

Extraordinary Meeting of the Tenants' Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday, 13 July
2026 at 11am in the Council Chamber, Town Hall
and via MS Teams

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Attendees present

Street Voices present:

Vice-Chair and Street Voice for Bank Lane to Millstone Avenue, Ormsgill

Bill McEwan

Street Voice for Newton Road area, Dalton

David Pearson

Street Voice for Carleton Meadows

Scott Jackson

Street Voice for Brathay Crescent

Gaynor Killip

Westmorland and Furness Council:

Bex Halton, Senior Manager – Housing Landlord and Homelessness Services

Councillor Judith Derbyshire, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

Councillor Anne Burns

Emma Broadbent, Community Development Officer

Darren Hardaker, AWOL (A Way of Learning)

Cathy Kirk, Performance and Engagement Officer (minute taker)

Meeting minutes

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Chair, Mandy Anderson; Street Voices Nicola Bull and Danny Green; Councillor Anita Husband and council officers: Caroline Kendall, Peter Rimmer and Debbie Cubiss.

2. Proposal for Cotswold Crescent (Griffin) Community Centre

A written proposal for the future use of the Cotswold Crescent (Griffin) Community Centre had been circulated to Forum members in advance of the meeting for consideration.

Darren Hardaker from A Way of Learning (AWOL) and Emma Broadbent (Community Development Officer) were introduced to the group.

Darren presented a proposal to bring the vacant Griffin Community Centre back into community use. He explained his previous community development work, including anti-social behaviour projects, volunteering programmes and partnership working across Barrow.

The discussion focused on ensuring that the centre becomes a sustainable community asset that is run for and by the local community. Members agreed that previous attempts to operate the building had not been successful and that any future arrangements should be community-led rather than relying on a single individual.

There was strong support for involving local residents, volunteers and community groups in shaping activities. Suggestions included youth activities, support services, bingo sessions for older residents and community projects such as the proposed laundry initiative previously discussed by the Forum.

Members praised Darren's experience and existing links with community organisations and partners.

Outcome

The proposal received unanimous support from Forum members.

Actions

- The Group agreed officers should move forward with developing the idea, consulting residents and exploring a community-led management model – along the lines of Ormsgill Stronger Together:
- Officers to progress development of the Griffin Community Centre proposal.
- Darren to continue discussions with officers regarding the management and operation of the centre.
- Explore the establishment of a community management group or committee.

- Consult local residents on what services and activities they would like to see at the centre.
- Engage interested local volunteers and residents in future planning.
- Investigate opportunities to link existing community initiatives and services into the centre.

The Chair thanked Darren for attending the meeting and presenting the proposal. Members welcomed the ideas put forward and looked forward to seeing the project develop.

3. Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Results

Bex presented the latest Tenant Satisfaction Measure (TSM) results. The survey was undertaken between January and March, analysed in May and submitted to the Regulator in June.

Overall, the results remained positive and broadly stable. Bex noted that this was the first year the survey had been undertaken by an independent company, but this had not significantly affected satisfaction levels.

Four measures had improved compared with the previous year, while most others remained stable or showed only minor decreases.

Discussion focused on lower satisfaction levels relating to neighbourhood management, communal areas and anti-social behaviour. Bex explained that much of the negative feedback related to issues such as street cleaning, street lighting and waste management, which, whilst not always directly managed by Housing Services, can influence tenants' perception of their neighbourhoods

Bill asked which results officers were most pleased with and which areas caused the greatest concern. Bex highlighted strong performance in repairs, building safety and complaint handling, whilst identifying neighbourhood satisfaction and communal areas as priorities for improvement. She noted that although satisfaction with complaint handling had reduced slightly, performance remained above the upper national benchmark

Gaynor raised concerns regularly reported by residents, including delays to repairs, fly-tipping, communal area cleaning and difficulties knowing who to contact when reporting issues. Bex acknowledged these concerns and outlined plans to improve communication, increase officer visibility on estates and strengthen partnership working with other council services.

Gaynor also shared a positive example of local children volunteering to litter-pick in their neighbourhood. Members welcomed this example of community spirit and discussed opportunities to support similar community-led initiatives.

Bill asked what actions would be taken to improve satisfaction levels. Bex advised that the service would focus on increased tenant engagement, estate visibility and partnership working to address neighbourhood concerns.

Actions

- Increase officer visibility and tenant engagement through estate walkabouts and neighbourhood visits.
- Work with partner services to address environmental issues affecting tenant satisfaction.
- Improve communication with tenants about reporting issues and accessing services.
- Support community-led initiatives that promote pride in neighbourhoods.
- Continue to monitor repairs, complaint handling and tenant satisfaction measures to inform service improvements.

4. Regulatory Improvement Plan

Bex provided an update on progress against the Regulatory Improvement Plan following the service's C2 grading from the Regulator of Social Housing. She explained that she continues to meet with the Regulator on a monthly basis to provide updates on progress and evidence of improvement. Discussion focused on the three key areas identified by the Regulator:

4.1 Understanding the Diverse Needs of all Tenants and Improving Insight

Bex outlined the work being undertaken to improve understanding of tenants' needs and preferences through the collection of more up-to-date tenant information. This will help ensure services are accessible and tailored to individual needs.

As an example, Bex described how a visually impaired tenant had chosen to continue receiving the standard A3 newsletter rather than a large-print version, highlighting the importance of understanding individual preferences rather than making assumptions about accessibility requirements.

4.2 Strategic Tenant Scrutiny

Bex outlined proposals to strengthen tenant involvement through the development of a formal tenant scrutiny framework, providing opportunities for tenants to review services, challenge performance and make recommendations for improvement.

Members welcomed the proposals and recognised the importance of ensuring tenants have a meaningful voice in shaping services.

4.3 Strengthening Performance Reporting and Feedback to Tenants

Discussion focused on how performance information and service improvements would be communicated to tenants.

Bill asked how the Regulatory Improvement Plan would help address issues highlighted through the Tenant Satisfaction Measures. Bex explained that the actions within the plan are intended to improve tenant satisfaction through better engagement, improved understanding of tenant needs and stronger tenant influence on service development.

Bill also asked how tenants would know whether progress was being made. Bex advised that performance information and improvement activity would continue to be reported through newsletters, annual reports and future tenant scrutiny arrangements

Bex advised that, whilst there is no fixed timescale for achieving a higher grading, her ambition is for the service to achieve a C1 grading by 2027/28

Councillor Ann Burns commented on the tremendous amount of work Bex had undertaken in leading the Regulatory Improvement Plan and responding to the regulator's recommendations. She thanked Bex for her efforts and acknowledged the significant progress made to date. Her comments were echoed by members around the table.

Action

- Continue delivery of the Regulatory Improvement Plan and monthly engagement with the Regulator.
- Increase tenant involvement and scrutiny opportunities.
- Encourage tenants to update their information to support service planning and accessibility.
- Improve communication with tenants on performance, feedback and service improvements.
- Continue working towards the ambition of achieving a C1 grading by 2027/28.

5. Invitation to Launch of Tenant Engagement Strategy

Bex invited members to attend the launch of the new Tenant Engagement Strategy, which will be held on Wednesday, 13 August, between 2pm and 4pm in the Queen's Hall, Town Hall.

The event will include:

- Presentation of the strategy
- Opportunity to meet officers
- Tenant engagement information
- Refreshments

There was also discussion about holding a similar engagement event in the Eden area. Scott/Cathy will look into this.

6. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday, 16 September at 2pm in the Law Library and via MS Teams