



Minutes

Plymouth Community Homes
Customer Focus Committee
5th February 2021, 10:00am
Virtual Meeting – Microsoft Teams

Present:

Lavinia Porfir (LP) Chair
Debbie Roche (DR)
Tina Tuohy (TT)
Valerie Lee (VL)
Graham Clayton (GC)
Nick Lewis (NL) Observing

Also in attendance:

John Clark (JC) Chief Executive
Liz Phillips (LPh) Head of Income, Commercial and Home Ownership
Angie Edwards-Jones (AEJ) Head of Customer Experience & Assurance
Jonathan Quinn (JQ) Regeneration Manager (part)
Angie Scott (AS) Head of Communications & Marketing
Maria Schingen (MS) Head of Strategic Procurement (part)
Belinda Pascoe (BP) Head of Governance (part)
Charlotte Edwards (CE) Head of Strategy, Performance and Policy
Ian Frazer (IF) Head of Asset Management (part)
Stephen Ford (SF) Head of Neighbourhoods (part)
Carl Brazier (CB) Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods (Observing)
Laura Moss (LM) Governance Assistant – Minutes

Apologies:

Ember Wolfire (EW)
Kelly Wilding (KW)

1	Welcome and Introductions: Confirm Quorum	Action By
01/02/21	<i>The meeting started at 10:01am</i>	

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	<p>LP welcomed the Committee and the meeting was confirmed as quorate.</p> <p>LP welcomed CB, who has been appointed the new Director of Homes and Neighbourhoods with effect from 10th March 2021, and NL who were in attendance as observers. Both were invited to contribute to the meeting should they wish to do so.</p>	
2	Apologies for Absence	
02/02/21	Apologies were received from Ember Wolffire & Kelly Wilding who are both currently on a Leave of Absence.	
3	Declarations of Interest	
03/02/21	<p>The guidance provided to Committee members on declaring an interest was noted.</p> <p>LP, DR and TT have standing declarations as Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) tenants however this does not relate directly to any items on the agenda.</p>	
4	Minutes of previous meeting (6th November 2020)	
04/02/21	The minutes of the previous Committee meeting were discussed, and it was confirmed that the minutes were a correct record of the meeting and that they could be electronically signed by the Chair.	
5	Chair's Urgent Business	
05/02/21	There was no Chair's urgent business.	
6	Matters Arising	
06/02/21	<p>A list of all on-going and completed actions from previous meetings, with updates, was uploaded to Boardpacks ahead of the meeting for the Committee to review.</p> <p>The Committee noted the Minute Action Log.</p>	
7	Decisions since last meeting	

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07/02/21	There have been no Urgent or Efficient Decisions since the last meeting.	
8	Update on Tenancy Sustainment Officers	
08/02/21	<p>SF presented an Update on Tenancy Sustainment Officers (TSOs) to the Committee for information. Updates had been reported to the Committee previously in November 2018 and February 2020.</p> <p>The Committee were reminded that TSOs have been in post since April 2018 and provide intensive Housing Management with practical support and guidance. TSOs work with Housing Officers and Assistant Housing Officers to provide a service to customers at risk of tenancy failure by assessing and co-ordinating internal and external services to meet individual needs.</p> <p>A third, temporary, TSO has been in post since March 2019 and specifically supports residents at the Mount Wise tower blocks. Given the extensive nature of the works being undertaken at the Towers it was recognised that a dedicated resource to support vulnerable customers throughout the period would further support colleagues across the organisation and enhance liaison support with contractors. The additional community based aspect and focus of this role differed to the other TSOs.</p> <p>The report listed the external agencies that TSOs are engaged with in order to support customers through a multi-agency approach. The TSOs will deal with numerous categories of vulnerabilities, and specific training has been provided. They attend the annual National Hoarding Conference where this complex issue is focused on and have completed Level 2 Hoarding Awareness for Professional Practitioners training which is provided by Hoarding Disorders UK.</p> <p>Summaries of live and closed TSO cases were provided in the report and broken down by vulnerability and area.</p> <p>At the meeting in February 2020, the Committee requested that future case studies provided with the report should include how the residents had moved forward and what support from other agencies were involved in our multi-agency approach. Anonymised narrative from the TSOs was provided as an appendix.</p>	
09/02/21	<p>As a result of questions the following was clarified:</p> <p>The Committee were informed that the third temporary TSO position created to specifically support residents at the Mount Wise tower blocks will now be</p>	

