



ONGO CUSTOMER FOCUS COMMITTEE

Held at 1pm on Wednesday 21st May
Board Room, Ongo House, High Street, Scunthorpe, DN15 6AT

MINUTES

Present:

Committee: Judith Tomlinson (Chair), Rhiannon Jeans, Marianne Sonksen, Keeley McCahey, Jill Milner, Sarah Roxby, Matt Sugden

Officers: Steve Hepworth, Steve Ellard, Kevin Hornsby, Louise Usher, Gemma Willey (Minutes)

Apologies: Mike Finister-Smith

Absence: None

Also Present: Jordan Barr, John Hughes, Becky Johns

Observers: Wendy Wolfe, Maureen Mathieson, Sarah Wilson

Time meeting opened: 1:02pm

Quorum: It was reported that proper notice of the Meeting had been given in accordance with the Terms of Reference (quorum is 3 with one of these being a Board member and two being Independent tenant committee members), the Chair declared the meeting open.

Declarations of Interest: No declarations of interest were made.

1. **Welcome, introduction and apologies.**

The Chair opened the meeting and introductions were given for the benefit of all members. Apologies were noted as received in advance for Mr Finister-Smith.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

No declarations were made.

3. **Slide – Main Terms of Reference Reminder**

The Chair and Chief Executive noted that a reminder of the purpose of Customer Focus Committee and the Community Voice group had been added to the pack and shown for information on screen.

4. **Update from Community Voice Chair 15 April 2025 meeting.**

Summary: Jill Milner presented the update from Community Voice and updates from the previous meeting. The Terms of Reference had been included for information.

Discussion points/questions:

- The Chair reminded members of the opportunity to join future Community Voice meetings as an observer.
- It was noted that Community Voice members are also offered the opportunity to observe Customer Focus Committee however today apologies had been sent from those who had nominated themselves to observe. They will be offered the opportunity to observe the next meeting.

Agreed: The Committee noted the update from the Community Voice Chair. It was agreed the Governance Team will send a reminder of CV/CFC dates to both groups.

ACTION: 1/25: Governance Team to issue CFC members with CV dates and send CFC dates to Customer Experience Team via Wendy Wolfe.

4. Agenda item 5 Customer Feedback Methodology.

Summary: Currently, when a tenant expresses dissatisfaction, a ticket is created for a team member to make contact, but each department manages its own survey and dissatisfaction reporting process. This has resulted in inconsistent data, which makes it difficult to drive meaningful service improvements. Additionally, the current approach to tenant satisfaction surveys is generating multiple tickets per survey, leading to confusion across departments and duplication in tenant contact, which is negatively received by tenants.

The proposal is to centralise dissatisfaction reporting through a single tool managed by the Customer Experience Team. This would streamline the process, ensure more consistent data collection, and allow for a more coordinated and timely response to tenant concerns. Centralising the process would also enable the organisation to capture and address service improvement actions across departments more effectively, turning tenant feedback into actionable learning and driving overall service improvements.

Becky Johns thanked members for inviting to present the report on Customer Feedback, the paper was taken as read and questions invited.

Discussion points/questions:

- A members queried if the tickets would be duplicated by this process. Becky noted that it would simplify the system. A query was raised as to what filters or algorithms are in place to direct these queries to the right place. Members were assured that the system would be reviewed regularly to ensure efficient flow of information.
- A member queried whether a more efficient solution would be to take feedback as a job/repair is done rather than wait for a complaint further down the line. Kevin Hornsby noted that there are transactional surveys but at the moment different departments carry out surveys at different times. This proposal seeks to simplify the system. Moving forward this will also simplify surveys to clarify what we ask for and when, to assist in getting better quality data to drive service improvement.

