

Plymouth Community Homes
Customer Focus Committee

Venue: Plumer House/Microsoft Teams
Date: 10th May 2024
Time: 10:15am

Present in person unless stated otherwise:

Maja Jorgensen (MJ) – Chair
Lavinia Porfir (LP)
Zoe Reilly (ZR)
Joanne Bowden (JB)
Gaynor Southerton (GS) – CFC Co-optee
Mel Gallagher (MG) – CFC Co-optee
Tracy Lowings (TL) – CFC Co-optee
Louise Webb (LW) – CFC Co-optee

In attendance:

Tracy Smith (TS) – Director of Homes and Communities
Angie Edwards-Jones (AEJ) – Head of Customer Experience & Assurance
Alice Potter (AP) – Communities Team Manager
Helen Ryan (HR) – Head of Communities & Supported Housing
Charlotte Edwards (CE) – Head of Strategy, Performance & Insight
Lucy Rickson (LR) – Head of Governance
Ian Howse (IH) – Head of Repairs, Voids & Compliance
Rich Lunn (RL) – Resident Involvement Coordinator
Gerald Manning (GR) – Member of the Scrutiny Review Team
Andy Kerswell (AK) – Member of the Scrutiny Review Team
Jenny James (JJ) – Governance Assistant (Minutes)
Clare Stevens (CS) - Observer

Apologies:

None

1.	Welcome and Introductions Confirm Quorum	
	<i>The meeting started at 10:15am</i>	
	MJ welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was confirmed as quorate. LW was welcomed to the meeting as it's newest co-optee member. Thanks was given to LP for her work as Chair of the Committee and	

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	support in the ongoing induction process for the new Chair, MJ.	
2.	Apologies for Absence	
	There were no apologies for absence.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
	LP, GS, JB, MG, TL and LW have standing declarations as Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) tenants which were noted.	
4.	Minutes of Previous meeting (2nd February 2024)	
	The minutes of the previous Committee meeting were discussed, and it was agreed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting and could be electronically signed by the Chair.	
	No change to the redactions were proposed to the minutes; they would be uploaded to the PCH website following the meeting.	
5.	Chair’s Urgent Business	
	There was no Chair’s urgent business.	
6.	Matters Arising	
	The Committee noted the changes to the minute action log and actions to be removed in line with the new terms of reference.	
7.	Decisions since the last meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damp and Mould Service Standards • Complaints Policy Update • Update to Urgent Repairs Category 	
8.	Briefing papers (for information) circulated since the last meeting: None	
9.	Scrutiny Review Report – Damp and Mould	
	RL, Resident Involvement Coordinator, AK & GM, Review team members, presented the Damp and Mould Scrutiny report.	
	A task and finish group of twelve residents, working collaboratively with PCH staff had undertaken a Resident Review of Damp and Mould services. An interim report was presented to CFC at their November 2023 meeting, which recommended extending timescales to allow for more in-	

	<p>depth review, and the request to consider amendments to the Scrutiny process. A further update was presented to CFC in February 2024.</p> <p>The scrutiny review uncovered a number of improvements that could be quickly actioned:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Damp Inspection Form has been amended. • The Repairs team have increased the range of reporting measures used. • Staff are attending a ‘Technician Training – Damp and Timber’ course. • Progress has started on updating the Damp and Mould Policy. • A new Damp and Disrepair Coordinator role has been approved. <p>The completed review made ten recommendations for improvement, which sit across five themes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damp and Mould reporting and Communication. • Accessibility of information. • Guidance and education. • Asset Management. • Resources to meet the demand of the service. <p>The report presented details of the final findings and recommendations, following the completions of the review on Damp and Mould services. It also provided a revised scrutiny process for the implementation of future reviews. An update on how the recommendations had been implemented would come back to CFC in 12 months’ time.</p>	
	<p>As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:</p> <p>The Committee thanked the review team for their hard work and dedication to completing not only the review but also for their work in creating a revised scrutiny process for future reviews.</p> <p>It was noted that there was some disappointment with the lack of response to the Damp and Mould staff survey and it was agreed that more work would be done to understand how to raise staff engagement with surveys in the future.</p> <p>It was confirmed that the team were in the process of finalising guidance documents and ensuring they are accessible in all formats.</p>	<p>TS</p>
	<p><i>IH, RL, AK & GM left the meeting at 10.48am.</i></p>	
	<p>The Customer Focus Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approved the Damp and Mould scrutiny report findings and recommendations. 	

