

**COMMUNITY VOICE**  
**Meeting Minutes 15th May 2024**



**Present:**

**CV Members:** Jill Milner (Acting Chair), Dawn Johnson (Treasurer), Tracey Bain (acting Secretary), Jim Newcombe, Anita James, Keith Lumbers, Kevin Yearnshire, Eddie Stringer, Paul Pearson, Judith Tomlinson, Stewart Pearson, Tami Reeve, Heather Gregory (observer), Tima Obo Omari (Teams), Harry Jackson.

**Ongo Staff:** Kevin Hornsby, Andrea Morley, Andrew McFadden, Jo Sugden, Wendy Wolfe, Karen Cowan, Bev Miller, Emma Patrick.

**Apologies:** Ryan North, Sue Whitelock, Paul Smith, Ron Weller, Tracey Borill, Dawne Reed, Jack Dawson, Christine Osimbo.

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

The vice chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that due to the recent resignation of the previous chair she will now take over the role as acting chair until the next AGM.

Brief introductions were given, and it was explained there was no planned fire drill, and the fire exits were pointed out. Members were also reminded not to bring up personal issues and to raise their hand if they have a point or question during the meeting.

All speakers were asked to stand while presenting their agenda item to allow everyone to hear what is being said better.

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

Eddie proposed and Tami seconded the minutes for the April CV meeting. Wendy ran through the actions from the last minutes:

- Focus group workshop for consultation on Tenancy Services has been arranged 10am to 12noon at the Arc on 3rd July. A draft scope will be presented to CV prior to the next CV meeting.
- Key News sent in the post and not arrived for an individual member, has been looked into and rectified for the next issue.

### **3. Treasurers Report**

The treasurer explained that the accounts have been submitted to the finance team for their annual check. Online banking will be set up for transfers, payment of expenses etc. after the AGM in August, this is due to making changes to the officers' signatures and details.

### **4. Board Observers**

Next Board meeting via Ongo House Board Room or Microsoft Teams is taking place on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2024 at, 2.00pm. Three CV members can attend, names interested to notify customer engagement. One member has put their name forward for attending. The next meeting will be on 1st July at 1pm at Ongo House, anyone interested to contact Customer Engagement and a reminder will be given at the next CV meeting in June.

## **Decision Items**

### **5. Energy Efficiency and Improvement - Andrea Morley**

Andrea updated members on information included in the report and the success of the government grant funding which Ongo have been successful to receive 2.3million. To be used on 169 properties only, which are Ongo's lowest performing properties in relation to the EPC rating and require improvement, to make them more energy efficient and cost effective for heating. Each month data is submitted for scrutiny to the regulator to ensure the funding is being used effectively.

A member asked for definition of the chosen properties. Andrea referred to the Energy Performance Rating (EPC) used and what information Ongo have for properties. The EPC rating is what helps to select the need for retrofit assessment for finer details, which is done for all Ongo properties and covers: Ventilation, Loft Insulation, Solar panels, windows, low carbon forms of heating, extractors fans etc.

A member asks what would Ongo do if tenants don't want the changes, do the tenants have the right to refuse? Andrea confirmed they can refuse, however, there is a communications strategy which helps to educate tenants on the benefits of doing this work and the cost effectiveness.

Staff will explain all the improvements required and communicate fully what work would be done. A lot of tenants are wanting to get works started already. One of the challenges is that 96 are over the age of 60 or above, and the disruption to daily living may be a factor in delaying work.

The acting chair referred to it been a government grant and work can't be refused. Andrea explained we are trying to discuss the whole list of work to tenants.

A member asked about decanting for those who cannot be in the home when work is carried out. Andrea explained that help will be available and would be tailored on an individual basis. There will be tenant liaison officers who will visit individuals to alleviate any questions or concerns from tenants, and help will be offered for their circumstances.

A member asked if the Guinness properties were included in this? Andrea explained not at this time as the funding bid was submitted before those properties were taken over.

A member noted it's great that Ongo managed to get Decarbonisation fund Eco4 which is just looking at the type of houses, and there is other funding available from local government for adaptations and could Ongo tap into that funding as well. Andrea stated that this has been looked at and Ongo are currently only eligible for government funding.

A member referred to the use of gas and by 2035 we must stop using fossil fuel heating. Andrea explained this is a challenge, and Ongo knew they could deliver the work required from the funding received. The work has been split into 2 stages, this financial year funded by government funding, then 2<sup>nd</sup> stage by Ongo, and all work needs to be finished by the deadline of the 12-month period.

A member mentioned replacing boilers and if they are currently gas are Ongo still going to replace these with gas boilers in all homes? Ongo will still install gas as the cost price is high for alternative heating at the moment (£2-2.5k against £8k for heat pumps), however, in 2035 Ongo won't be installing gas boilers.

Karen asked for members of CV to help promote and explain the benefits of the work needed to other tenants, as some will not be happy about the upheaval, but the cost-of-living changes would be beneficial.

