

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Meeting | Customer Services Sub Committee |
| Date | Thursday 10 September 2024 |
| Time | 10.00am – 12.00pm |
| Location | Teams |



Core Members:

| | |
|------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Paul Hayward (PH) | Co-optee Board Member & Interim Chair |
| Tom Forty (TF) | Operations Director |
| Kelly Jean Dytor (KJD) | Personal Assistant & Minute Taker |
| Mitch Allan (MA) | Assistant Director of Housing |
| Ros Jones (RJ) | Corporate Director |
| Jenny Daisley (JD) | Client Officer (Shropshire Council) |
| Lynn Fonseca (LF) | Tenant Board Member |
| Richard Amos (RA) | Tenant Board Member |
| Yordan Tolev (YT) | Tenant Board Member |
| Rosanna Davenport (RD) | Governance Manager |

Apologies:

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Emma Jones (EJ) | Customer Relationship Manager |
|-----------------|-------------------------------|

| Item No. | | Who | When |
|------------|--|-----|--------------|
| <u>1.</u> | Welcome and Apologies | | |
| | PH the interim chair welcomed all to the meeting | | |
| <u>2.</u> | Declaration of Interest | | |
| <u>2.1</u> | No declarations of interest | | |
| <u>3.</u> | Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising | | |
| 3.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of the last meeting have been approved. PH mentioned actions from the last meeting which were not listed in the actions log within the minutes. This included item 6. around the Ombudsman self-assessment and a discussion about the spike in stage 1 cases between November and March. RJ advised they do not have the detail of that yet but will have an update for the next meeting <p>Action: RJ to update Committee at the next meeting on the drivers behind the spike in complaints in November and March 2023/24.</p> | RJ | Next meeting |

| | | |
|------------|---|--|
| 4. | <u>Retirement of chair and new chair</u> | |
| 4.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RD reported the retirement of Julia Buckley from chair of this committee, as she is now an MP, she will not have capacity. We are waiting for Shropshire Council to appoint a new Shropshire Council board member. Once we have confirmation of that, then we will look to appoint a chair of the Subcommittee. We will also be asking for each subcommittee to have a vice chair. If anyone would like to put themselves forward, please contact RD or TF. | |
| 5. | <u>Operational Performance Review</u> | |
| 5.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RB updated the committee on performance against our management agreement targets for period 4 which is the end of July. It was identified that to the end of July performance in several areas had met key targets, but that there were others that were currently behind target. Performance in the management of minor void works was identified as seeing notable improvements. In relation to managing empty homes, it was discussed that we remain on track to meet annual targets despite the current challenges that include some longer-term properties which remain empty. Positive improvement has been seen in complaint response rates that have increased following a period of sickness within the team. A number of process improvements were implemented that are now leading to improved response rates. Good progress continues to be seen, particularly in planned repairs. There are some areas of focus and areas to watch that include the number of homes meeting the decent homes standard and energy efficiency SAP ratings. Asbestos management also requires additional focus to ensure that we meet our year-end targets, but plans are in place to support us to achieve this. Overall, the KPI's show good progress in maintaining and improving performance and there are plans in place to address any areas of current underperformance. <p>Questions/Comments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In response to challenge from PH at the previous meeting, TF commented on the improvement in quality of the | |

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| | <p>reporting and the level of detail within the performance report following the new Performance Analyst joining. TF welcomed further feedback from PH and the Committee on this.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RA requested more clarity on the relationship between STAR and Cornovi. • RJ advised that historically STAR had employees with the organisation who managed the development of new homes. Since these key STAR employees left in 2023, this function is now contracted to Cornovii Homes who complete this activity on STAR's behalf. • Cornovii Homes are another company owned by Shropshire Council and are a sister company to STAR. Together STAR Housing and Cornovii form a group of companies with Shropshire Council and it makes sense for all the companies to work together as much as possible. • Whilst there is a technical structure to the companies, the relationship is strong. Cornovii staff operate from the STAR office and are seen as another team within the business. • The key reason behind the structure and for Cornovii being a separate company is to enable Cornovii to build and sell homes on the open market and trade at a profit, which can then be reinvested by Shropshire Council. • TF advised that Cornovii Homes were also supporting with the regeneration and improvement of a range of temporary accommodation properties on behalf of Shropshire Council including Coton Hill, Parish Rooms and 70 Castle Foregate. • PH questioned the operational performance review, and the rationale for the setting a target of 80% complaints response rate for stage 1 complaints. , PH also identified that, unless we maintain 100% on that for the next eight months, we won't reach that target. • RJ advised that the KPI targets that were set and agreed with Shropshire Council and Board were based on ensuring we were targeting median performance when compared and benchmarked to a Housemark peer group. | |
|--|--|--|

