

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Customer Services Sub Committee</b>	 <b>Shropshire</b> <b>Towns and Rural Housing</b>
<b>Date</b>	<b>Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2024</b>	
<b>Time</b>	<b>10.00am – 12.00pm</b>	
<b>Location</b>	<b>Teams Meeting / Mount McKinley – Atria</b>	

**Present:**

**Members**

Tom Forty (TF)	Operations Director
Emma Jones (EJ)	Customer Relationships Manager
Richard Almos (RA)	Tenant Board Member
Chris Thomas (CT)	Chair of Tenant Scrutiny Panel
Ros Bridges (RB)	Corporate Director
Paul Hayward (PH)	Co-optee Board Member
Charlotte Burrows (CB)	Personal Assistant (Minute Taker)
Julia Buckley (JB)	Chair of Customer Services Committee & Board Member

**Guest**

Jenny Daisley (JD)	Client Officer
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**Presenter**

Mitch Allan (MA)	Assistant Director of Housing
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**Apologies**

Eleanor Rayers (ER)	Tenant Board Member
Yordan Tolev (YT)	Tenant Board Member

<u>1.</u>	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></b>	<b>Action</b>
	There were no declarations of interest.	
<u>2.</u>	<b><u>APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR &amp; NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS</u></b>	
2.1	It was confirmed that JB was nominated as chair of the committee by Board.	
2.2	Vice chair of the committee will be discussed at a later meeting.	
2.3	CT has joined as Scrutiny Panel chair and RA has joined as Tenant Board member & Sub Committee member. Both were welcomed.	
<u>3</u>	<b><u>TERMS OF REFERENCE</u></b>	
3.1	TF gave a verbal overview of the Terms of Reference and opened discussion on whether the committee is focussing on the right things.	
3.2	PH raised that he felt the committee could consider wider tenant engagement and have oversight of how engagement is going. TF agreed and explained that in the TOR it sets out that Committee has responsibility for overseeing implementation of the Customer Engagement Strategy which would cover this.	

3.3	Committee discuss that their remit on was in support of Finance and Risk Committee, and that the role was to escalate issues when they occur and not lead on Health & Safety	
3.4	<p>There was a discussion on oversight and scrutiny of regulatory standards and how this is covered across the committees. It was agreed that this would be raised and discussed with Board on how the standards are monitored across all the committees and Board.</p> <p><b>ACTION: JB to escalate and raise at next Board meeting</b></p>	JB
<b><u>4.</u></b>	<b><u>VOICE OF THE CUSTOMER REPORT</u></b>	
4.1	EJ gave an overview of the paper and explained that Board had requested that the survey be completed again in Spring. This is progressing. RA asked about the process of sampling and representation. EJ explained how the full stock list is shared with Acuity who then ensure that a sample is contacted to represent properties, demographic and length of tenancy. They make sure the same people are not picked up again for the next survey.	
4.2	EJ updated that training on complaints will be delivered for staff across the business by the end of July using both in-house and external training.	
4.3	JB asked if this report will be coming to every meeting and EJ confirmed it would. TSM results will then come through when they are completed. Committee were asked to share feedback on the report or if anything is missing.	
4.4	JB asked if committee could see the worst complaints / problems through this report to better understand root cause of complaints. EJ has confirmed that something could be done and there is a complaint log and that something would be shared as part of the next report	
4.5	JB asked how we are recording the lessons learnt. EJ replied that it's a regular item that goes into SMT, so can add that into her report for this committee. It was agreed that this is an area of improvement for complaint reporting and Committee asked to see more specific information on learning.	
<b><u>5.</u></b>	<b><u>CORPORATE PLAN INCLUDING STRATEGIES</u></b>	
5.1	MA gave an overview of the paper and the progress made in developing the strategies. MA highlighted the input from both staff and customers in the process. PH commented that it was really positive in terms of tenants getting involved and asked whether these were replacing service standards. TF commented that developing new service standards was identified as part of the strategy itself and is something that we needed to do in the coming months. Committee would be updated and involved in the development of any future service standards.	

