

Area Panel Meeting
11/05/2023 – 11am
Hollywood Boardroom

Present:

Hollywood Boardroom:

Grainne Mullin, Community Investment
Manager and Chair Person
Loma Wilson, Director of Communities
Judith Gray, Senior Head of Assets
David Shepherd, Area Housing Manager
Paddy McKenna, Senior Assets Officer
Lesa Kelly, Tenant Engagement Officer
Samantha Collins, Business Support Officer
1x Carrickblacker Fold
1x Fergus Fold
2x Neillsbrook Fold
1x Tonic Fold
1x Cromac Wood Court
2x Spafield Fold
1X Quoile Fold

Mclvor Suite:

Keelan McGaghran, AHM
Nicky Bell, Assets Manager
Ashleigh Mulgrave, Tenant Engagement Officer
1x Coniston Close
2x Claremont Court
1x White Glen

Zoom:

Andrew Han, Corporate Services Manager
Jonny Herdman, Assets Manager
1x Foyle Fold
1x Meadowell Fold
1x Valley Fold
1x Rosseden Drive
1x St Johns Close
1x Garvaghy Grove
1x Cromlyn Fold
1x Fruithill Fold

	<p>Welcome and Introduction</p> <p>Grainne Mullin introduced herself as Community Investment Manager and Chairperson for today's Hybrid Meeting and thanked everyone joining from Zoom, Holywood Boardroom and the Mclvor Room in Holywood. Everyone in Holywood was reminded to turn their phones on mute, and for members on zoom go onto mute to reduce background noise. This is a public forum, and we would like to remind everyone that we are unable to discuss any personal or staffing issues due to GDPR. If you have a first-time repair that needs to be reported, please call the office or report after the meeting. A round of introductions of Radius Staff before the meeting started.</p>	<p>Action</p>
<p>2.</p>	<p>Communities</p> <p>Communities Update</p> <p>Shared on screen the Communities, Assets and Corporate Services Scorecard for March 2023. Everyone should have received a copy of the scorecard in their invite letter.</p> <p>Voids At present our voids are sitting at 3.75%, our target is 2.20%, slightly higher than we would like but are working hard to reach our target and working closely with our colleagues in Assets to reduce this figure.</p> <p>Rent Arrears are sitting at 10.88%, our target is 9%, we are working closely with the financial inclusion team.</p> <p>Relets are sitting at 32.87% which is target of 30 days. This is a joint target with our Assets colleagues to ensure we meet our target of reletting properties within 30 days. We are continuing to work to ensure we relet or properties within the 30 day timeframe.</p> <p>Transfer Assessments Are sitting at 97.98% and our target is 100%. We are happy with this figure and working hard to ensure transfer assessments are carried out within 21 days to support tenants who have requested a transfer to another Radius property or another Social Housing provider.</p>	
<p>3</p>	<p>Independent Living Rebranding</p> <p>G. Mullin explained Radius has been working on the rebranding of Sheltered Housing. This is due to research carried out by Fiona Boyle Associates in 2021/2022. The research consisted of surveys carried out with sheltered housing tenants, as well as staff and management of Housing Associations across Northern Ireland to look at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What the perception of sheltered housing is. • What is not sheltered housing. • The type of housing support that is provided in sheltered housing. • The misperceptions of what sheltered housing provides. <p>Across the board, it was agreed that a move towards 'Independent Living for over 55s' would be more marketable for people who would want to move into sheltered accommodation.</p> <p>G. Mullin advised leaflets are available, which are available after the meeting, and suggested holding a session on 'Independent Living for over 55s' for anyone who is interested in it and would like to talk to staff and management about it.</p> <p>A member asked if the rebranding means Radius is going to give up sheltered housing schemes?</p> <p>G. Mullin advised it is only to be referred to 'Independent Living for over 55s', but the schemes will remain the same.</p>	<p>AHM's</p>

A member highlighted that over 55s should also be emphasised in the rebranding.

G. Mullin explained it will be rebranded as 'Independent living for over 55s'

A member suggested the need to focus on letting accommodation more quickly, as well as the stigma around sheltered housing which perpetuates hard to let rentals, and agreed it might be more appealing if independent living is marketed.

G. Mullin advised a video animation was created as a result of the research to promote and explain the rebranding of 'Independent Living. A link to the video will be sent out to everyone. [\(43\) Independent Living for the over 55s - by the NI Housing Executive & Radius Housing - YouTube](#)
[Leaflet on Independent Living](#)

A member queried if the move to Independent Living will mean a move away from 55's and over? In addition, acknowledging the need to adhere to the Common Selection Scheme when allocating properties, but highlighted an issue of renting units to troublesome tenants which cause disruptions within the schemes.

