

NOTES

- Meeting title:** Residents' Panel
- On:** 9 February 2021
- Held at:** via zoom
- Present:** Steve Southwell, Nik Bedwell, Ann Humphries, Sarah Booker, Lilian Birchall, Frances Rainey, Sharon Stevenson, Jackie Burke, Celia Rowe, Michael Burke
- In attendance:** Ruth Pollard, Resident Engagement Officer, Simon Anderson, Head of Customer Services, Ian Reed Head of Asset Management

Action

1 Overview of the CET – Simon Anderson

- 1.1 Simon gave an overview of the Customer Experience Team (CET). Jackie wanted to say how impressed she was with the out of hours service when she had a problem with the lock on her front door. The problem was fixed within 1.5 hours of the initial call and wanted her gratitude for an excellent job noted in the minutes. Simon informed everyone that at the moment Worthing Homes (WH) is not processing general repairs but are still undertaking emergency and urgent repairs. Steve had previously asked Simon how the Panel can help the CET. Simon informed everyone that the CET spend lots of time dealing with queries which are the tenant's responsibility so encouraging tenants to read their tenancy agreement or look in the tenants handbook for the answer to a query before ringing the CET would save them time. Also if residents could try and avoid ringing unless it is an emergency between 9am-10am as this is their busiest time.
- 1.2 Steve mentioned that at the last meeting Simon talked about trialling different operating hours for the CET. Simon informed Steve this is still the aim, however at the moment they are short-handed and this is their busiest time of year.

1.3 Jackie informed everyone that the intercom had not been working where she lives for about 3 months which caused issues for herself and the other residents. Jackie emailed one of the team and was told it was in hand but the email that came back made her feel like she was being a nuisance. Jackie highlighted that communication is not always good as she or other residents had not been informed when the intercom would be fixed. Another communication problem was experienced by friends of Jackie who live in another block where balconies are being replaced and they have had no communication since last year about what is happening. Simon apologised and said he would call Jackie to discuss. Simon's presentation is attached.

Simon

2 Apologies (Steve)

2.1 Apologies were received from Carol Gatford, Siobhan Cappella and Clive Cavanagh.

3 Minutes of last meeting and matters arising (Steve)

3.1 2.1 Update on the Community Trust strapline. Simon/Ruth will talk to Clive and see if a decision has been reached. *I can confirm that the strapline chosen was 'communities driving change'.*

3.2 9.4 Outside noticeboards. Clive will update at the next meeting.

Clive

3.3 5.1 ASB scrutiny recommendations. Simon's understanding is that WH have asked repeatedly for this to be updated on our website and we have been told repeatedly that this will happen. Simon will get an update from Suzanne and let the Panel know. Steve has had a meeting with Suzanne recently and his understanding is that the website will be reviewed and refreshed using focus groups.

Simon

3.4 Involvement and Empowerment Scrutiny. Simon informed everyone that senior staff have met and there is a lengthy action plan which goes through the whole White Paper. Simon and others are putting together the outcomes of what they feel WH needs to do to comply with the White Paper. Simon is happy to share the actions at the next meeting in April.

Simon

3.5 11.3 Dementia Alliance. Ruth has joined the Dementia Alliance and will be speaking to Emily the training officer about all staff having dementia

training. *Ruth has spoken to Emily and she will contact Lynsey Trans of the Dementia Alliance with a view to setting up training.*

- 3.6 11.4 Texts out to residents. Ruth has asked colleagues not to send text out with links to surveys without including a contact number. Also not all residents have smart phones and they would like to do the survey.

4 Home Standard and next scrutiny (Ian Reed)

- 4.1 Ian introduced himself. The Home Standard is one of seven standards which form the regulatory framework social housing landlords must meet. To do this WH submit regular information to the regulator to demonstrate compliance across the different areas. The regulator is allowed to intervene at any time when they feel there has been non-compliance of the standards. Ruth has sent out the areas of the Home Standard we have to demonstrate compliance with and we submit evidence by way of documentation which is submitted annually. Additionally to that we have recently completed an HQN more detailed check list. Ian told everyone that as they all know the White Paper has been launched by the government which is going to lead to strength in the consumer standards.
- 4.2 Ian explained about the *decent home standard* which has been around for a long time and needs revamping. The next *decent home standard* will have a lot around energy efficiency that will be the big drive for future homes. The standard also features gas safety, health and safety and WH has a repairs strategy. WH are looking at doing a five year plan and maybe there needs to be more resident engagement built in.
- 4.3 Steve asked how Ian sees the Residents' Panel being involved in this process. Ian agreed that there needs to be an accountable person which would be the CEO or the Board then below that you would have a Building Safety Manager. WH only has three tower blocks that are six storeys plus. Ian said what would happen is a lot of that regulation would filter down to four/five storey blocks, so the drive is don't stop at just six storeys and above start applying some of the principles to the lower blocks too. Steve mentioned that there is some talk around should this be based on the vulnerability of the residents rather than just on buildings six storeys high. For instance Brougham Road complex should

have a similar strategy. Ian informed Steve that sheltered schemes are treated as high risk purely because of the client group.

