

**COMMUNITY VOICE MINUTES**  
Held at 1pm on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> August 2025  
The Arc, blended style (face to face & via MS Teams)



**Present:**

**Community Voice Members:** Jill Milner (Chair), Tami Reeve (Vice-Chair), Keith Lumbers, Judith Tomlinson, Ron Weller, Trevor Davey, Charmaine Mande, Tracey Bain, Dawn Johnson, Graham Lloyd, Angela Smith, Stewart Pearson, Tima Omari, Jim Newcombe and Eddie Stringer.

**Ongo Staff:** Wendy Wolfe, Steve Hepworth, Erica Sanderson, Kevin Hornsby, Jo Sugden, Emma Patrick, Mark Perrin, Jordan Barr, Becky Johns, John Hughes, and Sharon Wright.

**1. Welcome, Apologies and Housekeeping**

- The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were given.
- Apologies were received from Rhiannon Jeans, Heather Gregory, Eric Gosling, Paul Pearson, Chris Brady (observer), Rebecca Moody (observer), Mo Mathieson (Ongo), Steve Ellard (Ongo).
- Members were reminded that personal issues should not be raised during the meeting. If a previously reported issue has not yet been resolved, they were encouraged to record it in the enquiry log for follow-up.

**2. Minutes & Actions from Previous Meeting**

- Eddie proposed, and Keith seconded, that the minutes of the June meeting were an accurate record.
- Wendy provided an update on the actions:
  - The New Development presentation was sent out with the meetings minutes.
  - All members who expressed an interest in joining the Scrutiny Group have been contacted and completed the skills matrix. Seven members met the criteria and were notified.
  - The Scrutiny training session was held on July 29<sup>th</sup>. Wendy has arranged to meet members who were unable to attend separately.
  - The Survey was e-mailed out and shared on the Groups Facebook page.
  - The issue raised with the wording of the compliant letter has been reviewed by the publications panel, compliance manager and the member who raised the issue who agreed the final changes.
  - Wendy explained that there will be a review of other letters that the head of service is looking at and will be shared with the publications panel.

**3. Board Observers**

- Meetings taking place in person or via Microsoft Teams:
  - Ongo Homes Board on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> September, 2pm at Ongo House
  - Customer Focus Committee, Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> September, 1:30pm, at The Arc Enterprise Suite
  - Ongo Communities Board on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> October, 2pm at Ongo House (*note this may change due to the preceding meeting date being rearranged*)
- Three CV members can attend any of the meetings, and those interested were asked to inform Customer Engagement.

- As Jill is unable to attend the next Customer Focus committee – Maureen (HOS) will provide feedback.

#### **4. Social Value – Emma Patrick**

- Emma provided an update on the social value achievements since starting in the post in April 2025, and work involving contractors, these included:

##### **Projects completed:**

- SureServe - donation of craft equipment, bingo prizes and gardening tools for Myos House Dementia scheme.
- Ashbridge Roofing and Hales & Coultas - singer and pianist attended the Myos House VE Day celebrations.
- Hydro Clean - jet washing completed at a temporary accommodation property for vulnerable families.
- Sovereign - garden furniture, sandpit and storage box donated for the temporary accommodation property for vulnerable families.
- Rilmac - mock interviews carried out at Ongo Communities Employability Day.
- Matthews & Tannert - a 'day in the life' sessions held at Ongo Communities Employability Day.
- Teletrac Navman - re-painting of the play equipment at Melford Court and Pryme Road.

##### **Future projects:**

- Equans – running the Empower HER course from the Arc; a one-day course focused on teaching women basic maintenance skills.
- Jewsons – holding a 'bootcamp' event focused on understanding the construction industry and improving employability skills.
- Finance Contractors (Switch2, Marsh) - community clean up event on Barnes Crescent/Lockwood Court
- Ground Control – cutting back hedges at a local primary school

##### **In progress & future opportunities:**

- Frederick Gough School – working with the school to secure work experience placements, offer sector specific opportunities and surplus building materials for DT lessons.
- John Leggott College – talks from contractors on employment opportunities, career mentoring, cv skills etc.
- Trent View College – assisting with Project Search by getting contractors on board to support with employment skills, career mentoring etc.
- Tenancy Services – support with police operation to clear up fly-tipping/potential arson targets. Several contractors have been approached and are willing to contribute by providing resources, e.g. staffing or provide skips.
- Humberside Glazing – in the final stages of securing an apprenticeship in fenestration
- Jewsons – work placements.
- Heslam Park – changing room revamp & painting the stand.