G. Mullin advised that the move to 'Independent Living for over 55s' is currently only a rebrand, the model of the schemes is the same as it was previously. However, the reason the research was carried out was to find out what are the challenges, perceptions and issues that need to be addressed as Radius are aware that some of the tenants coming into the schemes may have additional support needs and may face challenges. The next step is to look at ways to address the issues that have been raised. Regarding the current issues presented with the allocation process under the current Common Selection Scheme (CSS), G. Mullin advised that Radius are bound by the CSS to ensure allocations are carried out fairly, however, the research carried out will assist in building an action plan to better address those issues.

A member queried why we are rebranding?

G. Mullin advised it was a collective decision made between all of the Sheltered Housing providers in Northern Ireland after extensive research was carried out and found sheltered housing accommodation was increasingly hard to let, units were sitting vacant for long periods of time, and particular client groups coming into the schemes were facing additional support needs and that was causing issues in schemes for the staff and for the other tenants. Additionally, the researched showed that 'Sheltered Housing' could be seen as outdated, and people felt it would benefit from being rebranded to 'Independent Living for Over 55s'.

A member asked what the term 'Void' meant. Grainne apologised saying within Housing we commonly use abbreviations when we need to get better at using the full wording and ensure everyone has an understanding of what the words mean, for example void is when a property is unoccupied/vacant.

G. Mullin suggested a glossary of terms to be created and sent out and asked for volunteers to assist with creating the glossary to please speak to L. Kelly.
Focus group date arranged for Wednesday 14th June 11am on zoom

A member queried are there many voids within Independent Living schemes when there are so many people on the waiting list?

G. Mullin advised that there is currently hard to let areas which we are working with our colleagues in Marketing to promote these areas better and a

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	<p>number of damp properties which we are unable to let until suitable work has been carried out, this has affected the amount of void properties.</p> <p>G. Mullin continued highlighting that one of the aspirations that came from the research was to raise awareness to people who add applicants on the waiting list letting them know about Independent Living schemes, and the benefits and support that is available so they can better market the schemes.</p> <p>A member highlighted the issue of tenants who have lived in Independent Living schemes for years and then eventually need care. G. Mullin advised that is one of the issues the research has looked at, and as a result, Radius would be looking at how to manage that process better, and in a sensitive way.</p> <p>A member asked if the research is available to read? G.Mullin to provide a copy. Fiona Boyle Associates Report</p> <p>A member queried how the research is going to impact the Housing Executive and the allocations process.</p> <p>G. Mullin advised Radius did the research in collaboration with the other the Housing Associations in Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA) to ensure a bigger, more powerful voice when addressing the issues with the Housing Executive.</p> <p>A member also queried if the Housing Executive would need to change legislation to allow the changes that would need to occur regarding the research carried out.</p> <p>G. Mullin advised that the Housing Executive are currently going through a fundamental review of the current allocations process, however, Radius have started the process of developing an action plan of how we might take it forward.</p>	GM
<p>3.</p>	<p>Assets</p>	
	<p>Repairs</p> <p>The response repairs team aim to complete 91% of repairs within target. Emergency (94.85%) and Routine (89.75%) are within target with Urgent repairs just below (90.44%). Radius continues to work closely with our contractors to ensure these targets are met.</p> <p>Inspecting Work</p> <p>Radius aims to post-inspect 10% of repairs at a value of £600 or below and all repairs that are over the value of £600. As of March 2023, 100% of repairs over £600 have been inspected and 10.11% of repairs below 100% were inspected.</p> <p>A member asks how Radius defines what is an Emergency, Urgent or Routine repair. Judith explained that the Department of Communities sets out the guidance for all Housing Associations to follow which sets out the response times for Emergency, Urgent and Routine jobs.</p> <p>This information is also included with the Tenant handbook on pages 23 and 24 explaining in more detail different types of jobs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency: 24 hours - defects affecting the safety, security or health of the tenant. • urgent: 4 working days - defects causing loss of facility to the tenant or likely to cause further deterioration to the structure, fabric, fittings, fixtures, or services to the building. 	

- routine: 4 calendar weeks - defects which can be deferred without serious inconvenience to the tenant.

