

Minutes

Plymouth Community Homes
Customer Focus Committee

Venue: Board Room, Plumer House and Microsoft Teams

Date: 3rd November 2023

Time: 11.30am

Present in person unless indicated otherwise:

Lavinia Porfir (LP) - Chair
Debbie Roche (DR) – PCH Board Member
Maja Jorgensen (MJ) – PCH Board Member
Gaynor Southerton (GS) – CFC Co-optee
Joanne Bowden (JB) – CFC Co-optee
Melony Gallagher (MG) – CFC Co-optee

In attendance:

Laura Haynes (LH) – Head of Asset Strategy & Delivery
Angie Edwards-Jones (AEJ) – Head of Customer Experience & Assurance
Louise Jarvis (LJ) – Customer Experience Manager
Helen Ryan (HR) – Head of Communities & Supported Housing
Alice Potter (AP) – Communities Team Manager (Virtual)
Charlotte Edwards (CE) – Head of Strategy, Performance & Insight
Jonathan Cowie (JC) – Chief Executive
Tracey Gray (TG) – Interim Director of Homes & Communities
Nicola Kingston (NK) – Area Housing Manager (Income Recovery & Financial Inclusion)
Dylan Chipp (DC) – Interim Head of Repairs & Compliance
Lucy Rickson (LR) – Head of Governance
Mary O’Leary (MO) – Head of Communications & Marketing
Richard Lunn (RL) – Resident Involvement Coordinator (part)
Jenny James (JJ) – Governance Assistant (Minutes)
Alison Casey (AC) – Member of Resident Scrutiny (part)
Andy Kerswell (AK) – Member of Resident Scrutiny (part)
Tracey Lowings (TL) Observer

Apologies:

None Received

1.	Welcome and Introductions Confirm Quorum	
	<i>The meeting started at 11.30am</i>	
01/11/23	LP welcomed everyone to the meeting, which was confirmed as quorate. LP noted that the meeting had been preceded by a briefing from the Scrutiny Group on their current damp and mould project; a paper on this top was on the agenda.	
2.	Apologies for Absence	

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02/11/23	There were no apologies.	
3.	Declarations of Interest	
03/11/23	LP,DR, GS, JB and MG have standing declarations as Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) tenants however this does not relate to any items on the agenda.	
4.	Minutes of Previous meeting (4th August 2023)	
04/11/23	The minutes (inc redactions) of the previous Committee meeting were discussed, and it was agreed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting and that they could be electronically signed by the Chair. The redacted minutes would be uploaded to the PCH Website.	
5.	Chair's Urgent Business	
05/11/23	LR, Head Governance, provided a verbal update on the progress of the Governance Review Task and Finish Groups. A Task and Finish Group of Vice Chairs, and Committee and Subsidiary Board Chairs has met twice to consider the Governance Review recommendations. They have moved forward with outline proposals for refocusing Board and Committees, clarifying delegations and ensuring the customer voice is heard within Governance.	
06/11/23	The proposals are for CFC to re-focus on the resident experience, covering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service delivery • Ease of access to service • Safety in homes • Resident voice • Supporting resident/tenancy sustainment • Triangulation of customer insight 	
07/11/23	The overarching proposals for PCH Board and Committees will be taken to November PCH Board. After which the Governance team will work with Chairs, CFC Co-optees, EMT and SMT to update Terms of Reference and Delegations, ready for a decision at February PCH Board and implementation by April 2024.	
6.	Matters Arising	
08/11/23	A list of on-going and completed actions from previous meetings, with updates, was uploaded to Convene ahead of the meeting for the Committee to review. Since it was last presented to the Committee, the action log had been updated with colour coding to highlight actions that were complete and outstanding. A key would be added to the bottom of the log to explain the colour system.	JJ
7.	Decisions since the last meeting	

