

COMMUNITY VOICE MINUTES

Held at 9.30am on Monday 16th December 2024
Holme Hall Golf Club



Present:

Community Voice Members: Jill Milner (Chair), Dawn Johnson (Treasurer), Eddie Stringer, Jim Newcombe, Judith Tomlinson, Tracey Bain, Paul Pearson, Eric Gosling, Heather Gregory, Anita James, Tami Reeve, Keith Lumbers

Ongo Staff: Karen Cowan, Bev Miller, Dawn Hill, Kevin Hornsby, Steve Hepworth, Hayley Fiteni, Erica Sanderson, Scott Strong

1. Welcome, Apologies and Housekeeping

- Apologies received from Lee Coulson, Steve Ellard, Wendy Wolfe, Rhiannon Jeans, Harry Jackson, Rachel Cook, Charmaine Mande.
- The Chair reminded CV that the general enquiries log is for chasing anything that has already been reported.
- No fire drills were expected but the exits were pointed by a member of staff.

2. Minutes & Actions From Previous Meeting

- Tracey and Tami proposed and seconded that the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting held in November.

3. Treasurer's Report

- No questions were raised re. the report that was provided in the paperwork.

4. Board Observers

- Meetings taking place via the Board Room at Ongo House or via Microsoft Teams:
- Ongo Communities meeting on 30th January at 2pm.
- Ongo Homes Board meeting on 21st January at 2pm.
- Three CV members can attend either of, or both meetings. Those interested to inform the Customer Engagement Team.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

5. Executive Update – Kevin Hornsby

- Reached the final of the urbanisation awards for work at the Arc, unfortunately we didn't win but the other finalists were from very big organisations and had massive city centre projects and regeneration.
- Just signed up to another 12 months of the Housing Perks app.
- An event at Grimsby was held at the football stadium, over 55 tenants attended to look at information stands that Ongo had there, many of them stating that they were surprised to see how much Ongo offer in the way of supporting their tenants. Some of them saying that they thought that when the initiative was promoted it must have been a scam, as they hadn't received regular communication from their prior landlord. Ollie

attended the event and one tenant is due to observe the next CV meeting. Ollie will also be following up on several (15-20) leads in the coming weeks.

6. **Landlord Services consultation feedback**

- Dawn Hill introduced herself and spoke about the survey that had recently taken place. She ran through the presentation (to be included in the minutes).
- She noted that if Ongo can get the firm foundation of the first slide right, then it shows the commitment to improve customer satisfaction. A member noted that with ASB/fly-tipping, as quick as it gets removed it appears again. This is where Ongo need to work with the Local Authority to try and educate tenants that the Council will remove 3 bulky items (in one trip) free of charge. A named officer can help build relationships up with the tenants and educate to not fly-tip and instead to take pride in their community. With the new properties in Grimsby it is necessary to develop better relationships with the Grimsby police, Safer Neighbourhoods etc. It was also noted that tenants need to be aware of what exactly ASB is and isn't, plus what Ongo can take on and what they can't, to manage their expectations from the start of the process.
- What came from the consultation survey was that a lot of people want face-to-face contact with a named person so they can communicate with just one person. There was lots of good feedback. Karen reminded the group that tenant feedback has been collected from the Resident Scrutiny Panel review, the Community Voice workshop, from door-knocking, digital surveys etc.
- Dawn advised that the team will be sharing updates on changes that are to be made via social media channels. The chair suggested that the group regularly look at information on the website and don't wait for a topic to be brought to Community Voice. It was also noted that sometimes the survey requests can contain incorrect information, could be sent out too early or too late.

7. **Proposals for the new social rent policy - Scott Strong**

Scott introduced himself as the new Business Assurance Risk Officer. He advised that Government are seeking responses to consultation.

They are proposing to set a rent policy for social housing that will remain in place for at least 5 years, from April 1st, 2026:

It is the Government's intention to set a further 5-year settlement for the period beyond this, however they are also seeking views on possible variations to this approach that could potentially improve the stability of rent policy. E.g. confirming the policy for a longer period (e.g. 7 or 10 years) or on a rolling basis.

Generally permit social housing rents to increase each year by Consumer Price Index plus 1 per cent (CPI+1%), applying to both social and affordable rents.

Definition – Consumer Price Index otherwise known as Inflation.

1. CV members found a 5-year settlement to be more limiting and voted in favour of a 10-year rent settlement to bring more stability.

2. Members who receive benefit payments to pay rent will not be affected as increases are paid. Affordability for working tenants would reduce and some tenants might struggle, especially those who are struggling already. One member said her pension would increase by £4.70 and rent by £5.40 so the actual difference is small. Increase of up to CPI + 1% voted by CV.

8. **Governance Update – Karen Cowan**

- Just a quick update to say that Fiona Ruddick has now left Ongo and a new Governance Manager, Gemma Willey, has been recruited.

