

## Community Voice Meeting Minutes



**Date:** Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023  
**Time:** 1.30pm – 4pm  
**Venue:** The Arc or via Microsoft Teams  
**Chair:** Tim Mills

**Present:** CV Officers: Tim Mills (Chair), Jill Milner (Vice-Chair), Dawn Johnson (Acting Treasurer)  
CV Members: Stewart Pearson, Keith Lumbers, Keith Riley, Paul Pearson, Jim Newcombe, Tami Reeve, Anita James (Teams), Tracey Bain (Teams)  
CV Observers: Dawne Reed, Andy Mumby  
Ongo Staff: Karen Cowan, Neil Keay, Kevin Hornsby, Steve Hepworth, Andrea Morley, Jo Sugden, Evelina Paulauskaite, Claire Coyle, Kevin Hornsby

### **1. Welcome, Apologies & Housekeeping**

Apologies were received from: Christine Osimbo, Anthony Sanderson, Jeanette Ellis (observer), Susan Hickling, Sue Whitelock, Paul Smith, Michelle Hodgson, Judith Tomlinson, Melvyn Kenyon, Ron Weller, Ryan North, Ian Bullyment and John Parsons.

Tim explained there was no planned fire drill, but the fire exits were pointed out. He also reminded members to not raise any personal issues and to use the general enquiry log if an issue had been raised before but no update had been received.

### **2. Minutes & Actions of Previous Meeting**

The minutes were approved as a true record and Karen provided an update on the actions:

- Members details were passed on that wished to observe the board meeting.
- Re who is responsible for paying the electricity for the scooters, it is not possible to separate this charge to a specific room, therefore the electric for all communal areas is shared/service charged between all the tenants in the scheme
- Changes were made to the Building Safety Resident Engagement Framework; this will be an agenda item in the May meeting for final approval.
- The repairs presentation has been sent out to members with the minutes.
- Kevin is providing an update on the figures for the Augmented Reality data during the meeting.
- Currently we have repair videos on the Ongo website for:
  - How to stop a leak
  - How to unblock a sink
  - How to clean a fan filter
  - How to fix tripping electrics
  - How to test a smoke alarm

### **3. Treasurers Report**

A verbal update was provided as the report had been updated since sending out the original report. Currently have £2419.97 in the bank. Invoice sent back to the Arc as CV was charged for the shareholders buffet and room hire. Taxi expenses are all up to date and accounts are ready to go to the accountants for the end of the year.

#### **4. Board Observers**

The next Board meeting will take place on Tuesday 28 March, 2pm to 5pm, in the Ongo House Board Room or via Microsoft Teams. Three CV members can attend, names interested to notify Customer Engagement (CE). Three members expressed their interest in observing the meeting.

**ACTION:** Customer Engagement to send details to Governance team.

#### **Decision Items**

##### **5. Damp & Mould Policy – Andrea Morley**

Andrea thanked the group for their input from previous consultation discussions on this topic. A member had sent a couple of questions to the Chair which he has passed on to Andrea who will look at the queries and what could possibly be amended if necessary. Steve updated the group re the new government guidance that has been announced. Our timescales may be a little tight but this is something we would have to revisit when the government gives us the exact details.

The group agreed to endorse the policy.

##### **6. Repairs Priorities – Neil Keay**

Some jobs have to be completed within certain timescales due to health and safety, for example a loose banister would need to be treated as an emergency. The idea is to communicate better with tenants especially with timescales, obviously maintain the emergencies and be able to be reactive but have something in place to deal with the routine and planned jobs. Ongo needs to be better as currently we are having a lot of follow on jobs which isn't ideal, it is better to attend the job once and complete it right first time.

A member asked if the customer experience team are trained in what is an emergency. For example, if a tenant called and said the toilet wasn't flushing and was given the advice to get a bucket and flush it until Ongo could get there, however that date was some 3 months away what would happen? Steve advised that this is a standard procedure to help the tenant self-resolve but that is a long wait time and this is what Ongo are trying to address. Call handlers do have the discretion to prioritise non-emergency jobs for vulnerable adults, but this should be discussed at the point of contact. It was noted that a blocked toilet is classed as an emergency but a toilet not flushing is a different matter. The group was advised that when the call handlers are inputting the repair job, they are advised by the system if it is a same day, next day or standard job. Karen advised that as she has been visiting the retirement schemes this is a theme that has shown through that we need to communicate better re appointment dates and this policy allows that.