- RJ advised that in spite of that internally we want to target 100%. Whilst we can't achieve 100% for the year we are confident we can recover the position sufficiently as internal processes are dramatically improved.
- RJ advised that she did believe that we could achieve the target by the end of the year and that this is being tracked. If we achieved 100% response rate for all remaining complaints, then we would need 26 complaints this year. Year on year trends suggests we will receive more than this.
- PH questioned the 80% satisfaction with planned maintenance and what that definition was in terms of planned maintenance, and what our plans are to improve that figure.
- TF advised the planned maintenance definition is broadly the work delivered by our assets team, including painting and decorating, electrical rewires, and heating installations. TF advised that whilst volumes are low in our planned maintenance satisfaction survey, we had identified dissatisfaction with Dodds as our Electrical contractors. TF confirmed that this contract is ending and that we will not be putting any further work through Dodds. We are in the process of insourcing the EICR programme from September or October. We have also had dissatisfaction around painting and decorating so we will be re-tendering and re-procuring that in April 2025.
- RA asked how the increased intelligence shared by the Performance Analyst was supporting the business and overall service.
- RJ advised that it is invaluable, Sarah is already making good progress in streamlining the information. The performance analyst has strong skills in analysis, objectivity and independence and is improving how we review data. There has not yet been an impact on streamlining the process significantly at this point as that is a work in progress and is linked to the new IT system due to be implemented next year.
- PH asked a question about the number of complaints received and that we are currently Q4 in the pulse survey. RJ added that the campaign that we did internally to push out the message that we want to encourage complaints and made sure that people know how to complain will have made a difference to increase complaint volumes. We have two staff training courses rolling out in this month for managers and front line staff. The first is about coaching managers to respond to complaints in the most effective way. The second is setting an expectation that everyone in the business understands the importance of complaints by attending a two-hour course.

| | | | |
|------------------|---|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • | | |
| <u>6.</u> | <u>Voice of the Customer Report</u> | | |
| 6.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RJ gave an overall summary. The paper aims to bring together in one paper all the activities and information related to the voice of the customer. It includes complaints which is a separate function, but by putting it all into one place it is clear what strands we've got going on. Overall, the paper shows a service in development and that there is work to do. • The first section is around engagement and sets out events and activities that we've done since the beginning of the financial year and that we have coming up. The Customer Engagement Manager is now back with the business, and we are working to pick up this area again, to get some effective engagement programmes planned for the future. The scrutiny panel has been a huge success in terms of the first review that it has delivered, and we need to build on that. Unfortunately, several members have needed to retire from that panel, so we are needing to campaign to recruit new members to get another review completed by the end of the year to ensure that we meet our strategy target of at least nine reviews over the next three years. • There is also a section about our customer feedback channels, to give a sense of where we are as an organisation and how we hear from customers. The Customer Engagement Manager is reviewing how effective the current systems are and whether we can streamline them as we change a number of our key systems across the business. • For the tenant satisfaction measures survey, we will be doing two surveys this year and this will complete our statutory requirement. The report from the first survey has been shared. The results are good and encouraging. We will be doing a second survey in the New Year. • Another piece of work is looking at our customer profile for which we have a working group looking at how to best build up an understanding of what information we want to collect and understand about our customers, so that we can tailor our services better to their needs. • In this report, we also talk about complaints performance and work that the new Complaints and Disrepair Manager will be focusing on improving as we go forward. • Finally in that report, there is a list of all of the different programmes that The Customer Engagement Manager will be coordinating to improve what we do in this space. <p><u>Questions:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LF asked for ideas to recruit a new scrutiny panel as there is only two people left. TF advised that we would try and tap into our neighbourhood housing officers who have got | | |