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09/11/23	There had been no urgent or efficient decisions since the last meeting.	
8.	Briefing Papers circulated since last meeting	
10/11/23	<p>It was confirmed that the Committee had received briefing papers, which were for information, on the following subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Void Letting Standard Update – Dylan Chipp • Digital Customer Communications Update – Mary O’Leary <p>Questions were raised by Committee members on the briefing papers, which were answered in advance of the meeting. These questions and answers would be added as an appendix to the minutes.</p>	JJ
9.	Approval of Scrutiny Review	
11/11/23	A Task & Finish Group of 12 residents worked collaboratively with PCH staff to undertake a scrutiny of damp and mould. They presented their interim report and recommendations to CFC. As a result of the group’s recommendations, there were a range of actions that PCH could adopt as an action plan and start work on straight away. These were detailed within the report.	
	As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:	
12/11/23	The Committee thanked the Task and Finish Group for their hard work and contributions to review, and for their attendance at the briefing that took place prior to the meeting.	
13/11/23	When asked about the review process, the group members advised that the biggest obstacles were the short timescales and the wide scope of the review. It was felt that the process was rushed and also that there was a lack of information provided to them at the beginning of the process. These comments were noted by the Committee and the teams involved in organising the reviews and all lessons learned would be considered when planning the next review.	
14/11/23	It was agreed that an update on the actions detailed within the report would be brought back to CFC at the next meeting, or sooner if needed.	DC
15/11/23	<p>The Customer Focus Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Approved the interim Damp and Mould scrutiny report II. Approved the development, adoption and implementation of the draft action plan. III. Approved an extension of the current scrutiny, noting the planned timetable, and with a view to the final report being presented at a Committee date that the Task and Finish Group agree, no later than May 2024. 	

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	It was noted the extension would be to undertake a specific set of tasks agreed with the Task and Finish Group, in a timetable of meetings and work also agreed with the Group.	
10.	Developing the Resident Involvement Strategy	
16/11/23	AP, Communities Team Manager, presented an update on the Resident Involvement Strategy 2019-2022, a review of which was taking place. PCH's Resident Involvement Strategy describes how PCH would meet its aspiration of delivering high quality services driven by resident's voices. It enables PCH to meet regulatory standards and maintains PCH's status as sector leaders, achieving Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) National Landlord Accreditation.	
17/11/23	Since the last monitoring update was presented the demand and delivery of resident involvement had seen a significant change. The Together with Tenants Charter had been formally adopted, the Social Housing White Paper became the Social Housing Act, the Hackitt report resulted in the introduction of the Building Safety Act, there was a new NHF Code of Governance, and as registered providers we are required to deliver against standardised Tenant Satisfaction Measures and the Better Social Housing review recommendations.	
18/11/23	PCH's formal Resident Involvement function is managed by the Communities team, which provides 2 Full time employee (FTE) specialist Resident Involvement Coordinator roles. Teams across the organisation support and deliver elements of the Resident Involvement Strategy, evidenced through the introduction of 'Resident Ready' to the Board report template, further embedding the residents voice in service change and improvement.	
	As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:	
19/11/23	The Committee discussed the resident involvement consultation survey in detail, with an emphasis on understanding where resident voices are being heard and where they are not, and where resident influence could be heard more. It was confirmed that work was being undertaken to embed the resident voice, this included expanding the remit of the Resident Void Inspections in new build properties, and giving consideration as to where the resident voice would have the most impact.	
20/11/23	It was also confirmed that engagement with shared owners and leaseholders was still being encouraged through the Leaseholder Forum. Although the Forum had not been well attended in recent year, efforts were being made to reshape the Forum to encourage attendance, including holding in person meeting (meetings had been virtual since Covid), and inviting key speakers.	
21/11/23	It was agreed that a chart demonstrating the demographic of residents engaged with PCH against PCH's customer profile would be circulated to the Committee.	AP