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	made permanent. This position will be useful in supporting projects from across the organisation for residents at the tower blocks as well as continuing with tenancy sustainment assistance.	
10/02/21	It was confirmed that hoarding is a challenge faced nationally which many of the TSO cases relate to. Hoarding is resource intensive for staff and requires monitoring as cases can reoccur.	
11/02/21	Risk assessments are conducted for each individual hoarding case which are reviewed with the Devon and Cornwall Fire Service and additional fire detection measures can be put in place where necessary. Photographs are taken of each room of the property and categorised depending on the level of hoarding. The TSOs will work in conjunction with external agencies to build relationships and trust with the tenant which is important to ensure support can be provided from both a mental health and health and safety aspect. This will also enable each case to be monitored effectively by communicating regularly with the tenant and gaining access to the property.	
12/02/21	TSOs also work with No Access Officers to gain access to a property when initially there has been no engagement from the tenant. TSOs will endeavour to communicate with the tenant to achieve the required resolution.	
13/02/21	It was explained that there is no specific criteria for a case to be referred to a TSO however, Assistant Housing Officers/Housing Officers will be required to demonstrate to their Senior Housing Officer (SHO) that they have attempted to primarily resolve the matter themselves. The SHO will then approve the referral of the case to the TSO to provide an audit trail and ensure quality of work.	
14/02/21	The Committee requested that when the report is next presented that demographic statistics of the tenants that have been or are being supported by the TSOs are included along with which tenants had engaged or not.	SF
15/02/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Update on Tenancy Sustainment Officers.	
16/02/21	<i>SF left the meeting at 10:18am</i>	
9	Legionella Control Policy	
17/02/21	IF presented the Legionella Control Policy to the Committee for approval.	

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	<p>The new Legionella Control Policy sets out PCH's commitment and approach to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting PCH's responsibility regarding the control of legionella bacteria; • Minimising the risk of exposure to legionella bacteria for residents, employees, contractors, visitors and the general public; • Identifying and assisting residents who have support needs, vulnerabilities and / or health issues that may lead to a particular risk from exposure to legionella bacteria. <p>The policy applies to all buildings owned by PCH or its subsidiary companies.</p>	
18/02/21	<p>As a result of questions the following was clarified:</p> <p>The Committee were advised that 71 residents participated in the consultation of the new Legionella Control Policy through Survey Monkey. It was requested that going forward resident participation is included within the policy document along with PCH's gratitude for their involvement. A review of policy frameworks will be taking place in due course and resident recognition will be included as this links with the 'Tenant Tick' initiative from the previous Chair's Legacy.</p>	CE
19/02/21	<p>When a hot tub or swimming pool is discovered at a property, PCH will ask the tenant to remove them. There have been several instances of this following a national trend which emerged during the pandemic lockdown. There have also been instances of tenants altering the use of pipes in kitchens without prior permission which has caused legionella concerns.</p>	
20/02/21	<p>The Customer Focus Committee approved the new Legionella Control Policy.</p>	
10	<p>Social Value Reporting</p>	
21/02/21	<p>MS provided a verbal update and short presentation on Social Value Reporting to the Committee for monitoring.</p> <p>Since the last update to the Committee in August 2020, there has been a quiet period due to limited initiatives (such as resident events) as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.</p>	

