

COMMUNITY VOICE MEETING MINUTES



Venue: Ashby Decoy Golf Club, Scunthorpe

Date: 13th December 2023

Time: 9.30am to 12.00pm

Chair: Tim Mills

Present: CV Members: Tim Mills (Chair), Jill Milner (Vice-Chair), Dawn Johnson (Treasurer) Tracey Bain (Acting Secretary), Keith Lumbers, Paul Pearson, Jase Ladley, Jim Newcombe, Tami Reeve, Anita James, Judith Tomlinson, Dawne Reed, Stewart Pearson Ongo Staff: Karen Cowan, Bev Miller, Wendy Wolfe, Fran Rhodes, Erica Sanderson, Kevin Hornsby

Apologies: Steve Hepworth, Ian Bullyment, Ron Weller, Harry Jackson, John Parsons, Keith Riley, Alexander Buckley, Tracey Borrill, Judith Tomlinson, Tony Sanderson, Ian Bullyment.

1. Welcome, Apologies & Housekeeping

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained there was no planned fire drill, and the fire exits were pointed out. He asked members to put phones on silent and 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. A brief introduction was given for the benefit of the observers.

2. Minutes & Actions of Previous Meeting

The minutes were approved as a true record; proposed and seconded by Keith and Dawn. Wendy provided an update from the actions of the previous meeting:

- The expenses form has been added to the CV Facebook page
- Four members of CV have notified Wendy about using online banking for expenses
- The wording was changed on point 2.2. for the code of conduct. Updated copies sent to volunteers
- Check awards and accreditations in terms of the potential merger. To be investigated further by Karen
- Invite sent to Kevin for the Christmas meeting and lunch

3. Treasurer's Report – Dawn Johnson

A copy of the report was included with the paperwork and the treasurer asked if there were any questions. Members were happy with the report. Wendy explained that the request has been submitted to finance for an additional £5K for Community Voice budget. The taxi invoices were discussed and are still ongoing.

4. Board Observers – Tim Mills

Next Board meeting will take place on 23rd January at 2.00pm, in person at Ongo House in the Board Room or via Microsoft Teams.

Three CV members can attend, names interested to notify customer engagement. Karen explained there will be a report going to the board meeting which may be of interest to members. Dawn expressed interest. Tami may be interested and will confirm.

Discussion Items

5. Regulator of Social Housing self-assessment (Tenant Involvement Consumer standard) – Karen

Karen provided members with some background about the Regulator of Social Housing consumer standards and the reason for completing self-assessments. The self-assessment of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard document had been sent out prior to the meeting and Karen asked for comments from members.

Members agreed that the self-assessment was comprehensive and provided a lot of information.

The self-assessment of the Tpas Pyramid, completed at a recent CV workshop, was used to take information from to help complete the self-assessment of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

A member noted that she hasn't read the whole document, but that the focus group was really detailed and comprehensive.

Karen explained the self-assessments go to the audit and risk team who will check that what we say actually does happen in practice, and they are happy with the rating of Green. The self-assessment will be considered at board in January.

A question was asked about Tpas, and explanation given by Karen and the accreditations explained regarding the Exemplar award. Tpas did ask why Ongo doesn't publish their self-assessments online and Karen needs to check GDPR to see if we are able to publish first.

ACTION: to inform members about Tpas and what they do, including training etc. Link to Tpas to go on the Facebook page.

6. Performance report - - Karen

Karen gave a brief explanation about the performance report and details in relation to customer satisfaction results:

During April and Oct Ongo received 140 complaints in relation to repairs. 54 went to stage 2, 5 went to the Housing ombudsman. 92.4% were responded to within target but not many people are happy with how their complaint is handled, this was nothing to do with resources but down to if you don't agree with a complaint, they are automatically unhappy, Ongo are on average with the sector.

Kevin has been reporting on complaints satisfaction with nonformal complaints, and Ongo now has a clear conception of what a complaint is, against those who were just not happy but didn't complain formally. The element of the unknown is general dissatisfaction rather than complaints, also, different expressions of complaints. If a tenant's boiler is not working, they might consider this to be a complaint, however we get out the same day and fix this, it will not go through the system as a complaint but then this might be reported as a complaint in a random survey.

Ongo can always contact tenants that respond to the survey to find out more details. Through the surveys contact is made with tenants who are dissatisfied.

A member referred to the percentage of dissatisfied to not dissatisfied and another member pointed out that those who are satisfied tend to not complete surveys as they don't necessarily feel they need to respond, as often only those dissatisfied complete them.

A member asked if Ongo monitor compliments, Karen explained how these are monitored and we try to show this within the performance report. Kevin asked if there is any way to

encourage compliments for receiving a good service, Fran explained that they often encourage good or bad comments from their contact with tenants and are not to be afraid to be honest.

