



Seaside Homes' response to Tenant Report: Communication

ACTION PLAN: November 2023

1. Introduction

Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes (Seaside) want to express our sincerest gratitude to the 9 tenants who attended the event on 29th August and completed the follow-up online survey to produce the Tenant Report on Communications. The thoughtful insights, constructive feedback, and candid opinions that tenants shared have greatly enriched our understanding of the challenges and opportunities we have when communicating with tenants. The event also provided a valuable opportunity for tenants to establish connections with both fellow tenants and our staff, and we appreciated the warmth, friendliness and lively spirit that tenants brought to the event. We are already looking forward to the next one, and we remain dedicated to making sure that tenant voices play a significant role in guiding our choices and decision making.

We are pleased to report that we have agreed to include the vast majority of the recommendations made in the Tenant Report in our Action Plan and include below our timeframes for implementing these. We commit to keeping tenants informed and updated on the progress of these actions. We believe that this Action Plan will result in the improvement and fine-tuning of existing approaches, more awareness across the tenant population of what Seaside Homes offers, and a commitment to maintaining multiple methods of communication to ensure accessibility for all.

2. Action Plan

Recommendation	Response	Timeframe for implementation
1. Maintain several different methods of communication with tenants to ensure that people are not excluded due to cost or skillset.	Agreed	Done
2. Use the terms "Engagement" or "Involvement" instead of "Scrutiny".	Agreed	Done
SMS		
3. Continue to identify the sender in every SMS by beginning to message with "SEASIDE:"	Agreed	Done
4. In addition to this, begin the text with "Hi Seaside tenant", or similar wording, to highlight that the text is relevant to the recipient. If possible, personalise this to "Hi [tenant's name]" if the SMS platform can facilitate this.	Agreed	Done
5. Wherever possible, include all the information in the SMS so that tenants don't need to click on a link to a webpage for more information. Where you cannot fit everything in, include an option for tenants to text back for more information.	Agreed	Done
6. Ensure that links included in an SMS are fully functioning.	Agreed	Done

7. Consider offering an email service as well as the SMS service, as it is easier to open a link to a webpage from an email.	Not Agreed	See section 3
8. Include more activities for adults, especially outdoor activities.	Agreed	Ongoing
9. Where a tenant has texted Seaside to confirm they are attending an event, Seaside should text back to confirm receipt.	Agreed	From 01/12/23
10. Seaside's Managing Agent, BHCC, should send a reminder SMS when attending for a repair or safety check.	Agreed	BHCC have confirmed that a reminder text is sent the day before the appointment
Website and Social Media		
11. Explore if there is a way to ensure that it is not publicly visible that people are following the Facebook page, for example making the Page private.	Agreed	Done
12. Raise awareness of the website and Facebook page to tenants.	Agreed	By 01/04/24
13. Raise awareness of the Decorating, Gardening and New Possibilities Schemes.	Agreed	By 01/04/24
14. Ensure there are always alternatives to using the website. Do not make it mandatory to contact Seaside via the website, or apply to schemes via the website. It's good to have this as an option, but it is exclusionary for this to be the only option. Offer phone and face-to-face communication. Make sure it is really clear that there are alternative routes.	Agreed	Ongoing
15. Explore if there is a way to create a private tenant forum on the website or social media so that tenants can communicate with one another and build community.	Not Agreed	See section 3
16. Make the Seaside Homes office hours clearer on the website.	Agreed	By 01/12/23
17. Add information on Housing Officers on the website, including contact details.	Partially Agreed	By 01/12/23
18. Review the information provided about the Gardening, Decorating and New Possibilities Schemes to ensure these are clear, simple, and easy to understand, and easy to apply.	Agreed	By 01/04/24
Tenant Handbook		
19. Add recommendations about local health and support services contributed by tenants.	Agreed	Done
20. Make sure tenants receive a confirmation email when we have submitted an online form so we know it has been received, especially when signing up to an event.	Agreed	Done
21. Include an A4 or A5 flyer in the welcome pack just outlining the Decorating, Gardening, and New Possibilities schemes, as some people don't read all the info in the handbook and may miss out on these opportunities.	Agreed	From 1st April 2024