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	<p>Social value continues to be included within tenders and contracts on a business as usual basis. Social value constitutes 5% of the evaluation criteria which is monitored through contract management.</p> <p>Focus has been maintained on the resilience of supply chains during the pandemic and regular communication with suppliers to establish organisational cash flow and financial health.</p> <p>Following development of Social Value KPIs and integration into standard contract management, Social Value metrics have also been established and were presented to the Committee comparing October 2020 data to January 2021. The metrics established are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Social Value in new strategic contract procurements – 100% b) Social Value in ongoing strategic contracts: defined (specified what social value) and agreed - 40% of monitored contracts, delivered - 35% of monitored contracts <p>These are the baseline and the composition of contracts changes as new procurements come on line and others are completed.</p> <p>Monthly meetings are held by a Social Value Allocation Group consisting of staff from across the organisation such as Housing with Support/Communities, Tenancy Management and Incomes to establish where social value that has been provided can be applied and what social value would be beneficial in future. The staff that form the Group have direct knowledge of where and how social value can be best utilised among the residents and communities.</p> <p>The Committee were also shown a Contract KPI Tracking spreadsheet which detailed month by month the social value awarded to PCH by contractors.</p>	
22/02/21	<p>As a result of questions the following was clarified:</p> <p>The Social Value KPIs graph on page 4 of the presentation shows that in October 2020 Social Value offered was not measured.</p>	
23/02/21	<p>The Committee queried whether PCH monetarises Social Value if financial benefit is not offered. It was explained that to date this is not carried out as there are a number of factors to consider such as obtaining the right methodology, tracking the financial value and the impact of some social value, such as apprenticeships, can be far greater than being measured financially.</p>	

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24/02/21	It was noted that there are various Social Value calculation methods available although there is debate around the financial value estimates.	
25/02/21	The Committee were informed of an ongoing project in relation to measuring social value, which include benefits to communities, with Locality who support local community organisations offering specialist advice and peer learning. Participants of the project include a number of Housing Associations and the Housing Quality Network (HQN) to work together to reach an agreement of acceptable measures for social value across the sector. The aim was for project participants to assess Social Value recorded over a 12 month period however this has been affected by the pandemic. As a result work has been suspended meaning that the project could take a further 12-18 months than originally anticipated.	
26/02/21	A suggestion was made for PCH to promote the Social Value concept to residents. The Committee were informed that work is underway to explore promotion of Social Value that has been achieved as well as other aspects of the Business Plan through social media using consistent '#' labels such as '#social value'.	
27/02/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the verbal update and presentation on Social Value Reporting.	
28/02/21	<i>MS left the meeting at 10:47am</i>	
11	Assurance on Compliance with RSH Consumer Standards	
29/02/21	<p>BP presented the report to provide assurance to the Committee about how PCH complies with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Consumer Standards.</p> <p>The Board is responsible for ensuring that PCH meets the regulatory standards and is required to certify compliance in the annual accounts. This report is part of a wider framework of assurance on compliance with the Governance and Financial Viability standard.</p> <p>There are four standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant Involvement and Empowerment • Home • Tenancy • Neighbourhood and Community 	

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	<p>It is a requirement of the Governance and Financial Viability standard that Boards certify in the annual accounts that the Association complies with its governing documents and all regulatory requirements (including the Consumer Standards).</p> <p>The RSH's annual Consumer Regulation review which provides a summary of the Regulator's consumer regulation work for 2019/20 and shares key lessons from casework undertaken in the sector during the year was included as an appendix.</p> <p>The review detailed the Regulator's consumer work in line with the reactive regime where action is taken when there is serious concern. However, one of the most significant elements of the Social Housing White Paper is that it sets out a change to a proactive approach which will include routine inspections of large landlords every four years.</p> <p>The Regulator has highlighted the importance of registered providers understanding what is required of them to ensure tenants are safe in their homes, putting things right and ensuring they are taking their tenants into account. Once again, they have highlighted the importance of robust reporting and assurance arrangements - to ensure Board members oversee compliance.</p>	
30/02/21	<p>As a result of questions the following was clarified:</p>	
31/02/21	<p>The Committee confirmed that the PCH Board are reviewing aspects of the new Code of Governance 2020, Together with Tenants charter and Social Housing White Paper at its Board Away Day on Friday 12th February 2021.</p> <p>Within analysis of PCH's compliance to the Home Standard, it explains that PCH's homes meet the Decent Homes Standard, as required by Government. PCH carry out regular, externally validated Stock Condition Surveys (latest in 2019) in addition to thorough individual property surveys when tenancies end. It was confirmed that the surveys have historically been conducted every five years in line with Business Planning however the opportunity to carry out more frequent surveys is being explored. The surveys also help to identify any HSRS (Health and Safety Rating System) issues.</p>	
32/02/21	<p>It was queried whether PCH's performance in accordance with the 'Getting It Right First Time' objective could be measured. Previously this has not</p>	

