



Community Voice (CV) Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday 14th November 2023

Time: 9.30pm – 12noon

Chair: Tim Mills

Present:

CV Members: Tim Mills (Chair), Jill Milner (Vice-Chair), Dawn Johnson (Treasurer) Tracey Bain (Acting Secretary), Keith Lumbers, Paul Pearson, Jim Newcombe, Tami Reeve, Anita James, Jeanette Ellis, Judith Tomlinson, Dawne Reed, Stewart Pearson
Ongo Staff: Karen Cowan, Steve Hepworth (in part teams), Bev Miller, Wendy Wolfe, Jo Sugden, Kevin Hornsby, Emily Chapman and Fran Rhodes (via Teams)
Guests: Debbie Potter and Alex Lyness-Brown lex of Together Housing

Apologies: Neil Keay, Ian Bullyment, Ron Weller, Harry Jackson, John Parsons, Keith Riley, Alexander Buckley. Tracey Borill.

1. Welcome, Apologies & Housekeeping.

Tim welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that there was no planned fire drill, and the fire exits were pointed out. He also reminded members to not raise any personal issues and to use the general enquiry log if a personal 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; proposed and seconded by Dawn and Jim. Wendy provided an update on the actions.

3. Treasurers Report – Dawn Johnson

Dawn explained there are some ongoing issues with the taxi company regarding payment of invoices which is being investigated, online banking has been approved and Wendy is producing a risk assessment, once completed plans can be made to set this up.

ACTION: Members were asked to notify Wendy of names interested in online banking.

ACTION: the chair asked if the expenses form could be put on the CV Facebook page.

4. Board Observers – Tim Mills

The next Board meeting will take place on 29th November at 2.00pm at Ongo House in person or via Microsoft Teams. Three CV members can attend. Names interested to notify customer engagement team. Stewart Pearson, Keith Lumbers and Anita James expressed interest.

Decision Items

5. Volunteers Code of Conduct – Erica Sanderson

Erica thanked all that had attended the focus group meeting held previously in the year. Explaining that the codes of conduct had all been combined and presented the draft version and any changes which have been made are noted in the appendix to make these clear.

It was noted that item 2 .2 is difficult language to understand with the Ongo communities, Erica explained that this code of conduct applies to anyone involved in tenant involved activities, and asked if this point is removed and add this sentence to 2 .1 would the group be happy with this alteration. All agreed. **ACTION:** Erica to amend this point.

ACTION: The amended document will be sent to all volunteers to sign up to the code and replace the previous one.

6. Corporate Plan – Erica Sanderson

The focus group for this was held in April with colleagues and tenants to understand what was required in the new corporate plan, this is a 5-year plan which is to be presented to board. The board agreed with this draft but wanted to add some further items. All the information from consultation has been pulled together to form a draft plan and was sent out, feedback was received and updated. There were not many changes to be made just some clarification around wording to be amended. Ongo are now proposing this draft for approval, which will then go to Executive Leadership Team (ELT) who will sign this and then on to Ongo board in January for final approval. It was noted that this looked to be an excellent plan, very easy to read and engaging. It is currently presented as a word document, but this will be changed. It will mainly be a digital version, but a printed version will run alongside. The group were happy with this.

Discussion Items

7. Organisational Growth – Steve/Kevin

On behalf of Steve, Kevin gave a brief update regarding the potential merger, staff are still going through the due diligence process, and this covers 3 themes, property, legal & finance. A joint working group deals with the reports and information etc. and are involved in some key decisions.

Steve recently sent a consultation letter out to tenants regarding the proposed merger asking for any comments to be fed back through Wendy (Customer Engagement).

A key point that has been discussed is the method of the proposed merger, the transfer of engagement from LHP into Ongo. A member said that this sounds more like a takeover rather than a merger. It was explained that there were lots of options on how to merge but the transfer of engagement method was shown to be the least risky and the most cost-effective way. There will of course be a wider integration, long-term plan with consistency maintained. It is important to note that both staff and tenants may feel concerned about the merger but the plan is to work to create a new culture ensuring all feel valued and secure.

A member noted that any rebranding would be very expensive. The group were assured that there would be no wastage and it would be a rolling system when stock needs to be reordered which will spread the cost over a period.

A member asked if LHP had any advice on how to deal with the merger as they have been through one in recent times. Karen advised that this might be a discussion for next week's meeting with the LHP involved tenants.

The timeline currently remains the same with the decision taking place in December, with the recruitment of a new board and the position for the chief executive decided in January.

Karen reminded the group there is a lot of information on the merger available on the Ongo website along with a list of frequently asked questions (FAQ's). There is also a feedback form on there for people to put their views forward and ask any questions they may have.

Karen explained that on 20th November the meeting between Ongo involved tenants and LHP's will be a chance to influence decisions moving forward. There will be a table plan and a member of staff allocated to each one. Karen advised the group that everyone is approachable, and no question is off limits, there will be breaks for coffee and lunch to mingle and talk to people and staff on other tables. Karen advised the group to think about issues, questions and make the most of this opportunity. It was advised to go into the meeting with an open mind, change doesn't have to be scary and it's easy to go on the defensive as a reaction. It's a chance for the organisation to grow, improve and maintain good practice.

A member commented they were worried that Ongo will be "watered down", Its not a case of losing resources but working together to learn from each other and improve services.

Another member asked if they would have the opportunity to promote the groups and panels at this meeting. Karen agreed this is a good idea and reminded members to be aware of the names that Ongo call the groups as they may not be the same as LHP.

A member asked who will do the interviews for the chief executive's job. It was confirmed that an outside source will be brought in, also when the new board is in place the new chair of the board will probably be involved.

