

Community Voice (CV) Meeting Minutes



Date: Tuesday 16th May 2023
Time: 9.30am – 12 noon
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: Tracey Bain, John Parsons, Ryan North, Maria Havercroft, Stewart Pearson, Keith Riley, Dawne Reed, Keith Lumbers, Jim Newcombe, Paul Pearson, Paul Smith, Judith Tomlinson
CV Observers: Matthew Waddingham, Eileen Salmon
Ongo Staff: Karen Cowan, Pete Stones, Jo Sugden, Becky Johns, Emma Atkinson (in-part), Melvin Kenyon (in-part), Ollie Mortimer

1. Welcome, Apologies & Housekeeping

Apologies were received from: Tami Reevell, Ian Bulleyment, Sue Whitelock, Michelle Hodgson, Harry Jackson, Anita James, Tony Sanderson, Susan Hickling, Jeanette Ellis, Tima Omari, Tracey Borrill (observer), Steve Hepworth, Kevin Hornsby, Neil Keay, Wendy Wolfe.

All members and observers were welcomed, and brief introductions were given by all present.

Tim explained that 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:

- A member's apologies had been added to the March minutes
- A session has been arranged to discuss what performance information CV members would like to monitor. This will take place on Monday 31 July, 2pm – 4pm, at The Arc
- The information about the demographics of those Ongo let homes to and how many homes for specific needs become available over a set period of time will be brought as an agenda item to the June meeting
- The possibility of Ongo providing a bulky item collection service is being looked into by Neighbourhood Services
- Jill has provisionally booked Holme Hall Golf Club for the December meeting, but will look into Ashby Decoy as a back-up option

3. Treasurers Report

The report was included in the meeting pack. Members were reminded that any expense claims for Community Voice matters (meetings, training etc) should go to Dawn and that claims for any of the other tenant groups should go to Customer Engagement.

4. Board Observers

The next Board meeting will take place on Wednesday 17 May, at 2pm, in the Ongo House Board Room or via Microsoft Teams. Three CV members can attend, names interested to notify Customer Engagement (CE).

Decision Items

5. Building Safety Resident Engagement Framework – Emma Atkinson

Tim explained that the framework had been to a previous meeting for the group to discuss and be consulted upon, it had been brought back for final approval.

Emma added that the document included in the paperwork was the final draft. All the comments and improvements made by members had been included, and Emma had also made some amendments to make certain parts clearer. Meetings had been held with residents of the high-rise blocks at Market Hill and Trent View House, though they had no suggestions to add.

A member pointed out an error under section 5.5.3 where the third bullet-point should start with 'They' rather than 'The'.

Another member raised that, for section 5.4.1 and the fourth bullet-point, the last sentence states 'Ongo Homes will aim to review this information with residents at least annually.' He contended with the word 'aim' and felt that this is something that should be done annually. Karen clarified that it is standard practice to include such words in a policy but, because this is part of an important health & safety matter, that the word should be changed to 'will'.

Emma said that both amendments would be made to the final version. It was then approved by all in attendance and will go to the Board for final sign-off.

ACTION: Changes to be made.

Discussion Items

6. Augmented Reality & Triage – Becky Johns

Becky went through a presentation which will be sent to members along with the meeting minutes.

ACTION: Presentation to be shared.

When a tenant reports an issue, since August last year Ongo have been able to send them a link to their smart phone which the tenant can click and give consent. The customer advisor is then able to see the issue through the tenant's phone and can do things such as turn on the torch, take screenshots and write on the image to assist the tenant to self-resolve the issue where appropriate.

AR is currently being used to help:

- Diagnose the urgency of a repair where it is difficult to describe
- Show tenants how to re-pressurise their boiler or instruct thermostat use
- Take pictures to assist operatives to enable the right repair or parts to be used
- Give a better understanding of damp & mould cases and where it fits in the Red, Amber and Green (RAG) rating used to determine the severity of such issues

It has allowed swifter resolution, less delays, fewer waste calls and has freed up valuable resources for the most urgent cases. Becky provided assurance that no tenant would be left behind though – if they didn't have a smart phone then the issue could be raised and resolved using the traditional methods. 537 AR calls have been taken so far, with many during the winter months and when Ongo started to use it to assist with damp & mould cases.

