essex County Fire Service, however information will be anonymous that is shared to them. Fire Safety manager from SEH is co-ordinating the collection of the data by completing the surveys. KB asked how often the information is updated which KH confirmed is annually. KH reiterated the importance of keeping information updated and that Landlords should be notifying us of any tenancy changes. KB reminded everyone to use a sub-letting notification form on the website to notify us of their current tenants which will help us keep things up to date as well as keeping us updated of their contact information.	
5	<u>Repair Reporting/Axis</u>	
	KB gave overview of Leaseholder vs. Landlord Responsibilities • Internal repairs inside the flat = leaseholder responsibility. • Communal or block repairs = report to South Essex Homes (SEH). • Window frames = SEH responsibility. • Glazing = leaseholder responsibility KB highlighted that concerns raised previously about contact centre not accepting repairs from leaseholder should not be happening and contact centre staff fully aware of the leaseholder vs landlord responsibilities. KB also advised they leaseholder can also contact herself directly and she can raise repairs on their behalf has access to the system to do this. KB gave information on ways to report repairs. KB gave information on timeframes once a repair has been determined Emergency repairs: • Attendance within 2 hours • Resolution within 24 hours Standard repairs (e.g., broken lights): • Up to 28 days • Appointments can be selected when reporting KB asked if anyone had any questions. JC shared that he felt communal repairs are left until forgotten about and referred to a communal smashed window which was boarded up and still not repaired which was from a couple of years ago at least and believes referring back to earlier conversation that this is an example of being discriminated against due to being high rise. IW advised that communal windows in his block are currently being changed to poly glass and believes this will be done to all tower blocks. TSH asked if there was awareness by Axis of the poor standards of jobs being completed. KB requested if concerns of poor workmanship can either be raised via the contact centre or directly with her so it can be followed up so we can report this back as they have a service level agreement that needs to be maintained. MS raised issue with poor lift constantly breaking down, Malvern was 5 weeks with only one lift recently and advised part needed but had to be ordered from Germany and suggested why don't they keep spare parts in stock to avoid this issue. KB advised that the lift servicing/repair contract had recently changed which should hopefully see an improvement in service for the lifts and quicker turnarounds with	KB to chase up this repair and follow up if all blocks will be getting changed to poly-glass. KB to follow up complaint with TSH regarding Axis KB to confirm who lift maintenance contract is currently awarded to.

	resolving any breakdowns. JC also confirmed faced similar issues within his block and states the real delay is due to costs and approval being required. Concerns also raised when both lifts are out and what support or lack of at present is in place for residents. JC asked who the current contractor was but information not known without checking and will come back to them with answer	
6	<u>Estate Inspections/Walk abouts 2026</u>	
	KB spoke about the planned Walk about estate inspections that the spring/summer planned itinerary is due to be released soon to the SEH website and encouraged all leaseholders to try and go along. KB explained what inspection/walkabout involve and who usually attends. KB confirmed that from previous meeting discussions it was asked if as a Leasehold Officer could they attend to represent leaseholders and KB confirmed is planning to attend as many as possible this year and hope to see some leaseholders also in attendance. JC advised that on previous occasions things highlighted but no follows ups done and issues remain. KB assured that anything raised when she attends will personally follow up. JC highlighted that he feels that Tenancy Services can make decisions as and when they want but for changes to come from leasehold team are not listened to and as leaseholders have a legal interest they should be. KB introduced TW and asked her to explain how decisions in tenancy are made as she used to do that role. TW explained how things are reported and followed up with other departments. JC also feels some decisions are made and no consultation with the residents, KB suggested this is more of a communication issue by not notifying the leasehold department. ML advised the communal bins at his block are in the process of being re-located and currently fenced off and wishes to know when will be sorted. JC spoke about a consultation about bollards by the garage blocks and everyone received a survey about it and he acted on the outcome from the survey which was really good way of doing it as felt it included everyone and was fair. Positive feedback provided about Zeki about how this was conducted.	KB to attend walkabouts and email leaseholders to notify of upcoming ones that affect them to encourage attendance. KB taken on feedback and will look to improve this line of communication with Tenancy Services when changes within blocks are being implemented. KB to follow up KB to feedback to Zeki and Tenancy Team
7	<u>Key Outcomes of Leaseholder Participation. -You said, we did.</u>	
	KB highlighted the success of this meeting being the first hybrid meeting and being so well attended. This is the result of everyone previously attending working together with ideas on promoting the meetings to encourage new attendees. This resulted in a new poster being produced with input from attendees and this also being shared by KB on social media platforms as well as a direct email to leaseholders. KB confirmed it has been a real success based upon the attendance of tonight's meeting with in person and online attendance. KB encouraged suggestions for future agenda items or key outcome from leaseholder and explained it is their meeting at the end of the day so input it important to help shape the leasehold service going forwards. JC the possibility of an interim meeting of two or three people to perhaps meet beforehand to produce an agenda. KB also asked for any other suggestions and JC suggested for someone from finance. KB also highlighted another positive you say we done for the new member that we never used to have guest speaker so this is something new we have	

	introduced.	
8	<u>Any other Business</u>	
	KB asked for a show of hands of who took the time to read Insight magazine which has about half said they do. Feedback given was it was a 'waste of time' 'waste of money' and 'all for show'. TW gave an example of being featured in one of the stories about changing a dormant room into a community room and explained how valuable to the residents and what it meant to them so to share that with everyone was very important about the positive work that is being carried out. KB asked for any suggestion on future insight articles relating to leasehold MD asked what assurance they have that due to the recent changes with changes to ground rent that it will not go up. KB assured that there are no planned changes to the ground rent charge and advised that if they were to renew a lease then it would then be a peppercorn rent. Discussion then went on to costs of service charges and JC said it would be beneficial to have someone from finance to attend to explain the calculation of charges. IW raised a point about a question on the meeting evaluation form about clear communication and stated staff need to be clear and be able to be understood when speaking to residents as he felt he could not understand one of the guest speakers clearly KR suggested that when guest speakers are confirmed could advance notice been given to attendees to, they can appropriately prepare questions that would be relevant. JD asked if maintenance of communal garden at their block could be completed by themselves and not grounds maintenance at their block JC asked how SEPS were awarded the grounds maintenance contract, JC confirmed has already submitted a FOI for this.	KB to ask finance if they can attend next meeting. KB to feedback KB agreed to do this when issuing the agenda 2 weeks prior to the meeting KB to check and update later. KB to investigate this and update him
9	<u>Date of next meeting</u> 29 th April 2026 5pm to 7pm	

