Meeting	Customer Services Sub Committee
Date	Wednesday 13th November 2024
Time	10.00am – 12.00pm
Location	Teams

Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing

Core Members:	
Paul Hayward (PH)	Co-optee Board Member & Interim Chair
Tom Forty (TF)	Operations Director
Jo Grivell (JG)	Executive 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
Ruth Phillips (RP)	Head of Corporate Services
Apologies:	
Richard Amos (RA)	Tenant Board Member
Presenters:	
David Moran (DM)	IT, Business Transformation, and Performance Manager

Item No.		Who	When
1.	**Welcome and Apologies**		
	PH the interim chair welcomed all to the meeting. The attendees introduced themselves as there are a few new attendees. Apologies received from Richard Amos which meant the meeting was not quorate, however as there are no approval/decisions required at this meeting, the meeting could still take place. PH raised that the agenda has a lot of items for discussion but nothing that required approval. He requested that in the future the meeting should be more approval focused. TF stated the Committee has more of a focus on scrutiny and consumer regulations. It was more important to evidence the challenging of performance in terms of the regulatory body. **Action #7: RJ to include items for decision going forward where possible.**	RJ	Next meeting
2.	**Declaration of Interest**		

2.1	No declarations of interest		
3.	**Minutes of Last Meeting & Matters Arising**		
3.1	• Minutes of the last meeting were approved • All open items were covered in agenda items within the meeting with exception of providing a set of new measures focussing on operational / customer issues to be developed and to add it to the overall performance management framework. This is still ongoing. • RJ advised that they have developed more measures around complaints and understanding root causes. Looking at identifying trip wires to potentially see failures before they become complaints.		
4	**Operational Performance Review**		
4.1	Report presented by Dave Moran/ Ros Jones The report was taken as read and an overview was given, and subcommittee members were invited to comment and ask questions **Questions/Comments** • RJ updated the committee on Period 6 performance. Working on automating how we collect the data and streamline the methodology for data collection and looking at development of the performance portals. • There is a separate group looking at data quality gearing up for the move towards new systems • 66% of metrics are being met or exceeded, with many expected to come good before year end. Looking to add a forecast and assumptions column to demonstrate this. For example rent collections is one that improves as the total is achieved throughout the year. It is tracking to meet metrics by end of the year. This will allow more focus on the ones that might be off track. • Period 5 House Mark Pulse which compares STAR to other providers in the sector shows a slight improvement and 69% of metrics are in top or second quartile. • For complaints specifically, there is improvement in performance and for Period 7 they have now hit the annual target. • **Action # 8: PH asked if exception information could be included within all the areas reported, and to include what the plan is to resolve them. All to include details when reporting exceptions with plans to tackle them.**	All	Next meeting/ report

- PH asked for detail about the Temporary Accommodation re-let and what the target is as it is shown as not applicable. DM advised that TA is difficult to quantify. At the time TAs came to STAR to manage, no target was set against them. TA used to have different metrics to General Needs lettings, it has now been asked that they are merged. The overall target for re-let times will cover General Needs and TA.
- PH asked why there was a delay with keys. MA advised that the TA properties are managed differently, and the team must get the voids turned around with very short notice.
- TF advised that Shropshire Council has decided to move the management of temporary accommodation properties over to the Housing Options team and there's an expectation that that will happen in March 2025. There are working groups set up to determine how that will be managed and the expectation is that STAR will still be involved but through different contracts for example acting as a contractor to turn the voids around. The KPIs and the measures are all being worked out led by Laura Fisher from the Council.
- PH asked for clarification on why the re-let time has increased as it is still not clear. DM advised that if the case, where social services delayed the decision on whether a tenant was suitable for a property, was excluded from the numbers the voids average would be 12.6 days as opposed to 43. It is a symptom of the volume, where one property can skew the figures.
- PH advised he thinks 80% is still too low for the complaints target. It's acknowledged the improvement in turnaround for the first few months but should be aiming for a higher target. RJ responded by saying the target is to complete every complaint on time. In the last 4 months everything has been 100% with exception of one.
- **Action # 9: PH asked what the reasons are for failure on property standards and energy efficiency exceptions. DM advised would ask for more detail on the failures to be reported in future by the business analyst.**