Another member said that after she had gone on the app it suggested a call back option which she took, and she then received a text with a much more appropriate date which reassured her greatly. A member asked what the procedure was for if the repair was "fixed" but then broke again within a couple of days/a week. Neil advised that this shouldn't happen.

The group agreed to approve the policy.

#### **Discussion Items**

##### **7. Ombudsman Spotlight Report, Noise Nuisance (presentation) – Claire Coyle**

Claire went through a presentation and asked if any of the group had any questions.

It was asked if it is allowed to leave carpets in a property as before it hasn't been possible. This is now encouraged if the carpets are in good condition. Neil mentioned that can clean carpets in void properties where necessary. This ties in with Ongo's net zero ambitions, e.g. less waste and can also help with soundproofing of flats. Also works well with the cost-of-living crisis if it

can save people having to carpet the whole of the property at the same time or maybe having to live without carpets.

It is important that Ongo manage the expectations of tenants, normal living noise is not classed as ASB. ASB has to have intent to disrupt/disturb, and this needs to be proven, the ombudsman is advising good neighbourhood engagement policy and for neighbours to contact each other at first point to try and self-resolve.

A member noted that there was no mention of health conditions that can be affected by noise. This would have to be disclosed at the time of allocating a property. Another member said that creating a focus group is good to get to know what bothers people in “normal” living environments, for example a washing machine being on at night (this may be the cheapest time to run it) will this upset neighbours in close proximity? Should Ongo advise/provide anti vibration noise reducing mats?

Creating a good neighbourhood policy will be key to differing opinions and finding out what defines ASB or nuisance. Claire wants to create a really strong framework so that its clear what is acceptable and what isn't, and how to deal with and keep timescales etc whilst keeping tenants informed. A member asked if something is done deliberately but the person is not approachable then is this classed as ASB. Answer yes.

A member asked if a family has a child/children with special/additional needs what precautions could be taken. It was advised that the first point would be to advise your neighbours of the situation, but this is classed as normal living noise, again the allocation and sustainment of tenancies needs to be looked at right at the start of the allocating process. A member asked if staff have dealt with tenants previously will this be biased, eg a serial complainer not having something looked into because of past history. It was advised that the tenancy services team are trained on this, concentration should be placed on keeping tenants up to date on what stage their complaint is at. It was asked what happens when the properties are a mixture of social housing, private owned and rented accommodation? This is when multi agencies need to work together, police, safer neighbourhoods, Ongo etc.

Steve asked as there are 32 recommendations, should Ongo accept them all or should they discard some. There are some quick wins Ongo could do and so need to explore all of the recommendations to find out what can and can't do be done but Ongo will make expectations very clear. Even if ASB is proven then Ongo may not be able to solve the issue with what they can enforce. Again communication is a massive issue even if Ongo are not providing the answer that the tenant wants, they still appreciate being told what is happening and what has been tried to resolve the problems.

**ACTION** Set up a focus group going forward to discuss ASB/nuisance issues.

### **Information Items**

#### **8. Executive Update – Kevin Hornsby**

Ongo rent collection performance is currently very strong and tenant arrears were 1.43%. The rent increase notification letters have all been sent out now and Ongo has had very little contact back around them, the main queries being around service charges and what was included. A member noted that the letter was concise and easy to understand.

The tenancy sustainment fund has been successful and has assisted 240 customers, enabled 129 food vouchers, 32 fuel vouchers, 129 rent credits approved, 34 household items gifted and 11 support bundles. This fund is also used for supporting Ongo tenants through the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) which has supported 130 customers since November last year,

enabling them to access over £200k additional income. This will continue through 2023/2024 due to the impact it is having. Karen stated that she had visited many retirement schemes recently and not had any comments in relation to the rent increase.

Kevin went on to inform the group about the Augmented Reality figures, this is working really well especially in damp and mould examples. 545 people have used this service and this has resulted in about 20% of issues being resolved at this first point of contact.

**ACTION** Becky to attend a meeting and show members how the AR system works.

Andrea noted that with damp and mould phone calls with this system, the need to go out and inspect has dropped from about 20% to about 6% which is saving time and resources. A member noted that she had had a very good experience with an AR call which saved her staying in the property waiting for a tradesperson to attend as she was able to self resolve.

