

COMMUNITY VOICE
Meeting Minutes 24th June 2024



Present:

CV Members: Jill Milner (Acting Chair), Dawn Johnson (Treasurer), Jim Newcombe, Keith Lumbers, Paul Pearson, Judith Tomlinson, Stewart Pearson, Tami Reeve, Heather Gregory, Ron Weller

Ongo Staff: Wendy Wolfe, Karen Cowan, Bev Miller, Lee Coulson, Steve Hepworth (Teams), Kevin Hornsby, (Teams), Erica Sanderson (Teams)

Apologies: Jack Dawson, Tracey Bain, Eddie Stringer, Dawne Reed, Jack Dawson, Rachel Cook, Jeanette Ellis, Jo Sugden. Kevin Yearshire, Tima Obo Omari.

1. Welcome, Apologies & Housekeeping

Jill welcomed everyone to the meeting. Brief introductions were given and it was explained there was no planned fire drill; the fire exits were pointed out. Members were reminded not to bring up personal issues and to raise their hand if they have a point or question during the meeting. The CV Folder was pointed out if members had a query that they needed to chase up.

2. Minutes & Actions of Previous Meeting

Keith and Dawn proposed and seconded the minutes from the previous meeting. From the end of year performance report it was noted that there were 18 complaints and not zero as appearing in the report.

It was mentioned that navigating round the MyHome app can be difficult. Further details requested for issues to be looked into. The digital Tenants Groups will look at this.

A separate workshop will be arranged in the next couple of months.

Improving Lives Project will be updated at a future CV meeting to discuss progress.

3. Treasurers Report

Dawn updated the meeting advising that the books had been audited, with the findings being that everything was in order. The closing balance as of 31st March £5262.10.

4. Board Observers

Next Board meeting via Ongo House Board Room or Microsoft Teams is taking place on 1st July 2024 at 2pm. Three CV members can attend but the names of those interested must be notified to customer engagement team in advance.

Decision Items

5. New Ongo Strategies – Erica Sanderson

There have been some minor wording changes:

Be a great landlord:

- Changed - At least 97% of reported repairs will be completed within the agreed timescales **and** At least 90% of reported non-emergency repairs will be completed within the agreed timescales

Customer focus:

- **Changed** - The majority of tenants will be satisfied with our approach to complaint handling **to** The majority of tenants that have made a complaint within the last 12 months will be satisfied with our approach to complaint handling
- **Replaced** The number of complaints received will consistently be within the top performing quartile **with** We will reduce the number of complaints that are escalated to stage 2 of our internal complaints process or to the Housing Ombudsman
- **Replaced** At least 90% of tenants will be satisfied with the quality of their new home **with** At least 90% of tenants will be satisfied with the overall condition of their home at the time of let

A member raised a question as to why the target for ASB satisfaction was lower (60%) than the targets for other satisfaction measures (80% or 90%). The reason for this is that Ongo need to set realistic targets and the reality is that satisfaction on the way landlords handle ASB across the sector is much lower than satisfaction for other services. This is generally down to the fact that, unless tenants get the outcome they want, which is often for the people causing the issues to be evicted (which is an absolute last resort), they are not satisfied with the outcome.

Performance against targets will be monitored quarterly by the leadership team and fed back to CV. A member asked about the target set for Ongo contractors. The response was that targets are detailed within SLA's (service level agreements) that are agreed with the contractor, these targets are set in line with Ongo standards. It was asked how staff were going to keep motivated and happy. Response being that staff have already been involved in discussions relating to targets and priorities, linking into what relates to them and their job roles. Another question was raised as to how Ongo are going to reduce carbon emissions by 20%. It was acknowledged that this will be a real challenge, however work on some older properties will increase the rating by more than the average. Funds from the decarbonisation project will be used to raise properties to EPC (energy performance certificate) rating level C wherever possible.

CV agreed they were happy to sign off the strategies before going to Ongo Homes board for formal approval.

Discussion Items

6. Executive Update – Kevin Hornsby

There has been a spike in complaints during the first quarter, 66%, with approximately half being repairs. The team are working hard to bring these in line, the figures show that quality work is being done at stage 1 that has reduced the escalation to stage 2, showing good cross team working. There have been 3 new Housing Ombudsman determinations; 2 maladministration and 1 non-maladministration. As a company Ongo takes learning away from each of these cases on what to improve moving forward.

