

COMMUNITY VOICE MINUTES
Held at 6pm on Monday 16th June 2025
The Arc, blended style (face to face & via MS Teams)



Present:

Community Voice Members: Jill Milner (Chair), Tami Reeve (Vice-Chair), Keith Lumbers, Paul Pearson, Angela Smith, Tracey Bain, Judith Tomlinson, Rhiannon Jeans, Jim Newcombe, Paul Smith, Charmaine Mande, Eddie Stringer, Tima Omari

Ongo Staff: Wendy Wolfe, Martin Phillips, Kevin Hornsby, Mo Mathieson, Louise Usher, Erica Sanderson, Jordan Barr, Ollie Mortimer

Also Present: Trevor Davey (tenant observer)

1. Welcome, Apologies and Housekeeping

- The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were given.
- Apologies were received from Dawn Johnson, Heather Gregory, Eric Gosling, Harry Jackson, Stewart Pearson, Jake Stockwell, Sharon Bernard-Earnshaw, Graham Lloyd, Steve Hepworth (Ongo), Sharon Wright (Ongo) and Matt Sugden (Board).
- Members were reminded not to raise personal issues during the meeting. If they had previously reported an issue but hadn't received an update, they were encouraged to add it to the enquiry log.

2. Minutes & Actions from Previous Meeting

- Keith and Paul S proposed and seconded that the minutes were a true and accurate record of the meeting held in April.
- Wendy provided an update on the actions:
 - Jordan Barr (Head of Maintenance and Building Safety) had been invited to future Community Voice (CV) meetings.
 - Cases of tenants moving from an Ongo home to another, and if a credit position on their rent is used for advance rent on their new property, had been looked into by a Lettings Team Leader. There are no particular themes or trends, each transfer is treated on a case-by-case basis and is assessed.
 - The Tenancy Fraud presentation had been shared with members.
 - An update had been provided direct to a member in terms of responsibilities for not being at their home for a certain period of time, as per their tenancy agreement.
 - Legionella test checks that were conducted at time was 89% for February, as three sites (Salacon Way, Wigmore Court and School Close) did not have their usual monthly temperature checks due to access issues. This has now been resolved and is back to 100%.
 - In response to a query raised about outside taps and the possibility of legionella, outside taps are not removed. This is included in information to tenants regarding management of legionella, and any outside taps are flushed with the rest of the system if the property is empty as part of that process.
 - A member's maintenance issue is part of an ongoing case that is under investigation.
 - The gas servicing letter had previously been amended in consultation with the Publications Panel who made some changes to the wording. After checking the letter received by the member, it was found that the contractor had sent the old

version. This has now been reported back to the contractor and an update was provided direct to member.

- The CV meeting dates had been sent to members who had requested an additional copy.

3. Board Observers

- Meetings taking place via the Board Room at Ongo House or via Microsoft Teams:
 - Ongo Homes Board on Monday 30th June, 2pm - 5pm, at Ongo House
 - Customer Focus Committee on Wednesday 16th July, 9.30am – 11.30am, at The Arc
 - Ongo Communities Board on Friday 25th July, 2pm – 4pm, at Ongo House
- 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.

4. New Developments Update – Martin Phillips

- Martin went through a presentation to provide further information on new homes built between April 2024 – March 2025.
ACTION: Send a copy of the presentation to all members.
- It included:
 - How many developments were started on site, how many were completed and in what areas
 - Some key highlights such as building specialist bungalows for specific needs, one-bed homes and for different tenures, including social rent (lowest rent that is charged)
 - Building new homes in six of the seven Local Authority areas throughout the region
- A member enquired about the size of the specially designed wheelchair bungalows and if there were any age restrictions in place. Martin confirmed that there are no restrictions and that the homes are spacious. Ongo are looking into opportunities to build more of these in the future.
- Another member felt it was reassuring that more homes are being built for social rent. In response to a query if the standard of build is different between social rent and affordable rent properties, Martin confirmed that there is no difference apart from the rent setting.
- Homes England, where Ongo get funding from to help build new developments, have had an increased focus on properties for social rent over the past year. Ongo have been successful with their strategy for funding applications in 2024/25.
- A question was asked about 44% of new homes achieving an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of A. It was clarified that the remaining new homes achieved a high B rating.
- Out of the 227 new homes started on site, 110 were in or around Grimsby (North East Lincolnshire). Martin explained that North East Lincolnshire Council have been supportive and encouraging with Ongo building in the locality.
- A member asked about electric vehicle charging points. These are provided for all new homes, if it is a flat then it would be a communal charging point which the flat's tenants would still have access to.

- It was raised if any restrictions were in place for private landlords to buy new homes to rent at a higher rate. Martin confirmed that this wouldn't be possible with Ongo, as there is an eligibility criteria.

