

## COMMUNITY VOICE MINUTES

Held at 9.30am on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025  
The Arc, blended style (face to face & via MS Teams)



### **Present:**

**Community Voice Members:** Jill Milner (in-part), Dawn Johnson, Jim Newcombe, Keith Lumbers, Angela Smith, Tracey Bain, Ron Weller, Graham Lloyd, Stewart Pearson, Judith Tomlinson, Tami Reeve, Eric Gosling (in-part), Rhiannon Jeans, Charmaine Mande

**Ongo Staff:** Wendy Wolfe (Chair), Steve Hepworth, Jo Sugden, Kevin Hornsby, Mo Mathieson, Claire Coyle, Ollie Mortimer

**Also Present:** Sharon Bernard-Earnshaw, Paul Smith (tenant observers)

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

- The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were given. Wendy was chairing the meeting due to Jill not being available, however, Jill did join the meeting later via Teams and Tami (Vice-Chair) attended digitally.
- Apologies were received from Harry Jackson, Heather Gregory, Paul Pearson, Tima Omari and Steve Ellard (Ongo).

**ACTION:** Send Jordan Barr (Head of Maintenance & Building Safety) a placeholder invite for future meetings.

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

- Dawn and Tracey proposed and seconded that the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting held in March.
  - Wendy provided an update on the actions:
    - The updated CV meeting dates had been sent to all members. There is ongoing internal work to discuss the future agenda items for CV meetings.
    - A physical copy of the updated Lettable Standard had been provided to a member.
    - A member will have a look at the Ongo website and contact Customer Engagement if they require any support.
    - Kevin provided an update on, when tenants transfer to another property which is classed as an internal transfer, whether customers should have to pay their rent in advance on a new property if they are already in credit on their current property. It would be worked out on a case-by-case basis with the individual customer. He assured all in attendance that the money would always be transferred across to their new tenancy, though Kevin recognised that the speed in which this takes place needs to improve in some cases.
- ACTION:** Look into internal transfers over the past three months to identify any trends and issues.
- Wendy had shared information with the Performance team for future reports at CV meetings.
  - Further consultation is required with tenants about the possibility of having SMS as another method of contacting Ongo. Expectations would need to be managed on the timescales to receive a response.

### **3. Board Observers**

- Meetings taking place via the Board Room at Ongo House or via Microsoft Teams:

- Ongo Homes Board meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> May at 2pm.
- Ongo Communities Board meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> July at 2pm.
- Customer Focus Committee on 21<sup>st</sup> May at 1pm.
- Three CV members can attend any of the meetings, and those interested were asked to inform Customer Engagement.
- If members wish to observe digitally via Teams, then they can't be sent the paperwork to their personal email address for security purposes. Members were encouraged to attend in-person, if possible, as the paperwork would be loaded onto iPads for them and made available at the meetings.

## DISCUSSION ITEMS

### 4. Tenancy Fraud – Claire Coyle

- Claire went through a presentation to provide further information.  
**ACTION:** Send a copy of the presentation to all members.
- It included:
  - The definition of tenancy fraud
  - Why it is an important issue
  - The various types of tenancy fraud
  - Why someone might sublet their property unlawfully
  - What Ongo are doing to tackle the issue
  - How customers can report
  - Policies and procedures that cover tenancy fraud
  - Enforcement
- Ongoing work is taking place to speak to those tenants who haven't contacted Ongo over the past year and the reasons why. Potentially high-risk areas are also being profiled, such as Allenby Close (Lincoln), with a risk-based approach being implemented for such areas.
- Awareness of tenancy fraud is being raised internally by training relevant teams, updating the public website, sharing on social media and including an article in the upcoming summer Key News.
- Several members raised experiences that Claire said wouldn't class as tenancy fraud. Wendy reminded all members to not raise personal issues, and for these to be reported through the usual contact methods to the Customer Experience team / relevant external agency.
- In response to another query that is currently under investigation, she said that a certain level of evidence is required for Ongo to take back a property.
- A member who transferred as part of the Guinness stock mentioned that, once every two years, they are away from their property for a couple of months. How would Ongo view that? Claire said it would depend on the terms of their Tenancy Agreement which also transferred from Guinness. For an Ongo Tenancy Agreement, it asks a tenant to notify Ongo if they will be vacating the property for more than 28 days.  
**ACTION:** To be looked further into for member who transferred from Guinness.
- Another member asked what would happen if a tenant passed away, and if their children would be able to take over the tenancy? It would depend on the terms of the Succession Law, the Tenancy Agreement and the individual case, as circumstances can differ.

- A query was raised about a person's tenancy if they went to prison. The case would be investigated further before any decision would be made.
- A member asked how long a property needs to be empty before it would be investigated as possibly abandoned? Though it's difficult to give an exact timeframe, Tenancy Officers do a range of checks if any reports of possible abandonment are received.