Examples were shown to highlight how issues had been diagnosed quicker and some cases were able to be solved by the tenant themselves after being guided by the advisor.

A sample of 156 calls featuring AR during January and February had been collated. 54 were to categorise and diagnose a repair, 72 were to see damp & mould issues and there were 30 instances of a boiler re-pressure being resolved immediately rather than having to wait for an appointment. Ongo are now looking further into other issues that AR could be used to show and assist with.

Questions were asked about the safety and security of the system. Becky said that the tenant has a choice whether to use AR or not and provides consent through a mutual sharing agreement. The advisor is then only able to see through the camera and can turn on the torch, they don't have access to any other aspect of the device or any personal data.

Melvin queried if there had been much resistance and if the system had been publicised. There hasn't been many issues as a person calling isn't forced to use AR if they don't wish, though most seem to understand how it could help with diagnosis and resolution. There have been some minor technical issues but the system is still in its trial period – once it is confirmed it will be promoted using a range of methods.

A member asked if they had to ring on a smart phone to use the system. Becky said that a tenant can ring on a landline but that they would need access to a smart phone with a camera for AR to be possible. Another member had recently used AR and commented that it was very clear and effective.

Another question focused on if a tenant had a disability and wasn't able to, for example, get into a certain space to show a video of their boiler. Becky said that as much information as possible would be collected before sending an operative out.

All images and videos are stored on a Cloud-based system and are removed periodically as part of Ongo's Data Retention Policy. They are also used for training purposes. A member asked what would happen if another repair or a tenancy issue was spotted on a video. If it was a safeguarding concern then it would be reported immediately, and Becky clarified that there hadn't been any tenancy issues raised through using the system so far. An advisor always asks at the end of the call if there is anything else that the tenant would like to report.

Becky also provided an update on call-waiting times. After nearly 10,000 calls in November 2022 alone and a longest wait of one hour and seven minutes, improvements have been made including extra resources through additional colleagues within the Customer Experience team. The call abandonment rate had been at 31% but is now down to 11%, the average waiting time had been 12 minutes and 20 seconds but is now two minutes and 20 seconds and 34% of calls were previously answered within 30 seconds which is now up to 74%. Having specific triage officers has helped to increase resolution at the first point of contact, reduced the need for follow-up calls and has saved around £30k so far. It has also improved efficiency and reduced wasted resources in other teams such as Maintenance and Tenancy Services.

A member asked about the impact recruitment has had financially. Becky explained that recruitment was imperative and that it is a short-term investment for a long-term gain. The resources already available within the team, such as team leaders providing training to advisors, have been used wherever possible to ensure Value for Money.

7. Performance Report – Karen Cowan

The information, covering April 2022 – March 2023, was included in the meeting pack alongside a report.

352 complaints were received in the period, 77% of which were upheld. 49% of the complaints were to do with responsive repairs and 18% repairs contractors, which has also led to more recruitment and now working with more contractors to get back to the level of service that Ongo wants to provide. A Contract Manager has also started which will improve assurance with contractors and there are Service Level Agreements in place with each to ensure they are maintaining the level of standard that is expected and agreed.

It took on average 34 days to complete a standard repair during the period, this is again better than a few months previously, but improvement work will continue. 10 – 15 days is the target, and the figures are moving in the right direction. Pete added that the Property Services Panel had helped to approve future targets and priorities, the backlog of repairs is still being worked through currently.

Though Pete said that they are around one month behind where they had initially would have liked to be, it is a six-month project that is still on target to be delivered. It was agreed that a detailed update would be given at the September meeting with facts and figures to show the difference made.

ACTION: to be delivered at the September meeting.

A member gave some positive feedback about an external contractor that Ongo had recently begun working with.

ACTION: feedback to be shared with the team.

9.7% of the customers that were engaged with were aged 25 and under. Karen explained that, though they can't always attend meetings, they do respond to surveys and get involved in shorter-term involvement such as focus groups.