	DM	Next meeting

- TF explained there are 111 properties moving into EPC C because of Wave 2.2 projects and a bid will go in for more funding for Wave 3 which will address another 1600 properties over a 3-year period.
- **Action #10: TF suggested to have another look at the energy efficiency targets to measure the programmes of work and**

the level of properties that need to be addressed to achieve the government target.	DM/RP	Next Meeting

- PH asked for clarification on servicing and testing, where there are 490 asbestos surveys that are overdue and issues with contract management.
- TF explained that asbestos surveys are always more challenging to get into the property. Previously the contractor managed no accesses themselves through the year and passed them to STAR on the 1st of April the following year. Therefore, the no access numbers spike putting pressure on the team. That information is now coming monthly, so the teams are contacting customers throughout the year to try and balance the workload and manage them timelier.
- There is a "no access working group" to try to streamline our processes and take the good practice in gas which is working more effectively and apply a much more consistent approach across all areas of access management.
- MA added that the processes now utilise all the assets within STAR to assist, for example Neighbourhoods and Tenant Liaisons, to gain access and there are now standard legal letters from Shropshire Council which are sent out to gain access before any legal process is started.
- PH asked why ASB satisfaction was below target and what the plans were to address it.
- **Action #11: MA agreed to provide a commentary on ASB dissatisfaction and reasons behind it going forward.**
- PH asked what the time lag was for the monthly pulse. DM said the monthly pulse is a month in arrears so by the time the information goes to SMT they are looking at the previous months pulse because the deadline for getting results onto House Mark's portal is 15th of each month and then it takes a few weeks for them to do their comparison with others in the sector.
- PH asked if there is any concern regarding the under reporting of complaints. RJ advised it is possible that not all complaints are reported. There are measures in place e.g. training to ensure that all staff understand complaints, and what constitutes a complaint. We are working to ensure that we are doing everything to avoid under reporting.
- DM believes House Mark have made a mistake in the measurement as organisations that are reporting more complaints are showing as higher quartile, but it should be the reverse. STAR had lower complaints so can assume they are

For the action row beside "Action #11":

	MA	Next meeting

	doing better notwithstanding the drive to increase the number of complaints.		
	• TF highlighted that the direction of travel is to have a higher number of complaints but that is perverse in that a higher number of complaints can mean customers are unhappy with the services. The focus needs to be on transparency and correlation of results. The balance scorecard will help make trends more visible.		
	• **Action #12: PH flagged concern on the increasing metrics related to damp and mould and asked for more information in the next report, and more information regarding call handling and the number of abandoned calls. What is happening and the reason for the abandonments. MA to provide for the next meeting.**	MA	Next meeting
5	**One Housing Update**		
5.1	Presented by David Moran		
	DM advised in the process of upgrading the core housing management system, moving from Open Housing to One Housing. It is provided by Capita and is essentially an overhaul of the front end of the system to a more modern web-based solution which will create staff efficiency. It is due to go live in May 2025.		
	• DM gave an overview of the customer tenant portal in particular. The old system is not good when using a mobile phone or tablet. It is basic in its functionality and looks outdated.		
	• The new tenant portal gives more features and is optimised for mobile use. It allows more visibility of transactions on the account.		
	• Pay 360, which is used by Shropshire Council will be integrated which will provide real time information on payments.		
	• There is a document download feature so tenants can see what is held on the account.		
	• Repairs can be booked through the system, and it guides the tenant through the process. If there is already a job in the system, it will flag to the team so will avoid duplicates.		
	• Rent charges are now available which increases the transparency to customers. It shows the breakdown on rent and service charges.		