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33/02/21	<p>been achievable such as difficulties in benchmarking against other Housing Associations however, a possible solution is now being explored.</p> <p>At present PCH have guidelines in place for providing compensation as these circumstances are rare. As it is a specific requirement of the Together with Tenants charter that a compensation policy is available PCH will be reviewing this.</p>	
34/02/21	<p>That the Customer Focus Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Scrutinised the Consumer Standard compliance information contained in appendices A – D of the report. 2) Confirmed that they are able to recommend to the Board that there is sufficient assurance that PCH complies with the RSH consumer standards. 	
35/02/21	<i>BP left the meeting at 10:58am</i>	
12	Update on the My PCH Portal	
36/02/21	<p>AS presented the Update on the My PCH Portal to the Committee for monitoring.</p> <p>At the end of January 2021, there were 5879 subscribers to My PCH which is an increase in the number of active accounts by 616 since November 2020. To date this means 41% of PCH residents have an active MyPCH account – the target remains at 60%.</p> <p>The next phase in the development of the MyPCH portal encountered an unexpected delay in November 2020, which means that Phase 2 of the project will not be completed until late spring/early summer 2021. This was related to the impact of other in-house projects on our IT resources and that PCH needed to complete some development work before our external developer could progress with the next steps of Phase 2.</p> <p>However, work continued on elements of the project that could be delivered and as a result, the much anticipated ‘plug-in’ with the Devon Home Choice application portal went live at the end of the year. In addition, digital signatures went live last year which means PCH are 70% of the way to making the application process truly digital.</p>	

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	<p>When residents use the MyPCH portal and website, they are offered an option to provide feedback about their experience through a system called 'Hotjar'.</p> <p>An analysis of the last 12 months feedback are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 326 responses • 227 responses related to MyPCH, the PCH website or webchat • 137 positive responses (60.4% positive comments) • 60 negative responses (26.4% negative comments) • 30 neutral responses (13.2% too early to give feedback) <p>When the feedback was analysed 99 comments did not relate to MyPCH, the website or webchat, but gave feedback on other PCH services and were actioned as required.</p> <p>The majority of positive feedback stated that the sites were easy to use, information was easy to find, webchats were useful and reporting repairs was effective. However, the most useful points of learning came from the 'negative' comments received, as residents have shared their frustrations with the portal and website, and in doing so highlighted areas for development or put forward suggested improvements to functionality.</p> <p>Further research will take place to coincide with the completion of Phase 2 to ensure a new roadmap for MyPCH and the website, which will be shared with CFC, is based on the combination of customer feedback, transactional demand and commercial/business benefits.</p> <p>This work will form part of the new Communications Strategy which will be developed in 2021. This is subject to the PCH Board (at its meeting on 4th February 2021) agreeing to extend the existing Communications Strategy by one year.</p>	
37/02/21	<p>As a result of questions the following was clarified:</p> <p>A MyPCH project Board meets regularly to forward plan the next stages of the project. The project Board is made up of staff from across the organisation, including the Head of Asset Management and the Head of Neighbourhoods, who connect with frontline staff for feedback and suggestions as well as comparing future plans of becoming more digital with other Housing Associations. There are expectations from the Social</p>	

