

# Tenants' Forum

Minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday, 2  
June 2026 at 1pm in the Law Library, Town  
Hall

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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 Roosegate

Nicola Bull

### Street Voice for Newton Road area, Dalton

David Pearson

### Street Voice for Carleton Meadows

Scott Jackson

### Street Voice for Bank Lane to Millstone Avenue, Ormsgill

Bill McEwan

### Street Voice for Brathay Crescent

Gaynor Killip

### Westmorland and Furness Council:

Bex Halton, Senior Manager – Housing Landlord and Homelessness Services

Caroline Kendall, Interim Operational Lead – Safe and Strong Communities (part of meeting)

Peter Rimmer, Senior Surveyor

Councillor Judith Derbyshire, Cabinet Member for Housing and Homelessness

Councillor Anne Burns

Councillor Anita Husband

Cathy Kirk, Performance and Engagement Officer (minute taker)

The Vice-Chair warmly welcomed Gaynor Killip as the new street voice for the Brathay Crescent area. The group introduced themselves.

# Meeting minutes

## 1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Chair, Mandy Anderson; Street Voice Danny Green and Debbie Cubiss, Senior Neighbourhood Team Leader

## 2. Minutes of Previous Meeting held on 3 March 2026

The minutes were agreed and noted as a true and correct record.

## 3. Matters Arising

### 3.1 Boundary Fencing at Property on Longway

This work has been completed.

### 3.2 Roosegate Community Centre

Bex advised the community centre is now back under the corporate asset team.

They will do the necessary repair work – will probably be a joint approach between the asset team and Housing service with a view to it getting back into proper use.

### 3.3 Scaffolding at Raglan Court/detritus

Peter advised following completion of the work the scaffolding and detritus had been removed.

### 3.4 Responsive Repairs Contract

Likely to extend the current contract into next year, will delay until we have consulted with leaseholders.

## 4. Tenant Participation Compact Budget Updated

Since the last meeting, the following spend has been incurred:

Community Events:

- Easter eggs for St. Pius School £93

Cost of Living Assistance:

- Cleaning products – tenant assistance £26
- Toasters, microwaves, air fryers, kettles £2,137
- Storage container for Brook Street site £2,400
- Bed frames, mattresses and duvets £2,039

At year end, of the £15,000 budget, £7,241.93 had been spent leaving a balance of £7,758.07.

There has been no spend as yet from the 2026/27 £15,000 budget.

## 5. Environmental Enhancement Budget and Officers' Budget Update

### 5.1 EEB Budget

Since the last meeting, the friendship bench has been purchased and secured on grassed area at junction of Dalton Fields Lane and Thornton Park. The final cost for the bench and plaque was £587.

At year end, of the £5,000 budget, £3,447 had been spent leaving a balance of £1,553.

There has been no spend as yet from the 2026/27 £5,000 budget.

### 5.2 Officers Budget

Figures not available. Will be provided at the next meeting.

Gaynor raised issue of a young person who had just moved into property doesn't have cooker or washing machine. Gaynor will pass her address on to us so we can have a look at it.

Councillor Derbyshire drew attention to the Crisis Resilience Fund (formerly the Household Support Fund) and to spread the word.

## 6. Service and Performance Update

Bex presented the quarterly service and performance report, which is submitted to senior leadership and Cabinet Members, the report covers key performance measures and areas assessed by the Regulator of Social Housing. A copy of her report will be sent out with the minutes.

Key updates included:

- Bex reported that Awaab's Law came into force on 27 October 2025 and that new procedures had been successfully implemented.
- Between 27 October and 31 December, 89 damp and mould hazard risk assessments were completed, alongside 807 other emergency hazard cases. Of the damp and mould cases, only five required emergency investigation, with the remainder assessed as standard cases requiring further investigation or remedial work.
- All cases were responded to within the required timescales, achieving full compliance with the legislation.
- A monthly review group continues to monitor performance and ensure compliance.