- A member queried how this would be publicised to residents so they know we are acting on their feedback and where will the quarterly reports go? It was confirmed these will come to Customer Focus Committee for assurance.
- With regards to publicising this will start on the website through the you said/we are doing page. Other forums such as key news, Steve Hepworth's live updates, blogs, vlogs etc. Kevin noted the priority is to show the changes in service are based on feedback and the outcomes that will result from that.
- A member suggested taking the PR plan to Community Voice for their suggestions and feedback.
- The Chair queried what the impact on staff has been. Becky Johns noted that the current staffing is not currently set up to facilitate this, however current consultation on the neighbourhoods approach will address this.
- Overall members were supportive of the approach.

Agreed: Committee:

- Will receive an update quarterly with themes identified.
- Community Voice will receive the PR plan to discuss and feedback at a future meeting.

ACTION: 2/25 Kevin Hornsby/Becky Johns to share the PR plan with Wendy Wolfe/Customer Experience for a future CV meeting.

6. Agenda Item 6: Key Performance

Summary: Steve Ellard presented the report and noted the significant issues were damp and mould. This will be more tightly regulated with the introduction of Awaab's Law. We have received positive news that we have managed to significantly reduce cases and complaints which is testament to the investment into that area.

Kevin Hornsby noted that there is a plan for the target of being a great landlord – we have strong performance concerning arrears collection which is leading in the sector, there is a plan to embed this moving forward for all areas.

Discussion points/questions:

- A member suggested that the workmen carrying out repairs are able to feedback as part of the job. Steve Ellard noted that once the repair has been completed, this should trigger a transactional survey to be sent to the tenant and will look into some case studies as an example.
- The Chair suggested that the repair operative could ask the tenant at the time of repair on preference to complete a survey there and then or have the choice of it being sent via email/text.
- A member noted that currently this misses the "so what?" response – what are we doing to improve performance and how are residents being able to shape the format.
- A member suggested that future reports should not refer to "Guinness properties" as they are now Ongo properties, unless the additional information has important context.
- A member suggested that it would be useful to have reported by exception, some narrative on the improvements and expectations of when these will improve.

Agreed Committee:

- Noted the performance updates
- Agreed future reports would benefit from some narrative

Action: 3/25: Steve Ellard to ensure that future reports include a narrative section explaining the improvements made, as well as outlining any expected timelines or next steps if KPIs are not met.

7. Agenda item 7: Complaints Performance and Service Improvement Report (CPSI)

Summary: This report presents the annual Complaints and Service Improvement update required by the Housing Ombudsman. It includes a review of complaint handling performance over the past year, the results of the annual self-assessment against the Complaint Handling Code, and details of complaint learning and service improvements. The report notes that the number of complaints has increased, reflecting a wider sector trend, but handling timescales have improved, particularly for stage two complaints, and fewer cases are escalating to stage two. Key complaint themes and areas of learning are identified, along with actions being taken to address service improvements. The annual self-assessment was carried out in collaboration with the tenant complaint panel to ensure the customer voice is represented. The outcome confirms compliance with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code. The report also includes a summary and details of the Housing Ombudsman's determinations for the year.

Discussion points/questions:

- It was noted that one of the areas the sector struggles with is tenant satisfaction (TP09), this asks how satisfied tenants and customers are with the complaints handling process – current score 28%. It is challenging to get an improved score sector wide
- Becky Johns noted on further analysis, 92% of the tenants who had responded to that question had not raised a stage 1-2 complaint so were not able to give a definitive opinion on complaints handling process but their own interpretation of what was a complaint.
- Becky noted the success and value of the tenant complaints panel, giving consistent feedback on how we can improve tenant feedback and improve service.
- A member queried that whilst there are a number of complaints and these appear to be rising due to a shift in customer expectations or misunderstanding of what a complaint is, it is positive that there are relatively low numbers of stage 2 complaints.
- A member queried what the target is in terms of number of cases with the Ombudsman? The CEO noted that we do want people to be able to complain if they are not happy, as they have the right to. The mechanism for complaints has to be there and the focus is not so much on the number but more the nature. The Housing Ombudsman can award compensation and this does drive some of the complaints. The main focus has to be to ensure the organisation has done everything appropriately. We do monitor the complaints number however focus more on ensuring they are handled correctly at stage 1 and 2 to avoid escalation to the Housing Ombudsman unless absolutely necessary.
- A member noted that it is a sector wide problem that any form of a customer sharing an unhappy opinion is captured as a complaint. It was questioned whether requests should be an enquiry or request for service, rather than classifying as a formal complaint.