	<p>There was a discussion about vulnerability and mental health and how we can best support and promote services to residents. RA commented that in terms of understanding vulnerability, we would need to look at diversity and demographics and pay attention to the different financial situations people are in, in the context of a cost of living crisis. TF explained that STAR are looking at a range of circumstances to support vulnerability and had developed a vulnerability policy that is on the agenda for approval.</p>	
	<p>There was a discussion supporting the Neighbourhood Strategy, particularly in relation to the development of neighbourhood plans. TF identified that we need to define neighbourhoods and are considering this. RA supported but explained the importance of speaking to residents in this. TF advised that further thinking would be brought back to Committee in June for discussion.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Further work to be completed on defining neighbourhoods and discussed with committee when further developed.</b></p>	MA
	<p>JB asked how the Neighbourhood and Community Strategy works alongside the Community Chest Fund. EJ responded it is currently within the Area Panel, but that this is under review as it is not working as well as it could. EJ explained that STAR needs to decide on the future of how any community funds are managed. JB explained the importance of ensuring that there needs to be alignment across any community funds, to the outcomes of all the strategies. RB explained that we are going to begin considering criteria and how match funding can increase the impact we have.</p>	
	<p>RA asked what would work in the communities look like. TF explained that there is an expectation for local teams to have a closer relationship with their areas once we have defined neighbourhoods more clearly. This will be based on more time in neighbourhoods and face to face conversations, along with other ways of engaging. RA supported discussing in the community how investment will happen, rather than separately.</p>	
6.	<p><b>OPERATIONS PERFORMANCE FRAMEWORK</b></p>	
6.1	<p>TF gave an overview of the paper and explained why STAR were looking at introducing a more granular view of operations measures. CT stated that he wasn't sure of the acronyms that are being used verbally and within the papers, could we keep it simple. TF advised that we'll look to improve on use of acronyms so reports and discussion are more inclusive.</p>	
6.2	<p>TF explained that we would like to begin bringing specific measures to this committee to improve scrutiny. TF asked committee to consider and begin identifying any particular measures that would be of interest. It would be too ambitious to bring all measures to the group from day one. 10 to 15 measures was proposed to be a good starting point. JB asked if these would come to each meeting and TF confirmed they would once agreed.</p>	

6.3	<p>RA had an interest in some of the financial inclusion measures and mentioned that he'd like an overview of the financial situation. MA advised we could bring a report back to committee at a future meeting, and include a focus on early intervention work we are doing. PH explained that he'd be interested in looking at the call centre management side, customer facing, times answering calls, abandonment. Committee were asked to share views after the meeting of measures to include. TF would share a proposed list by mid-May for review via email.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Share proposed measures with Committee</b></p>	TF
7.	<b>CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT UPDATE</b>	
7.1	<p>EJ gives an overview of her report and particularly highlighted the work being done by the Scrutiny Panel. CT explained that the Scrutiny Panel have been looking at the repairs service and as part of this have met staff, visited properties, reviewed data and are call listening in the coming weeks. The panel will be focusing on looking at vulnerabilities of tenants and how we are adjusting for them and how staff being aware of these. TF stated that he's looking forward to reading this report. Scrutiny Panel will have a round table look at the recommendations with TF, MA and other staff and the report will follow. TF explained that he would also be keen to hear about the panels experience and support from STAR.</p>	
	<p>CT has suggested that STAR replace the word void, replace with vacant or empty. JB emphasised to CT that he can bring anything big or small to this committee for it's up for discussion. CT said that it's very enjoyable being on the panel. The report will be on the agenda for 6<sup>th</sup> June.</p>	
	<p>JB raised some questions about the level of resource allocated to resident engagement and whether STAR felt that it was being adequately resourced. RB advised that this will be considered in the coming months and any concerns flagged for discussion.</p>	
	<p>RA asked that we make sure that we are implementing appropriate feedback loops to ensure customers hear what we have done with feedback. EJ replied from the survey carried out, 'Shaping our future', we've used the group that want to be involved and set up focus groups, neighbourhoods policy group and 8 polices have been approved. EJ to check on whether we have fed back on the changes resulting from this.<sup>7</sup></p> <p><b>ACTION: EJ to check on feedback following Neighbourhood sessions</b></p>	EJ
	<p>JB raised about the cost of living and whether we could think innovatively in how we engage with residents. It was suggested that we could use a warm room during winter periods that would target people with financial problems and engage with people whilst there. JB has seen previously with other social housing providing a cooked breakfast and warm room and chat. EJ said that OsNosh funding has come to an end. EJ would have a look at where we could find funds from. JB also suggested that we could look to develop an approach where customers get asked the same 3 questions</p>	