5. Executive Update – Kevin Hornsby

- Kevin provided an update on the new Neighbourhoods Model plan.
- Around six months ago, consultation took place with residents on their priorities for landlord services and what mattered most to them. All the feedback was reviewed and has influenced the new service proposals.
- This included having one named contact in their neighbourhood. Recommendations from the previous Scrutiny investigation have also been implemented, including the simplification of job titles.
- The role of Tenancy Officer and Lettings Officer, currently two separate roles, will be merged into one role called a Neighbourhoods Officer. This will involve signing up of new tenants and helping to manage tenancies.
- The operating area will be split into three separate regions, with up to 30 neighbourhoods. Each neighbourhood will have allocated Neighbourhoods Officer, who will be the point of contact for tenants in that area for any neighbourhood issue.
- Kevin explained that the regions and areas are based on capacity workload and data (including the amount of sign-ups and anti-social behaviour).
- The changes will also be reflected across the Maintenance service. There will be Regional Managers for Neighbourhoods and separate ones for Maintenance, who'll work closely together.
- We will also strengthen customer contact around complaints and feedback by introducing a centralised Complaints and Feedback team and the creation of a new customer hub which will deal with the administration tasks to allow the Neighbourhood Officers to be visible to tenants, meaning that the Neighbourhoods Officers can spend sufficient time within their area dealing with any issues.
- Following the tenant consultation, consultation has been taking place with affected Ongo colleagues and unions. The aim is to launch the new Maintenance model from September, and Neighbourhoods from October.
- A member asked if there could be some potential confusion for residents, as there will be Neighbourhood Officers but also Neighbourhood Services (responsible for grounds maintenance). There will be a range of communication, including an article in Key News, providing detailed information to tenants about each team, their role and responsibilities to avoid potential confusion.
- There will be a further update provided at the next meeting.

6. Business Assurance & Risk team update – Erica

- A covering report had been included with the meeting papers.
- The Customer Focus Committee are now in place and held their first meeting in May. Any changes to, and reviews of, Ongo Homes customer-facing policies will go to this Committee for approval.
- As previously agreed, Community Voice will still provide valuable input for tenants on any policies where they will affect residents.
- Community Voice will continue to receive the six-monthly update on policy reviews

completed and that are upcoming. If consultation is required with members in between the bi-monthly meetings, then alternative methods of feedback (e.g. electronic feedback, separate focus groups) will be looked into.

- Scrutiny will continue to form a key aspect of tenants and customers providing assurance that Ongo are doing what they say they will., This will now sit within Community Voice rather than a separate Scrutiny Panel as before.
- Particular attention was given to section 4.1.4 of the report, which set out some potential areas for scrutiny based on an assurance map completed against the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards. These included Adaptations, Domestic Abuse and Tenure.
- Some alternative options, based on identified strategic risks for Ongo, had also been included under 4.1.5 of the report. These included a service satisfaction review, stock condition and investment planning, and budget transparency.
- Support for scrutiny reviews will be provided by Customer Engagement, and the Business Risk & Assurance team. There will be scope to complete two scrutiny investigations in the remaining financial year, and then aim for at least three in the next year.
- Erica explained that, at the time of choosing the next scrutiny review, it would be made sure that there isn't duplication with any ongoing internal audits or investigations of a certain area.
- A member asked how the topic of each investigation would be decided. Wendy and Erica asked members to consider which areas they would like to focus on first and to provide feedback after the meeting break.
- A majority of members voted for Adaptations and Domestic Abuse to form the first two investigations.
- Seven members who were interested in being involved in scrutiny provided their details, and members not in attendance will be contacted. Customer Engagement will call each individual interested to complete a skills matrix, which will assess their suitability for the required criteria.

ACTION: Contact the members interested.

- Wendy explained that there would be a core sub-group of Community Voice members who would be involved in scrutiny. How many people from the sub-group that would be needed for each investigation would be assessed as part of the planning for each review.
- Wendy is arranging with Tpas some introductory scrutiny training for those who will be involved. It was agreed by members that they would benefit more from the in-person, more in-depth session. There will then be opportunities for future training and sessions, such as relevant webinars.

ACTION: Confirm date and time of training session with those who will be involved in scrutiny.

7. Performance & Customer Satisfaction – Kevin Hornsby and Jordan Barr

- The performance information for April 2024 – March 2025, along with a covering report, had been included with the meeting papers. An overview of specific areas was provided.
- **Empty Homes** – this area largely improved in the last financial year, with lower rates of tenancy turnover and a positive reduction in the average days it took to relet a standard void property.

- **Complaints** – the amount of complaints increased by 161% (219 in 2023/24 to 572 in 2024/25).
- **Repairs and Maintenance** – Jordan provided an update. He started in his role as Head of Maintenance & Building Safety in January and, since March, the amount of outstanding repair orders in the system has been reduced from 6,500 to 5,500.
 - Though the rate of jobs completed in timescale for a 7 Day Priority, 4 Week Priority, 12 Week Priority and Non-Emergency Repairs has dropped, reducing the older jobs that had passed the timescale will help to improve these areas later in the financial year, as the team will then be in a better position to meet the timescales of new repairs being raised.
 - There has been a recent review of the Schedule of Rates (the amount of time allocated to specific jobs) to improve the planning of repairs.
 - Two repairs systems that the team use to diagnose and schedule repairs have also been upgraded.
 - A new materials supplier is due to start in August, and a new Contractors Framework has also been introduced.
- A member gave a compliment for a job they had recently raised, which was resolved quickly. The tradesperson was also praised for their attitude and the standard of work completed.
- Another member enquired about the complaints that went to the Housing Ombudsman, and which service areas they related to. Kevin explained that the majority of complaints were for repairs and maintenance, whilst there was some relating to customer experience, communication and tenancy management (including the handling of an anti-social behaviour case).
- Jordan was asked to clarify, under the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, TP05 (the percentage who report they are satisfied their home is safe), and what could be factors that were making some tenants feel unsafe where they live. He explained that Ongo are in the top quartile of all housing providers for performance in building safety and compliance, and making sure homes are safe. More will be done to publicise and raise awareness of what work is done to ensure tenant's safety e.g. checks for Asbestos, Fire Safety, Legionella, Gas, Electrics and Lifting and Hoisting equipment.

