



ONGO COMMUNITIES COMMON BOARD

COMPRISING OF: ONGO COMMUNITIES LTD (Company Number 08619739)
ONGO RECRUITMENT LTD (Company Number 04750128)
CROSBY BROKERAGE LTD (07307333)

Held at 9.30am on Wednesday 1 July
The Ac, Enterprise Suite, Lichfield Avenue
Scunthorpe DN17 1QX

MINUTES

Present:

Common Board: Natalie Cresswell (Chair), Karen Locking, Judith Tomlinson, Jan Williams, David Bishop, Stewart Atkinson

Officers: Gemma Willey, Bev Lewis (Minutes), Kevin Hornsby, Steve Hepworth (Teams), Ashley Harrison (Teams), Erica Sanderson, Kerry Copson,

Apologies:

Absence: None

Observers: Scott Strong, Kelly Jones

The meeting was confirmed as quorate – three members are required as per standing orders item 15 and the specific resolutions agreed by the entities in November 2022.

Declarations of Interest: Natalie Cresswell and Judith Tomlinson declared they are members of Ongo Homes Board and Jan Williams is employed by Ongo. David Bishop noted that he has provided consultancy work for Ongo Developments.

Time meeting opened: 09:33am

1. **Agenda item 3 – Minutes of Previous meetings and Matters Arising**

The minutes from the meeting held 1 April 2026 were approved.

2. **Agenda item 4 – Action List**

The action list was noted with all actions marked as complete.

3. **Agenda item 5 – Management Accounts**

Summary: This report presents the management accounts including financial golden rule of Ongo Communities, Ongo Recruitment and Crosby Brokerage for May 2026. Management accounts are presented in appendix 1

Discussion points/questions:

- The Board received the management accounts for April and May 2026/27, noting performance was in line with budget, all golden rules were met, and the additional £300k donation from Ongo Developments had been placed in ring-fenced reserves. It was confirmed that debtor levels did not currently impact the cash-based golden rule position and would continue to be managed through the bad debt policy. Total reserves were around £930k, including ring-fenced funds, with general reserves within policy limits.
- The Board queried the level of outstanding Ongo Recruitment debtors and whether this affected the golden rule position. It was confirmed that the golden rule is based on cash held, and debtor levels would only affect this if they impacted cash. Doubtful debts are managed through the bad debt policy, with provisions made where appropriate based on finance and operational judgement.
- Previous discussions with Finance had helped review debtor issues and identify any action needed. It was noted that outstanding debtor levels can appear significant but are managed through the bad debt policy. A query was also raised on reserves, with confirmation that total reserves were around £930k, including ring-fenced funds, and general reserves remained within policy limits.
- The Board noted the importance of monitoring reserve levels to ensure funds remain within policy and are used effectively. It was confirmed that any further discussion could be arranged with Karamjit as the finance business partner, with escalation to senior finance colleagues if needed.

Agreed: Board

- noted the contents of this report and associated information and approved the management accounts of Ongo Communities, Ongo Recruitment and Crosby Brokerage Ltd for the period

ACTION 4/26: Governance Team to arrange a Teams Call with David Bishop, Stew Atkinson and Karamjit to provide training on golden rules.

4. **Agenda item 6 – Business Performance Report.**

Summary: This paper provides performance management information on progress against the targets and highlights the year-to-date results on projects and business activities.

Discussion points/questions:

- The Board received an update on the policy report, including work to strengthen outcomes and social value.

- Members noted progress with the sports partnership work, including the move away from the previous “support, health and housing” wording and the development of a clearer approach focused on connecting communities.
- A short promotional video is being developed to showcase the sports partnerships across the four clubs and encourage customer involvement in activities.
- Positive engagement was noted, although there remains a gap in North East Lincolnshire, which will be explored further.
- The Board discussed the importance of using customer data and feedback to better understand who is engaging with activities and how future promotion can be targeted.
- A strong response had been received to the tenant survey, which had been issued to around 12,000 tenants and was expected to reach around 1,000 responses. Responses were mainly from North Lincolnshire, with a good spread from Doncaster, Grimsby and Lincolnshire. Customers indicated that wellbeing, training and community activities are valued, with key themes including mental health and wellbeing, communities, carpets/furniture, neighbourhoods, ASB, fly-tipping and opportunities for young people. It was also noted that awareness of the £1.1m investment in communities was low.
- Members noted the importance of understanding customer feedback on mental health, social isolation and access to activities.
- The Board discussed wider partnership opportunities, including links with local authorities, elected members and community organisations to address local issues.
- It was agreed that further consideration should be given to how services are promoted and targeted, including use of the website, welcome pack materials, QR code signposting and other communication channels. Members noted that there was no formal referral scheme, but a “human to human” approach was in place, with colleagues attending team meetings to build awareness and support referrals across the business.
- Members highlighted the need to understand demand, changing customer needs and how support offers can be sustained in the longer term, including the impact of mental health demand, apprenticeship activity, funding pressures and how customers are communicated with where services are short term or funding dependent.
- The Board noted that referrals from neighbourhood officers were being monitored and agreed that Jan Williams would review how many customers had accessed the employment support service and what could be identified from the data.
- Stewart Atkinson highlighted the Crosby Collective and the opportunity for Ongo to explore involvement in local fly-tipping activity. It was agreed that Stewart Atkinson would link Kevin Hornsby with the Crosby Collective contact.