- Emma would like some CV reps to have future involvement at the larger contractors' meetings. This would mean tenants can ensure social value money is being spent on the right things. Feedback would then be shared with customer engagement. A member suggested that the tenant representatives from the procurement panel could be involved with this.  
**ACTION:** Clarify whether members from the procurement panel would be involved with this.
- A member asked if projects are planned beyond Scunthorpe. Emma confirmed that while work so far has used local contractors, plans are in place to engage others to deliver projects across wider Ongo housing areas.
- A member requested that the achievements be included in Key News to promote visibility of the project for tenants.  
**ACTION:** Ollie to include Social Value achievements in Key News to raise tenant awareness.
- Emma explained that social value remains a key focus, with emphasis on maximising benefits from contractors. The park painting project was linked to a digital system for tracking social value and this showed the project generated £4.42 million of social value.
- **ACTION:** Wendy explained she will provide Emma with further information on the contractors who supported the Ongo Carnival.

## **5. Heating Charges – Mark Perrin**

- The report which provides details on the proposed Heat Network Charges had been included with the meeting papers and was for information to provide feedback on the proposed heat network rate changes to be applied from 1 October. Mark provided an overview for members.
- Ongo have signed a new contract for gas for next 2 years, and as a result can now pass on savings to the tenants who are using the heat network.
- From January 2026, Ongo must comply with the new Heat Networks (Metering and Billing) Regulations 2025.
- The proposed heat charges are below Ofgem benchmarks, with estimated average annual costs of £580 (low usage) and £835 (medium usage). The new rates will apply from 1 October 2025 (backdated to 1 August, with refunds to be made where differences exceed £5).
- A member stated that the ratings were not included in the appendix sent out prior to the meeting.
- A member asked whether the new contract affects service delivery; it was clarified that the only change is a new contract with the same supplier.
- A member raised a query regarding property charges – £11.07 per property vs. the previous £9.24 charge. It was noted that the previous £9.24 charge had not been increased for two years, and costs have now increased above £11 due to rising expenses.
- Members agreed the new rates will make a difference to the schemes who are using the heat network system.

## **6. Contact Handling & Emergency Hour consultation – Becky Johns**

- The report on the Customer Experience Team Performance provided an update from the changes implemented for the emergency repair call handling. Becky provided some background on progress made and points to consider making further

improvements.

- The changes for contact handling changed 12 months ago, with emergency repair calls directed to 9–10am. The aim of this change was to create a more efficient customer service and prioritise urgent contacts from customers with emergency repairs.
- The key findings following the changes has resulted in the emergency hour creating a backlog of calls after 10am, impacting the service until mid-afternoon. The service also dips significantly over lunchtimes when many tenants need to call.
- Call-handling target is now 80% within 5 minutes; this is difficult to achieve consistently and can be due to high staff turnover, low resources, and long-term sickness. The call-back service is popular and used by 47% of customers, but calls remain classed as “waiting” until returned. Overall call volumes have reduced compared with previous years and customer satisfaction has improved averaging around 80%. Benchmarking shows Ongo performs mid-range and unlike some landlords with “switchboard” models, Ongo remains front facing.
- A discussion took place with members on several options to help make further improvements.
- Members raised concerns about long wait times and unreturned calls (one reported 25 minutes on hold, and others that call-back times sometimes take 2 hours). **ACTION:** Becky will investigate call wait times and unreturned calls and report back at the next meeting.
- Members asked what counts as an emergency; the Chair confirmed guidelines exist but need wider publicity. **ACTION:** Becky to ensure the emergency criteria for repairs are communicated clearly.
- A member raised concerns about weekend emergency repairs and how they are dealt with. Becky confirmed staff make systems safe (e.g., turn off water), with full repairs scheduled promptly afterwards. Heating and hot water issues must be fixed within a reasonable time frame.
- A member raised concerns that current call-back options are too limited. **ACTION:** Becky to explore improvements.
- Members suggested holding focus group meetings to discuss improvements in the future and to consider a scrutiny review into call handling. Becky explained that for any future changes this could be looked into.
- A member suggested that using part-time staff could help cover peak times and lunchtimes; Becky confirmed this will be reviewed.
- A member offered positive feedback where his call at the weekend to the emergency line and the call-back worked well. The repair was completed promptly on the Monday after the weekend call.
- Becky summarised the feedback from members:

#### *Emergency hour*

- All agreed that emergency repairs should be prioritised through the day.
- All agreed to remove the emergency hour and just open as normal.
- Feedback to ensure all advisors are fully trained to handle emergency repairs effectively.

#### *Lunch time*

- Members did not support a full closure for 30 minutes at lunch.
- Suggestion to investigate overlapping job shares.
- Suggestion to consider extra staff for lunch cover.

- Suggestion to consider using part time workers to cover over the lunch period (Consider this within recruitment and new contracts)

#### *Call handling metrics.*

- There was overwhelming feedback to suggest quality was more important than speed.
- There was a desire to try and hit 280 seconds which is the benchmarking average.
- There was feedback to support a workshop approach for further changes in the future.
- There was feedback that it would be useful to hear directly from Customer advisors in any consultation workshops.

## **7. Consultation on the reformed Decent Homes Standard – Erica Sanderson**

Erica Sanderson presented the key proposed changes in relation to the Decent Homes Standard and wanted to gain members views on these changes.

These were:

- Health & Safety: ensuring homes are free from serious hazards – no changes are proposed from the current standard on this criterion.
  - Repairs: a clear definition of what disrepair means for each component, expanding the list of building components that must be kept in a reasonable state of repair and removing the age requirement that is in the current standard. What this means is that components (i.e. kitchen or bathroom) no longer have to be old and broken to be in disrepair, only broken (regardless of age)
  - Facilities: The proposals are that homes must provide at least three of the following facilities to be considered decent:
    - A kitchen with adequate space and layout
    - An appropriately located bathroom and WC.
    - Adequate external noise insulation
    - Adequate size and layout of communal entrance areas for blocks of flats
  - Under this criterion, it is proposed that all rental properties must have child-resistance window restrictors on all above ground-level windows.
  - Energy efficiency: compliance with the agreed Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) – these are currently out for consultation and whatever is agreed will be incorporated into the new DHS. The heating system must heat the whole home and be programmable.
  - Damp & Mould, this isn't sited in the current Decent Homes Standard but needs to be included. This new requirement will align to the requirements on landlords from Awaab's Law. The proposed standard is for landlords to ensure homes are free from damp and mould and where mould is creating a significant risk of harm, landlords should take action within the timescales set out under Awaab's Law
- It was noted that whilst attending a recent Tenant Inspection, the inspectors had found broken restrictors on the windows and asked if this could be added to the check list for Tenant Inspections.  
**ACTION:** Window restrictors to be included in TI inspections.
  - Members asked what restrictors looked like. Erica said that she would seek

clarification.