## 5. **Key Performance & Satisfaction report – Kevin Hornsby**

- The performance scorecard and a covering report had been included in the papers sent to members in advance of the meeting.
- **Complaints** – there is a high number of complaints, but Ongo are performing well in responding to cases within timescales. This had been discussed in more detail at the latest Complaints Panel meeting.
- **Customer Engagement** – continuing to achieve over the 10% target for youth engagement (aged 30 and under) each month.
- **Customer Experience** – there remains a big demand for services, with high call-handling figures but also a high level of digital contacts.
- **Empty Homes** – maintaining a low tenancy turnover rate, which is better than the sector average. There were 114 empty properties when the report was published, Kevin explained that the aim is to be at less than 100. It took an average 39 days from keys being received for a property to a new tenant moving in, an area which is being targeted to ensure properties are ready quicker in the future.
- A member asked about performance on letting garages. There has been focused work over the past couple of years, which has led to a reduction from over 200. Though the Lettings member of staff responsible for garage lets has been off work, and the majority of the team's work is to let homes, the number of empty garages is low.
- **Compliance** – it was questioned why the Legionella test checks conducted on time was at 89% in February. A contractor is normally used for these checks, and the figure needs to be at 100% each month. It was thought that it might be due to the properties that were transferred from Guinness.  
**ACTION:** Clarify reason and provide an update.
- Jo asked if it would be worthwhile to have numbers alongside the percentages to provide further context.  
**ACTION:** Look into the possibility of providing numbers as well as percentages for the performance information.
- Following a query raised about outside taps and if they would be taken off to reduce the risk of Legionella, it was agreed to be checked.  
**ACTION:** Update to be provided direct to member about process.
- **Income** – there has been a positive upward trend, with a particular focus on reducing the arrears levels inherited from Guinness and the amount of former tenant arrears is also going down.
- **Repairs** – Mo delivered an update received from Jordan. The rate of emergency repairs completed within target timescales was 87.9% in February compared to the 85% target. Work is taking place on how Ongo categorise emergency repairs, as around 30% of the jobs wasn't emergency work. The team are working through the backlog of non-emergency repairs and, though it is not showing in the performance data yet, there has been an improvement in the amount of repair jobs closed down

and those completed right first time.

- A productive session recently took place with the Property Services Panel to complete the self-assessment against the Regulator of Social Housing's Safety & Quality Standard. Improvements are also being made to the internal Dynamic Resource Scheduling (DRS) system, including allocating jobs to specific tradespeople based on where they live so there is less travelling and more efficiency.
- A member expressed their concern at the 57% rate in February for the percentage of 7-day repairs completed in target. Steve answered that it is the hardest category to achieve as the timescale disappears quickly, and a combination of factors need to be right so that jobs don't go over the seven days. It is important that the scheduling tool is working effectively and that every job is completed on the day of the appointment, avoiding any follow-up work wherever possible.
- The workforce within the team has increased by 25% (10 additional tradespeople) over recent months.
- When transferring from Guinness, a member explained they had an issue with their front door which was part of a programme of improvement works. They enquired if, since the transfer, Ongo were also due to carry out the investment programme. The member was encouraged to report the issue so a repair could be raised.
- An observer provided an experience of the wrong trade being sent out for a job, which led to unnecessary delays. Steve acknowledged that this is another main focus. Though Ongo employ Maintenance Assistants who are able to carry out some different trade's jobs, a skills audit has since taken place so that the right Assistants with the required skills needed to complete a repair is matched to that job.
- A fellow observer enquired about communal boilers for high-rise flats and maisonettes. The 10-day timescale doesn't apply, as that is for individual boilers, but Ongo would still endeavour to repair them as quickly as possible. Temporary heaters would be provided if the work wasn't able to be completed swiftly. It was also recognised that communication needs to improve and be quicker when there are issues that could affect a lot of properties.
- A member was encouraged to email full details about an individual issue so it could be investigated further.

**ACTION:** Member to send details for Repairs team to look into.

## **6. Executive Update – Kevin**

- **Football Partnerships** – these continue to go well, with over 1,000 customers getting access to free football through Ongo's links with Scunthorpe United, Doncaster Rovers and Grimsby Town. The partnerships with Scunthorpe and Doncaster will continue next season and, after a member queried about Grimsby, further discussions are due to take place.
- A partnership with Scunthorpe Rugby Club is due to be launched in September.
- **British Steel** – initial discussions have taken place with North Lincolnshire Council (NLC) about the impact that any potential job losses at the Scunthorpe steelworks could have. There is proactive employment support in place for anybody who would benefit.
- **Placeshapers** – representatives from the national network of housing associations recently visited The Arc, Viking Centre and Cole Street office with Steve. A blog about the visit is available at <https://www.placeshapers.org/ongo-transforming-estates-changing-futures/>
- **Repairs** – Steve gave a further update from the previous agenda item. The Schedule

of Rates (SoR) has been relaunched to ensure that the right tradesperson is matched to the relevant job and to reduce any wasted resources. Trades colleagues are also going to be involved in performance data and satisfaction figures to show the impact that an incomplete job might have on a person. There remains a lot of outstanding jobs in the system, though this rate is improving and continues to be worked on.