Dawn asked what area the properties are in. Andrea replied that they are spread across different areas, some are rural Keadby, Epworth, Barrow etc.

A member asked if personal visits are done rather than just sending a letter, Andrea explained the process for the initial survey and that will follow with visits to tenants etc.

### **Discussion Items**

#### **6. End of Year Performance Report (verbal) – Karen**

The end of year performance report is included within the paperwork. The number of complaints for the last year April 23 to April 24 were 221, a reduction from 356 the year before as we have changed the way we deal with complaints. If someone is still not happy after stage 1 it is escalated to stage 2. We had 60 stage 2 complaints last year compared to only 16 the previous year. Lots of tenants in the sector have been to the housing ombudsman (HO) due to a lot of national advertising, meaning the HO has been inundated with lots of queries and complaints. In the last 2 months we have had a drop in the number of complaints as things have improved, however only 38% of tenants said they were satisfied with complaint handling, which is still lower than the sector average. A member asked why it is saying a nil figure for March. The figures could be missing, or no returns or we genuinely had none. **Action: Customer Engagement to look into this.**

Customer Engagement: our target was for 4% of our total engagement to be with those under 30 years. We achieved 9%, which is excellent. However, it was noted that in the latest census figures, 9% of our total tenant base are now under 30 years old, meaning going forward our target will move up to 9%.

Customer Service: Customer Service total number of contacts was less than the year before (note the more contacts we get the more pressure the staff are under). We had 152k contacts dealt with, but if you look at the total number of complaints against the number of contacts it does put things into context. We have pushed the use of the MyHome App to report repairs and other things online, however we would expect the use of digital methods to increase but this hasn't happened. Only 27% of our contacts were via digital methods and we need to understand why, as digital is more convenient for

customers. Jill explained she sometimes finds MyHome difficult. **Action: Wendy will raise this with the digital group and bring back to a future CV meeting.**

Employment Support: Have exceeded target this year helping 391 tenants access coaching and training, which also helps them to sustain their tenancies by gaining sustainable employment (70 tenants last year compared to 36 the year before).

Empty Homes: 91 which is an improvement from 144 last year. However, it is taking us longer with an average of 43 days to relet a property (last year took only 33 days). Kevin explained the delay is due to the time it takes to repair properties but we are working hard to get this done quicker.

Health and Safety: Compliance checks all in target, except for asbestos surveys but they are back on track now.

Rent is back on track; we have a lot of people helping get people on Universal Credit, which could be the reason.

Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) less cases open. 363 live tenancy breaches which is average to the housing sector.

Repairs – repairs and maintenance is a large area and we were behind on all targets, which has been discussed. The performance on emergency repairs fell well below target and we know we have work to do here. Likewise the average days to complete a standard repair by the inhouse workforce (DLO) increased from 46 days in 2022/23 to 53 days in 23/24, with contractors taking 91 days to carry out a standard repair. It was reported that we now have a contractor coordinator who is looking at how contractors work and how the monitoring of works is carried out. A member added, it's sad we had to rush this section, as it's important as it is the annual performance report rather than just the usual monthly discussion. Karen suggested that a workshop could be convened to look at the performance in more detail if needed. **Action: Wendy to set up a separate workshop to discuss the performance report.**

Karen asked if anyone had recent experiences of repairs that they would be happy to share with Ongo for learning purposes, and if so, to please send the details via email to the customer engagement email address.

Karen reminded the meeting that some repair categories had changed previously in agreement with tenants and that two previous categories had been merged into one new one – the one for 24hr repairs and the one for next day repairs both now being merged into one new category for emergency repairs. Karen asked members to approve the change of performance information displayed on the website to reflect these changes for tenants at large. Approval was granted.

## **7. Executive Update (verbal) – Kevin Hornsby**

Kevin updated members on the new Corporate Plan and Strategies for the coming years. There are some staffing changes and who will be covering different service areas for an interim period. Repairs (waiting for the new Director who starts in July), and Lee Coulson will cover as Head of Service. Neighbourhood Services will come under Kevin Hornsby, Development and Assets will come under Ashley Harrison, Health & Safety will come under Jo Sugden.

Repairs is the number 1 priority to look into communications etc. and to improve the service, a lot of work has already been put in place. Contract management has not been strong enough, the Service Level Agreement needs to be enforced and contractors need to be working to Ongo's standard, as they are a reflection of Ongo.

The complaints report will be going to board today, there are some recommendations from tenants, and will be discussing details from the maladministration cases.

Office changes from moving staff from Cole Street office to Ongo House, is at the design stage. The design layout has been received and this includes looking at the use of doors suitable for anyone with a disability to be compliant. No date has been set for the work to be carried out, hoping to start by the end of August as it is a quieter time with staff annual leave.