- Contractors have received additional training on the new requirements.
- Remaining incomplete cases were primarily due to difficulties gaining access to properties.
- Most reported damp and mould cases are initially treated as emergency referrals and inspected within 24 hours, although many are subsequently assessed as standard cases with no immediate health and safety risks.
- Still at 100% gas safety testing – we obtained 12 warrants to gain access where tenants had refused entry.
- Remain at 100% Decent Homes for those properties surveyed.
- 100% fire risk assessments carried out annually to communal blocks
- Asbestos management surveys and inspections carried out in communal blocks and shops in the last six months since the new regulations
- Nine properties have to have legionella testing where there is stored water, all checks completed.
- Electrical Safety Testing has become mandatory for social housing landlords. At the end of Quarter 3, compliance stood at approximately 93%, increasing to around 96% by the time of the meeting. A plan is in place to achieve full compliance by the November deadline. It's a rolling five-year programme. Following new legislation we can now go to court to gain access if necessary.
- Number of repairs completed within the required timeframe has improved compared to previous quarter.
- The group was reminded of the outcome of the recent Regulator of Social Housing inspection, which resulted in a C2 grading. The report includes both strengths identified and areas requiring improvement.
- As of 31 December 2025, the housing stock totalled 2,557 properties across the Barrow and Eden areas.
- Performance data is reported quarterly, with comparisons against previous quarters to identify trends and actions required where performance has declined.
- In relation to repairs and damp and mould cases, some outstanding actions remain due to difficulties gaining access to properties. Access issues continue to be a challenge for completing works within target timescales.
- Seasonal trends indicate that reports of damp and mould tend to reduce during warmer months as ventilation improves.

Councillor Derbyshire asked whether the service was monitoring trends in damp and mould reports to identify any links with particular property types, locations or other factors, and to support targeted interventions.

Peter advised that environmental sensors were being installed in a sample of properties to monitor humidity and ventilation levels. The pilot programme is being rolled out initially in Ormsgill, with plans to extend it to Roosegate and Newbarns. The information gathered will

help identify trends, inform future interventions and support the management of damp and mould issues. Due to cost, the programme is being implemented on a phased basis.

Officers advised that most damp and mould issues are linked to condensation caused by lifestyle factors and inadequate ventilation, rather than being associated with a particular property type or area. Education and awareness information is regularly shared through tenant newsletters and social media. It was also acknowledged that some issues can be linked to fuel poverty and tenants' ability to afford adequate heating.

Bex advised that financial circumstances are discussed during the tenancy sign-up process and that support is provided to help tenants access Universal Credit and water tariff assistance. Where appropriate, tenants are signposted to organisations such as Citizens Advice for additional support and benefits advice.

Councillor Derbyshire advised that she had been in discussion with Simon Blythe and the Poverty Working Group regarding support initiatives and suggested exploring opportunities to link tenants with services that could assist them in maximising their income and accessing available benefits.

## 7. Complaints

Bex reported that six Stage 1 complaints were received during Quarter 3. The complaints related to a range of service areas, with no identifiable trends or significant concerns emerging.

Common reasons for complaints included service expectations not being met and the time taken to complete repairs, although repairs were generally completed within published timescales.

An annual complaints return would be submitted to the Housing Ombudsman, alongside an action plan identifying opportunities for service improvement.

## 8. Proposed Shed Permission Guidance

Members reviewed draft guidance on the installation of sheds at council properties. Officers clarified that tenants are not prohibited from having sheds, but permission must be sought beforehand to ensure structures are appropriate, do not require planning permission, and do not adversely affect neighbouring properties.

The guidance has been developed in response to concerns about sheds being erected without approval and, in some cases, causing issues relating to size, location and boundary encroachment

The group approved the new guidance which will now be promoted through the tenant newsletter, included in new tenant sign-up packs, and highlighted on social media to raise awareness of the requirements



Bex explained that responsibility for fencing is defined in law and depends on the boundary in question.

