

COMMUNITY VOICE MINUTES

Held at 1pm on Thursday 20th August 2026
The Arc and MS Teams



Community Voice Members: Rhiannon Jeans (Chair), Tami Reeve (Vice-Chair), Sharon Bernard-Earnshaw, Trevor Davey, Toni-Anne Deas, Simon Milner, Charmaine Mande, Jim Newcombe, Stewart Pearson, Keith Lumbers, Tima Omari (in-part)

Ongo Staff: Wendy Wolfe, Kevin Hornsby, Mo Mathieson, Liz Birkhead, Ollie Mortimer, Amy Sylvester

Apologies received: Sue Hickling, Ross Best, Tracey Bain, Paul Pearson, Eric Gosling, Rachel Cook (Ongo Board), Louise Usher (Ongo), Jo Sugden (Ongo)

Also in attendance: Jenny Osbourne (Tpas), Judith Tomlinson (Board Observer)

1. Welcome, Apologies & Housekeeping

Rhiannon welcomed everybody to the meeting, and all in attendance introduced themselves.

2. Tpas Award Presentation – Jenny Osbourne

Jenny gave an overview of Tpas, explaining that they are the main tenant engagement consultants in England and have around 340 landlords and contractors as members. Landlords go through an accreditation process to check against Tpas' seven Engagement Standards and, after receiving the accreditation three times, an organisation can go for Exemplar status. Ongo have received this status once before and, following the re-accreditation process earlier this year, they have been awarded it again.

Jenny thanked all those who were involved as part of the process and added that only five organisations are currently at the Exemplar level.

Jenny explained that Tpas have provided a report that includes recommendations on how Ongo can make further improvements. Mo explained that an action plan will be produced from the report and updates on progress will be provided at future meetings.

3. Minutes & Actions of Previous Meeting

Tami and Keith proposed and seconded that the June meeting minutes were accurate.

Wendy gave the following updates on the actions:

- Grass-cutting query made to the Contact Centre - Customer Advisors check the GIS mapping system for grass-cutting boundaries and inform customers. Ongo are looking into enhancing the current system used.
- A member had been directly updated about their service charges and what they cover.
- The Social Tenant Access to Information Requirements (STAIRs) will include clear language on the Ongo website and a publication scheme will be designed to clarify any ambiguous meanings. There will also be information about what is Ongo land and North Lincolnshire Council / Local Authority land as part of the published STAIRs information online.
- A recruitment plan to get more tenants involved is currently with the Head of Service for feedback, and it will then be brought to Community Voice (CV) for feedback.

- Six CV members were originally involved as part of the Procurement Panel, and we have recently had two members step down. Another tenant volunteer is due to be part of the tender process for Decent Homes works.
- Suggestion on organising a Q&A with members of the Executive Leadership Team (ELT), the CV member who raised the idea was not in attendance at the meeting. Members were reminded that the Chief Executive holds regular Facebook Live sessions for residents to ask questions.
- Work had been identified at Market Hill (Scunthorpe) to clean algae from the fences, with this due to take place week commencing August 10th. Kevin agreed to check that it was completed. Similar work will then take place at Trent View House (Scunthorpe) once the scaffolding has been removed following completion of the re-roofing works. **ACTION:** Check that work was completed.
- Initial consultation on grounds maintenance survey took place at the Ongo Carnival, this received a low response. A joint CV and Tenant Inspectors (TI) session was held in August to discuss the draft survey questions, with changes to be made based on members' feedback before it is then shared with residents.

4. Board Observers

Rhiannon explained that up to three CV members can observe the following meetings (in-person or via Teams):

- Customer Focus Committee (CFC) on 2nd September 2026, The Arc, at 1pm.
- Ongo Homes Board on 16th September 2026, Ongo House Boardroom, at 2pm.
- Ongo Communities Board on 15th October 2026, The Arc at, 2pm.

Members were encouraged to attend and to contact the Customer Engagement team if they were interested.

5. Executive Update – Kevin Hornsby

Repairs & Maintenance

There continues to be an increased demand for the service, but the amount of works in progress has continued to reduce whilst customer satisfaction from recent surveys after work completed has generally been high (above 90% on average).

Due to the decision to increase focus on repairs in tenanted homes, empty homes turnaround times have increased and, though in line with the rest of the housing sector (around 38 days), Kevin explained they are still currently longer than Ongo want them to be. Plans are in progress to increase the focus on empty homes over the coming months to improve the turnaround times. Homes that require major works, and those that are with insurance, increase the number of days that they are empty for.