	2. Approved the revised Scrutiny Process.	
10.	New Terms of Reference (TOR) and way forward for the Committee	
	<p>LR, Head of Governance, presented the new TOR and way forward for the Committee report.</p> <p>Following the refocus of the Committee TOR, the Committee were asked to consider the new TOR and the reports needed to fulfil the TOR requirements. The report was supported by a short presentation and discussion at the meeting.</p> <p>CFC focuses on customer experience and insight, supporting two of PCH’s top five priorities: Know and Listen to our Customers and Deliver Outstanding Service for Residents.</p> <p>Board discussed 2024/25 objectives for each Committee at their Strategy Days in April, these were agreed for CFC:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeking assurance that we are delivering improvement to complaint handling and embedding new Ombudsman Code • Monitoring and gaining assurance on Consumer Standard Compliance and Tenant Satisfaction Measures performance • Monitoring development of customer insight to understand resident needs and seeking assurance that services support customer priorities • Approving service standards and appropriate targets; then monitoring improvement actions and customer insight to gain assurance that services support customer priorities • Ensuring that PCH uses best practice and learning from others (inside and outside the sector). <p>It was recognised that changes would take time to embed and teams would work together to monitor the operation of the refocused TORs and make changes as required. A formal review of Committee TOR effectiveness would be carried out by May 2025.</p>	
	<p>As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:</p> <p>The Committee noted that an additional meeting may be organised to discuss the proposed new service standards, as well as a joint meeting with the Capital Investment Committee to develop the Homes Standard. Timescales for these would be fed back to the Committee when available.</p> <p>The Committee discussed how best to summarise and connect data within reports, this would be an ongoing process to understand the best</p>	JJ

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	ways to do this and feedback from the Committee would be welcomed at all stages to guide this.	
	The Customer Focus Committee discussed and noted the new objectives, TOR and agenda forward plan.	
11.	Draft Resident Engagement Strategy	
	<p>AP, Communities Team Manager, presented the draft Resident Engagement Strategy which sets out PCH’s ambition to deliver high quality services driven by residents’ voices. It also describes how PCH will meet regulatory and other standards expected of delivering.</p> <p>An update on reviewing the Resident Engagement Strategy was presented to CFC at their meeting in November 2023. It presented the changes in demand and the sector since the current iteration of the Strategy (Resident Involvement Strategy 2019-2022) and provided the results of the substantial consultation which asked residents and staff what the new strategy should focus on, and how resident engagement should be shaped.</p> <p>A draft Resident Engagement Strategy 2024-2029 has been shaped and an overview given to CFC in April 2024. It captures the feedback from residents and staff, the new requirements of regulation and demonstrates how it supports delivery against PCH’s Strategy Business Plan 2023-2028. CFC were asked to provide feedback and comments on the draft Strategy, ahead of forming the final version for further resident consultation and Board approval.</p>	
	As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:	
	<p>The Committee discussed the benefits and qualities of both online and in person resident engagement, and it was recognised that an increasing number of residents are engaging online. Work was ongoing to understand the best engagement methods and how to best allocate resources. It was noted that the team were looking into engagement with and promotion of community events organised by other organisations.</p> <p>The Committee also discussed the importance of Housing Officer visibility within communities, and it was confirmed that work was being done to look into promoting housing officer walk arounds, more information would be provided on this when available.</p>	
	The Customer Focus Committee discussed the Draft Resident Engagement Strategy and recommended it for Board approval.	
12.	Customer Insight Report	

	<p>AP, Communities Team Manager, presented the Customer Insight Report, the first of these reports were presented to PCH Board at its February 2024 meeting. It described the journey PCH is taking to build customer insight, including the sources of information, those that could be developed, and the aim of this style of reporting to enable forward thinking and acting on emerging issues that are important to residents.</p> <p>This report provided an update on the action plan which progressed the development of customer insight and ‘Appendices 1 – May 2024 Customer Insight Report’, which brings together resident feedback and identifies the common themes, including: complaints/contact and communications; community engagement; and communal areas.</p> <p>The Committee were asked to consider the insight provided within appendices 1, and the progress against the action; and discuss and make suggestions for the continued shaping of PCHs’ customer insight journey.</p>	
	The Customer Focus Committee discussed and noted the report.	
	<i>AP left the meeting at 11:43am</i>	
13.	RSH Consumer Standard Compliance	
	<p>LR, Head of Governance, presented the RSH Consumer Standard Compliance report.</p> <p>CFC is responsible for obtaining assurance that PCH complies with the Regulator of Social Housing’s (RSH) Consumer Standards.</p> <p>At their March 2024 meeting, the Board received high-level of assurance in relation to the new Consumer Standards. PCH has acknowledged that as a community-based landlord that puts residents at the heart of decision-making, we are well placed to meet the new Standards. However, it was acknowledged that there are some areas where a strengthened approach is needed, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stock condition surveys and strategic asset management. • Customer engagement in developing strategies, policies, and service reviews. • Sharing performance information with tenants and expanding opportunities for tenants to hold us to account. • Data collection, usage, and integrity. • Enhance customer insight and listening to the customer voice. <p>The report provided a RSH Standards Compliance Assurance Statement (Appendix A) for the new Consumer Standards. There were no areas of non-compliance identified.</p>	