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38/02/21	Housing White Paper and the new Fire Safety Bill 2019-21 which will be incorporated into the MyPCH portal.	
39/02/21	In 2020, the PCH Board agreed the 30 Year Business Plan and values. The objectives will be integrated into expected staff behaviours to ensure the organisation as a whole are contributing to the delivery of the Business Plan with everyone striving to achieve the best from all projects.	
40/02/21	<p>The Committee were informed that net promoter is a service PCH uses as part of the STAR surveys, which allows us to understand the extent to which residents would recommend family and friends. However, this measure is not particularly well understood in the sector, and benchmarking is very inconsistent especially when taking this into granular service areas.</p> <p>Hard to let properties which are not let through Devon Home Choice are advertised on the MyPCH portal directly. Currently, when there are no properties available the page is blank which customers found frustrating. This was fed back through the Hotjar survey. A solution would be to consider hiding the page when there are no properties available to let or displaying a message to explain and ask the customer to return to the service another time.</p>	
41/02/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Update on the My PCH Portal.	
13	Regeneration Q3 Performance Update	
42/02/21	<p>JQ presented the Regeneration Q3 (Quarter 3) Performance Update to the Committee for monitoring.</p> <p>The report provided an overview of how Regeneration are delivering against the targets which were set out in the Asset Management Update to the PCH Board on 28th July 2020.</p> <p>During the 90 days of the third quarter of 2020-21, there have been some significant highlights for the team including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing the EPC position of our properties • Finalising the preparation of the 2021-22 Programme with a view to impact on future years expenditure • Two significant Modernisation Projects being successfully tendered and will be on site in Q4 • The PCH Disposal Strategy was written and approved 	

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	A breakdown of the work carried out during Q3 of 2020-21 was presented along with areas of focus for each of the teams that contribute to Regeneration: Asset Data team, Surveying team, Fire Safety team and the Programme Delivery team.	
43/02/21	<p>As a result of questions the following was clarified:</p> <p>The Kings Tamerton External Wall Insulation (EWI) project, which will see 107 properties have EWI installed in 2020-21. 32 of these properties have been completed and 36 have works in progress. It was queried whether PCH will carry out any follow up contact with the residents to establish if there have been any benefits as a result of the EWI. The Committee were informed that the EPC scores of the properties will be refreshed once the work has been completed and follow up communication with residents could be explored. However, there are a number of factors that could invalidate research such as residents not disclosing information and utility tariffs differing for each household.</p>	JQ
44/02/21	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	
45/02/21	<p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>	JQ
46/02/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Regeneration Q3 Performance Update.	
47/02/21	<i>IF and JQ left the meeting at 11:29am</i>	
14	Welfare Reform Update	
48/02/21	<p>LPh presented the Welfare Reform Update to the Committee for monitoring.</p> <p>At the end of December 2020, there were 3,707 PCH tenants receiving Universal Credit (UC). Of these 1,724 were in rent arrears. The arrears figure for those on UC was 2.45%, compared with 2.14% for our overall current rent arrears.</p>	