A member asked if the number of empty homes is going up or down. Kevin explained that it was currently at 8.9%, which is low, and that it isn't a case of more empty homes – it's more the amount of time it is taking to make them ready-to-let for a new tenant to move in.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs)

Overall satisfaction was around 65% for 2025-2026, which was a similar figure compared to the previous financial year. Ongo collect most of their data using digital surveys, and it was noted that satisfaction typically tends to be higher when the surveys are completed via a phone call.

Over the past month, the data has been analysed and any themes for different demographics (e.g. age, gender, where a tenant lives) to identify improvement areas. Kevin noted that, for example, younger tenants are less satisfied than older tenants, with satisfaction for those aged 20-29 at 45% and 80% for those aged 70-79. The data also shows that female residents are less satisfied than males, and that those living in high-rise blocks are less satisfied than other property types. The full report will be delivered to CFC in September, including several recommendations, and a further update will then be provided for CV.

A member commented that 65% felt quite low and asked how this compared with the sector. Kevin explained it is relatively at the lower end. Ongo use Housemark to benchmark against other organisations and, if the surveys had been completed on the phone rather than digital methods, Housemark re-aggregated that the satisfaction score would have been around 83%. However, Ongo are getting real feedback, including from complaints, which can be worked on to influence future improvements. The aim is to be at 90% satisfaction by the end of the Corporate Plan (2029).

Another member queried when the annual TSM survey was sent to residents. Kevin confirmed it is on the anniversary of their tenancy, and the data is then reported to the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) at the end of each financial year. However, responses are regularly reviewed to identify areas for improvement. Considerations have been taken to link the survey with an annual health check, which would detail everything that a tenant has received over the past year (e.g. repairs, rent paid). Seasonal and behavioural trends can also impact on responses and the level of satisfaction.

A question was raised on how those who don't use digital methods can also provide feedback. Kevin clarified there are alternative methods in place, e.g. phone call, in-person at retirement schemes, where required. Another member suggested, for schemes where staff are helping to complete the survey and gain feedback in-person, to invite other residents in the nearby area so their feedback can also be received.

It was asked if there are any themes from what makes tenants more satisfied. Kevin confirmed that these themes have been identified and are also being analysed.

Community Priorities Survey

Over 1,500 responses were received on the annual survey which asks residents what is most important to them as part of what the Communities team can offer, and what else they would like to see.

Mental health support was the highest priority for most, whilst providing more activities for younger and older people was also a theme. A report will be delivered to the next Ongo Communities Board meeting for further discussion. This will be considered when agreeing budgets at the Ongo Homes Board meeting in November, and how much will be spent in each area.

A member added that inclusivity for activities, e.g. people with additional needs and wheelchair users, needs to be considered. Kevin agreed this would be included.

A fellow member asked if there is a dedicated mental health awareness team and if managers receive mental health training to spot signs. Kevin confirmed that all relevant training is provided for staff. He also provided further details about Ongo Talk, which is a free counselling service for tenants and staff, funded by Communities, and includes trained counsellors along with volunteer counsellors who are in the last year of their qualification. There is a large waiting list for counselling services in Local Authorities, but waiting times are a lot less through Ongo Talk. Over 60% of respondents to the survey answered that mental health is a barrier to them gaining employment.

Sports Partnerships

Kevin gave a reminder of the partnerships that Ongo currently have with Scunthorpe United, Doncaster Rovers, Lincoln City, and Scunthorpe Rugby Club. He added that a partnership is due to be signed with Grimsby Town which will provide tenants with the opportunity to get free tickets.

6. STAIRs Policy – Liz Birkhead

A presentation had been delivered at the previous meeting, and the draft policy along with a covering report had been included in the meeting paperwork.

Liz explained that it will be a government regulatory requirement from 1st October 2026, and individual information requests can be made by tenants as part of the requirements from 1st April 2027. The RSH are due to incorporate it as part of their Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

Liz summarised that it would allow tenants better access to information about how Ongo manages their homes and services. The policy aligns with the requirements. Members were asked for any questions.

A member queried point 6.4 in the policy, which states that Ongo may refuse an information request where the work involved with responding to the information request would exceed 18 hours of time. They asked what safeguards are in place to support reasonable tenant scrutiny requests in different areas. Liz clarified that, like Subject Access Requests under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018, each case would be assessed to determine whether the request is reasonable and proportionate. Where a request could not be accommodated, a clear justification would be provided.

A follow-up question was raised about if tenants would be provided with alternative information if their request was refused. Liz confirmed it would be provided where possible, if there was sensitive information under GDPR then that information could be redacted.