	<p>The statement had been developed following a Joint Leadership session at which Executive Management Team (EMT) and Senior Management Team (SMT) worked together to understand the impact of the new Consumer Standards and the actions needed to ensure compliance beyond the basic regulatory requirements. The aim is to ensure continuous improvement in line with PCHs’ aim to be ‘a sector leader in governance and regulation’.</p> <p>A full statement (including the existing Economic Standards) was scrutinised by Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) in April and will be taken to PCH Board in May for sign off.</p> <p>The actions from the Statement will be monitored quarterly by EMT and SMT, and by ARC at their November 2024 meeting. The Statement will form part of the evidence for our RSH inspection (anticipated from Spring 2025).</p>	
	<p>As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:</p> <p>The Committee discussed the variances between the monitoring of Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) cases and Domestic Abuse (DA) cases, with the former having more frequent multi agency meetings than the latter. It was noted that there are other ways to identify and monitor DA through PCH processes however the communication on this may need to be clearer. This would be fed back to the interim Head of Neighbourhoods.</p> <p>It was agreed that clarification on acronyms should be clearer in all reports. Communication would be sent to all report authors to ensure acronyms are defined going forward.</p>	<p>AEJ</p> <p>LR</p>
	<p>The Customer Focus Committee discussed and recommended to Board that the RSH Standards Compliance Assurance Statement provides appropriate assurance with Consumer Standards.</p>	
<p>14.</p>	<p>Annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) Report</p>	
	<p>CE, Head of Strategy, Performance & Insight, presented the TSM report which contained the final results of the Regulator’s TSMs for 2023/24. The measures are split between customer perception and management information metrics and give a rounded view of how PCH is performing as a landlord, and how PCH compares to other through an interim benchmark exercise carried out by Housemark.</p> <p>Overall, PCH performed well against the customer perception measures, with overall satisfaction being in the top 25% in the mid-year benchmark exercise. However, we are not complacent and want to do more, and</p>	

	<p>have therefore set challenging targets for 2024/25 in this area (these were available within the 2024/25 KPIs and Targets paper on Convene).</p> <p>For the management information metrics, PCH had strong performance in the building safety compliance theme, with only a small number of homes without certification due to non-access which are being robustly followed up. We have more to do on complaints and complaint handling (also linked to customer perception of complaint handling) and need to communicate more and do what we say we will when upholding a complaint.</p> <p>Anti-social behaviour is another area where PCH need to understand more about in terms of volumes and reasons why volumes are higher than others and also consumer perceptions of how we handle anti-social behaviour.</p> <p>The final key area of focus is repairs; we have experienced challenges with increased volumes of repairs and how we prioritise these (we have many more job types assigned to the Emergency category than others as an example) and then this has a knock on effect on job scheduling and operative availability.</p> <p>There are a range of other areas where we want to enhance our performance, and these were identified throughout the report, and a list of summary actions were included at the end which we intend to deliver to address the underperforming areas. These will be published on the PCH website, alongside the results and monitored frequently throughout the year.</p>	
	<p>As a result of a questions, the following was discussed and clarified:</p> <p>Assurance was given that areas of customer dissatisfaction within the surveys were being looked at by the appropriate departments.</p>	
	<p>The Customer Focus Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Approved the TSM results and summary actions and recommended their approval to PCH Board. 2. will monitor ongoing progress with future TSM results and the summary actions 	
<p>15.</p>	<p>Performance Update</p>	
	<p>CE, Head of Strategy, Performance & Insight, presented the performance update which contained the Q4 2023/24 end of year performance update to CFC.</p>	


	<p>Overall, PCH had performed well during the year with positive results across customer perception, rent arrears and compliance.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rent arrears are lower at the end of Q4 than the same period in the previous year. • Customer perception survey results are all in the top or second quartile (detailed report on these within the 2023/24 TSM report). • There had been a strong effort to improve performance and refine processes on out building safety compliance metrics. • Repair performance had reduced during the year however there had been an increase in the volume of repairs this year which impacted upon the ability to schedule jobs within the service standard. Work was underway to review job priorities to ensure the right job is being done within the right timescale which should release capacity in operatives’ diaries. • There had been significant improvements in void turnaround time as we are clearing the backlog of long-term voids, speeding up the lettings process and doing more works in-house meaning we have control over timescales. 	
	<p>The Customer Focus Committee noted the Performance Update.</p>	
<p>16.</p>	<p>Complaints Performance</p>	
	<p>AEJ, Head of Customer Experience & Assurance, presented the annual report, which had been created to display data collated regarding the complaints received within the last year 2023/24.</p> <p>The volume of stage 1 complaints showed an increase of 12% from the previous year with 74% Upheld or Partially Upheld. ‘Repair’ complaints had the highest volume in the last 3 years. Examples of how trends had been reviewed were including within the report to provide suggest future improvements.</p> <p>Stage 2 complaint volumes were up by 71% and suggested enhancements were recording within the report.</p> <p>99% of complaints were completed within time scale from a target of 100% - 7 failed.</p> <p>21 holding letters were sent as it was identified a more thorough investigation was needed due to various reasons provided to the Head of Customer Experience & Assurance.</p> <p>MP contact volumes increased by 74% this last year with Tenancy Management receiving the highest number of enquiries, mainly for ASB and Fly Tipping enquiries.</p>	