Customer service abandoned calls have increased from 8% in summer months to 9% in autumn, however overall abandonment rates have dropped by 6% compared to the previous year at 15%. Digital contacts is 33% of all contacts which is good.

Tenancy service open cases has reduced, and ASB complaints have also reduced to 54%. Fran has completed a lot of work with the Customer Service Manager, and they do filter out true ASB behavior to help educate tenants as to what is and isn't ASB. Ongo are market leaders of logged ASB cases which have been dealt with.

Empty properties have risen 33 days to 47days, Neil (Head of Property Services) added that when there are so many voids, the average days will go down, due to time to get through the voids and the amount of work that may be required.

Repairs and maintenance, satisfaction and context between April and November, over 25K jobs in the last couple of months have been completed: 3,750 and November 3,782 an increase from the previous year by 700 jobs There has been a problem with guttering and looking at a more planned approach for in house to carry out the guttering work. Winter is always busier, and when we approach spring things should see a change.

Income collection in the sector has dropped slightly and it is still a great figure.

Health & Safety all running well, all things running on time and within constraints.

Kevin referred to the maladministration with Housing Ombudsman and had a few more decisions come through 1 case severe maladministration going to deep dive as Ongo feel it's a bit harsh (3 in same week) couldn't get parts for boiler so fitted a new one but this was a communication problem, and the last one was again maladministration, tenants appealed on this and this will take a few months for them to look at. Ongo has just sent one off to Housing Ombudsman so again that will be a few months before they come back to us.

The board discussed in detail and focused on learning from these cases, and ensuring what we can do to improve but they are usually historical (2 years) so naturally things move on with damp and mould being a factor.

7. Organisational Growth (verbal) – Kevin/Karen

Potential Merger with LHP

Kevin updated new members about the progress in relation to the potential merger with LHP and spoke about the work involved in relation to due diligence. A joint working group has been set up and information from the group will feed into the board meeting on Monday 18th December when they make the decision and discuss the business case to merge. The outcome and decision from this meeting will be communicated in the new year to tenants.

Tenant consultation took place over a 6-week period, Ongo received 27 responses and LHP received 75 responses, and these were mostly positive, with questions being asked about to rent and repairs.

Guinness Partnership – Karen

Karen updated members that Ongo had secured a bid for 850 properties from Guinness partnership located in North Lincolnshire, North East Lincolnshire, and a few in Derby. These properties are mainly local and Ongo already operates in some of the areas. This was an opportunity to expand quickly and is good for the business plan. There has been a period going through due diligence and Ongo has signed a potential contract and properties should be handed over to Ongo during February early March. Their tenants are being consulted with two drop-in sessions taking place at Grimsby and Scunthorpe.

A question was asked about properties in Derbyshire area, Karen explained that contractors are used for the maintenance works on these properties and this would continue. Ongo will learn short term on how to deal with this area and may in the future different possibilities, e.g. Ongo to retain and manage them, Ongo to retain them but use a managing agent or consider selling them to a local landlord.

A member asked why Guinness wanted to sell them, Karen explained they wanted to sell the properties as they are out of their main operating area and they want to focus on the southern locations in London.

It was a competitive bid, and one of the reasons we won this was due to tenant involvement and how we work with customers. The chair felt this, and the potential merger will provide some good opportunities for tenant involvement.

A member asked if the bid was lower would Ongo have won on what we could offer against others. Karen said we don't know what others did offer but that Ongo scored highly on the quality side.

A member felt it was good news, but do we think Ongo and LHP will get too large. Karen stated the regulator wants to deal with larger organisations, and consolidating would see Ongo become a bigger player, leading to more power and influence.

Information Items

8. Customer Charter - Erica Sanderson

Erica provided an update on the 2022-23 customer charters and progress made against these. Information is provided in the paperwork for the meeting. Erica highlighted key points in the report and thanked the staff involved for providing the information.

Examples given from information included:

- Increased diversity of CV members and tenant involvement from under 30's. Also, achieving the exemplar Tpas accreditation award.
- More homes and increasing resources, and following consultation, repairs times have been changed as influenced by tenants
- October satisfaction was 83%, customer experience triage roles showed success
- ASB reporting carried out through my home app, Erica needs to find out how many ASB reports have been reported. **ACTION:** details to be provided at a future meeting.
- 37% expressions of dissatisfaction went to rapid resolution, which then doesn't go through to a formal complaint. This is good news for tenants and a success for the customer experience team

The chair noted that most of the report has highlighted the tenant's influence to make changes.