- 4.4 Jackie mentioned her friends at Kingfisher Court who are due to have new balconies they understand that Covid has put everything back but they have not had much communication from WH. Ian is aware of the project and agreed with Jackie that WH should be giving residents an update on the project. Ian said that there would have been communication at the start of the project but informed Jackie that it has been a while now. Ian said he will make sure an update on the balconies goes out this week. Nik agreed with Jackie as he raised communication a few months ago and has still not received a formal response about the planned works to replace windows. Ian apologised to Nik and said he would look into the matter.

Ian

- 4.5 Ian also informed the panel that there are some bigger procurements coming up over the next 12-18 months for example the cleaning contract, gas servicing contract and WH will be looking at the repairs service. Can panel members let Clive know if they are interested in being involved in any of these procurements.

Panel members

5 Complaints Policy and Ombudsman Self-assessment (Simon)

- 5.1 Simon showed on screen the updated complaints policy. The housing ombudsman has prompted WH to review its policy as they have bought out a new complaint handling code. WH has filled in the self-assessment template and the ombudsman asked landlords to answer all of the questions and publish this on their website by 31 December 2020. One of the things the ombudsman expects landlords to have is a reasonable adjustment policy. The self-assessment then feeds into the policy. Pages 9-15 of the policy have had major revisions. The ombudsman is keen that landlords have no more than a 2 stage process.

6 Update on progress from Involvement and Empowerment Scrutiny (Ruth)

- 6.1 Ruth had previously sent out the involvement and empowerment scrutiny with progress on the recommendations.
- 6.2 Ruth talked about the tenant responsibilities paper that the lettings team send out under recommendation 5 and asked members to give her anything that they feel is missing regarding tenants responsibilities.

Steve

Steve said that Jackie had come up some great suggestions Ruth asked Steve to forward them to her so she can compile a list.

7 Quarter 3 Business Intelligence Indicators (Simon)

7.1 Simon went through the key performance indicators mentioning that Covid has had an impact on some areas of WH. Routine repairs have been completed much slower than usual. WH has seen some disruption around the gas servicing and this will probably be one of the scrutiny groups key areas of focus when they do the Home Standard. One area which is pleasing is our rent performance. WH have not only collected all rent due but also some arrears.

Simon

7.2 Nik asked if the indicators say how many complaints WH has dealt with. Simon informed Nik that it does not but he offered to find that information out for Nik. Simon said going forward there will be an extra column to say these are the number of cases etc.

7.3 Steve asked with regard to gas safety check visits do contactors receive information on which residents are more vulnerable than others. Simon said if there are particular issues of relevance then that should be on the job ticket given to the contractor but also if there are particular issues panel members are aware of they need to let WH know.

8 Website update (Suzanne)

8.1 As Suzanne was not at the meeting Simon informed everyone that our website is due an overhaul/revamp. Simon does not have a timescale for this but the more we can get the Panel involved in this the better regarding functionality and access to information. Hopefully Suzanne can come to the next meeting and give an update.

9 Update from the Board (Celia)

9.1 Celia asked about gas checks that are due and if a resident is shielding how are WH going about this. Ian commented that if residents are shielding and they can show proof of this and are engaging with us we are not pursuing access as this would not currently be the right thing to do.

9.2 WH have started looking into how to make homes more sustainable. WH are going to approach some residents on how to make their homes more

sustainable. In the meantime 300 properties have been identified for fully funded wall insulation and communal lighting upgrades to LED. WH recently purchased their first electric van and eventually all vans will be replaced. Celia did inform the Board that the panel would like to be involved with the sustainability programme and Celia has been advised that we should inform Poppy Scott who is the sustainability project manager. Ruth will e-mail Poppy about the panel's interest.

Ruth

- 9.3 Nik said he had seen something on Twitter which was advertised by Adur and Worthing Council about Warmer Homes and preparing your home for colder months. They were able to give free energy assessment and support accessing grant funding for energy improvements. Nik sent this in and had a reply from Poppy Scott informing him that she recommends residents taking up offers of energy efficiency advice and soft measure from our trusted service LEAP. Nik stated that this didn't really answer his question because he asked if it was ok for WH residents to contact Warmers Homes and partake of their free survey. After conversation between Celia, Ian and Nik, Ian said he would speak to Poppy as she hasn't really answered Nik's question and Ian will get back to Nik.

Ian

10 AOB

- 10.1 Steve commented that he would like to hold a scrutiny meeting next Tuesday 16 February and if members could let him know if they are interested by 12 noon on Friday 12 February. There was no other business.

Signed



Chair

Date: 18 March 2021