	<p>Also recorded within this report were all the compliments received and Customer Satisfaction performance, which showed we scored below the target of 95% in all but one category. A list of suggested improvements was included in the report to show areas that will be focused on to improve performance and increase results.</p>	
	<p>As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:</p> <p>The Committee noted that next year’s iteration of this report would be different in line with the requirements of the complaint code, with a focus on service improvement and delivery as well as details of how lessons learned have helped to alter service delivery outcomes.</p> <p>The Committee discussed the reduction in number of complainants being contacted following a complaint and it was agreed that this would be looked at internally to see how it could be improved.</p> <p>It was agreed that a review of the communications around when a complainant could contact the Housing Ombudsman would be carried out to ensure residents are fully aware of the process.</p>	<p>AEJ</p> <p>AEJ</p>
	<p>The Committee noted the Complaints Performance.</p>	
17.	Compliance with Ombudsman Complaints Code	
	<p>AEJ, Head of Customer Experience & Assurance, presented the Compliance with Ombudsman Complaint Code report.</p> <p>CFC recently approved the updated Customer Complaint and Complaints Policy, which complies with The Complaint Handling Code for housing, which became statutory on 1st April 2024.</p> <p>The update policy outlined how PCH will be adhering to its requirement and illustrates the primary code of the goal which is to promote best practice in handling complaints and enhance service for residents.</p> <p>The Complaint Handling Code covers the following areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Universal Definition of a Complaint: The Code provides a clear definition of what constitutes a complaint. 2. Easy Access to Complaint Procedures: Landlords must ensure that residents are aware of the complaints procedures and their right to access the Housing Ombudsman Service. 3. Two-Stage Complaint Procedure: The Code outlines a streamlined two-stage process for handling complaints, with specified response times. 	

	<p>4. Fairness in Complaint Handling: The focus is on resident-centred processes that ensure fairness.</p> <p>5. Taking Action and Remedies: Landlords are expected to take appropriate steps to address complaints and provide suitable remedies.</p> <p>6. Creating a Positive Culture: Continuous learning and improvement are encouraged to foster a positive complaint handling culture.</p> <p>7. Annual Self-Assessment: Landlords must assess their compliance with the Code annually and submit self-assessment reports to the Ombudsman.</p> <p>PCH is a member of the Housing Ombudsman Scheme, a service which residents can utilise if they remain unsatisfied with the handling of their complaint.</p> <p>The Housing Ombudsman expects landlords to carry out regular self-assessment against the Code and take appropriate action to ensure their complaint handling is in line with the Code. The published assessment is the first to be completed and shows that PCH complies with all of the Code requirements. This must be published on PCH’s website alongside the TSMs in June.</p>	
	<p>As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:</p> <p>The Committee were informed that the team were in the process of attending sessions held by the Housing Ombudsman to understand how they want the self-assessment to be sent to them and published.</p>	
	<p>The Committee noted the Compliance with Ombudsman Complaints Code report.</p>	
<p>18.</p>	<p>CFC Risks</p>	
	<p>AEJ, Head of Customer Experience & Assurance, presented the Customer Experience Strategic Risk Register (SRR) to the Committee. The Committee is now responsible for monitoring the ‘customer experience’ risk which currently has the Risk Rating Score of 6 (Amber) and is inside risk appetite.</p> <p>Several actions had been identified to mitigate the risk, but the Committee were provided with assurance that the Customer Experience Risk was being well monitored and there were no further emerging risks identified at a strategic level which needed to be reported.</p>	
	<p>As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:</p>	

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	As these risks were a new addition to the CFC remit, it was agreed that a session would be organised to provide members with more context and understanding of the risks, however, the Committee were given assurance that there was nothing that needed to be raised and that the scoring was appropriate.	JJ
	Feedback on the clarity and presentation of the register would be fed back to the Risk Manager.	AEJ
	The Committee noted the CFC Risk Report.	
19.	Next Meeting: 2 nd August 2024	
	<i>The meeting closed at 12.22pm</i>	



Signature

Lavinia Porfir – Chair

Date 02/08/2024



Certified as a true copy

Lucy Rickson, Head of Governance

Date 02/08/2024