100 new homes were built in the financial year and 143 started on site. 337 Ongo customers accessed employment support, coaching and training. 36 gained sustainable and long-term employment.

There was a 29% drop in the number of anti-social behaviour (ASB) cases compared to the previous year, and there was also a reduction in the overall number of live cases. There was an increase of 12% in terms of the number of tenancy breaches, members asked for extra information as to why this has increased to be included as part of the performance information next time.

ACTION: extra information to be included.

Total rent loss due to empty homes is still below the target, there was an increase in the number of empty properties, but the figure is still within target and compares well to the rest of the sector. The average number of days it took to re-let a standard void property was 33 days which has improved from before and work continues to reduce this figure further.

The number of empty garages has reduced to 92 which is part of continuous improvement and had also reduced rent loss by 53%.

All relevant safety checks were 100% completed for the year. Thanks were given to Emma and the Compliance team on their work to achieve this.

Information Items

8. Executive Update – Jo Sugden

Jo began by praising the Income team for the tenant arrears figures being £745k at the end of the financial year compared to an £850k target. This is particularly due to a lot of proactive and supportive work to help people sustain tenancies. Landlord Services would like to engage with CV soon to talk about the work that they are doing and what are they planning to improve which will also include the support available from the Communities team.

Pete said that, in terms of new developments, 1,099 new homes had been delivered since Ongo started building around 12 years ago. This is around 10% of the current overall stock. The ongoing work includes 40 new builds in Winterton (Coates Avenue), some more new properties on Rowland Road (Scunthorpe) and building for specific needs including 28 bungalows on East Common Lane (Scunthorpe).

The team also help to regenerate areas with ongoing examples including Ashtree Close (Belton) and work starting on the site of the old Ashby market. Ongo are increasing their activity in Doncaster and Gainsborough, 350 homes have either been approved by the Board or are undergoing the final stages of the process before building begins. A further 72 are also due to go to the Board meaning over 400 properties are due to be delivered over the next couple of years.

9. Notice of CV AGM (process & change of date) - Karen

The group's AGM takes place every 12 months to elect the four Officers (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer). This year it will take place in August and the relevant documents, including the specification for each Officer role and a self-nomination form will be sent to each current member.

People need to have been a CV member for at least six months and regularly attend meetings. If a member who has been part of the group for less than the timeframe would like to nominate themselves for an Officer position, then they could be elected but only in an acting role and only if no member for longer than six months nominates themselves and meets the criteria. There is a certain level of commitment needed to become a CV Officer such as commitment to attend meetings (including Officer meetings in advance of the main CV meetings each month) and being a figurehead for the group influencing future agenda items etc.

Customer Engagement will check any self-nominations received against the role applied for to check they meet the criteria and role specification. If so they will be invited to an interview, the interviews for Chairperson will take place first and if successful will interview alongside Karen and Wendy (Customer Engagement Manager) for the other roles. Karen added that it is about who is right for each role to help develop and ensure the most effective CV group moving forward. There has been a long standing vacancy for the Secretary role historically, with Ongo providing support in the meantime, but it is hoped that all four roles will be filled in the future so that the group can become more independent.

Members can nominate themselves for more than one position if they would like, with interviews taking place over the next couple of months. Each applicant for a certain role will be

asked the same questions during the interview so it is a fair process with scoring taking place. Then, at the AGM in August, if only one person has been interviewed and is successful then fellow members will be asked to just ratify the appointment at the meeting. If more than one has applied and been interviewed successfully for a certain role, then a hidden ballot of CV members will take place to decide who will be elected.

A member asked if it was the same process as before where they couldn't become an Officer of the group due to being a Chair of another main tenant group. Karen confirmed that was still the case.

The current Officers encouraged any member to ask them if they had any questions.

10. Customer Engagement Activity Update – Karen

Resident Scrutiny Panel

Tim said that they have a meeting planned to collate all the information and make some recommendations to improve the ASB service that they have been investigating. It will then be added into a final report that will be brought to CV for approval and then Board.

Publications Panel

The group, which now has full membership, had discussed the content for the upcoming June digital Key News. They also looked at ways in which more feedback could be encouraged on each edition so that improvements could continue to be made. Members had fed back on a smoke alarm inspection letter issued by contractors Sure Maintenance in terms of the wording.