	- The Manage your household feature allows the tenants to update occupants of the tenancy, contact details and streamlines the process by making it self-service. - The Contact us feature allows tenants to communicate directly into the new system, rather than the old email type function where it relied on staff responding to it from a group mailbox. It allows a case to be created which goes into the team workflow tasks. There is a reference number generated which correlates with the case number in One Housing which enables better tracking. - The plan is to go live with this at the same time as the rest of the implementation in May 2025. - Only about 17% of tenants are signed up to the current portal so hopefully this will increase with the new portal. Currently you need your email address, DOB, and tenancy reference and that is a barrier to people signing up to it. For the new system all you need is the email address, to sign up. They would need to know their tenancy reference, but a report can be run to identify all those that signed up so far and contact the tenant to get all the additional details. The added benefit of this is it will increase the KPI for digital engagement. **Questions/ Comments** - PH asked how much involvement the tenants have had in the building the new system. DM confirmed the product is off the shelf and there has been no tenant engagement in the design so far but will be engaging with tenants around the configuration and there is a resident engagement module within One Housing that looks at events and will be engaging with them on that too. - The new system ticks all the boxes in terms of what we would expect a tenant to be able to do through a self-service portal. - RP added that the system is not ready yet, they are still developing the final version. Once there is a live environment that can be tested and the team establish which features will be turned on, that will be done in partnership with customer engagement.		
6.	**Voice of the Customer Report**		

6.1	Report presented by Ros Jones		
	The report was taken as read and an overview was given of the workstreams related to Voice of the Customer.		
	• The number and types of engagement activities is being increased, for example involving tenants in shaping the damp and mould policy and termination of tenancy and moving in process reviews. Looking to target those who have recent experience of those processes.		
	• The scrutiny panel has 8 new members, and the panel will be up and running again in the New Year.		
	• Our offer of how we will engage has been drafted, to expand on the traditional ways of engagement, focus groups, drop ins, and will include more in the virtual world for example we've got the STAR One Voice Forum proposal.		
	• RJ asked that the committee to comment and provide recommendations of other ideas of how we can engage with customers, different channels etc.		
	• Currently it is not easy to understand the themes that are coming through in the transactional customer feedback, so are looking to switch to a different provider to make it more streamlined and modern. This is for transactional surveys, for example, if we do a repair, we will survey and follow up on their satisfaction with it.		
	• There is a customer profile group underway.		
	• Hitting target on complaints handling. The spikes from last year in November related to roofing and guttering and damp and mould related queries. There was a spike this October, and it was another wet month so there is some correlation between the weather and issues and handling of complaints.		
	• There is no specific theme for the March spike last year but we are continuously looking to identify patterns and trends in complaints.		
	• The complaint training is well underway, managers have been trained and now working through the frontline staff.		
	• MP is focussing on coordinating the learnings and feedback. Work is being done to look at how we determine the root cause of the complaint and interpret the information and what is done with it.		
	• The key point is to demonstrate that we are listening and doing something about what we hear.		
	Questions/ Comments:		

	• LF said that this is very important from a tenant's perspective to know that STAR is listening. RJ stated will be publicising what we are doing too. We need to listen, learn, act, change and improve our service delivery, but need to tell people what we've done and how we did it, and it was a result of hearing from customers. The importance of publicising actions, "you said, we did" was echoed by PH.		
	• TF referenced the Ombudsman's annual report which highlighted some best practice in terms of the annual reports, customers, and there were some engaging examples cited so we need to learn from where people are doing this well and engage with business to see if that's the kind of thing that our residents would want.		
	• **Action #13: PH asked if LF was happy with the scrutiny action plan and progress being reported. LF advised that there is a 6-month interim update due in December. RJ to arrange for this report to be issued.**	RJ	December
	• **Action #14: PH queried actions being delayed due to the IT system for example communication of repair to the tenant. PH asked that the action plan is reviewed, and it was made clear what impact the delay to IT system might have.**	RJ	Next meeting
	• **Action #15: PH asked if STAR is considering using a mystery shopper. This was agreed to be a good recommendation and will be worked through.**	RJ	Next meeting
	• **Action #16: PH suggested that it would be good to include some diversity and protected characteristics insights in the complaints reporting.**	RJ	Next meeting
7.	**Customer Insight – Customer Data Profile**		
7.1	Report presented by Ruth Phillips The report was taken as read and an overview was given. • The project is part of the strategy delivery programme and is targeted at knowing and understanding our customer. • There is real traction on understanding the landscape as it is today; what information is held, how its managed, what is used and why. • The next step is to build a brand for the customer profiling work and customer engagement offer and go out to customers to explain what is being done and why. • The expectation is this would coincide with the launch of the new portal. The plan is to consult with tenants on the best approach, how best to gather information and link it to getting them to use the new portal and review the information that is currently held and to fill some of the gaps on the data that is not currently held.		