The Housing Perks app is going well with over half Ongo's colleagues signed up and 570 tenants. This has resulted in £80k being spent and £4k being saved.

A board strategy day took place looking at challenges to the sector, new inspection regimes and discussing risks on corporate strategies.

The Improving Lives project (carpeting and decorating homes project) has had its first set of referrals and work has started.

A member asked if the increase in complaints is down to companies soliciting for business? In part this will be true, but people are much more aware of how to complain now. It was asked what determines a tenancy breach? This could be an untidy garden, property alteration that hasn't been authorized, the beginning of an ASB case etc. A member said that complaints will happen if tradespeople do not attend jobs when expected, Ongo is working on addressing the problem of non-attendance and 'getting it right first time', however sometimes when a tenant describes a job it can be interpreted incorrectly and vice versa.

Community Voice are asked to try and spread the word that others need to ring the contact centre if an appointment has been missed/late arrival, so that Ongo can address the issue.

7. Governance Review – Yvonne Davies

Yvonne introduced herself and gave a brief background of what she wants to learn from the group. She is looking at the CV structure and how tenants can influence board decisions and has already been doing lots of research, e.g. reading self-assessments and minutes of meetings. CV members introduced themselves and advised of the different groups that they sit on if involved with more than one. Yvonne asked how voices got through from CV to board. Various members of the group responded by saying that they bring information from tenants and their community/neighbourhood areas which they raise and discuss in meetings. Members are from diverse areas, rural villages through to town centres.

Members stated that minutes of their meetings are shared with the Homes Board (Board), that a CV Chairs report is submitted for inclusion in Board meeting packs, that the Board's Senior Independent Director (used to be Melvin and now Rachel) is invited to attend CV meetings etc.

Members stated Ongo staff draft the agenda and discuss and agree it with the CV officers but they know that they can ask for additional agenda items to be added. Or if at a CV meeting a topic comes up that takes up more than the allotted time, a separate meeting to discuss it in further detail can be set up.

A member noted that there are several different avenues where tenants can get their voices heard, not just CV. They also advised that there are no exclusions on age, disabilities etc. Yvonne asked about training and what CV received. It was explained that the group are advised of all training available but again they are also aware if a group or individual needs training on a specific subject that they can ask and where possible this would be organised. If the skills necessary can be found within Ongo staff then training would take place in house, as VFM (Value for Money) is always considered. However external training is also accessed where required, e.g. TPAS. Members also advised that they do undertake some mandatory training on a regular basis (usually annually), on topics such as EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion). It was noted that most Ongo

departments have provided training sessions so that members can learn what is involved in the different services/roles within the organisation.

A member stated that tenants contribute to Ongo's self-assessments of the RSH consumer standards, adding that at the last CV Away Day, a workshop took place to contribute to the self-assessment of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

CV Members know that the suggestions, ideas and queries they put forward will be passed on and changes may be put in place. A member mentioned that a SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) has been carried out with members of each customer engagement structure to assess its success, or whether changes are needed. They also put forward suggestions, such as changing wording on draft policies etc.

Yvonne asked what CV thought was the most important when looking at performance figures. A member said that Compliance is extremely important, e.g. gas safety checks and this is usually shown at 100%. The members are aware that repairs are struggling now but know that the new Director of Property Services is starting soon along with a new Head of Service and feel that a fresh pair of eyes will be good for the organisation.

It was asked about younger people having their voices heard. A member said that these will often come through digitally, through surveys, e mails, key news and ad hoc workshops. Another member noted that younger peoples voices also come through from the children of tenants and grandchildren, everyone's voice being important as no one voice is more important than the next persons.

Yvonne asked if members got to attend board meetings and it was confirmed that yes they could attend as an observer but that they couldn't put forward any questions at that stage.

Yvonne noted that tenant satisfaction is big currently and how do CV see this. Members said that the routine performance reports that are presented to CV show this. If they have any questions they put these forward at the time but any that can't be answered immediately by a member of staff present will be taken away with an answer provided at the next meeting. The members said that there is always an open channel of communication via customer engagement. Even out of hours queries can be sent in and the team will respond as soon as possible by either answering the query themselves or directing to the relevant department.