Tenant Inspectors

The group had completed 29 inspections in March and April – none were rated red, four amber, 18 green and seven gold star. Some issues with ASB, fly-tipping and cleaning were raised with the relevant teams.

An observer asked if a cleaning inspection could be arranged at Myos House (Scunthorpe). This will be added to the list.

ACTION: to be included on the schedule of inspections.

Complaints Panel

A meeting has been set for Tuesday 6 June which will involve two new observers.

Retirement schemes

Most of the 16 schemes have had their first meeting, with action plans being created from each and regular feedback being provided on any issues. If a scheme has had some major issues then a further meeting has taken place to update on progress. Feedback from the sessions has been positive with residents happy about the improved communications. Most schemes will continue to have a meeting every six months, with others being annually.

Awareness session

An Officer and Committee training session will be taking place on Tuesday 23 May, 1.30pm – 3.30pm, at The Arc. This will be led by Voluntary Action North Lincs (VANL), those interested to notify CE.

Staff networking

A meeting featuring customer engagement staff from Ongo, Hull City Council, Lincolnshire Housing Partnership, Acis and Longhurst will be taking place. In the future tenant networking sessions at different locations will then be set up.

11. Any Other Business

A member had seen a news item about carpets and curtains being left in a property when moving out and asked what Ongo's policy was. Pete said that they try and retain as many carpets as possible but they have to be in good condition. Leaving all carpets could potentially lead to complaints if they are in a poor state and some new tenants moving in like them removing before, plus it adds cost and resources to take out. However, the environmental benefits and reduced wastage were noted. A colleague would assess if a carpet were worth keeping and /or could be cleaned and kept or if it needs removing as part of the inspection that takes place once the keys have been returned for a property.

Another member pointed that out that sometimes there is a lack of consistency and clarity from colleagues about what needs removing and what can stay when leaving a property. It was agreed that Ongo would look further into this.

ACTION: to be reviewed internally.

A reflection of the meeting took place. Melvin had commented earlier that he was impressed by the attendance and the level of contribution from all CV members, while the two tenant observers both expressed how interesting they had found their first meeting and how the group needs to be promoted as much as possible. It was noted that the group's minutes are published on the Ongo website and, following a recent retirement scheme focus group at Martins Close (Barrow), it is being looked into them being shared on the My Home app as well.

It was also raised about the possibility of a CV stand at the Ongo Carnival in August.

ACTION: to be looked into.

All members congratulated Ongo on receiving the Tpas Exemplar accreditation which highlights their work and dedication to Customer Engagement. The recommendations made from the independent report will be brought to the next meeting.

ACTION: recommendations to be presented at June meeting.

A member noted how there had been some apologies for the meeting but that the room was still full. Karen explained that the room could fit up to 50 people conference style so it could be adapted if needed for future meetings.

12. Date and Time of next meeting

The next meeting is due to take place on Wednesday 21st June, 1.30pm, at The Arc.

13. Action Plan

	Action	Who	Update
1.	Changes to be made to Building Safety Resident Engagement Framework.	Emma Atkinson	Completed.
2.	Customer Experience presentation to be shared with members.	Customer Engagement	Completed.
3.	Repairs information with updated facts and figures to be added to September agenda and to be delivered.	Customer Engagement / Pete Stones	In process of being arranged.
4.	Feedback about external contractor to be passed on.	Pete Stones	Completed.
5.	Reason why tenancy breaches have increased to be brought to next	Tenancy Services / Performance	In process of being arranged.

	meeting featuring performance information.		
6.	Cleaning inspection of Myos House to be added to the Tenant Inspectors schedule.	Customer Engagement	Completed.
7.	Internal process for what needs to be removed and what can stay when leaving a property to be reviewed.	Lettings	Update to be provided at a future meeting.
8.	Look into the possibility of a CV stand at the Ongo Carnival.	Customer Engagement	Update to be provided at next meeting.
9.	Recommendations from Tpas report to be brought to June meeting.	Customer Engagement	Update to be provided at next meeting.