A member asked what will happen to the old building? Kevin said that Ongo's preference is to sell and there has been some interest, which is being looked at, or the building could be leased, to generate some income

The consumer standard has shown Ongo are compliant and CV members helped with that.

### **8. Improving Lives Project (verbal) - Andy McFadden**

Andy provided members with an update on the project which will be for Ongo tenants. This is a joint project with Ongo Communities running as a pilot for the next 12 months, to help provide carpets and decorate properties. They are aiming to provide 125 carpets and painting 40 properties in the next few months.

10% of funding is set aside for non-tenants, under 35 and those that struggle to sustain their tenancy. Funding available for white goods is up to £500, if a tenant has long-term disabilities or is particularly vulnerable they can apply for £750.

61% of people live without floor covering, and with the increase in cost of living this affects health and wellbeing. In flats it can become an ASB issue in relation to noise for those living above or below flats with no flooring.

The project is open to those who are in need, not specifically new tenants, tenancy services can be contacted for this.

A member asked does it just apply to carpets? A tenant inspector explained as part of their inspections some blinds and items of furniture are already being gifted to new tenants.

Another member has witnessed a team take the lower blinds from a property but left upstairs. Andy explained some items may not be suitable to leave, but where items are in good condition they are left. Kevin explained that some items may not be to someone's taste, and they may not need them, but generally people accept items where there is a need.

Karen referred to the health and safety of some items like fire safety, and the need for Portable Appliance Testing (PAT) etc., Andy added the white goods supplied are brand new.

After some discussion on this project members asked for an update on progress to be made at a future meeting. **ACTION:** In 6 months, Andy will present at board, and will update CV.

### **Information Items**

#### **9. Customer Engagement Activity update (verbal) - tenant reps**

##### **Community Voice Away Day - Dawn**

Members felt the day went well with some good discussions on the topics at the meeting. These included the roles of officers. Impact Assessment and Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis, Consumer standards, with a role play for members for the ice breaker.

##### **Resident Scrutiny Panel - Tracey**

At the last meeting, the panel discussed a list of suggestions on areas that should take priority for the next review. From the discussions the panel agreed to concentrate on tenancy management services as CV members have already raised this at previous meetings.

In addition to the review a focus group is being arranged with all current volunteers to discuss tenancy management.

##### **Publications Panel - Jill**

The panel have reviewed the content for the next edition of the Key News, talking about statistics on what people have enjoyed and not enjoyed in previous Key News. Wendy added that the panel have been involved in the customer engagement handbook review, and a final version is due to be printed.

##### **Tenant Inspectors - Keith**

The group have been successful in getting a few more inspectors. The majority of the inspections completed each month have greatly improved with no reds, the main issues are litter and fly tipping, which has been reported to Neighbourhood Services.

#### **10. CE Update - Wendy**

During the month we've engaged with 258 tenants via our involved groups and meetings, retirement scheme focus groups, responses to Spring Key News survey, Tech & Talk session and social media interactions. 9.3% of those involved during the month were aged 30 and under.

Details of the additional work with various Customer Engagement groups was available in the report provided in the meeting pack.

Additional information and updates included the Procurement panel which now has 5 members. There are 2 tenders which the panel will be involved with, and a meeting has been arranged to discuss these, the areas to be covered are: Grounds Maintenance and Kitchens.

#### **11. Any Other Business**

Karen explained that Ongo are advertising for board members and trainee board members, these packs are available on Linkden.

Karen informed members that a public meeting for tenants living in the flats at Alvingham Road took place. Some repair work carried out at the flats highlighted the need for investment work to be made and from the feasibility work it was found the investment costs would be very high, and a decision has been made to demolish the flats. The meeting was positive, and support will be available for tenants to help them find a new home, the old market site developments in Ashby are available.

The Acting Chair asked members to consider the role of Acting Vice Chair, and anyone interested to contact Wendy via email.

Kevin mentioned the SUFC partnership work and there will be an opportunity for some tickets to be available for CV members when they plan the new football season. **ACTION:** further details to be provided when available.

#### **12. Date and Time of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on **Monday 24<sup>th</sup> June at Ongo House, 9.30 to 12.00.**

## Action Plan

	<b>Action</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Update</b>
1.	End of year performance report – complaints is showing a nil figure for March, check reason why.	Customer Engagement	Update to be given at the next meeting.
2.	Navigating round MyHome can sometimes be difficult. Member to raise at the digital tenant's group, also Wendy will check if other issues have been reported relating to this.	Wendy Wolfe	Update to be given at the next meeting.
3.	A separate workshop to be convened to look at the performance in more detail for the future end of year reports.	Customer Engagement	To be arranged when the report is due.
4.	Members asked for an update on progress for the improving Lives project to be made at a future meeting.	Andy McFadden	To be included on the agenda for 6 months' time.
5.	Tickets for Scunthorpe United football matches to be available when they plan the new season.	Kevin Hornsby	Further details will be provided when available.