Heating Contract Update

The new heating contract started on the 2nd of May with the following contractors covering the following areas:

- CFM will be covering the Northwest region.
- ATS Gas Services will be covering the South and East regions.
- CTS Projects will be covering the Belfast area.

Landscaping Maintenance Contracts – P. McKenna Senior Asset Officer advised that the Greentown contract had come to an end, resulting in the hire of local contractors who will provide the service for the duration of the summer, while a newly appointed consultant develops a new tender for the future grounds maintenance contract.

A member commented that smaller companies do a better job, as opposed to larger contractors who don't take as much care, and queried why the smaller local companies can't be hired instead.

J. Gray Senior Head of Assets advised that Radius are bound by Public Procurement Regulations, and as the contracts are worth a considerable sum of money, Radius go over the threshold meaning we are subject to even more stringent regulations. Because of this, there are a number of reasons why Radius are unable to hire small local businesses, mainly around required documentation, such as, insurance, but also due to complex IT Systems which the contractors would be required to have in order to carry out the service. However, the Assets team are looking at ways, such as, making the geographical lots smaller to allow smaller contractors to apply and win one lot within the contract.

A member highlighted that in a number of garden areas Radius are supposed to provide a grounds maintenance service, but these areas are currently not receiving thCould Radius look at the design of the areas around the schemes to ensure tenants gardens are easier to manage (for example, raised pots).

J. Gray thanked the member for the feedback and explained Radius are always trying to improve the service they deliver.

A member suggested doing pre and post inspections of maintenance services carried out?

J. Gray advised the Assets Department have Asset Officers who look after 12 patches across NI and carry out pre and post inspections, additionally, Scheme Coordinators are asked to give feedback on the ground's maintenance. Landscapers are also provided an activity schedule which clearly outlines what jobs need to be completed, and when. Contractors are required to complete 2 visits a month, however, they are not required to provide a date of when they will visit, and unless the post inspection is carried out on the day, it is difficult to complete a post inspection.

G. Mullin highlighted that when the Assets team were developing the most recent contract for ground's maintenance, tenants in the Service Improvement Group were in involved in forming the contract, and Radius would be keen to ensure that the type of consultation and involvement from tenants continues.

	<p>A member highlighted that when previous contractors were cutting the communal grass areas, they wouldn't pick up the litter before mowing, and asked if this could be done under the new contract?</p> <p>J. Gray advised this is an issue the Assets team have struggled with in the past with dog foul and litter when the onus is on the dog owner and the person littering.</p> <p>J. Gray advised the Assets team will be reaching out to tenants for their input to develop the new grounds maintenance contract and will be in touch with Tenant Engagement to arrange this.</p> <p>A number of members commented that their Grounds Maintenance Contractor (Trevor) is outstanding.</p> <p>Should contractors take photos of the work they have completed?</p> <p>J. Gray advised that this is currently a requirement of the maintenance contractors, and that payment is not made unless pre and post inspections are carried out.</p> <p>All Trades Contract – J. Gray advised a tender went out in December for a 9 year contract worth over £100M, the contract has been awarded but unfortunately there is a legal challenge which prevents Radius from starting the contract. The current contract ends in August, and interim service will be organised. We hope the matter will be resolved soon for the new contract to start.</p> <p>A member highlighted that the text messaging service which notifies tenants of the date a contractor will be visiting does not currently specify which job they are attending for, and asked if this can be included in the texts, for example "fence".</p> <p>J. Gray advised that is something that has been highlighted through the Customer Satisfaction Surveys, and has been looked into, however, the system only allows a certain amount of characters in texts and this is why it has yet to be implemented.</p> <p>Planned Maintenance update – J. Herdman Planned Asset Manager advised that the Planned Maintenance Programme has been approved for this financial year, this tender out at around £14M in various work strains which will be rolled out this year, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redecoration works. • Lift replacements. • Commercial and domestic heating upgrades. • Communal door programmes. <p>J. Herdman advised that fire and building safety is still a key focal point following the Grenfell disaster, and there has been many changes in building regulations and legislations, and multiple projects this year which will include fire door replacements, compartmentation works, and fire alarm and emergency lighting upgrades which will take up a large proportion of the programming budget.</p> <p>In addition, J. Herdman advised that another key focus this year is Sustainability, and Radius' commitment to Net Zero Carbon by 2050, which will be a huge challenge over the coming years.</p>	
4.	Corporate Services	
	<p>Following the introduction of the Complaints on the Scorecard Radius have received 152 formal complaints within this financial year 90.32% of complaints received have been responded to 25.66% of complaints have been upheld this financial year.</p>	