8. Customer Engagement Activity Update – Tenant Reps

- **Publications Panel** – Jill explained that the last meeting focused on providing feedback on the spring Key News, and planning the content for the upcoming summer edition. The panel had a separate session with the Developments team to agree which new developments would be featured in the next magazine. Members have provided their feedback on the first draft, and a session has been arranged to go through each page of the final draft for any remaining improvements.
- **Tenant Inspectors** – the group had recently completed a mystery shop exercise on Customer Experience by using a range of scenarios, methods of contact and including various areas of the service to assess if they were up to standard and where improvements could be made. Full details are included in the Customer Engagement Activity Report which was part of the meeting paperwork. Most inspections carried out over the past two months have been rated green, with some fly-tipping and cleaning issues identified on some inspections which have been resolved.
- **Residents Building Safety Group** – the group discussed recent building safety and

compliance performance. They recommended for the Building Safety & Compliance Manager, Emma Atkinson, to be involved in a future Live Chief Executive Q&A session to raise awareness. It was also agreed to do a presentation on a certain piece of software at the next meeting to aid members' understanding. An issue with an external fire door contractor was raised and actioned. The possibility of adding communal repairs to My Home is also being looked into.

- **Complaints Panel** – Judith explained that Matt Sugden (Board Member responsible for Complaints) attended the June meeting. They reviewed two case-studies of recent complaints, and discussed the Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report. More details are also in the Customer Engagement Activity Report.
- **Sustainability Panel** – Tracey gave an update. Details of the work that has been taking place to bring properties up to at least an EPC C rating or higher was provided, along with some challenges that had been faced. Some biodiversity projects are due to be planned in to help a local area.
- **Customer Focus Committee (CFC)** – Judith, who chairs the CFC, provided information about their May meeting. There are eight members, with five who are tenants, meaning a tenant majority involved in making decisions on customer-facing matters. It was an informative meeting, which included formulating ideas for future work and asking relevant questions. A report from Community Voice will be delivered at each CFC meeting.

9. Customer Engagement Update – Wendy Wolfe

- The full report had been included in the meeting papers.
- The engagement figures in the report will now be combined together for the previous two months, with Community Voice meetings now being bi-monthly. The 10% target of engaging with younger voices is being exceeded for most months. Though they typically aren't involved in meetings, they provide feedback in different ways (e.g. surveys).
- Updates were also provided on:
 - Digital Tenants
 - Key News
 - Drop-in session at the Viking Centre (Barton)
 - Neighbourhood Engagement events
 - My Home and digi session held at Greenfields (Goxhill) on Friday 9 May
- Sharon Wright has recently started as the Customer Engagement Assistant. She will now be the first point of contact for Customer Engagement.
- A member expressed their gratitude for the voucher that had been sent to all participating tenant volunteers in recognition of National Volunteers' Week.

10. Timings of Community Voice meetings – Wendy Wolfe

- Historically, at least one Community Voice meeting each year has been held in an evening to allow anybody with other commitments (e.g. daytime work) to be able to attend.
- However, this hasn't typically led to any additional attendees compared to the daytime meetings. Customer Engagement had also looked into the current membership of the group to ensure alternating between morning and afternoon meeting wouldn't have a negative impact.

- All members present approved no further evening meetings and for all future meetings to be in a daytime.
- A member explained that, in between meetings, Community Voice arrange a social gathering that all members are invited to.

11. Any Other Business, including Reflection on Meeting

- Mo asked if members would be happy to receive an email survey as part of Lee Coulson's (Head of Commercial) Masters degree, which is focused on how organisations such as Ongo meet changing customer needs. All members agreed.

ACTION: Survey to be sent to members in July.

- A member raised that the tone of recent letters they had received about the lifts not working in their block was not empathetic and the wording needs to be improved. Wendy explained that the Publications Panel, who review such customer-facing documents, will look at the letters and make suggestions for improvement.

ACTION: Review the letters and provide feedback to member.

- Mo added that there is a need to review other template letters to ensure they are up to the required standard. The Publications Panel will be involved in this review.
- Members and the observer present gave positive feedback on the meeting, saying it had been informative.
- Staff were reminded to stand at future meetings for their agenda items, to ensure they can be heard by everyone around the table.

12. Date and Time of next meeting

- The next meeting will be on **Monday 18 August 2025, 1pm to 4pm, at The Arc.**