Agreed: Board

- considered the content of the report and discussed and debated any performance issues
- agreed that the report demonstrates sufficient progress against targets and outcomes, and that risks are understood and managed appropriately.

5. Agenda item 7 – Communities Deep Dive – Ongo Recruitment

Summary: This report sets out the performance, risks, and future direction of Ongo Recruitment and Crosby Brokerage, both of which are key to delivering growth, sustainability, and social impact.

Discussion points/questions:

- The Board received a deep dive on Ongo Recruitment, noting improved service practice, stronger relationships with local authorities and positive progress against expectations. It was reported that performance had remained strong despite wider market challenges.
- Members discussed the need to strengthen Ongo Recruitment's marketing to address common concerns from businesses, including hidden costs, previous negative experiences with recruitment agencies and uncertainty about the benefits of the service.
- It was suggested that marketing should be more clearly aimed at businesses, explaining how Ongo Recruitment differs from other agencies, what the fees and processes are, how it can reduce the burden on employers and how it can support an employer's bottom line by making recruitment easier and avoiding hidden or unexpected costs.
- Members noted that case studies, testimonials and short videos could help demonstrate the positive impact for businesses, candidates and the wider community.
- The Board recognised that the service operates in a competitive and challenging market, but noted the strong progress made and the need to continue building confidence with potential clients.
- Capacity within the team was also discussed, with recognition that stability and the right resource would be important if Ongo Recruitment is to become more proactive in reaching new businesses. Members also discussed future resourcing and funding capacity, including the potential need for specialist funding support or outsourced support rather than relying on one individual.
- A new Board member noted that the deep dive into Ongo Recruitment clarified the wider brokerage activity and services provided.
- Members discussed the interpreters and translators service, noting the loss of NHS and GP-related work due to qualification requirements and competition from other providers.
- It was queried whether qualifications could be obtained in future to support tender opportunities, but it was noted that upskilling all interpreters would be challenging.
- The Board questioned why the service continued where income had reduced. It was confirmed that limited work remains where specific languages are required, with minimal resource needed to service this.
- Members noted that future decisions on whether to continue specific activities should consider margins, demand, resource requirements and strategic value.

ACTION 5/26: Share promotional videos with Board - KH

ACTION 6/26: Feed board suggestions, including WhatsApp communities, into the tech and innovation team's project to develop an outbound communications tool for tenant engagement.
- KH

Agreed: Board

- considered the content of the report and discussed and debated any issues.
- agreed that the report demonstrates a clear description of the services delivered by Ongo Recruitment and Crosby Brokerage, the targets and outcomes achieved, and that risks are understood and managed appropriately.

- noted the key risks and future direction set out in the report, including the focus on sustainability and growth

6. **Agenda item 8 – Communities Strategy Day**

Summary: A discussion was held between all members to decide themes and topics to be included on the agenda for the upcoming Strategy Day.

Discussion points/questions:

- The Board discussed the need for a dedicated strategy session to review the Community Strategy, customer survey feedback, future funding priorities and current activity against the plan.
- It was noted that the session should consider how existing funding is prioritised, particularly in light of tenant feedback and the likelihood of reduced future funding.
- Members agreed that the discussion should include the risks and impact of continuing or stopping current services, alongside options for using reserves or reducing activity over time.
- The Board recognised the importance of using customer feedback to shape future services and support clear, strategic decision-making.
- A separate strategy session would be arranged to allow sufficient time for discussion. A potential date of 15 October at 2pm was discussed, with Kevin Hornsby to explore venue opportunities and Gemma Willey and Kevin Hornsby to work with Natalie Cresswell on a draft agenda covering priorities, risks of continuing or stopping activity, and the consequences of not acting.

Agreed: Board

- the topics to be covered on the Strategy day and identified potential dates.

ACTION 7/26: Governance Team to arrange a draft agenda and circulate options for the dates

7. **Agenda item 9 – Health and Safety**

Summary: Ongo Communities has a duty of care to all stakeholders, including our employees, customers, and the public we interact with. We have a legal obligation to comply with various Health and Safety legislation and regulation, with serious consequences if we fail to do so. Board members must play a key role in setting the tone from the top, the risk appetite and providing oversight for Health and Safety. Board members must satisfy themselves that Ongo Communities is effectively managing the risk.