	Questions/comments: • PH said the report does not give a feel for where the gaps are particularly in respect of protected characteristics data. RP said a full review has been done of all the data fields within the system and the next step is to overlap what data we have currently got and determine the best approach to filling the gaps by going out to the customers. • RP said the sheer volume of data on the system is creating an issue and have approached Capita to support STAR with doing that as do not have the capacity within the system. • RJ clarified that individual data can be seen, the challenge is to look at all the data as a collective and understand where the gaps are. • PH asked to be kept updated on progress.		
8.	**Operational Risk Register**		
	Report presented by Tom Forty The report was taken as read and TF gave an update on three risks that have been changed. • Poorly managed non-core activities. This relates to the temporary accommodation and the decision by the Council to insource that. The likelihood has been amended. • There is review going on for non-statutory services by the Council which could have a huge impact especially in relation to the Sustain contract. This will impact STAR financially, but it could have an impact on the support for people trying to avoid homelessness. • Policies and procedures are improving slowly. A new void and letting procedure have just been signed off. The KPIs are more automated and monitored. • Operational Risk 12 is more of an emerging risk where a lot of new customers are coming through Band 1 and 1a route who are far more complicated and have greater needs and that is starting to have an impact in all areas, particularly in income collection and anti-social behaviour. • The risk is how this evolves over 2- or 3-years cycle. There have been stable customers who are reliable, pay on time and 30-40% of the properties that become empty are because the tenant has died. When they are replaced with Band 1, it changes the whole dynamic of the customer base which brings with it a significant demand. • This area is flagged and there needs to be a strategic review in the future.		

	• The Neighbourhood management agenda item covers the risk in more detail. **Questions/ Comments:** • None.			
9.	**Neighbourhood Management Report**			
	Report presented by Mitch Allan The report was taken as read. MA highlighted a few key things: • As mentioned STAR is dealing with more Band 1 and Band 1a customers coming into the properties. The incoming customers are not tenant ready, and the team have to invest a lot of time to ensure they are able to maintain their tenancies. This puts more pressure on the income and neighbourhoods' teams. • Income collection is becoming far more challenging too. In the process of moving the last of our customers to Universal Credit. A lot of them have never budgeted before and are struggling with it. • There has been a significant rise in notices being served for arrears. Arrears generally are on the increase in particular £700-£1000 range and over £1000 range. This is putting more pressure on the income collections team and our money advice team. They are doing some sterling work in helping customers manage arrears and maximising the income that they have. • Hoarding is becoming a more prominent issue and takes a lot of time from the Neighbourhoods team with the customer. The appendix of the report showed an example of where multi-agency working has worked well and can make a significant impact to the property. • Previously the incomes and neighbourhoods had a single manager and were split North and South. Now looking to introduce two managers with specific skills to support the teams. • Looking to bring in a tenancy sustainment officer to help incoming tenants and those with lower-level needs for support. **Questions/ Comments:** • PH asked how the customer feedback had shaped the restructure of the team. MA advised the Senior Neighbourhood Housing Officer is doing a lot of managerial functions rather			

	than being out on the patch to support customer. With the changes being made it will free them up to support customers particularly the more complex cases. • The incomes team leaders are doing a lot of the managerial functions rather than being there to support customers. • TF added that the feedback came from speaking to residents about what they valued or what they didn't need with the neighbourhood management service and what needed to be addressed. Some of the feedback was to do more site visits, estate inspections and that is why having an area of the team be responsible for neighbourhood and estate management makes it simpler. • The other change reflects the change in the Sustain contract. Previously it was something that we could utilise to support customers but now the triage is done by the Council. Our residents have felt that loss of support and responsiveness. The tenancy sustainment officer is in response to that. In an ideal world there would be more of them, but it is being piloted first to understand the impact of that new role on tenant sustainment. • PH asked if anything is proactively done with the silent customers as a lot of focus is on the high demand customers. MA said there is nothing specific being done but a programme is going to be developed to go out and meet those customers on a regular basis. • TF said there is a new measurement that has been introduced around customer contact and aspiring to have contact with a 100% of customers in a 12-month period. • TF added that the high demand customers are resource intensive, and we still need to understand the demand from complex customers a bit more to understand any resource gaps in being able to have touch points with the more silent customers. When the two managers are in post, they will be able to identify efficiencies to allow more time to be spent on the value-add type activities.		
10.	**Strategy Delivery Programme Update**		
	Report presented by Ruth Phillips The report was taken as read. The Strategy Delivery Programme was developed from the 8 strategies within the Corporate Plan.		