Yvonne asked how involved the group gets with dissatisfaction. Members stated that CV and often the Resident Scrutiny Panel will get involved with this type of discussion. Ongo often offer up a number of suggestions on what to scrutinise but CV & RSP members can also offer suggestions.

Tenant Inspectors use a traffic light system to assess their inspection findings. With dissatisfaction they now rarely get a red but when they do they investigate it thoroughly with the teams that are involved.

Yvonne asked members what the moments are they can think of that they are most proud of. Members responded saying that the Resident Scrutiny Panel has influenced and implemented many changes, the complaints panel influenced a dedicated board member to champion complaints etc. The Tenant Inspectors have had the opportunity to go out and shadow members of staff that are involved in the various processes so that they can independently scrutinise and assess.

It was noted that each of the main customer engagement groups have a dedicated volunteer that will report on their meetings to the following CV meeting to update everyone on what has been happening.

8. Key Performance & Satisfaction Results – Karen Cowan

Karen ran through some of the balanced scorecard performance details that had been sent out in the paperwork. Kevin advised that the reason the abandoned calls had risen was probably down to high demand on the service, however the call back facility is now in place and should help the figures.

Regarding the employment support it is hard to keep track of the longevity of people who stay in the workplace.

ACTION consider should this indicator remain on the CV balanced scorecard.

Steve advised the group that with the repairs and maintenance section it shows some red indicators. Although the number of average days went up to complete a repair, Ongo have been doing a lot of work on historic repairs that may have been missed, so satisfaction has actually gone up.

A member stated that the gas safety checks seem to be brought forward consistently year on year. It was explained this is a deliberate process to allow a lead in time, technically doing 13 months of work in a 12-month period, to allow for non-access and difficult tenants. It was also asked how much staff sickness/annual leave affects repair times. The response being that this does affect times and it is hard to catch up, it is also difficult and time consuming to recruit into the sector. A member asked why only tenants pay service charges for outside communal spaces. It was advised that Ongo can only charge Ongo tenants legally through their tenancy.

9. Customer Voice Report – Karen Cowan

Karen advised that this report was very similar to the one given to Board about how Ongo engages and listens to its tenants. The report included how tenants input into the service level agreements that were set for contractors, the self-assessments against the consumer standards etc. Also, it reported on informal engagement such as Ongo Action Days out in neighbourhoods, public meetings and retirement scheme meetings.

Information Items

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

Complaints Panel – Dawn. Dawn advised that this group has been looking into a live complaint and they have all found this very interesting, they are checking that the correct process has been followed and putting forward suggestions for the ongoing investigation.

Property Services Panel – Dawn. Dawn updated saying that the membership has grown on this group so lots of new ideas and opinions being shared whilst challenging Ongo staff, getting reasons why things happen. They have completed their self-assessment and would still like some more people to join to get a broader range of ways of thinking.

Resident Scrutiny Panel – Stewart. This group is doing some research and contacting other Housing Associations re the language used for tenancy services, relationships etc.

Procurement Panel – Jill. They are currently working on grounds maintenance and new kitchens, trying to get the process right from the very start of procurement right through to tender process, covering all choices of specifications and instructions.

11. CE Update – Wendy

Wendy talked about the report that was included in the pack.

Wendy and Tim had given a presentation at a conference recently and felt it had gone very well. Karen is to be speaking at a NHF webinar on 10th July and will be discussing Community Voice.

12. Any Other Business

- A member said that they had joined the Housing Ombudsman panel and had attended a meeting on Zoom.
- Acting chair reminded members that the next meeting is an evening meeting starting at 6pm at the Arc.
- Wendy reminded people that, although she won't be there for the July meeting, the nomination forms ahead of the group's AGM in August will be sent out for anyone that would like to stand for an Officer position, along with the officer specifications.

13. Reflection On Meeting

Karen noted that she was proud of the responses that the members gave to Yvonne's questions.

14. Date and Time of next meeting

The next meeting will take place on **Monday 15th July at The Arc, 6pm – 8.30pm.**

Action Plan

	Action	Who	Update
1.	Longevity of workplace employment.	Employment Support	