A member referred to contacting Ongo between the hours of 12 noon and 1pm and found it difficult to get through to someone. **ACTION:** Erica agreed to feedback on 12 to 1pm phone cover.

Erica explained that the next report is due in April / May 2024 on further progress made. No further questions were asked, and the chair said it was a good report.

9. Tenancy Services Offer (verbal report) – Fran Rhodes

Fran attended a previous meeting with CV members to update everyone on the new ways of working in tenancy services. These were implemented in November. From talking to staff and looking at new ways of working it showed that we were spending too long on cases. The time spent on cases is being reduced, which also means cases are being resolved better and now getting through all the referrals and allocating them to the most appropriate team from triage. There is still more work to be done to get where they want to be but the early indications from staff, customers etc. show that tenancy services are going in the right direction.

The offer is what Ongo say they will do for customers and their home, helping tenants to sustain their tenancy.

The chair explained a lot of lengthy cases are due to things out of Ongo's control like court proceedings etc. Court cases and legal aspects do lengthen the period it takes to deal with complex cases. Fran explained that Ongo are working towards better relationships with other bodies, e.g. Grimsby County Court.

Fran explained that a positive "you said we did" success has been showing more presence to tenants by being out on estates and at meetings, e.g. the retirement schemes.

Tenancy services carried out a team door knocking exercise along with neighbourhood services in the Warley Road area and received some good feedback. They coordinated responses with the police and repairs team from the feedback gained.

10. Customer Engagement Activity update (verbal) – tenant reps

Complaints Panel – Tracey explained the panel went through details of the maladministration case from Damp and Mould, and some members from the panel are also on the scrutiny panel who are doing a review on Damp and Mould. Based on the amount of contact to Ongo the percentage of complaints was very low, and complaints are reducing, which is good.

Resident scrutiny panel - Tim provided an update on the review the panel is working on which will focus on Damp and mould. The panel interviewed members of staff and had feedback which was good. The next meeting will take place in January to help draft recommendations and discuss research from the peer group organisations.

Digital Experience panel - Jill explained it was a good meeting and the panel have been checking the web page, they found that some links don't work. The panel has been very positive on how the website looks and provided their comments to IT who are looking into fixing the issues. The website is much easier to navigate for tenants now.

A member referred to attending a Northern Housing Consortium seminar and representation from other tenants from housing associations. Jill found that Ongo are doing a lot of what was discussed during the seminar and shows how ahead of the game Ongo are in the marketplace.

The seminar focused on respect between generations encouraging learning from each other, helping in gardens, bug hotels, weeding, mowing lawns etc., involving the community and local schools. There were a lot of examples given by different peers.

Karen explained that Ongo staff have been going to schools to raise awareness to children of housing, how to budget, how to look after the environment etc.

A member also found it interesting that some were asking children what they wanted in their areas. Fran reported that Ongo also does this kind of work, e.g. on the safer streets project they asked children to help design the fences in Westcliff.

A member referred to previously working with young people, with participatory appraisal type work. This involved asking questions and writing answers on post-it notes, from a group activity. Again, it was noted that Ongo has used this approach previously too.

11. Customer Engagement (CE) update – Wendy

Wendy briefly went through the information in the report and there were no further questions from this.

12. Any Other Business

- Karen reminded members that Ongo had been awarded the National Centre for Diversity (NCFD) Leaders in Diversity accreditation. She explained that each year the NCFD takes the accreditation results from all of the 300 plus multi sector organisations that go through this process, and then uses these scores to populate their top 100 inclusive employers list.

The NCFD contacted Ongo in December to advise that Ongo has been awarded position 24 in their top 100 inclusive employers list for 2023. This is a fabulous achievement.

- A member referred to receiving a letter by post regarding the potential merger and asked why Ongo didn't use email and not send them all by post. Karen explained the merger letter had to go out as a legal requirement by post, to ensure every tenant had been informed and had the opportunity to comment.
- A member referred to bungalows that were supposed to be specifically adapted for wheelchair users, saying that these weren't always fit for purpose. **ACTION:** It was agreed to raise this with the Property Services Panel
- Kevin explained that tenants will be receiving details of a discount app, for vouchers etc. to use for discounts at retailers.
- A new member referred to the paperwork and the tenancy agreement and felt that it was overwhelming the amount of information provided. The chair explained that the tenancy agreement is a legal document and can't be condensed. The new member also asked if Community Voice has aims and objectives and commented that as an observer, she hadn't received a copy of the CV Constitution. **ACTION:** To be followed up after the meeting.
- **Reflection on the meeting**
The two new CV members enjoyed the meeting and one referred to being happy that all the paperwork received is clarified during the meeting.

13. Date and Time of next meeting

15th January 1.30pm in person at the Arc or digitally via Teams.