## 9. **Performance Reports – Karen Cowan**

An accessibility audit took place at Ongo house in March (issue raised by tenant volunteers and the disability awareness group). Will find out specific details when the results are in.

The draft Key News draft has been shared with staff and the publications panel and this edition will be published on 31<sup>st</sup> March.

An environmental session was held at Lincoln Court and several tenants attended and found the session to be very informative, the social group based at the scheme also received help in applying for Ongo Community Grants.

Karen advised there had been no evictions in December and just 1 in January. Ongo are providing lots of interventions to avoid evictions and they will only occur if the property is abandoned or if the tenant will not engage.

Customer satisfaction is not great at the moment, but upward turn is expected in a few months when the extra resources that have been put into the customer experience team are trained up. Abandoned calls were also up. Steve mentioned that in January the team handled 14.5k calls which is a massive increase to a couple of years ago. It was asked if Internet issues could play a part in abandoned calls, people working at home more often now could be an issue.

Tim asked if they could have a new members session on understanding paperwork and this was agreed to be discussed in the next officers meeting.

**ACTION** Add an agenda item for this to be included in the officers April meeting.

A member asked if going forward, electric cars will cause an issue. If you don't have a driveway you can't run a cable across footpaths or communal areas due to health and safety so how do you charge an electric car? Karen said that the infrastructure in the area is not set up for electric vehicles currently. North Lincolnshire Council (NLC) are leading on this as mostly the roads are owned by them. NLC are hoping to produce information on the locations of all public charging stations and are also looked into piloting charging points in some lamp posts. In Ongo new builds there are some plans to have communal charging points.

## 10. **Smart Home Technology (presentation) – Evelina**

A basic update as it has been a long time since this has been looked at. Evelina advised the group that the trades people going out to properties are helping set up the app for tenants. A member asked if the app would highlight issues on pre-payment systems. It would,

as if they ran out of credit and the house went cold for a period of time this would send alerts, potentially prompting Ongo to check for the beginnings of damp and mould, fuel poverty or abandonment of property. It was also asked if the app can work on all devices. This would be picked up at first point of contact.

A member asked if the tenant had a long stay in hospital what would happen if they received texts to say that their home is too cold. It was confirmed that alterations can be made through the app to the heating system. It was asked if tenants can install this system themselves. This particular app has been designed for social housing so no, if a system needs to be wired into a boiler for example this would have to go to Ongo to request permission.

## **11. Customer Engagement Activity Update**

Karen gave a quick review and directed the group to the information sheet in the pack.

The Net Zero workshop had asked for some information on whether charities took clothes just for resale or for rags. The answer is that most do but would prefer for them to be bagged separately. They also asked whether the Arc had solar panels. The answer is no not currently but these are being looked into.

136 people have been engaged and 8.8% were 30 and under.

Safety for the high-rise buildings is ongoing and very important and groups of staff from different departments will be going out to meet and greet and answer tenants' queries and questions.

## **12. Any Other Business.**

It was asked if there are any plans for the bungalows on Pryme road to be demolished?

Steve advised that there are no plans whatsoever for this. It was then mentioned that a lady had been in hospital for approx. a year and had been asked to clear her property but as she has had a stroke there is no way that she can do this, therefore can Ongo do this for her? The response was no, this is still the tenant's property and Ongo can't just go into her home.

A member shared that a neighbour had died. He agreed to pass the address to staff at the end of the meeting so they could check whether Ongo was already aware or not.

**ACTION** Bev to check the address.

Steve mentioned to the group to keep an eye out in the housing press as Ongo has something coming out re fire safety in the high rises.

Karen noted that it had been great to see so many CV members contributing in the meeting, Tim agreed and said it's always good to see the group offer different views and opinions.

The next meeting is due to take place on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April 1.30pm to 4.00pm at The Arc.

**13. Action Plan**

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Update</b>
1.	Pass member details to Governance team for observing Board meeting.	Customer Engagement	
2.	Focus group to be set up to discuss ASB/nuisance issues.	Customer Engagement	
3.	Becky to attend meeting to show members how the AR system works.	Becky Johns	
4.	Add agenda item to April CV Officers meeting re new member session to understand paperwork.	Wendy Wolfe	
5.	Check address to see if Ongo is aware that tenant is now deceased.	Customer Engagement	