- Matt Sugden, noted that he is the Board member with responsibility for hearing complaints and wanted to acknowledge the brilliant performance on stage 1 complaints, for stage 2 would like to know more about the customer demographic, is it geographical? Is there anything that can help identify or group complaints to aid in this. Matt noted that the scrutiny from residents has been great in helping to address some of the issues commonly seen with complaints. Finally Matt asked where can we apply the learning from complaints in a suitable, accessible way for sharing with residents?
- Becky noted that at the moment as these are not held centrally it requires a lot of back and forth across departments. There will be some strengthening of data to check before final submission.
- It was noted that the above points would be taken into consideration and addressed on future quarterly report.
- A member queried how we self-assess against the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight reports. Steve Hepworth noted that a self-assessment is done and shared at ELT. It was agreed that examples can be brought to future CFC meetings for assurance. It was noted that they do get shared with Customer Complaints panel.
- A member queried if the committee could see an exemplary timeline of complaint from inception to resolution. Currently this goes to the Customer Complaints Committee. An example was noted of the standardised complaint closedown letter which did not exist until recently.

Agreed: The Committee received the update

- The Committee considered the report and assured that Ongo is compliant
- Subject to a change in Section 1.9 the committee approved this and assured Ongo is compliant
- The CFC Chair will agree a case study/exemplar in advance following the Customer Complaints Committee learning.

Action: 4/25: Steve Ellard to identify some case studies of transactional surveys based on the improvements into damp and mould and include in future report for this meeting.

Action 5/25: Housing Ombudsman Spotlight Reports/Self Assessment to be brought to future CFC meetings as appropriate.

Action 6/25: Becky Johns to share the Customer Complaint Panel exemplar on standardised complaint closedown.

Action 7/25: Becky Johns to agree suitable case study from Customer Complaints Panel with CFC Chair for each meeting.

8. Agenda Item 8: RSH Safety and Quality Standard Self-Assessment

Summary: Over the course of the year, individual regulatory standards are reviewed in detail and shared with the Board, allowing for thorough consideration supported by the actual self-



assessment documents. At the end of the year, these self-assessments are reviewed by the Business Assurance and Risk Team as part of second line assurance and are then presented to the Audit and Risk Committee. Additionally, the regulatory standards are included in the Internal Audit Programme, which operates on a three-year cycle.

Jordan Barr presented the Safety & Quality report, providing additional context for the member's benefit of the Consumer Standards and Economic Standards.

The key highlight of this report notes that Ongo is meeting the standards based on service delivery. The self-assessment does identify further areas of improvement, many being focused on repairs and maintenance delivery. Future plans are detailed and many of these are underway for example, changes to systems, how we report cases of damp & mould. These are driving improvements.

Discussion points/questions:

- A member queried where the distinction between partial and fully compliant. Jordan confirmed that in order to confirm full, we need to implement all the findings from the audit and there is further work to do.
- Jordan clarified the distinction between submitting a self-assessment with partial assurance versus fully compliant for the newer member's benefit.
- Members discussed their own experience of damp and mould, including from other landlords. A member noted congratulations were due to the damp & mould team based on the improvement in this area which includes the communications to tenants, not just the remedial work itself.
- The Committee asked for a Damp & Mould spotlight at a future meeting
- A member queried if external assurance was received, Louise Usher noted that the assurance mapping for each self-assessment goes to ARC, then internal audit in July goes through the regulatory consumer standards on a three year cycle.
- The Committee noted the contents of the report and thanked Jordan for the update.