| | | |
|-----------|--|--|
| | <p>good relationships and know our communities well and ask them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RA queried the feedback channels and how that is held together from each and every customer? RJ advised the intention from within corporate services is to have that much wider view and consolidate this across all of the channels, which is the part that is not happening effectively at the moment. <p>It will be the role of the new Customer Engagement Manager role to do that and that's part of why she's looking at the systems that we have got.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PH queried feedback from residents. RJ advised that is something we are not formally doing enough of at the moment. One of the key things is designing new customer engagement channels and find different ways to engage with our customers. PH reiterates the need to get the scrutiny panel set back up to dig deep on the issues around planned maintenance. PH queried whether we are tapping into some of the comments from the residents in the survey and resolving some of their issues. RH advised that during the survey all comments requiring action were flagged and addressed immediately by the Contact Centre team. PH added that repairs, handling of complaints and maintenance in communal areas is clearly our focus now. RA queried whether there is a feedback loop going out to customers and is it consistent to all customers. RJ advised we are not doing that as effectively as we could right now, but the 'you said, we did' type of work is something we are developing to ensure that feedback loop. | |
| 7. | <p>Annual Report 2023/24</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approval final version | |
| 7.1 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RJ apologised for not having the draft report to share at this meeting as there were wording changes still required and we were working around availability of the editors. The report will have to go straight to the board for approvals, but the Head of Corporate Services is working hard to get an edit prepared to share with the committee first. RB shared on her screen the current version of the report for a high-level overview. RJ advises that one of the criticisms from last year's report, gathered by an externally convened focus group, was that it was too corporate and too long. We have worked on the language which also responds to the new Transparency and Accessibility standards. Specifically, we have translated the wording to a lower reading age, which makes it more accessible to a wider range of people. The report has also been them sectioned around different themes. Another criticism that it was too purple. So, this year it has been themed around our strategy colours instead and we have tried to keep a lot of infographics and pictures, showing our own homes, staff and customers. | |

| | | | |
|----|--|----|--|
| | <p>There is a section around our communities and the work that we've done to date. We also talk about customers, how they interact with us, our targets and how we're achieving. There is a finance section and a section which focuses on the future and what we are planning to do.</p> <p>Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RA queried whether it is available in different formats. RJ advised that we are aiming to have a digital copy, which will be available on the website and a printed copy. We want to be sure that we issue a hard copy to those people who do not have an e-mail address. We also talked about supplementing it with a short video, talking about our performance which we are working on and hope to bring that to the AGM. Once we have established our customer profile then then we can identify our customers individual needs. <p>Action:</p> <p>RJ to issue the report to the committee by Thursday 12 September.</p> | RJ | |
| 8. | <p>Operational Risk Register</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> TF updated the Committee who are not on the finance and risk committee of the ongoing work to develop the organisation's approach to risk management. The proposed approach is going to Board next week for approval, and so Committee can expect to see updated version of the risk register after that. The new approach will include a much stronger escalation up and down of risks, where they and in the future the Governance Manager will likely work with you as a committee to determine what you might want to be looking out for or challenging us on around risk. RD added that risk is something that we need to have a greater focus on due to changes in the industry and sector and with new regulations. There is a risk workshop with Beavers and Struthers and the Committee is welcome to join. They will be doing many sessions, such as risk appetite and risk tolerance level. TF discussed a change in risk profile around the recruitment of staff, which reflects the fact that we have filled a significant number of the vacancies in a relatively smooth way. From a STAR perspective our employment packages are competitive within the Shropshire market and there are some benefits that we have of our locality. There are still one or two roles we are finding difficult to recruit across the business, but the system has improved. On damp and mould we have seen significant improvements in managing after we have invested in a new surveyor focussed specifically on damp and mould, and | | |