**ACTION:** Update to be provided at the next meeting.

- A member suggested that, where carpets are left in a property, new tenants should be offered the option of a professional clean as a compromise instead of replacement flooring.
- A member asked if Ongo would decant tenants into an Air-B&B if damp and mould required relocation. Steve explained that the use of hotels or a B&B are preferred in these kinds of situations.
- A member asked how Ongo will manage tenant behaviours contributing to damp (e.g., having fish tanks in the home). It was advised that stronger communication, education, and tenant guidance will be developed to assist with this.
- A member asked how standards would apply to 100-year-old properties. The standards will look at the individual components of the property e.g. the roof, windows, or the kitchen, rather than the property age.
- Jordan noted that the decarbonisation, insulation, and fabric upgrades will also support compliance.
- An in-depth discussion was held around the proposed changes, what the changes mean for tenants and Ongo Homes, particularly around floor coverings. The majority of members disagreed with the proposals around providing floor coverings throughout the whole home for all new lets. A compromise was suggested for a deep clean of existing floor coverings rather than replacement.
- Implementation timeline: Consultation closes 10th September with legislation expected to be introduced by 2035–2037.
- Members were asked to send any further feedback on the consultation to Erica by Wednesday 27th August, (midday). Erica will then collate and submit an organisational response by 10th September.

## **8. Executive Update – Kevin Hornsby**

- Kevin provided an update on the recent recruitment of the new Chair of the Board; Des Hudson is the successful candidate and will start in the role on 26 September. Kevin noted that Des is a qualified lawyer with experience, including serving as Chair of the Wrekin Housing Group. He has also held Chief Executive roles at the Law Society and the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Scotland, along with senior positions in the media and financial services sectors.

## **9. Progress on the new Neighbourhood Model – Kevin Hornsby**

- Kevin gave a presentation on the new Neighbourhoods model.  
**ACTION:** A copy of the slides will be sent out with the minutes.
- The three proposed key changes are:
  - To move towards three new operating regions for Ongo and twenty-nine smaller neighbourhoods of around four hundred properties, currently known as patches.
  - The role of Lettings Officer and Tenancy Officer will be combined, and the title of the role will be Neighbourhood Officer - who will work across the 29 Neighbourhoods. Consultation has taken place with internal staff and the teams involved with these changes. Structures are being put into place to meet demand in the different areas. Recruitment for remaining posts will be in September and training plans with individuals for repairs, damp and mould are ongoing.

- The new regional model will go live starting with Property Services from 1st September and 1<sup>st</sup> October for Landlord Services and Customer Experience team.
  - All transactional tasks such as administration and advertising of Ongo homes will move to a newly formed customer Hub in the Customer Experience team.
  - Property Services will cover three regions with staff covering repairs and voids in each region.
  - A map was shown to highlight how the three areas will all cover parts of Scunthorpe, to share workload across neighbourhoods. Regional data shows that on average there will be four hundred properties per neighbourhood officer.
- A member asked whether customers could contact a tradesperson directly if they had already visited the property for an urgent repair, with the tradesperson then logging the job in the system to reduce the number of calls to Ongo. Jordan explained that this option is being reviewed to see how it could work in practice. While customer advisors will continue to schedule repairs, building direct links between customers and operatives could help reduce calls to the contact centre.
  - A member asked whether Neighbourhood Officers will be listed on the website now that there is a dedicated team for each area. It was explained that plans are being developed to improve visibility of the team and keep the information up to date. Members were also told that when customers log into *My Home*, they will be able to see who their Neighbourhood Officer is.
  - A member raised concerns about stress under the new system, noting that some staff are currently off sick, and asked if support is available. Kevin responded that levels of long-term sickness are not high, and that the new model is designed to improve staff wellbeing. With smaller neighbourhoods, workloads will be more manageable, and the service will be stronger.
  - A member expressed concern about officer visibility and suggested that the new team be introduced with photographs, as staff do not always wear Ongo-branded clothing.
  - Members praised the new service and welcomed the fact that there will be three regions and the changes to job titles etc. which came from customer feedback and a scrutiny review.

## **10. Performance and Customer Satisfaction – Kevin Hornsby**

- The Tenant Satisfaction and Management Performance report was included in the meeting paperwork.
- Kevin explained that there has been a slight decrease in customer satisfaction levels, and the team are looking into the trends with that. Section 6 of the report lists what is being done to look at addressing the issues and Kevin noted they are back on track with repairs.
- The Chair noted that this report appeared to be in a different format compared to previous versions. Wendy explained that she has been in contact with the team that produces the reports asking for them to be clearer to read and is waiting for feedback. **ACTION:** Wendy to check for a response and explore options for improving report readability.
- A member noted that whilst conducting a recent Tenant Inspection the cleaning was at a good standard.