ACTION: Karen will ask Gemma to observe a Community Voice meeting in the near future.

9. **Key Performance & Satisfaction Results – Karen Cowan**

- Karen talked through some of the key points on the performance information sent within the pack.
- There has been over 16,000 contacts made to the Contact Centre. Some of these contacts will be chasing repairs rather than initially reporting them.
- 72 homes were relet, the average number of days taken is 21 days now. This figure has significantly improved from last year and sector wide is approx. 40 days. Ongo are now down to 84 empty properties.
- Marginally behind on Asbestos checks but this is likely to be a recording error.
- Income team continuing to work well. It was asked if the previous Guinness properties are compliant in their rent collection. Dawn responded to say that the teams are helping these tenants with the different support Ongo offers in relation to employment services, financial advice etc. There is lots of work going into engaging with these particular tenants at this time.
- The repairs and maintenance recording figures may be slightly incorrect for emergency repairs, instead of closing the emergency job down, it is being left open for any further work to be done. Work is being done with the trades to educate them on the impact their work has on tenants.
- Tenancy Services work is ongoing and will be a piece of work on what ASB is, what Ongo can take on and what is never going to be resolved. Also showing some tenants how to be a good neighbour and be respectful of others. Ongo need to ensure ASB is continuing to be easy to report but also to manage tenants expectations and not raise a case automatically.
- It was asked why a repair would not be showing on My Home.
ACTION: Hayley Fiteni to look into this.
- It was noted by a member that there are several occasions where someone has turned up to do a repair and the tenant has not been informed, therefore they may not be in. This is a waste of resources and should not happen. Ongo are trying to use in-house trades for as much as possible, but working with contractors will always be necessary and their service level agreements need to be such that communication is of upmost importance.

INFORMATION ITEMS

10. **Customer Engagement Activity Update**

- Complaints Panel – Dawn stated that the panel has been looking at themes in the

complaints Ongo receive. There are occasions when people use their poor mental health as leverage to get their issues resolved as a priority. Ongo supports tenants in these cases, but needs to remember to support the members of staff that are involved and may be affected. This is going to be looked at and dealt with.

- Tenant Inspectors – Jill reported that most inspections are coming back as green, very few are rated red now which shows great improvement. Themes are that it is mostly fly-tipping that is the issue. The Tenant Inspectors guide was looked at and gone through carefully to advise the group what they should and should not report on. It was advised that in the virtual inspections that they don't need to report on any repairs that the Lettings Officer mentions.

11. Customer Engagement Updates – Karen Cowan

- Karen ran through some of the report that was provided in the packs. It was noted Ongo has far less resident and community groups than in previous years. This is not necessarily a bad thing because, if a group is only involved in doing social things for the community, then Ongo doesn't need to be involved. The Regulator of Social Housing is keen to know that Ongo learns from its tenants and that we record this information. It was asked how this is recorded. Karen explained that Wendy provides quarterly performance information, including outputs and outcomes. Karen also presents a Customer Voice report for Board every six months, including what customer engagement are doing and achieving, you said we did results etc.
- It was noted that, when the Dine and Dance event had been promoted on social media, that there were some unfavourable responses from tenants questioning why they weren't aware of it. Karen responded to state that the event is specifically for the people living in Ongo's retirement living / sheltered schemes, the Myos House dementia scheme and tenants who are supported through the learning disability officer. If there isn't enough uptake then other tenants may be accommodated too, but usually the take-up matches the capacity number for the venue. Events for other demographics are catered for during the year, e.g. Christmas lunches at the Arc for isolated vulnerable tenants, the Ongo Carnival for families etc. The aim for Ongo is to give back to as many people as possible.

12. Any Other Business including Reflection on Meeting

- Bev Miller is leaving the Customer Engagement Team. She is staying with Ongo but transferring into the Procurement Team. All in the meeting wished her well.
- A member asked for a compliment to be passed to Emma Patrick for her excellent work on summarising the Key News survey responses.
ACTION: feedback to be sent.
- Send a separate sheet detailing meeting dates with the minutes.
ACTION: check for an evening meeting first then send out.
- Look at June meeting as it shows it is at Ongo House on the schedule.
ACTION: to be looked into.
- The members enjoyed Dawn's item as they could give feedback instantly. The group are looking forward to more focus groups where they can learn about the specifics of a topic.

13. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 20th January 2025 at The Arc, 1pm to 4pm.

Action Plan

	Action	Who	Update
1.	Ask Gemma Willey to attend a future meeting as an observer.	Customer Engagement	
2.	Check why a job would not be showing on the My Home app.	Hayley Fiteni	
3.	Pass compliments to Emma for her work.	Bev Miller	Completed.
4.	Check / confirm the venue for the June CV meeting. Also check whether an evening meeting is required.	Customer Engagement	