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22/11/23	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Developing the Resident Involvement Strategy report.	
11.	Digital Rent Statements	
23/11/23	<p>NK, Area Housing Manager (Income Recovery & Financial Inclusion), presented the report which sought approval to change the way in which we send quarterly rent statements.</p> <p>Rent statements were currently sent out on a quarterly basis with the In Touch magazine. To reduce the costs involved in producing paper statements, and to be more environmentally friendly, it was proposed to go paperless and stop sending paper rent statements unless a request was received, which they can do at any time.</p>	
24/11/23	The move to digital had seen a large number of customers choose to have In Touch in a digital format rather than a printed copy – the last one sent in October saw over 95% of customer receive it digitally although they were still sent a rent statement in the post. The cost of PCH to produce the rent statements and post them was around c£15k per quarter.	
25/11/23	Customers are able to sign up to the My PCH portal where they can view their account at any time and download a statement if required and there were currently 6,761 customers signed up to this.	
26/11/23	For those customers who do not have a MyPCH account, they would still be able to request a rent statement to be sent my post or email by calling PCH.	
27/11/23	PCH does not rely on the quarterly rent statement being sent to alert customers to any arrears on their account. As soon as a customer falls into arrears, they are contacted by the Incomes team to see why they have not paid as they should and provide support. This could be by helping them to apply for additional benefit so they can pay their rent. If arrears do continue and letters are sent, a number of these have a rent statement included with them which mean that on the rare occasion when PCH have to take legal proceedings, the requirements of the court pre-action protocol for possession claim would still be met.	
28/11/23	A survey was recently conducted of customers regarding the quarterly rent statements and asked them how they would prefer to access their rent statement. Just over 91% said they would prefer to access them electronically either via MyPCH or by email.	
29/11/23	<p>As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:</p> <p>The Committee discussed the report in detail, giving particular consideration to being able to provide paper statements to those residents who do not wish to go digital. It was agreed that all customers would be written to, to inform them of the change and a process would be put in place for those residents who wish to keep receiving quarterly paper rent statement.</p>	NK

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30/11/23	The Customer Focus Committee approved the proposal to stop the production of quarterly rent statements, on the basis that customers would be written to, to inform them of the change and a process would be put in places for any residents who still wish to receive quarterly rent statements in print.	
12.	Repairs Policy and Standard	
31/11/23	DC, Interim Head of Repairs and Compliance, presented updates on the Repairs Policy and Standards. Over the past 8 years, the repairs service faced significant challenges, including the pandemic, economic hurdles, and an intensified focus on Consumer Standards. These challenges, combined with changes in staff, technology misunderstandings, and structural shifts, has led to an inconsistent and hybrid repairs service, increasing complaints and costs.	
32/11/23	To address these challenges and provide clarity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The policy was updated to include a previously missing “repairs responsibility table” providing clarity on responsive repairs. • Emphasis was placed on compliance measures, including the Safety and Quality Standard of the Regulatory Framework and the Government’s Decent Homes Standard and Homes (Fitness for Habitation) Act 2018. • No fundamental changes were made to the core aspects of the policy, ensuring continued support for the vulnerable residents, offering appointments where feasible, and maintaining our repair responsibilities. • The revised policy will be widely disseminated through various channels to ensure comprehensive understanding among tenants and staff. A more substantial review was planned for 2024 to align with the Regulators Consumer Standards. <p>This revision emphasised Plymouth Community Home’s commitment to clear communications, tenant safety, and service quality.</p>	
	As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:	
33/11/23	It was confirmed that following the meeting, DC would be meeting with relevant managers to discuss policy implementation, which included promotion communications and information for residents.	
34/11/23	The Committee discussed discretion within the policy as well as resident perception of the policy. Although there would be further clarification of the scope, PCH would work with residents and discretion could be given to the implementation of the policy on a case by case basis. There was also further work to be done on understanding the customer base better, especially in terms of vulnerable residents and how support and guidance is offered to them.	
35/11/23	The Committee also discussed, case studies and how this would give further context and understanding to the upcoming revision of the policy.	

