



ONGO HOMES LTD
(FCA Mutuals Registration No 7639) (the Association)

Held at 9.15am on Tuesday 21 November 2023
Best Western Mount Pleasant Hotel, Great North Road, Doncaster, DN11 0HW

MINUTES

Present:

Ongo Homes Board: Bob Walder (Chair), Mike Finister-Smith, Helen Lennon, John Wright, Paul Warburton, Kacper Merta, Steve Hepworth, Rachel Cook, Gerraint Oakley, Melvin Kenyon

Officers: Jo Sugden, Fiona Ruddick (Minutes), Kevin Hornsby, Pete Stones, Ashley Harrison, Bev Lewis, Karen Cowan

Apologies: Natalie Cresswell, Paula Gouldthorpe

Absence: None

Also Present: None

Time meeting opened: 9.15am

Quorum: It was reported that proper notice of the Meeting had been given in accordance with the Rules of Ongo Homes. A quorum being present, the Chair declared the meeting open.

Declarations of Interest: Each Board Member considered whether they were interested for the purposes of rules D15 to D24 of Ongo Homes' Rules, directly or indirectly, in any of the matters to be discussed at the meeting (including interested personally or by virtue of being a director or other officer of a business trading for profit or in any other way whatsoever in any contract or other transactions with Ongo Homes other than as an officer, committee member or employee of the body whose accounts are or ought to be consolidated with Ongo Homes' accounts) and it was noted that any Board Member who disclosed an interest was requested to remain present by the other members of the Board but did not vote upon the matter under discussion. No declarations of interest were made.

1. Agenda Item 4: Housing Ombudsman Determination Overview of Case, summary of learning and action plan

Summary: This report provides an overview to Board in relation to the recent severe maladministration Housing Ombudsman (HO) determination. The report appendices include a detailed breakdown of any learnings from the case review and the action plan to address the findings.

All parts of the HO's order have now been completed and the tenant is back in her property. Steve Hepworth has informed the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The RSH have confirmed receipt and that the case will be considered at their internal Consumer Regulation panel, which DTP have advised, is normal practice.

Discussion points:

- Kevin Hornsby recapped that detail around the complaint was provided in the meeting pack. The complaint dates to events starting in 2017. He explained our approach is different these days and technology is used to help resolve issues.
- There has been a detailed learning undertaken on this case. One point of contact was given to deal with this and that was well received by the tenant. The contact person was Becky Johns who is the Customer Experience Manager.
- A summary of other outstanding complaints had been provided within the meeting pack. A new treatment of complaints has been agreed with all complaints to the Ombudsman now being escalated internally for review by senior staff.
- One area of learning is at times staff are too customer friendly, focusing on the needs of the customer when sometimes a house is not safe and the customer has to move out; which may not be what the customer wants.
- The HO recommended staff should be told to advise tenants to make a claim on Ongo's insurance for contents. There has been some pushback on this recommendation and it has been explained this is not how Ongo deal with insurance – all tenants are responsible for taking their own contents insurance policies out. However, where appropriate compensation is awarded for loss/damage to contents.
- For this case, some of the damp and mould has been caused by air bricks being blocked by cavity wall insulation. This work was completed prior to the stock transfer in 2007 and Ongo Homes does not have records on this work.
- Pete Stones advised this is not something that would be picked up on the stock condition surveys as a periscope would be needed to assess this. It was felt this highlighted a more complex set of issues to be learnt from.
- Some Members agreed the information suggested customers were dealt with in a very process driven way and asked if the culture had been addressed on this, for staff to put themselves in the customer's situation and see their point of view.
- A Member explained there is a thought around professional curiosity – where information is not just taken at face value. If something doesn't seem right, ask the questions.
- Continuity of the tenant journey is a learning area – each repair might not be a one off repair but one of several forming part of a bigger issue.
- Following this case, enquiries have been made with neighbouring properties to see if they have similar issues. An independent assessment has been undertaken and the report is awaited. Once received, this will be shared with the Board. **Action 13/23**
- The Regulator of Social Housing has been notified of the finding by the HO. The RSH have requested further information will be provided to them later this week.
- An internal audit has been requested on data quality in repairs . It is anticipated this will highlight some weaknesses.



- No clear instructions/guidance has been given to staff on how jobs should be closed on the system. Closures should not be lengthy but often they are closed with “job complete” which does not provide much information retrospectively.
- A Member asked if there was any indication on how the RSH may react to this. Currently there is not. There are four or five other complaint cases currently with the HO. If any of these are also found to be severe maladministration, this may impact the RSH’s view.
- A Member pointed out the HO has a trigger point of cases they have reviewed. If they make a finding in any of those, then once you hit 50% of your cases having a finding, you are on the HO’s radar.
- This finding will create a renewed focus to address some of the wider issues that the increase in repairs demand and publicity around damp and mould have highlighted.
- A full report on complaints is being brought to the January meeting where the upcoming changes to the HO code will be presented.

Agreed: The Board:

- Noted the contents of the report and the actions that Ongo has taken, or plans to take, to prevent future cases like this.
- Considered the report and appendices provide assurance to board around Ongo’s approach to repairs, decants and complaint handling.
- Noted an internal audit has now been completed around repairs and once the report is available this will go to the next Audit and Risk committee for their consideration.
- An independent assessment has been undertaken on neighbouring properties and the report is awaited. Once received, this will be shared with the Board. **Action 13/23**

With no further business the meeting closed at 9.45am.

Signed by Chair:

Date:

As a true and correct record of the Ongo Homes Board meeting held on 21 November 2023