- A member noted the TSM Management Performance complaints section showed 100% and asked what had happened in June with a drop of 50%. There was a question around the accuracy of the report and Becky will check this.  
**ACTION:** Becky to investigate this further.
- A member noted TP10 on the reports TSMs and asked if this includes communal gardens. It was explained that it is aimed at flats and areas around them, but when tenants answer the question, they may not have understood. The survey is perception based and noting tenants' perceptions when answering questions.
- A member noted section TP05 on the report, and asked are we doing any investigation as to why tenants are saying their homes are not safe? Steve agreed that it would be useful to explore why tenants feel their homes are not safe. Becky explained there will be a dedicated officer to scrutinise this in the future.
- Wendy explained that the compliance team are also working with the Residents Building Safety Group on plans to get out into the community to hold drop-in sessions at the flats.
- Jordan explained that a great deal of work has already been completed this year and emphasised the importance of publicising these achievements to tenants.  
**ACTION:** Explore options to improve tenant communication on building safety work already completed.
- A member asked about the questions for communal properties and if we can amend them. Kevin explained the government sets the questions therefore, we are unable to change them.

## **11. Customer Engagement Activity Update – Tenant Reps**

- **Tpas Conference** – Four members recently attended the conference and reported it was useful, providing extensive information, networking opportunities, and examples of best practice. Members noted that local councils had sought their views as they work towards meeting regulatory standards. Attendees were described as “activists” for the positive changes they are influencing standards, with Ongo recognised as doing its best for tenants.  
**ACTION:** A meeting will be arranged with those who attended the conference to discuss their learning and explore best practice.
- **Tenant Inspectors** - Since the last meeting, twenty-six inspections have been conducted. None were rated red, three were amber, sixteen were green, and seven received gold stars. Issues highlighted included fly tipping. All issues reported have now been actioned. Tenants who came to shadow the meeting have since joined the panel.
- **Publications Panel** - At the last meeting, the group discussed the number of houses built and reviewed the survey responses published in the most recent edition of Key News. Members were also provided with statistics on the digital version of Key News and gave input on the content for the upcoming Autumn edition. In addition, the panel reviewed a draft compliance letter, considered a version of the annual report, and provided feedback on updates to the ASB webpage.
- **Property Services Panel** – Hayley and Kelly provided updates on the new Neighbourhood Model, the storage facility, and revised working patterns. Hayley presented performance information, and the panel also received an update on the new materials supplier.
- **Residents Building Safety Group** - The group received an update on building and safety compliance, including a new document outlining the requirements of the



Safety Act. Members discussed ways to improve engagement with residents and suggested conducting an additional survey, alongside exploring the potential for a marketing event to raise awareness. The panel also looked ahead to upcoming initiatives such as Gas Safety Week and Fire Door Safety Week and discussed the most effective ways to involve tenants in these campaigns.

- Further discussions focused on reducing risks associated with damp and mould, as well as maintaining fire doors. The group also raised concerns about vandalism of lifts and reviewed the measures that have been taken to address this issue.

## **12. Customer Engagement Update – Wendy Wolfe**

- The full report had been included in the meeting papers and included updates on:
  - Digital Tenants
  - Tenant Inspections
  - Key News
  - Ongo Carnival
  - Estate Walkabouts (Hilton Lodge and Lodge Moor Road)
  - Neighbourhood Engagement events
  - Training for Volunteers

There were no questions raised from the information in the report.

- Wendy also explained that the CV away day will be planned for November and is a more informal meeting, providing members with an opportunity to discuss how the meetings are going and any future improvements etc. Members will be notified when the date and time has been arranged.

## **13. Any other Business, including Reflection on Meeting**

- A member expressed their thanks for the help they received from Ongo, and a Support Officer, to fill out some forms recently following a recent family bereavement.
- Members all felt the meeting had gone well and thanked all in attendance for the information that had been shared.

## **14. Date and time of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> October, 9:30am to 12.30, at the Arc.