	<p>The Corporate Services Manager Andrew advised Radius faced challenges dealing with complaints during Covid lockdowns, as complaints were unable to be resolved face to face. Housing complaints had increased, and Assets complaints had decreased over the year.</p> <p>The main complaints raised during this time was the following:</p> <p><i>Long house sale processing times</i> – these complaints were difficult to deal with as the wait times were due to solicitors and cheque payment processing times which are outside of Radius’ control.</p> <p><i>Increased service charges</i> – Service charges increase due to varying factors, such as, heating and insurance costs.</p> <p><i>Charges in schemes with no Scheme Coordinator</i> – Radius understands the importance of Scheme Coordinators in Independent Living schemes and are continually recruiting for new staff to cover these roles, unfortunately there may be interim periods where we are unable to find staff.</p> <p><i>Gas Capping</i> – Radius are under clear statutory requirement to test gas every year in each property and are obliged to adhere to those requirements.</p>	
5.	Business Plan Update	
	<p>Loma Wilson Director of Communities shared on Screen Radius’s Business Plan Update going through the Achievements for 2022/23 and plans for each department for 2023/24.</p> <p>A member commended Radius on their willingness to listen to tenant concerns and shows a desire to improve, you can see within repairs and service improvement groups these are improving significantly.</p> <p>A member queried if there will be any new developments coming to Hollywood, and it was highlighted that Kinnegar Army Barracks is currently up for sale?</p> <p>L. Wilson advised she is not aware of anything on the programme at the moment, however, she will enquire to see if this is something Radius, or any of the other Housing Associations are looking to develop. L. Wilson also advised that new developments must first be approved by the Development Programme Group in the Housing Executive, and they approve new developments on the basis that it is an area with significant housing need.</p> <p>L. Wilson promoted that there is a Category 1 over 55s Independent Living scheme on Knock Road being developed, which will contain 52 units. The waiting list for this scheme is not full so if anyone knows anyone who might be interested to please let them know that they will be available in Autumn and to contact the office for more information.</p> <p>G. Mullin advised that the Development team are interested in setting up a Focus Group with some tenants in the coming year to talk about the development side of the business, what new developments look like, what attributes housing has that work for tenants and what doesn’t work, for anyone interested in participating in the group let Tenant Engagement know.</p>	
6.	Tenant Engagement	
	<p><i>Upcoming Elections</i></p> <p>To help us build on the success of our Tenant Engagement Structure we will be holding elections this financial year for Chair and Vice Chair of our Independent Living and General Needs panels and depending if we get a Youth and Rural Panel set up we would like to have a chair and vice chair from these panels then sit on a Tenant Executive Committee helping to shape the services all our tenants receive. We are currently carrying out desktop research to find out</p>	

	<p>what out Housing Associations in the rest of the UK have done when it comes to elections and having tenant representation on panels.</p> <p><i>Tenant Engagement Highlights</i></p> <p>To ensure we keep up to date on the benefits of working together in the last financial year we held 52 Estate Walkabouts, 26 meetings with tenants volunteering 309 hours, held 3 Service Improvement Groups with a number of recommendations coming from the groups. We Tenant Approved 15 letters, leaflets and publications and 30 groups within Radius Communities receiving funding of £20,000 between them and of course Tenant Engagement won the More than Bricks and Mortar Awards at the CIH Awards 2023</p> <p><i>Key Information Poster</i></p> <p>Was designed after we received a request from a number of tenants saying our Noticeboards weren't up to date and there were no contact details for the Housing, Asset Officer or they didn't know who the Contractors were. Radius Marketing team designed an A4 page Poster which will be added to Noticeboards within Independent Living, Over 55's Housing and General Needs over the coming weeks.</p> <p><i>Supporting Communities</i></p> <p>Are hosting the very first All-Ireland Tenant Engagement Conference on Tuesday 13th June at the Carrickdale Hotel located between Dundalk and Newry. The conference will have tenants, housing professional and customer engagement experts discussing best practices in tenant participation, how tenants and landlords can work together with various speakers including our Community Investment Manager Grainne Mullin and Head of Assets Judith Gray.</p> <p>We have a number of spaces available for Radius tenants to attend and we will be providing transport, depending on the demand for places we will look at a fair way of deciding who gets a place. Can you let myself or Ashleigh know if you would like to attend?</p>	
7.	<p>Boardroom and Zoom:1x Carrickblacker Fold, 1x Fergus Fold, 2x Neillsbrook Fold, 1x Cromac Wood Court,2x Spafield, 1x Quoile Fold 1x Tonic Fold,1x Foyle Fold, 1x Meadowell Fold, 1x Valley Fold, G. Mullin, L.Wilson, L.Kelly, D.Shepherd, S,Collins, J.Gray, P.McKenna</p>	
a.	<p><i>Tonic Fold</i></p> <p>Would like to meet with Radius Housing to find out what is going to happen as their scheme has been left without a full-time scheme coordinator. L Wilson apologised that there hasn't been two fulltime scheme coordinators in place. Radius are working hard to recruit scheme coordinators in a number of schemes and are working with HR to help people understand what the role is of a Scheme Coordinator which we hope will encourage more people to apply for the roles.</p> <p>Can agency staff cover Scheme Coordinators roles while recruitment is taking place. It was explained the Radius have a number of agency workers currently covering some posts and we have peripatetic scheme coordinators who travel to necessary schemes.</p>	