It was asked about the accreditations and awards that Ongo currently has and if these will continue for the original term awarded, or when the new company is formed will the process have to be undertaken again. Karen is checking this with the companies who've given these awards.

ACTION: Karen to contact each company regarding awards and accreditations.

8. Executive Update – Kevin Hornsby

Kevin explained that at the last meeting members were made aware of the recent Damp and Mould case with the Housing Ombudsman. Kevin provided an update from this stating that Ongo has complied with the full order and the tenant is now back in the property after significant work has taken place. A full report to include the learning from this case will go to board later this month.

The Complaints Handling Code is currently going through a consultation period with the Housing Ombudsman and Ongo are currently compiling a response. The Complaints panel will have the opportunity to feed into this consultation. All responses from the consultation will be shared with the Housing Ombudsman and any changes to the Code will be shared with Community Voice.

Kevin explained there are some changes being made to the way the current chatbot facility presents questions to customers when they access the live chat function. The tenants' digital panel will be involved in testing this work. It will not change anything regarding the way it works but will present a menu choice to the customer to enable them to choose questions from these options.

Ongo are now in the first phase of the talk desk implementation with a preliminary go live date of week commencing 4th December. This will allow the Customer experience team the ability to manage contacts in a more efficient way and provide an improved service to our customers. The area's that customers will notice a positive difference are:

- The IVR will be voice activated but will also give an alternative (option o) pressing a button if a voice cannot be recognised.
- Rent payments - there will be a change on how card details can be taken over the phone and the customer will need to input this into their phone now, this is in line with the customer security protocols with card payments, and Ongo need to do this way to be compliant.
- A new callback service that will keep the customers in the queue without waiting on the line (great feature for when the lines are busy)
- A new automated balance checking facility so customers can check their balance over the phone 24 hours a day, this will also be implemented on the Ongo webchat facility and is available on My Home
- A new and improved fallback queues for when calls hit a waiting time trigger, this will alert Team Leaders that queues are busy and will instigate further action to manage the waiting time where possible (will basically automate resource flexing within the team)

Ongo are currently exploring a new product as part of Ongo's tenancy sustainment fund that will provide Ongo tenants discounts across a range of retail stores called Housing Perks. This will be open to Ongo colleagues also. Looking to hopefully pilot this from December onwards.

9. Customer Engagement Activity Update

- Resident Scrutiny Panel – Tim explained that the panel are now focusing on their next review which is on damp and mould. They held a meeting with managers who provided a background presentation on the work involved for damp and mould. The panel have received policies, procedures, and other documents to help with their desk top review. The next meeting will involve operational staff and the panel will ask them questions in relation to their work around damp and mould.
- Tenant Inspectors – Keith explained that recruitment is ongoing with this group to help get more members involved. The inspectors have carried out inspections during October/November and they have found that a lot of the areas have improved vastly, and it is very rare for an area to be rated red. The cleaning has also improved and again this has improved the ratings to only see amber at the worst. The Tenant Inspectors have been shadowing with the neighbourhood services operatives and this has worked very well for both sides learning who is responsible for what. It was noted that the Tenant Inspectors do go further afield than just Scunthorpe and will visit wherever Ongo has properties.
- Resident Building Safety Group -Wendy explained the group are involved in helping produce some training videos for tenants. This group is also doing more promotion to help gain new members for representation from all different property types.
- Publications panel – The panel have been involved in the Key News content and lay out for the latest edition that was sent out in October. More recently the panel have been involved with documents from other departments to look at and advise on whether they are using plain English and reader friendly. The Customer Engagement handbook is also being updated and the panel provided feedback on this.

10. Customer Engagement Update

Wendy briefly went through the report and explained that all the retirement living schemes have held focus group meetings with follow up sessions taking place, and these will continue on an annual basis, unless there are a lot of issues in which case the meeting will be held after 6 months.

In addition to the information in the report there will be some new Tech Sessions arranged starting in the New Year. The focus for these sessions will be around those tenants who aren't currently registered for using MyHome. Tenants will be invited to take part in sessions using their own devices and staff from customer engagement will provide support on using MyHome.

11. Any Other Business

Steve joined the meeting and referred to a question being raised about whether the new organisation would have shareholders or a bond. He explained that the bond is a form of a loan which would just come over to Ongo as it would stand alone as existing borrowing. In terms of shareholders, Ongo has tenant shareholders now and so some thought would be given to how to reflect wider tenant shareholders in the future.

The proposed method of merger will be a transfer of engagement from LHP into Ongo.

Reflection on meeting:

The observers from Together Housing thanked Ongo and CV and said they had really enjoyed the meeting and found it very informative and could see the level of passion within the group.

A tenant observer said that they were looking forward to becoming a member of the group, Wendy explained that a customer engagement officer will contact him to discuss further details. It was suggested to extend the invitation for the Christmas meeting as this would be a good way to get to know other members. **ACTION:** Customer engagement to send details of Christmas date if possible.

12. Date and Time of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 13th December 9.30am to 2pm at Ashby Decoy Golf Club, Burringham Road, Scunthorpe, DN17 2AB.
The meeting will take place first, followed by lunch.

13. Actions

	Action	Who	Update
1.	Include expenses form on CV Facebook page	Wendy/Customer Engagement	Completed
2.	Members of CV to notify Wendy about online banking for expenses	CV members / Wendy	Update to be provided at the next meeting
3.	Change wording on point 2.2. for the code of conduct. Update copies to be sent to all volunteers for signing.	Erica / Customer Engagement	Completed
4.	Check awards and accreditations in terms of the potential merger	Karen	Update to be provided at the next meeting
5.	Send observer (Kevin) date for the Christmas meeting and lunch	Bev/Customer Engagement	Completed