- *This report covers updates between 12th March 2026 – 11th June 2026. Incidents detailed are since the last reported incidents detailed in the last Board update.*
- *There has been 1 incident reported since the last reported incidents.*
- *There has been 0 RIDDOR reportable incidents within this reporting period.*

Discussion points/ questions:

- The Board received an update on health and safety matters and noted there had been a relatively quiet period, with no significant issues reported.
- Members discussed a recent isolated incident involving a customer's dog in the building and noted that this was not a common occurrence.
- It was confirmed that the distinction between assistance dogs and pets had been clarified, with arrangements in place to manage any disruption appropriately.
- Members noted the need to balance consistency across buildings with awareness that some colleagues and customers may have concerns or fears around dogs.

Agreed: Board

- confirmed they are satisfied with the management of Health and Safety arrangements set out in the report.

8. **Agenda item 10 – Strategic Risk Register**

Summary: This report presents the updated Ongo Communities strategic risk register.

The compliance risk will be retained and split into three sub-risks covering Post Office, food safety and grant funding compliance.

The People risk score has increased and should be monitored, although this is expected to be short term.

Risk appetites need updating following Ongo Homes Board approval in January 2026.

The external funding environment, including the Greater Lincolnshire Combined Authority, has moved CSR1.2 out of appetite while the overarching risk remains within tolerance.

Discussion points/queries:

- The Board received the Strategic Risk Register and noted that the finance risk had increased due to external funding pressures.
- The people risk remained within tolerance, with staffing stable, although reduced customer footfall following the move from Cole Street to Ongo House was being monitored.
- It was noted that the compliance risk had been reframed rather than removed, with sub-risks added for grant funding, food safety and Post Office compliance.
- The food safety compliance sub-risk was currently scored high due to outstanding actions from a pest control review, but these were expected to be completed shortly, reducing the risk score.
- Members discussed the proposed move to the new risk appetites and noted the mapping of existing risks to the revised categories.
- The Board reviewed the horizon scan and discussed future funding pressures, mayoral authority opportunities, customer access to services, communication methods and potential strategic risks.
- Members agreed that the risk register should remain fluid and continue to align with strategic priorities, particularly following the planned strategy session.
- The Board was comfortable with the current risk positions, mitigations and proposed approach.

ACTION 8/26: Review the Risk Register after the Strategy Day to determine whether any risk appetites or related areas require amendment.

Agreed: Board

- confirmed they have considered the Ongo Communities strategic risk register (appendix 1) and that they are satisfied with the management of the risks presented in this report
- discussed the flagged risks detailed at section 4.2 and confirmed satisfaction with the proposed management of these risks
- agreed the revised risk appetites at section 4.3 to align to the approved organisation wide appetites set by the Ongo Homes Board
- noted and discussed the horizon scan at 4.4 in relation to external funding and the impact on Ongo Communities and its service delivery

9. **Agenda item 11 – NHF Code of Governance**

Summary: Annually a self-assessment of the NHF Code of Governance must be undertaken. This is a requirement of the code itself. The results of the self-assessment are reported in the annual report. The statement of compliance is agreed by the Group Audit & Risk Committee, as required by Standing Orders. Each Board must agree its own self-assessment. Governance and Remuneration Committee will also review the self-assessment process and report to Group Audit & Risk Committee, who in turn will agree the statement of compliance.

Discussion points/questions:

- The Board received the annual self-assessment against the code requirements, noting full compliance for Ongo Communities. It was explained that the only area of non-compliance related to Ongo Developments, due to board size, and this is reviewed annually as part of the assessment process.
- Members were content to confirm compliance. It was also noted that abbreviations in future reports should be clearly explained to support understanding, particularly for newer members, and that a glossary of acronyms should be included where this would improve clarity.

Agreed: Board

- scrutinised and considered compliance against National Housing Federation (NHF) Code of Governance 2020 for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026 as per the self-assessment.
- confirmed Ongo Communities, Ongo Recruitment and Crosby Brokerage are fully compliant with the Code.

10. **Agenda item 12 – Time for Reflection**

The Board reflected positively on the meeting, noting that the papers were helpful, particularly the summaries, finance visuals and supporting information. New members welcomed the opportunity to contribute and confirmed the meeting had improved their understanding of Ongo Communities and its wider activities.

Thanks were given to colleagues for the work involved in preparing the detailed, insightful reports and supporting discussion. Members noted that they felt involved and able to contribute, and feedback was also shared on the use of electronic access for papers. The Board also agreed on a date and venue for the strategy session, with a half-day session preferred.

With no further business the meeting closed at 11.35am

Signed by Chair: Natalie Cresswell Date: 23 September 2026
As a true and correct record of the Ongo Communities Common Board meeting held 1 July 2026.