Agreed: The Committee

- Considered the self-assessment and noted the partial rating
- Requested the self-assessment comes back to the next meeting with additional narrative on the points rated partial
- Requested a spotlight on Damp & Mould

Action: 8/25: Jordan to bring the self-assessment back to the next meeting with additional narrative on the partial assurance points

Action 9/25: Steve E to bring a spotlight on Damp & Mould to a future meeting.

9. Agenda Item 9: Policy Development & Review

Summary: There are no policies to review at this committee meeting, however an update on the requirement of Customer Focus Committee was given. It was confirmed that approval for customer



facing policies will now come to Customer Focus Committee for approval, after prior consultation taking place at Community Voice.

Louise Usher noted that the first round of policies will come around September. Members were reminded this will be via Convene in advance.

Discussion points/questions:

- The Chair reminded members of the importance of ensuring that Community Voice consult on the policies first, with this committee to then take their points raised into consideration.

Agreed: The Committee noted the update

10. Agenda Item 10 – Strategic Risk Register

Summary: Louise Usher presented the report and summarised the two key risks for which CFC members are responsible: SRGL2 – Delivery of an effective repairs service, and SRCF2 – Customer expectations. Both risks are currently outside the organisation’s risk appetite. For members’ benefit, Louise provided a brief explanation of risk appetite and target levels.

Discussion points/questions:

- A member queried the impact assessment in the report, specifically noting the omission of HR, customer voice/impact, and sustainability and carbon reduction. Louise acknowledged this as an oversight.
- Steve Ellard observed that a report will be presented to the Board in June due to these risks being out of appetite, or to confirm whether they have moved into appetite. Steve noted that, given the recent downward trend over the past two to three months, there may be a recommendation to move these risks into appetite in the future. This reflects a cautious but positive direction of travel
- An update was provided on the repairs backlog: while the current figure is around 6,000 (down from 6,500 in February 2024), the backlog remains a concern. Contractors have been engaged to address the issue, but an influx of new repairs has highlighted the need for a more sustainable approach. Members were assured that progress is being made, albeit at a pace that remains challenging.
- A member queried the timescales for emergency and urgent repairs and noted the absence of a structured approach to cyclical repairs. She also highlighted that tenants have limited information on the website regarding repair expectations. The Chair acknowledged that some repairs are straightforward, and it was suggested that communications such as newsletters or videos could help tenants maintain their homes.
- A member queried the triage process for repairs and how urgency is determined. Steve Ellard confirmed that repair levels are generally consulted, but acknowledged further work is required on cyclical repairs.
- The Customer Focus Committee noted their responsibilities in relation to the risks register.

Agreed: The committee

- Noted their responsibilities with regards:

- SRGL2 – Delivery of an effective repairs service, and;
- SRCF2 – Customer expectations

11. **Agenda Item 11 – Forward Agenda Planner**

Gemma Willey advised the Committee that over the coming months they would expect to see the quarterly reports mentioned in previous items, alongside ad-hoc reports that may be brought to the committee for approval/opinion.

As part of the wider Governance structure, an overarching forward plan will be developed and brought to a future meeting to assist officers and the Chair/Committee members with agenda planning.

Agreed: Governance Team to bring Forward Plan to future meeting once confirmed for wider Governance structure

12. **Agenda Item 12: Time for Reflection**

The Chair invited feedback from committee members on their thoughts on the meeting. Members noted they were unsure what to expect despite the thorough induction. It was agreed until the committee has met several times it will still feel new to members, particularly the independent tenant members.

Members thanked ELT and officers for the reports. It was agreed that members would find it useful to have more visual and engaging reports, such as presentations, case studies and make the pack less reliant on reports.

A member noted that compared to other boards she had been on, she felt able to keep up, invited to ask questions and challenge which in turn helped her to learn as a member and she felt that member's input was clearly valued.

ELT and the Chair thanked members for their contributions.

With no further business the meeting closed at 3.34pm

Signed by Chair: Date:

As a true and correct record of the Ongo Homes Board meeting held on 21st May 2025