	<p>regardless of how they contact and that all the data goes to the same way., TF said this is a good idea and would explore this further with EJ</p> <p><b>ACTION: EJ to develop thinking around consistent three questions engagement approach</b></p>	EJ
8.	<b>COMPLAINTS PERFORMANCE UPDATE</b>	
8.1	<p>PH commented that the report is really useful and a good starting point. This was the key area from TSM that was concern. PH would like us to look at the detail around extensions and how they are reported. EJ replied that the Ombudsman isn't explicit around extension reasons, but that annual leave is not one of the exceptions, someone should be covering this. EJ confirmed there are internal processes that ensure that they are considered reasonable. EJ would agree this is an area of weakness and an area for improvement.</p>	
8.2	<p>EJ explained that there has been improvement in how we manage complaints and that they are <b>not</b> managed by Managers at Stage 1 and SMT for Stage 2. There was a brief discussion about compensation payments and how this compares to previous years. TF suggested that it would be useful for Committee to see a breakdown for redress or compensation.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Look to include a breakdown of redress and compensation in future reports.</b></p>	EJ
8.3	JB suggested that this is earlier in the agenda for the next meeting.	
8.4	<b>DECISION: The Complaints Policy was approved by Committee</b>	
9.	<b>NEIGHBOURHOOD MANAGEMENT POLICY APPROVAL</b>	
9.1	<p>MA gives an overview of the report and summarised the key changes proposed in the policies. MA explained that we had engaged with customers as part of the process. PH asked a question about how we share vulnerability information with contractors now or whether it is something that needs the new IT system. TF replied that OpenHousing is the single view of the customer record currently and holds the vulnerability information. This pops up whenever staff access the system and is shared with contractors as part of the information sent to them. part of</p>	
9.2	<p>TF advised that in terms of reasonable adjustments, the policy is aimed to work alongside another policy focussed at property adaptions. JB asked TF why did we not have these policies previously. TF commented that he couldn't advise why STAR did not historically have a vulnerability and reasonable adjustment policy in the past. They were gaps we had identified and therefore worked to address them.</p>	

9.3	<p>JB asked if these will be available on the website. TF advised that most of them would be. TF also explained that it is often unrealistic for all residents to find and read the entire policy detail and that a better structured website with the relevant information well managed was a solution. There are plans to develop the website coming forwards as part of the Corporate Plan. It was discussed that we should promote the policies in the newsletter which was agreed with by MA.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Include update on policies in upcoming newsletter</b></p>	EJ
9.4	<p>RA asked why the reasonable adjustments policy was very focussed on disability, and could be expanded to look at other customer groups. TF advised that the policy does explain that all of the reasonable adjustments listed can be considered for customers without a disability, but also explained that the policy is in part a response to our obligations under the Equalities Act 2010. MA discussed examples of how we adapt services for customers of different cultural backgrounds already, but that we will look to consider the policy for other groups in how we communicate it to staff.</p> <p><b>ACTION: Consider roll out of policies to the business and ensure can be considered wider than just disability</b></p>	MA
9.5	<b>DECISION: The Complaints Policy was approved by Committee</b>	
<b><u>10.</u></b>	<b><u>Operations Director Update</u></b>	
	TF confirmed that the Operations Director agenda item is an update to Committee of anything not specifically captured in other reports that is of interest or felt to be important for Committee to be aware of. There was nothing specific at this meeting to note.	
<b>11</b>	<b>OPERATIONAL RISK REGISTER</b>	
11.1	<p>TF provided an overview of this report and explained that the Operations Risk Register was relatively new. PH stated that it was really useful and that he agreed that everything up to point 12 sat in the Committee's remit. PH felt that 13-15 sat more in FAR's remit. TF agreed and accepted that, and explained that the risk register was for the Operations Directorate more broadly, but could remove the final few risks for the next Committee update.</p> <p><b>ACTION: TF to remove 13-15 risks for next Customer Committee update.</b></p>	
	JB asked whether there was a risk of compensation that should be included in the register. TF replied that compensation is more a symptom / impact than the problem itself. Other areas such as poor repairs service are included which would lead to increased compensation.	

<b>12.</b>	<b>FORWARD PLAN REVIEW</b>	
12.1	The Committee were happy with the forward plan with nothing specific to add.	
12.2	Committee asked for an acronym table to be developed and kept to help better understand reports. TF committed to ensuring reports are improved for future meetings in terms of the use of acronyms.	
<b><u>13.</u></b>	<b><u>AOB</u></b>	
13.1	JB raised the volume of papers at the meeting. TF acknowledged this and suggested that it was partially the result of it being the first Committee meeting, and the backlog of items needing Committee input or approval. It is noted for future meetings.	
	A brief discussion on whether Hybrid or Teams would work best. The general consensus was for a Hybrid meeting, as the face to face element was supported. An email will be sent out to get views for the next meeting <b>ACTION: Governance to email Committee members to agree format for next meeting</b>	RD
	<b>Start of Meeting – 10.04am</b> <b>End of Meeting – 12.12pm</b>	