In terms of reasonable requests, members asked if there was any guidance about where a request may be reasonable or not rather than it being up to individual discretion. General guidance is included in item 6 of the policy, but Liz added that it will be a developing matter with it being a new policy and piece of legislation.

Another member asked if Ongo expected to get many requests. Liz said that it remains to be seen and would depend on matters including raising awareness and publicising information. Lots of work is being carried out on the publication scheme to ensure the website and other sources have all the relevant information.

It was queried if Ongo will seek feedback from tenants on if the information is useful. Mo explained that a survey had recently been sent to tenants about information on the public Ongo website, but there had been a low response rate. The first phase of STAIRs, which includes publishing information on the website, needs to be completed by the start of October.

A question was raised on time needed for a request, what would the maximum timescale be and would the tenant be informed. Liz confirmed that the tenant would be kept updated. It would be treated the same as Subject Access Requests where, if it can't be completed within 30 days, then the tenant would be notified as to why and an extension (usually around two weeks) would be given.

Members agreed that the policy was understandable and helped Ongo to prepare for when the first phase is due to begin.

7. Volunteers Code of Conduct – Mo Mathieson

Mo provided details on the revised document and explained it was reviewed in 2023 and, as part of the three-year review cycle, is due to be updated by October. There are no fundamental changes; some sections have been strengthened, whilst a new section has been added (item 4) about shared values and principles for tenants, staff and contractors. There is also a greater focus on accessibility and reasonable adjustments, along with more information about digital, AI and the RSH Consumer Standards.

Mo asked for feedback as part of this item, but she confirmed that members could provide feedback up to two weeks after the meeting if required. **ACTION:** Send any additional feedback on the Code, including those members not in attendance.

Wendy added that a one-page summary sheet had previously been created, and that it could be produced again if volunteers would find it useful. She explained that the full document needs to be in place, particularly if there is an alleged breach of the Code so specific areas in which the volunteer may have breached can be referred to. It was agreed that a summary sheet would be beneficial. **ACTION:** Create summary sheet once updated Code has been approved.

A member wished to clarify if challenge and disagreement in some cases would be protected. E.g. somebody may unknowingly make a statement based on false information that may have been provided. They asked how Ongo would know if something was deliberately malicious rather than an honest mistake. Wendy confirmed that it would be looked further into and there would be an informal discussion with the volunteer to make it clear what is expected. These informal chats have been beneficial in previous situations, as it helps to remind volunteers of their responsibilities and avoid potential issues being escalated.

Wendy suggested that it could be useful for members to have a refresher on the Code at a future away day for the group.

Another member asked for further information on point 18.1 where it referred to a volunteer raising a concern about possible wrongdoing to an external body, and which external bodies this meant. It could be the RSH if a volunteer felt that Ongo were doing something they shouldn't, or Tpas for advice. If a volunteer had a concern about the Customer Engagement Manager or Head of Service, then they could raise it with Ongo's Director of Corporate & Compliance Services, Jo Sugden. **ACTION:** Clarify this further in the Code.

Following a query, Wendy clarified that the Code is for individual volunteers. If a volunteer felt that another volunteer had breached the Code, then they could raise it with Customer Engagement without requiring the support of CV.

8. Customer Engagement Activity Update (verbal) – Tenant Reps Tpas Conference

Rhiannon explained that it had been an excellent opportunity to network and share best practice with tenant volunteers and staff from other organisations. There had been talks from the RSH and Chartered Institute of Housing, along with an engaged tenant who was very passionate about championing tenant involvement. A workshop on 'A Seat at the Table' which focused on improving engagement and influence with ethnic minority groups.

Rhiannon found a Chairing Skills workshop particularly useful, and proposed trialling a 'carpark' idea at the next CV focus group. This involves 'parking' topics on a flipchart that are important, but not fully relevant to what is being discussed at the time, these can then be returned to or be an agenda item for a future meeting. All agreed to this. **ACTION:** Trial at next CV meeting.

Rhiannon learnt a lot from an AI workshop, where it helped to de-myth a lot of commonly held views about AI. The Stop Social Housing Stigma group placed particular focus on the language used in the sector, such as Stock Condition Survey rather than a Home Condition Survey, as language can add to stigma.

Rhiannon had featured in a Tenant Talks session to close the Conference, and lots of positive feedback had been received. She encouraged members to attend future Conferences where possible.

Tami emphasised how much she had learnt, particularly around inclusivity, and how she felt Ongo were advanced in many areas compared to other organisations. Tami liked an idea which had been shared of a 'Tidy Friday', which included staff, Executive Leadership Team and residents who help spruce up a particular area. Wendy explained that Ongo do similar as part of their Neighbourhood Engagement events in different areas.