22. Consider posting out a flyer to all tenants outlining these schemes, as longer-term tenants may not be aware.	Agreed	By March 31st 2024
23. Consider posting out a new copy of the Handbook to all long-term tenants whose copies may be very out of date.	Partially Agreed	By March 31st 2024 See Section 3
24. Run a competition in the Newsletter for tenants to design a new Front Page of the Handbook.	Agreed	Done
25. Add information on housing officers to the Handbook, including contact details.	Partially Agreed	From 1st April 2024 See Section 3
26. Add out of hours contact details for Managing Agent.	Agreed	From 1st April 2024
27. Add more information on gas and electric meters, including what to do when you move in. For example, British Gas meter cards are only accepted at the Post Office, and if the Post Office is closed you can't top-up.	Agreed	From 1st April 2024
28. Add more information about fire alarms and what to do when the alarm goes off but there is no fire.	Agreed	From 1st April 2024
29. Make it clear in the Handbook that you can request the quarterly newsletter by post, and how to do this.	Agreed	From 1st April 2024
30. Move the Tenant Engagement section closer to the beginning of the Handbook.	Agreed	From 1st April 2024
31. Pages 47 and 48 are very helpful. Increase the size of the table on these pages of the handbook so that tenants can write in these more easily.	Agreed	From 1st April 2024
32. Add more information on Homemove and bidding. Including what the jargon and logos mean on the Homemove website what happens when a bid is accepted, how are we informed?	Agreed	From 1st April 2024
Newsletter		
33. Consider sending the Newsletter in hard copy by post to all tenants aged 30+.	Not Agreed	See Section 3
34. Send one edition of the Newsletter to all tenants by post (hard copy) to ensure all tenants are aware of the Newsletter and the option to receive it by post.	Agreed	By May 31st 2024
35. Explore if there is a cheaper way to produce the Newsletter that will facilitate sending it by post (hard copy) to all tenants. For example, its currently very high quality, glossy paper and it would be acceptable to print this on thin, matt paper if this allows Seaside to send it in hard copy to more tenants.	Agreed	Done – current print style is cheapest available
36. Make sure that tenants are aware they can request the Newsletter by post, advertise this by SMS, email, and social media.	Agreed	Done
37. Change how the newsletter is displayed on the Seaside website. It is easier if the information is formatted so that it fills the screen, and we can scroll through the newsletter.	Agreed	By May 31st 2024
38. Continue to offer tenant contributions and competitions in the Newsletter.	Agreed	Ongoing

39. Include more information about local services such as food banks, doctors, dentists and charities in my area.	Agreed	By 1st April 2024
40. Include information on the opportunities available to tenants, such as the Gardening, Decorating and New Possibilities Scheme, the Tenant Panel and Engagement opportunities.	Agreed	Ongoing
41. The QR codes are useful, however not everyone has a smartphone so ensure that other options are available – such as a phone number to ring for more information.	Agreed	Done
42. Include tenant contributed gardening ideas to inspire tenants.	Agreed	From Q4 2023-2024

3. Reasoning

We have been unable to agree 3 recommendations at this time and we would like to provide our reasoning and explanation for this. We have also partially agreed on recommendation, and agreed 2 recommendations pending agreement from our Managing Agents, and would like to explain these as well.

Recommendation 7 – Not agreed: *Consider offering an email service as well as the SMS service, as it is easier to open a link to a webpage from an email.*

We have investigated the software options available to us for offering an email service and have determined that unfortunately we will not be able to implement this. We are unable to link our SMS software to an email software so that an SMS message can be sent to an email address instead of a phone number. This means we would need to double the workload involved by managing a separate email service. When our Tenant Engagement Co-ordinator previously attempted to do this in 2022, we found that this was unmanageable within the work hours of the role.

We believe that our Facebook page offering is an effective, online alternative to our SMS service. Similarly to our SMS service, our Facebook page shares information about local free and low-cost support services and events. Recent updates from our Facebook page are shown on our website so that those without a Facebook account can still see these. We believe that opening a link on Facebook is as easy as opening from an email, so we hope that this offer still meets the underlying requirement expressed in this recommendation.