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	<p>Since the current Covid-19 situation started, the team have been extremely busy supporting people who are struggling financially. Over the 41 weeks to the end of December 2020, 1215 new PCH UC cases have been added to the portal. Particularly at the beginning of this period, this was a significant increase compared with the usual level. However, the latest numbers have now stabilised to more usual levels with - around 20 a week, compared with a peak of 168 in mid-April 2020.</p> <p>The increase in rent arrears has been caused by a number of factors including financial hardship caused to individuals through loss of income, the five week waiting period for the significantly higher number of UC cases, the teething problems caused by PCH's new payment system which was introduced in Quarter 3 and the closure of the courts for possession hearings. The Committee were informed that rent arrears have reduced again to 1.76% for January 2021 following the 'rent free' week.</p> <p>At the end of December 2020, the number of 'bedroom tax' cases had reduced to 849. Whilst this number is usually stable or shows a decrease, this is an increase from 803 at the end of March 2020. Since bedroom tax has been in place in April 2014, PCH have assisted 743 tenants to downsize.</p> <p>At the end of December 2020, there were 91 PCH tenants affected by the benefit cap. This is an increase of 1 tenant since the end of March 2020.</p>	
49/02/21	<p>As a result of questions the following was clarified:</p> <p>It was explained that the rent arrears figure of 2.14% for December 2020 within the report was slightly higher than the rent arrears figure (2.13%) within the Performance Indicators report as this included Shared Ownership properties.</p>	
50/02/21	<p>The Committee were informed that additional resources for the Incomes Team are now being sought. Assistant Housing Officer vacancies to the equivalent of 1.5 FTE (full-time employee) for the next 12 months have been advertised to manage the workload.</p>	
51/02/21	<p>The Customer Focus Committee noted the Welfare Reform Update.</p>	
15	<p>Performance Indicators</p>	
52/02/21	<p>CE presented the Performance Indicator report to the Committee for monitoring.</p>	

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	<p>The report presented a suite of performance indicators most relevant to the areas of responsibility falling within the remit of the Committee, covering the period to 31st December 2020.</p> <p>The report showed an overall good performance in especially challenging times, with the added pressure of additional national lockdown in the lead up to the Christmas period. The majority of areas covered by the indicators are showing performance that is within target as at 31st December 2020.</p> <p>The Committee requested information about evictions for rent arrears that have taken place however, there have been no evictions over the period covered by the report.</p> <p>Repairs and Regeneration – 3 performance indicators were outside of target but within 10% and 2 were more than 10% outside of target. 7 performance indicators were on target.</p> <p>Housing Management – 2 performance indicators were on target and 1 performance indicator was outside of target but within 10%.</p> <p>Voids and Lettings – 1 performance indicator was on target and 12 performance indicators were more than 10% outside of target. (These 12 indicators take into account the current Covid-19 situation and have been marked under the agreed new ‘pale’ version of the red target. This acknowledges that, whilst the performance is out of target, it is accepted that the targets are not so significant at the current time whilst the team are focussing on working through the backlog and ensuring voids are turned around as quickly as possible.)</p>	
53/02/21	<p>As a result of questions the following was clarified:</p> <p>It was confirmed that repairs are defined as emergency or routine, during the national lockdown period, following review of a Repair Managers. IF and the Senior Repairs and Operations Manager categorised the different types of repairs to assist with this. However, some repairs which would normally be categorised as routine would need to be handled as emergencies such as leaking roofs to maintain property condition and tenant belongings. These types of repairs would not wait until the national lockdown period has ended.</p>	
54/02/21	<p>It was noted that in December 2020, 100% of respondents to the ASB satisfaction survey were very or fairly satisfied with the outcome of their ASB</p>	

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	complaint. In addition, 97% of tenants were satisfied with programmed works, covering all programmes cumulatively.	
55/02/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Performance Indicator report.	
16	Forward Plan	
56/02/21	The Forward Plan was reviewed by the Committee which detailed items that were due to be reported in 2021. The Committee were informed of an opportunity in the new financial year to commission a review with an independent adviser as detailed within the Committee's Terms of Reference, [REDACTED]. The Committee will be able to select the review subject which the independent adviser can benchmark against peers within the sector, establish any enhancements to be made and where necessary provide reassurance and validation of the work already undertaken by PCH.	
57/02/21	The Customer Focus Committee noted the Forward Plan.	
17	Date of Next Meeting	
58/02/21	The next Customer Focus Committee meeting is scheduled for 7 th May 2021 at 10am.	
59/02/21	<i>The meeting ended at 11:46am</i>	

Name Lavinia Porfir

Signature

Date

Certified as a true copy

Belinda Pascoe, Head of Governance

Date