

TENANTS' FORUM
Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday, 3 December 2025 at 12 noon
in Committee Room 4, Barrow Town Hall

Tenant Representatives Present:

Chair & Street Voice for Raglan Court & Corporation Terrace
Mandy Anderson

Street Voice for Roosegate
Nicola Bull

Street Voice for Bank Lane to Millstone Avenue, Ormsgill
Bill McEwan

Westmorland and Furness Council:

Bex Halton, Senior Manager – Housing Landlord & Homelessness Services
Cllr Judith Derbyshire, Cabinet Member for Housing & Homelessness
Cllr Anne Burns
Cllr Anita Husband
Cathy Kirk, Projects Officer (minute taker)

The group welcomed Bill to the meeting as the new Street Voice for the Bank Lane to Millstone Avenue area of Ormsgill.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Street Voices: David Pearson, Danny Green and Scott Jackson; Caroline Kendall, Interim Operational Lead – Safe Strong Communities and Debbie Cubiss, Senior Neighbourhood Team Leader

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 16 September 2025

The minutes were agreed as a true and correct record.

3. Matters Arising

Boundary Fencing at Longway

Nicola asked for an update on the provision of a boundary fencing for a tenant she is supporting. Bex has previously given her approval for this fencing.

Cathy will seek an update and get back to Nicola

Post meeting noted:

A quote is awaited from the fencing contractor for replacement fencing.

Roosegate Community Centre

Bex advised that a working group has been established to look into the management of this corporately managed centre.

Cathy will seek an update from the Community Development Team who are looking at the way in which both the Roosegate and Griffin community centres are currently operating.

Post meeting note:

Following concerns raised by Alison and Sim from the Community Development Team, a meeting is to be arranged in the new year with Caroline Wagstaff to discuss how these issues can be moved forward.

4. Tenant Participation Compact Budget £15k

Spend since the last meeting:

Cost of Living Assistance: £100 to supply and fit cooker for tenant with no means to do so themselves.

Community Events: £86 spent on Christmas selection boxes for Ormsgill Stronger Together's children's Christmas party.

Balance £13,500

Bill asked how tenants could access the cost-of-living assistance funds, noting that others might also benefit. Bex advised that this funding is officer-led, with tenants identified through usual contact. It was agreed that staff would be reminded about the available funds and the support they can provide to tenants.

Bex will look to include an article in the next newsletter about the budget and highlight that funding may be available to support tenants with cost-of-living needs.

This budget will also be added as an agenda item for the next meeting of the Senior Officer Housing Group to encourage spend before the end of the year.

5. Environment Enhancement & Area Improvement Officers Budgets Update

5.1 Environmental Enhancement Budget (£5k) (EEB)

Bex advised Caroline Kendall is currently looking at the creation of a community space on the Anson Street/Tay Court estate using funds from the EEB to provide fencing.

Caroline is also pursuing the Council's free tree initiative and looking to identify locations.

Balance: £5,000

5.2 Area Improvement £10k Budget (Officers' budget)

No update available.

6. Service and Performance Update

Following the visit by the Regulator of Social Housing in October and numerous meetings and evidence gathering, as of Monday we have now submitted our final submission, consisting of 200 documents. The judgement is due in early Spring 2026.

Judith thanked all those involved and the tenants who had met with the inspectors.

Bex suggested the group take away the Quarter 2 Performance Report to read at their leisure – it will also be emailed with these minutes so they can click on the various links for more information - and highlighted the following from the Key Update section:

6.1 Introduction of Awaab's Law

Awaab's Law came into effect on 27th October and requires social housing landlords to investigate and fix serious hazards, particularly damp and mould, within strict timeframes.

We have assessed current practices, identified risks, and developed an action plan to ensure compliance. Implementation is embedded in repairs, maintenance, and service procedures, with progress monitored through a dedicated working group which meets fortnightly. We are not finding anything that we haven't found before.

Performance against Awaab's Law will be reported from quarter 3 of 2025/26.

Bex said that since the introduction of the new law, of the 40 reported cases of damp and mould, 37 were condensation issues.

Bill said as used to happen, it would be good for someone from the Maintenance Team to attend to meetings.

Post meeting note: Senior Survey, Peter Rimmer, will be asked to attend future meetings.

6.2 Mandatory electrical safety testing

From November 2025, electrical safety testing became a mandatory requirement for social housing landlords, requiring electrical safety tests to be carried out at least once every 5 years. The regulations come into force from 1st November 2025 for all tenancies granted after 1st December 2025. For tenancies granted before the 1st December 2025, the regulations come into force from the 1st May 2026, with an expectation that safety tests be carried out on these properties before 1st November 2026.

We already have an established policy to carry out periodic electrical testing at least once every 5 years across all of our housing stock so are well positioned to meet the new requirements.

Historically, we have had difficulties gaining access for electrical safety testing, which is the reason that some tests (9%) are overdue. We have worked hard in the last 18 months, establishing a working group and working closely with the contractor delivering the periodic testing and the courts, to embed a robust 'no access' procedure to align with that used in gas safety testing. Where access cannot be achieved through engagement with tenants, we will apply to court for a warrant of entry to ensure the safety test is completed.

HS14 shows the progress we have made with electrical safety testing up the end of quarter 2, which shows 91% of all properties have now had an electrical safety test in the last 5 years. We will have tested all properties by the end of March 2026.

6.3 Appointment of new gas contractor

Following the appointment of a new gas contract to Rothwell Plumbing Services, from 15th December our Eden tenants will be able to access the same gas servicing and repairs service as tenants in the Furness area – both during and outside normal working hours.

6.4 Complaints Update

Bex advised the number of complaints being received is consistent and for the second quarter there have been six in total which is low compared to other service providers.

She also mentioned that the complaint handling satisfaction score gained from our 2024/25 Tenant Perception Survey is almost double that of the national average.

Reasons for Complaints	Stage 1	Stage 2	Total
Repairs	1	2	3
Officer Conduct	2	0	2
Service Expectations not met	0	0	0
Policy and Procedure	1	0	1
Totals	4 (1 withdrawn)	2	6 (1 withdrawn)

Bex advised that as part of the Tenant Engagement Strategy Action Plan, she will be looking to reintroduce a Tenant Scrutiny Group once two new roles are in place following the Housing reshape. These new roles will mainly revolve around tenant engagement and involvement

7. Tenant Perception Survey for 2025/2026

Independent market research company – MEL Research – has been appointed to carry out the survey – we don't have the resources to chase people for replies and the

analysing of data is very time consuming. Hopefully using an independent company will increase the response rate. Questionnaires will be sent out in January.

8. Tenant Engagement Strategy Update

Consultation with tenants has now taken place and feedback from the consultation has been included in the final version of the Strategy, together with comprehensive Action Plans

Bex asked the group to read through the Strategy and come back to her with their approval/comments.

Bex will come back to the group about plans to official launch the Strategy.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is to be scheduled.