Recommendation 15 – Not agreed: *Explore if there is a way to create a private tenant forum on the website or social media so that tenants can communicate with one another and build community.*

We have looked into this and believe that if Seaside host an online forum for tenants to communicate with other tenants, we would be obliged to ensure the safety of the tenants using the forum and monitor this forum for inappropriate language and content, hate speech, and safeguarding concerns. We do not currently have the staff resources to commit to this.

We want to encourage community building amongst Seaside tenants through our face-to-face Tenant Panel meetings every quarter, which give tenants an opportunity to meet each other and exchange contact details if they choose to. We also encourage community through our quarterly Newsletter, Seaside News, where tenants can share articles, poems, and now local recommendations about services. We will also explore other ways to build community, such as a funding pot that tenants can apply to set up their own tenant-run community group for Seaside tenants, such as a running group,

book club, knitting group, etc. We hope that this aligns with the underlying need expressed by recommendation 15.

Recommendation 17 & 25 – Partially Agreed: *Add information on housing officers to the Handbook/website, including contact details.*

We hoped to include Housing Officers' names and direct contact details, and the addresses for which they were each responsible, on our website and in the Tenant Handbook. However, the Housing Officers work for our Managing Agents and sit within the Temporary Accommodation Team at Brighton & Hove City Council, therefore we needed their consent to share these personal details. We requested this consent and were denied permission to do this. We will instead raise awareness of the fact that all Seaside tenants are allocated a housing officer on the Temporary Accommodation Team (on our website and in the Tenant Handbook), and share the centralised contact details for this team.

Recommendation 33 – Not agreed: *Consider sending the Newsletter in hard copy by post to all tenants aged 30+.*

Whilst we understand the good intent behind this recommendation (to get those tenants who don't like to read content online, reading and involved with the Newsletter), Seaside are concerned that sending information to tenants in different formats based only on their age may be classed as discrimination based on the protected characteristic of age under the Equality Act 2010. We believe that recommendation 34, sending one edition of the Newsletter as a hard copy by post to all tenants, and ensuring that there is a clear message in this printed edition explaining how to sign up to always receive the Newsletter by post, will effectively ensure that all tenants (regardless of age) who prefer to receive the Newsletter as a hardcopy will have been made aware of this option through this. We are also committing to recommendation 36, to raise awareness that tenants can request the Newsletter by post, by advertising this across our communications channels.

Recommendation 23 – Partially Agreed: *Consider posting out a new copy of the Handbook to all long-term tenants whose copies may be very out of date.*

Seaside review and update the Tenant Handbook every 12 months and maintain an up-to-date version on our website. If we consider long-term tenants to be those resident with Seaside for 5 years or longer, this would require us to print and post 203 copies of the Handbook this year. The estimated printing cost for this would be £960, and estimated postage cost £790, totalling £1750. This would also become a reoccurring cost every year as existing tenants move into the 5 year category. This is a substantial cost within the Tenant Engagement budget and we believe this is not the most cost-effective approach.

We will instead contact all tenants who have been resident with us for 5+ years and link them to the online up-to-date version of the handbook, and at the same time ask them if they want to receive a hard copy. For those who request a hard copy, we will have these printed and posted. This allows us to target our resources to those who want the updated Handbook as a hard copy. We propose to complete this exercise every 12 months when the Handbook has been reviewed and updated, if changes have been made.

4. Conclusion

Seaside Homes is grateful to our involved tenants for the care, attention and insight they have brought to their Tenant Report, and we believe their recommendations have made a meaningful difference in enhancing the overall experience for all Seaside tenants. We are very pleased to be implementing almost all of the recommendations and we hope that tenants feel we have tried to meet the spirit of those few recommendations that we could not implement at this time.

This Action Plan has provided clarity on which recommendations we are implementing and our timeframes for completing these, and we will provide ongoing updates on those actions through our website and Newsletter, and at our Tenant Panel meetings, to provide evidence to our tenants of the impact made through this tenant activity.

Board of Trustees	Date
Approved	22/11/23