Charmaine added that she also found the AI workshop useful. She said that some other tenant volunteers had been raising issues about their housing provider at the Conference, but she felt that Ongo listen to residents and implement their suggestions for improvement, which she extended her thanks for, giving a recent example from a Customer Focus Committee meeting about raising that more needed to be done for young people in the Market Hill area, which had led to a family fun day being held.

Wendy explained there are other conferences, webinars and training sessions that volunteers could benefit from. Customer Engagement (CE) continue to look and share if there is anything that would be worthwhile. Members were encouraged to contact CE if they found any training that they think would be beneficial.

Tenant Inspectors

Stewart provided an update on the number of inspections completed since the last CV meeting, themes of issues identified, outcomes and an update on the group's latest quarterly mystery shop of the Contact Centre.

A member asked, for consistency, if the estate inspections that the group carry out could be renamed neighbourhood inspections. **ACTION:** To be discussed at the TI's next meeting.

Kevin also said it would be useful to compare the themes and issues identified from the group's nine amber-rated inspections with themes that are coming from survey feedback and neighbourhood plans. **ACTION:** Information to be collated and shared.

Complaints Panel

Trevor gave an update from the panel and the outcomes of the previous meeting. There has been a recent increase of complaints raised using AI, and the Complaints & Feedback Team are trialling the use of AI for writing complaints acknowledgement and outcome letters, which is not only saving time but also highlighting and reducing any human error.

He praised Becky Johns and Helen Heseltine, who are involved in the meetings, for their knowledge and how they help to make the meetings informative and enjoyable.

A member asked about a recent complaint that they had made, but they had been told that it couldn't be progressed further due to a policy currently under review. They asked for clarity on if an existing policy is still in place until a review was completed and checked if advisors in the Contact Centre are kept up to date with any updated policies and changes so they can advise accordingly. It was confirmed that advisors are kept up to date, including the policy review schedule, and that an existing policy remains in place even when it is undergoing a review.

Property Services Panel

Keith detailed the actions and outcomes from the previous meeting, including a reduction in the amount of repair jobs in progress and an increase in customer satisfaction for repairs and maintenance.

9. Customer Engagement Update - Wendy Wolfe

Wendy went through the details from the activity report, particularly focusing on the diversity profiling of the groups which has shown where CE are lacking in representation and what areas are due to be focused on for targeted promotion (mainly rural areas).

Claire Coyle (Region 2 Neighbourhoods Manager) had found the July CV focus group, which focused on the Pet Policy, beneficial from the feedback and suggestions received. The revised, draft policy will be brought back to the group for further discussion once all changes have been made.

CE are going out to different areas as part of targeted work to support with the neighbourhood plans and engaging in areas that CE have identified where there is low representation. Upcoming engagement will take place with residents at Allenby Close (Lincoln), Melford Court (Ashby) and Ashtree Close (Belton).

The Ongo Carnival was successful, with some organisations already expressing an interest in attending again next year. Ongo received positive feedback from members of the public and external organisations.

10. Future Agenda item / Focus group ideas – Wendy Wolfe

Wendy explained that she has been involved in meetings with staff about the Tenant Handbook, which is currently being reviewed. The current document is out of date and very lengthy and it was agreed with the Chair and Vice Chair of CV that, as part of the review, the September CV focus group will look at Tenant Handbook to gain members' feedback.

The November focus group is due to cover details about using AI, providing an overview along with its benefits and how Ongo are currently using it. It will be led by the member of staff, who is leading on the project. It was emphasised that, although AI can help in many ways, there still needs to be the human element, such as writing meeting minutes. A positive example was given of a tenant volunteer who was concerned about using AI and when shown an example of a document AI had helped to produce, they were reassured that it is being used as a support tool.

Mo asked members if they would be happy with future CV meetings being recorded for the purpose of transcribing and helping with writing minutes. All in attendance agreed. **ACTION:** Begin using AI, CoPilot, to record meetings.

11. Any Other Business

Wendy provided an update that Melissa Cooper, Customer Engagement Officer, was leaving her role. This will be advertised in the next few weeks. Members were asked to contact the Customer Engagement email, customer.engagement@ongo.co.uk, or Customer Engagement Assistant Amy (Amy.Sylvester@ongo.co.uk) for any CE queries.

12. Date and Time of Next Meeting

- Focus Group: Tuesday 22nd September, 1.30pm – 3.30pm
- Full CV meeting: Wednesday 14th October, 9.30am – 12.30pm

Both will be held at The Arc (Enterprise Room), with members being able to attend in-person or digitally via Teams.

Rhiannon thanked everyone for their contributions and closed the meeting.