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36/11/23	The Customer Focus Committee noted the update to the repairs policy.	
13.	Signage Across PCH Stock	
37/11/23	MO, Head of Communications & Marketing, presented the report which sought approval to keep using the PCH logo on housing stock signage. A review of PCH's signage across its housing stock prompted a discussion on whether future signs on blocks, homes and streets should include the PCH logo.	
38/11/23	It was suggested it could be potentially stigmatising for residents to mark homes, streets or areas as belonging to a social housing association.	
39/11/23	A consultation was carried out amongst residents to determine general thoughts on the use of the PCH logo on housing signs. The result showed that the majority were in favour of retaining the logo – with many residents feeling it created a sense of pride in their homes.	
	As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:	
40/11/23	The Committee discussed the report in detail and agreed to approve the continued use of PCH logo on housing stock signs provided another review took place in 3 years' time.	MO
41/11/23	The Customer Focus Committee approved the continued use of the PCH logo on housing stock signs.	
14.	STAR Survey Action Plan	
42/11/23	CE, Head of Strategy, Performance & Insight, presented the report containing a summary update on delivery of the actions identified following the STAR customer satisfaction survey fieldwork. Overall good progress had been made, and was summarised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior Management Team (SMT) now received monthly complaint reports covering the whole organisation, and further complaint handling training had been rolled out. • SMT were now signing off complaint responses at both stage one and stage two in order to provide better consistency and appropriateness of response. • Enhancements were being made regarding how STAR survey results were shared across SMT, with the aim of rolling out formal ways to share how PCH is performing across the organisation. • "You Said, We Did" reporting was introduced as part of In-Touch from the Spring 2023 edition. • Environmental Services continued their transformation journey and started to introduce digital ways of managing the service. Service standards in this area to introduce consistency was also being looked into. • PCH would immediately be informed by its market research company when feedback related to damp, mould, and 	

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	condensation was received so the relevant teams could make contact and book an inspection in advance of receiving the survey results.	
43/11/23	The Customer Focus Committee noted the STAR survey action plan.	
15.	Performance Update including update on re-introduction of urgent repairs category	
44/11/23	CE presented the report to give an update on performance during Q2 2023/24. The purpose of this report was to present a suite of performance indicators most relevant to the areas of responsibility falling within the remit of CFC. As regulation changes within the sector, this report would evolve to focus more on the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures and how PCH is performing against these key metrics.	
45/11/23	Overall, PCH continued to perform well, and most of the indicators were either within target or marginally off target, with the variances described within the report.	
	As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:	
46/11/23	It was agreed that additional communications could be created for residents around gas safety checks and breaking down the legal jargon.	MO/DC /LH
47/11/23	It was agreed that there would be a check on the process of welfare checks for residents who have capped their gas supply.	DC
48/11/23	The Customer Focus Committee noted the performance update.	
16.	Asset Management Q2 Performance Update	
49/11/23	LH, Head of Asset Strategy & Delivery, presented the 2023/24 Q2 asset management performance update report to provide visibility as to how the team delivered against the targets. These targets linked back to ongoing elements of the Asset Management Strategy 2017-2022 and start work on the requirements of the 2022-2027 Asset Management Strategy. For the purposes of this report, fire safety performance had been excluded as this had been moved under the management of the Repairs team.	
50/11/23	Achievements in Q2 included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planned maintenance completions at for 402 [REDACTED] • Roof replacements of single dwellings for 22 [REDACTED] • Planned maintenance customer satisfaction 96.43% • Stock Conditions Surveys completed 52 properties & 48 blocks • Design Team – multiple sites in review for delivery 2024/25 	
	As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:	

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51/11/23	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
52/11/23	<p>It was confirmed that customer satisfaction feedback would be collected after each scheme was completed, the first of which was due to finish by Christmas 2023. The feedback would be included in future reports coming back to the Committee.</p>	
53/11/23	<p>The Customer Focus Committee noted the Asset Management Q2 performance update.</p>	
17.	Complaints Report	
54/11/23	<p>LJ, Customer Experience Manager, presented the report to provide complaints performance information for the period July to September 2023.</p>	
55/11/23	<p>For this report, tables had been created to display comparisons with the complaint volumes from 2023/24 and the previous 2 years.</p> <p>Q2 figures showed a slight increase from the previous volumes recorded in Q1 2023/24 and an increase in the same quarter of 2022/23.</p> <p>The 3 top highest grossing complaints for this quarter were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outstanding work • Damp • Quality of work 	
56/11/23	<p>In Q2 there had been 15 complaints that escalated to stage 2. From this volume, 4 complaints had not continued through the complaints process and would be dealt with under an alternate policy. A further 3 residents had requested for their complaint to escalate to stage 3. However, further visits and more detailed discussions with the resident had ensured the outstanding work was monitored and completed which prevented them escalating.</p> <p>From the 15 stage 2 complaints, 6 were recorded as 'Upheld', 4 recorded as 'Partially Upheld' and 5 recorded as 'Not Upheld'.</p>	
57/11/23	<p>This quarter there were no complaints that escalated to stage 3. 2 panel meetings were originally scheduled, however further visits and discussions with the residents resulted in the works being completed, and resolved the complaint satisfactorily for them.</p>	
58/11/23	<p>There were 3 complaints that went out of target this quarter. All 3 complaints went out of time due to the response letters needing to go for approval but not enough time was allowed for any changes to be made or for the letters to be read.</p>	