<p>b.</p> <p>c.</p> <p>d.</p> <p>e.</p>	<p>Heating/Hot Water not working in two of the flats within Tonic – PMK to investigate this.</p> <p><i>Cromlyn Fold</i> Asked when the gutters were last cleaned at Cromlyn Fold? Gutters cleaned by Amber on 21st December 2022</p> <p>Raised an issue that urgent jobs are taking longer than the 20 days. – PMK to investigate this.</p> <p><i>Foyle Fold</i> Raised an issue that visitors are parking in tenants parking spaces. Previously when the scheme was Fold Housing there was signs stating Private Parking but when the new Radius signs were erected the signs stating Private Parking weren't reerected. G Mullin to speak to the Area Housing Manager for this area.</p> <p><i>Cromac Wood Court</i> Internal bin rooms are not being cleaned. Fergus Fold and Tonic Fold agreed that the bins within their schemes aren't been cleaned. PMK will investigate and find out why the Contractors OCS who are supposed to be responsible for cleaning the bins. G Mullin suggested having a Service Improvement Group on Waste Management to see if we can help resolve some of the issues that are raised.</p> <p>Cromac Wood Court raised a number of issues: Guest room no furniture or bed linen Scheme requiring cleaning of curtains, blinds needing fixed and new furniture in common room. Grainne to investigate the issues and come back to Cromac Wood Court.</p> <p><i>Spafield Fold</i> What is the Fire Safety legality in relation to lint in the laundry room? Should a property be deep cleaned before a tenant moves in and what are the requirements when a tenant moves out? Within the Tenant Handbook Page 48, the property must be left in a clean, tidy and safe condition on the last day of the tenancy.</p>	<p>LK</p> <p>AOP</p> <p>JG</p>
<p>9.</p>	<p>Breakout Room 2 Mclvor Room and Zoom – Keelan McGaghran, Nicky Bell, Ashleigh Mulgrave, 1x White Glen, 2x Claremont Court, 1x Rosseden Drive, 1x Garvaghy Grove, 1x St Johns Close</p>	
<p>a.</p>	<p>Keelan McGaghran welcomed everyone to the General Needs Panel Breakout room. He asked at this time if there were any issues within the schemes.</p> <p><i>Claremont Court</i></p> <p>A discussion took place regarding Anti-Social Behaviour experienced within Claremont court. Tenants asked if a focus group meeting could be arranged to discuss such issues with a Housing Manager and Assets Manager present. Tenants commented that this meeting would need to be longer than an hour.</p>	

<p>b.</p>	<p>Ursula noted that she had the tenants contact details and would be in touch to arrange this.</p> <p><i>Service Charges</i></p> <p>One member asked what services charges are used for?</p> <p>Keelan responded that services charges vary across different accommodations but generally they are used for heat in communal areas, cleaning communal areas etc.</p> <p>Panel members from Rosseden Drive, Garvaghy Court and Claremont Court asked if they could receive a breakdown of service charges. Keelan confirmed they could and noted this as an action.</p>	
<p>c.</p>	<p><i>St Johns Close</i></p> <p>A member asked, if possible, could we take learning from the NIHE Tenant Portal when producing our own? Keelan responded that we can look at this, however as Radius and NIHE use different software the portal will not be the same.</p>	
<p>8.</p>	<p>Close Meeting end: 12:50pm</p>	