- There will be a new fleet of vans rolled out over the coming months, as the previous vans had reached the end of the lease period. Their design will be slightly changed, with plans for QR codes on the vans which will link to different support and opportunities that Ongo offer.
- A member asked if the new fleet would include electric vans. Steve said that the original plans included them, but the van supplier couldn't deliver them for over 18 months so this will be reviewed again when the next lease reaches its end period.
- Another member queried why Ongo were leasing the vans rather than purchasing them outright. It is more Value for Money (VfM) to lease them as it includes all maintenance costs.

## DISCUSSION ITEMS

### 7. **Customer Engagement Activity Update – Tenant reps**

- **Complaints self-assessment focus group** – Judith and Dawn said that the Complaints Panel session will lead to some improvements, including more consistency between information on the public Ongo website and My Home. The final document is being prepared before it will be delivered to the Customer Focus Committee. CV will also receive an update for information.
- **Property Services Panel (PSP)** – Tracey gave an update. A main PSP meeting had recently taken place which included updates on a new material supplier, changes in timescales to new kitchens and bathrooms, plus sharing customer experiences to aid future learning. A separate self-assessment workshop then took place on the Safety & Quality consumer standard.
- Tracey noted that Jordan and Adam Quickenden (Maintenance Operations Manager) are settling well into their roles and have provided updates about the service including ongoing priorities and where improvements have been made so far. Different timescales that PSP helped to influence last year are now beginning to have a positive impact on some performance levels.
- **Neighbourhood Management Policy focus group** – Dawn felt that the combined session for CV members and Tenant Inspectors (TI) was very informative, especially Ongo's approach to anti-social behaviour (ASB).

### 8. **Customer Engagement Updates – Wendy Wolfe**

- The full report had been included in the meeting papers.
- A recent TI mystery shop into the contact centre highlighted some further training for staff. A report will be taken to the group's next meeting in May, and the manager of the service area will implement the actions / recommendations arising from the exercise.
- Updates were also provided on:
  - Community Groups
  - Key News
  - Neighbourhood Engagement events

- Retirement scheme focus groups
- My Home and digi session to be held at Greenfields (Goxhill) on Friday 9 May
- Wendy has received approval from NLC for the Ongo Carnival to take place on Wednesday 6 August at Manor Park (Burringham Road, Scunthorpe). Many external agencies have already confirmed their attendance.
- Interviews recently took place for the Customer Engagement Assistant vacancy, and Sharon Wright is due to start on Monday 28 April. The Customer Engagement Officer vacancy is currently with the Executive Leadership Team for approval.
- Tracey gave a compliment to Wendy and Ollie for the work that they are doing despite being two members of staff down.

#### **9. Any Other Business, including Reflection on Meeting**

- A member enquired if a tenant was vulnerable and were unable to manage a gas supply. Steve explained that they would not be able maintain a tenancy and would get help in supported living.
- A fellow member had received a letter from Sure Maintenance (contractor who carries out the gas servicing) and was unhappy with the tone, particularly the paragraph about pre-payment meters. Another member agreed that the wording felt harsh and too strong.
- Wendy explained that the Publications Panel had previously provided feedback on a gas servicing letter, and changes had been made. It was felt that this was a new letter and will be reviewed.

**ACTION:** Wording of the gas servicing letter to be looked at.

- A member asked for clarification on the checks being carried out every ten months when it is an annual requirement. It was confirmed that this allows sufficient time for the appointment to be re-arranged if required, so it still falls within the 12-month timescale.
- They also asked about wheelchair arrangements for the Carnival. NLC have been asked to cut the grass as near to the day as possible, and it is difficult to find another suitable location for the size of the event that is completely flat. The current location is also within close proximity to two neighbourhoods, Westcliff and Riddings, with a large amount of Ongo properties. Others using wheelchairs and mobility scooters have been able to attend in previous years.

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

- As previously agreed, CV meetings will now take place on a bi-monthly basis to fit in with the Customer Focus Committee meetings.
  - Two members asked for the 2025 CV meeting dates to be sent to them again.
- ACTION:** Arrange to send to both members.
- The next meeting will be on **Monday 16 June 2025, 6pm to 9pm, at The Arc.**