## 9. Any Other Business

### 9.1 Property Boundary Query

Gaynor raised concerns about owner-occupiers who may have extended their garden boundaries into access land at the rear of properties on Brathay Crescent. It was agreed that Gaynor would provide the relevant addresses so the matter could be investigated.

Bex advised that the Housing Service is looking to introduce a programme of planned estate walkabouts as part of its action plan. In the meantime, walkabouts are undertaken as required in response to reported issues.

Members were encouraged to continue reporting estate management concerns. Officers are exploring the use of cameras to support enforcement activity.

### 9.2 Leaseholders' Forum

The Vice-Chair reported that a resident had asked whether the Leaseholders' Forum was still meeting.

Cathy advised that meetings have recently resumed and that all leaseholders had been notified by letter. Future meetings will also be promoted through the tenants' newsletter.

### 9.3 Shop on Mill Lane

Councillor Husband reported concerns regarding the former fish and chip shop on Mill Lane, which has been vacant since before Covid. She advised that substantial bramble growth had developed around the site and that waste was being dumped beneath the building, reportedly from a nearby property on Darent Avenue.

Bex advised that Bryan had visited the site following the previous meeting to inspect the tree and would be asked to revisit the area and review the concerns raised and she will also check on ownership.

### 9.4 Fly-Tipping

Nicola raised ongoing concerns regarding fly-tipping and a perceived lack of responsibility being taken by some tenants for the area surrounding their properties.

Bex acknowledged the issue and advised that fly-tipping and tenant responsibilities would be highlighted in the next tenant newsletter.

### 9.5 Renters Right Act

Councillor Derbyshire highlighted the introduction of the Renters' Rights Act and the changes relating to the ending of 'no fault' evictions. She encouraged members to raise awareness that support and advice are available from the Council for anyone with concerns about their housing situation.

### 9.6 Griffin Community Centre

Bex provided an update on the Griffin Community Centre. She advised that, following a period of engagement with the group operating the centre, the Housing Service had taken the decision to bring the management agreement to an end.

The decision followed concerns regarding governance, compliance and the information required to demonstrate that the group was operating in accordance with the terms of the agreement. Officers had worked with the group over several months and provided opportunities for the necessary information and documentation to be supplied.

The centre will be returned to Housing Service management while any necessary repairs and maintenance works are completed. Future options for the building will be considered in partnership with the Community Development Team, including the potential for a community-led arrangement.

### 9.7 Overhanging Trees at Brathay Crescent

Gaynor raised concerns about overgrown trees and shrubs affecting properties in the area, including blocking light and contributing to a path remaining wet and muddy.

Bex advised that the Council is undertaking a survey of trees on council estates with a view to introducing a planned inspection programme. Where trees or vegetation are reported as causing problems, officers will investigate to establish ownership and responsibility before determining whether any remedial action is required.

Members were encouraged to report specific locations of concern so that they can be assessed.

### 9.8 Fencing Complaint

Gaynor raised concerns regarding responsibility for repairs to boundary fencing between neighbouring properties.

Bex explained that the Council is generally responsible for perimeter fencing adjoining public areas, while fences separating neighbouring properties are the responsibility of the tenants and/or property owners concerned.

Disputes relating to damage or contributions towards repairs are private matters between the parties involved.

Bex advised that an article would be included in a future tenant newsletter to clarify maintenance responsibilities and help address common queries regarding fencing and other property boundaries.

### 9.9 Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Bex advised that the latest Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey results had now been received. The results will be included within the new-look Annual Report, which is due to be distributed to tenants by the end of June.

Members were informed that the survey results were broadly consistent with the previous year's findings. While there had been a slight decline in some areas, this was within expected levels and did not give rise to any significant concerns.

The Annual Report will include performance information, the TSM results and an associated action plan. Bex confirmed that the results would be shared with Forum members in advance of publication.

## 10. Date of Next Meeting

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