	• RP outlined the progress that had been made since she started in post. The project tracker has had a re-write, tightening it up into deliverable projects and business as usual. There were a lot of duplicates that have been removed. • ELT will now need to sign that off, reprioritise where needed, look at project dates so we will be in a much stronger position of understanding the delivery of that programme. • All the projects are being SMT led, which is a risk as they have their day jobs as well as leading on the projects. For that reason, have recommended bringing in some programme support, to provide some capacity and governance and will have project management experience. The job specification is being drafted for a 12-month fixed term resource to give some momentum for the delivery of these projects. **Questions/ Comments** • PH asked if there is any progress on any of the projects being held back by Shropshire Council. RP stated that most sit within the IT area and they have been escalated now and they are making progress and are engaging with us.		
11.	**AOB** There were no items raised.		

Action Tracker:

Below is a snapshot of the new CSS action tracker. It will be updated and provided as part of the meeting papers. Any closed items will be filtered out once minutes are signed off but are still available on the main action tracker if required.

Action#	Date of Board Meeting	Agenda Item	Action	Status	Action Owner	Action Due By	Updates
1	06-Jun-24		First set of new measures focussing on operational / customer issues to be developed and added to the overall performance management framework.	Ongoing	RJ		Update 13/11: Discussed and advised action is ongoing
2	06-Jun-24		Update Committee on progress with the strategy delivery plans in November / December 2024.	Closed	TF/RJ	13-Nov-24	Details provided at 13 November meeting.
3	10-Sep-24	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.	Closed	RJ	13-Nov-24	Details provided at 13 November meeting.
4	10-Sep-24	Annual Report 23/24	RJ to issue the report to the committee by Thursday 12 September.	Closed	RJ	12-Sep-24	Report issued. Action Complete
5	10-Sep-24	Damp and Mould	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.	Closed	RD		Action complete
6	10-Sep-24	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	Closed	RJ	13-Nov-24	Details provided at 13 November meeting.
7	13-Nov-24	Welcome	RJ to include items on the agenda that require decisions where possible.	New	RJ	02-Apr-25	
8	13-Nov-24	Operational Performance	PH asked if exception information could be included within all the areas reported, and to include what the plan is to resolve them. All to include details when reporting exceptions with plans to tackle them.	New	All	02-Apr-25	
9	13-Nov-24	Operational Performance	PH asked what the reasons are for failure on property standards and energy efficiency exceptions. DM advised would ask for more detail on the failures to be reported in future by the business analyst.	New	DM	02-Apr-25	
10	13-Nov-24	Operational Performance	TF suggested to have another look at the energy efficiency targets to measure the programmes of work and the level of properties that need to be addressed to achieve the government target.	New	RP/DM	02-Apr-25	
11	13-Nov-24	Operational Performance	MA agreed to provide a commentary on ASB dissatisfaction and reasons behind it going forward.	New	MA	02-Apr-25	
12	13-Nov-24	Operational Performance	PH flagged concern on the increasing metrics related to damp and mould and asked for more information in the next report, and more information regarding call handling and the number of abandoned calls. What is happening and the reason for the abandonments. MA to provide for the next meeting.	New	MA	02-Apr-25	
13	13-Nov-24	Voice of the Customer	PH asked if LF was happy with the scrutiny action plan and progress being reported. LF advised that there is a 6-month interim update due in December. RJ to arrange for this report to be issued.	New	RJ	09-Dec-24	
14	13-Nov-24	Voice of the Customer	PH queried actions being delayed due to the IT system for example communication of repair to the tenant. PH asked that the action plan is reviewed, and it was made clear what impact the delay to IT system might have.	New	RJ	02-Apr-25	
15	13-Nov-24	Voice of the Customer	PH asked if STAR is considering using a mystery shopper. This was agreed to be a good recommendation and will be worked through.	New	RJ	02-Apr-25	
16	13-Nov-24	Voice of the Customer	PH suggested that it would be good to include some diversity and protected characteristics insights in the complaints reporting.	New	RJ	02-Apr-25	