| | | | |
|-----------|---|--|--|
| | <p>we have put our in-house maintenance team through a training course to complete mould washes. They can also get out to the jobs more to address that immediate health risk and concern if it is flagged. Despite the improvements, we are keeping the risk profile the same but plan to monitor this through the winter and review this early in the new year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TF advised that there remains ongoing work to manage increasing challenges around affordability and the cost of living crisis. With the stopping of the winter fuel allowance and with a number of residents still to transition to Universal Credit, we are assessing what the risks are and looking at what support we can put in place to help people even if it is some advice and some guidance. <p>Questions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PH would like to know numbers we are talking about with regards to the cost-of-living issue as we move forwards. PH also drew attention to the highest risk which is policy and procedures. Can we have an understanding of which procedures we are missing and how quickly we are looking to address those. • TF confirmed, some of the key procedures include anti-social behaviour, vulnerable customers and safeguarding. There are several other procedures across the business that we can start to improve of governance and oversight of working with Corporate Service colleagues, such as damp and mould. TF identified that it isn't necessarily the operational work where the problem is, it is more the documentation of procedures that allows us to monitor and track progress and prepare ourselves for regulation. | | |
| 9. | <p><u>Damp & Mould Update</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Customer Focus on D&M service delivery</u> | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MA reported that now we have insourced the ability to complete minor mould washes. We are still outsourcing more significant cleans because we don't have that skill set, although we have brought in some people that can do damp proofing. • All damp cases are tracked since November 2022. This is currently an Excel document, but the expectation is to bring this into One Housing when the new system is launched. We reviewed Awaab's Law consultation document and are already working to the proposed timescales and approach, even though it has not come into law yet. • We are taking a fabric first approach, working to understand the true root cause of damp and mould, rather than assume lifestyle. MA identified that this is a complex area of work and is taking a lot of work, but progress is positive. | | |

| | | | |
|------------|--|----|--------------|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MA identified that we are continuing to monitor customer vulnerability, seeking to prioritise these cases. We are also seeking to improve our strategic approach to reviewing damp and mould to be proactive to address damp and mould. <p>Action: YT & LF having issues with access to packs, maybe send a pdf documents, RD to check access. YT to get summary in English not Bulgarian.</p> | | |
| 10. | <u>Strategy Delivery Programme Update</u> | | |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RJ advised we have eight separate strategies that cover different parts of the business and within each one of those strategies are aims and objectives which we are pledging to achieve over the three year strategy period. We have translated those aims and objectives into around 170 work streams over three years. The project leads are expected to complete status reports on how they're achieving the implementation of those projects, and then they're reviewed by a Programme Board in terms of progress. The Programme Board has met twice and RJ shared the results. RJ reported that some projects were unable to provide a status update due to leave arrangements. <p>Action: PH It would be helpful to get an update and some reassurance for those ones that were not able to provide an update.</p> | PH | Next meeting |
| 1. | <u>Forward Plan Review</u> | | |
| | TF asked any comments from the group. | | |
| | TF asked for anything else to be sent outside of the meeting | | |
| 13. | <u>AOB</u> | | |
| | Nothing to Declare | | |

| | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|-------|--|
| Meeting | Customer Services Subcommittee | | |
| Date | 6th June 2024 | | |
| Agenda Item | Action | Who | Status |
| | ACTION: First set of new measures focussing on operational / customer issues to be developed and added to the overall performance management framework. | RB | |
| | ACTION: Update Committee on progress with the strategy delivery plans in November / December 2024. | TF/RB | As part of update on 13th November 2024 |
| Meeting | Customer Services Subcommittee | | |
| Date | 10th September 2024 | | |
| Agenda Item | Action | Who | Status |
| Minutes from previous Meeting | RJ to update Committee at the next meeting on the drivers behind the spike in complaints in November and March 2023/24. | RJ | To be included in meeting on 12 th November |
| Annual Report 2023/24 | RJ to issue the report to the committee by Thursday 12 September. | RJ | Completed |
| Damp & Mould Update | YT & LF having issues with access to packs, maybe send a pdf documents, RD to check access. YT to get summary in English not Bulgarian. | RD | Completed |
| Strategy Delivery Programme | PH would like to get an update and some reassurance for projects that were not able to provide an update at previous programme Boards. | RJ | As part of update on 13 th November 2024 |