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	Postal surveys could also be sent to residents who prefer that format or who do not have an email address.	
67/11/23	The report showed the number of complaints that completed the follow-up survey for Q2 and previous quarters for 2023/24 and total volumes of 2022/23. After filtering out 99 out of the original 126 complaints (filtered as the complainants were not contacted, reasons for non-contact were listed in the report but included: no phone number, ASB cases, ongoing works etc), 27 were contacted to complete the survey which equated to 21% of the total 'closed' complaint cases recorded on Pentana for Q2 of 2023/24. Of the 27, 6 were unable to complete the survey. Overall, a total of 21 customers completed the survey which as 17% of the original sample. Of the sample surveyed, 13 complaints were upheld, 3 were partially upheld and 5 were not upheld.	
68/11/23	From completing the survey, it allowed PCH to ensure any works agreed with the customer had been completed and that they were happy the initial issues reported were fully resolved. This could then be linked back to relevant staff and provide them with feedback to ensure complaints continued to be completed effectively and efficiently, and lessons learned and improvements made.	
	As a result of questions, the following was discussed and clarified:	
69/11/23	The report detailed a decrease customer satisfaction in some areas. It was noted that this was related to outstanding work not being completed in this quarter. Although the complaint had been closed, it had been done so with the promise of the works being completed, which had not happened due to delays.	
70/11/23	It was agreed that benchmarking data on complaint handling within and out of the sector would be circulated to see how PCH compares with others.	JC
71/11/23	It was also agreed that future reports would include a paragraph underneath the survey analysis table to provide further context for any low scores and narrative on work being done to improve this.	LJ/CE
72/11/23	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Complaint Follow Up Report.	
19.	Compliments Report	
73/11/23	LJ presented the Q2 compliments report, which showed that compliment recording had increased. For this report, tables had been created to display comparisons with the compliment volumes from 2023/24 and the previous 2 years. The top responsible services, who achieved high volumes in Q2 had been broken down in more detail within the report, it included compliments to Repair, Environmental and Income Recovery staff.	
74/11/23	For the month of July, a total of 613 positive comments were received from tenants responding to a text survey for repairs carried out in their homes, 726 in August and 733 positive comments received in September.	

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75/11/23	The compliment data was shared with the Communications team to enable some of the compliments to be uploaded onto Jannet, enabling everyone to be aware of staff's great achievements. This resulted in staff complimenting each other after reading the praise they have received from tenants, thus encouraging departments to ensure all compliments are recorded.	
76/11/23	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Compliments report.	
20.	Forward Plan	
77/11/23	The Forward Plan was reviewed by the Committee which detailed reports that were due to be presented at meetings in 2024.	
78/11/23	The Committee thanked DR for her contribution to CFC over the years and wished her the best of luck in her endeavours after leaving CFC and PCH Board later this year.	
79/11/23	The Committee also thanked Laura Moss for her hard work and support to the Committee as she moved to the Customer Experience team.	
80/11/23	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Forward Plan	
21.	Date of next meeting: 2nd February 2024	
	<i>The meeting ended at 13.25.</i>	



Signature

Lavinia Porfir – Chair

Date 02/02/2024



Certified as a true copy

Lucy Rickson, Head of Governance

Date 02/02/2024